

2012



Caribbean Volunteer Expeditions Newsletter, 2012

FURTHER DISCOVERIES ON ST KITTS!

By David Rollinson



Brimstone Hill

With the arrival of over a dozen Road Scholars and Caribbean Volunteer Expedition participants in January of 2012, hopes were high for more interesting discoveries as volunteers worked at Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park and Wingfield Manor Estate, exploring, clearing, digging and recording.

Our first week was spent at Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park, where the project was to continue the uncovering of the 1800 hospital building and further investigation of the NCO and soldiers cemetery. Some of the overburden covering the masonry platform on which the wooden hospital building stood had been removed, allowing us to work carefully at exposing the exterior walls and corners of the building. After a couple of mornings work we had a set of steps, beautifully carved from local limestone and several decorative columns which may have held rails for the steps. Surprisingly, and a bit disappointing, were the lack of artifacts as we dug; only a few pipe stems and some pottery shards were found. Further mechanical clearing of the platform walls can now take place and our next project at the site will take us inside the building where we hope to find more evidence of the history of the site. While the hospital site failed to yield much, an exploration in the bush below the fortress walls revealed a very large cannon, which was first spotted by volunteer John Covey. In the area where there was a small battery, the cannon would have been used against the French during their siege of 1782 and has lain there since.

While one group worked on the hospital the others were down below at the cemetery. Last years exploration here, made easier by the removal of

substantial vegetation by Park staff, uncovered a number of grave markers that were not visible on the cemetery survey undertaken some years before. Encouraged by this knowledge we adopted a plan of probing the ground in rows using a length of metal rod and a hammer. Hard and hot work, but it paid dividends, and by the end of the week the marker tally had gone from 18 to 61! Typically, these markers were large pieces of volcanic rock that were rounded at the top and had two sort of flat faces. As we excavated each one to make them visible it was evident that small pieces of brick or stone had been put under the markers to help keep them level, and to stop them sinking. None of these markers had any identification- a sad reflection on the times and lives of the common soldier in those days.

From the heights of Brimstone Hill we moved to the cool river valley at Wingfield Manor Estate. As research into the history of the sugar works at the site continues we find more places to dig for remains, and this week was no exception as a brief session with a cutlass down by the river uncovered a substantial masonry ruin. Further clearing unveiled the remains of a large structure that might have been part of an earlier water works. A highlight of the week was the visit by a group of students from the local veterinary college's prep school. After a brief introduction to the principle of archaeology they became willing diggers and thoroughly enjoyed working in the dirt and washing off and recording the many 'artifacts' they uncovered. For the CVE volunteers it was an enjoyable and novel experience to share the site and experiences with these young people.



Brimstone Hill

CVE Mission Statement:

Throughout the Caribbean, historic structures representing each island's rich and unique heritage suffer due to natural and man made threats ranging from tropical storms to tourism-related development. Caribbean Volunteer Expeditions' mission is to support local efforts to preserve historic and architecturally valuable resources. We recruit volunteers from the US and Canada to work on preservation projects with local Caribbean agencies. We seek to contribute to the broader base of information about Caribbean styles, influences, history, and architecture, and to help preserve the region's architectural and cultural heritage.

JEWISH CEMETERY INVENTORY PROJECT JAMAICA by Meryl Greer Domina

My friend was describing her upcoming trip in January to volunteer inventorying historic Jewish cemeteries in Jamaica. Volunteer and contribute to historic research! Participate in a Jewish project! Meet local residents! Learn about a tropical place! That sounded exciting to me and I decided to join my friend.

I started to look up travel in Jamaica. I learned the interesting history of early Sephardic Jews in the New World and the impact they had on Jamaica.

There were eight women who came from the U.S. to work on this CVE project. Five of us were new. Interestingly, of our group, Sandra was originally Jamaican and Toni South African. On Sunday, January 22, 2012, Ainsley Henriques met us at the Kingston airport or bus station and then took us to his house in Kingston. He and his lovely wife Marjorie are fascinating people who are involved in many aspects of Jamaican life and quite willing to share their knowledge. We had an interesting afternoon talking with them and enjoyed viewing their artwork and plants indoors and out. They fed us lunch and dinner and put up three of our group at their home and one person with Ainsley's sister. They arranged for the other four of us to stay at The Jewish Home which had been an old age home in the past but is not needed now that some of its rooms are rented to college students.

CVE had arranged to have a small bus available each day. On Monday and Tuesday we went to the Orange Street Cemetery in Kingston; situated on three and a half acres of land it has been in continuous use since the 1820's. In addition to the original graves, approximately one hundred stones with Hebrew, Portuguese, and English epitaphs were transposed here from the Old Kingston Cemetery which was used from 1716 until 1880 and then sold in 1950.

Our leaders were Rachel Frankel, an architect from New York who is a recognized authority on historic Jewish sites in the New World, and Lauren Stahl who is an architectural conservator.



We were divided into small groups to take measurements of the graves, fill in incomplete data sheets, give each grave a number based on the numbers in the Barnett and Wright book*, or to measure the distance of each grave from two of the perimeter walls of the cemetery. I'm not sure what I was expecting to find, but I do remember being very surprised by how much garbage was in the cemetery, that many of the earlier tombs had deteriorated into a rubble of bricks, how many graves were missing their epitaph stones, and that goats and chickens spent their days in the cemetery. We found that the newer part of the cemetery was maintained in much better condition.

As the inventory was performed at the request of the United Congregation of Israelites Shaa're Shalom Synagogue of Jamaica we had a steady stream of Congregational visitors. Among them were their new rabbi Dana Kaplan, a young man from New York City, who was distressed by the neglect and Alison Read and her teenage son, Sebastian Otway, who came to offer a few hours of help. Ainsley later told us that our presence reminded the congregation of the importance of their cemeteries.

By the end of the second day we had marked most of the older graves with its Barnett and Wright number and had filled in the measurements, location, condition, and inscription on the data sheets. Rachel was able to take photographs of each grave.

After breakfast on Wednesday morning we left Kingston. First Odari drove us to the Hunts Bay Cemetery which was established in the 1600s. Much of the original cemetery was gone, but in 2008 Ainsley invited CVE to document this cemetery, the oldest in Jamaica. We spent some time comparing the inscriptions to those we saw in the Orange Street Cemetery. These graves were older, used more Spanish, Portuguese, and Hebrew, and had more engraved symbols than those in Orange Street. Before leaving we formed a circle and said Kaddish.

Odari then drove us through the lush mountains. We stopped in one town to purchase food for our next three lunches which gave us the opportunity of shopping at a local grocery store. When we reached the Laco-via cemetery we found it was overgrown with vegetation. Christy needed to trim branches and weeds with his machete before we could begin our inventory work. Toni and Sandra became expert at flouring and reading the epitaphs. Rachel again took photographs of each grave and Heidi interviewed some of the local people.

Ainsley had arranged for us to stay at the beach house of one of his friends near Alligator Pond. This was a six-bedroom home with a beautiful patio overlooking the Caribbean Sea.

The next morning we had a ten minute drive to the Rowe's Corner cemetery where we followed the same routine as before. Shortly after we were joined by Dr. Cleveland DaCosta and some of his friends. Dr. DaCosta had relatives buried here and he came to share information about them. Heidi interviewed him while Liz recorded them. He also informed us that a few of the epitaph stones were copies made to replace stones in very poor condition.

Friday evening we joined the congregation of Shaa're Shalom, United Congregation of Israelites for Shabbat Services. After a week of focusing on the dead and Jewish history I felt ready to participate in worship. After Services we joined the congregation at their Kiddush, toured the Jamaican Jewish Heritage Center on the synagogue compound, and talked with congregants.



* Richard Barnett and Philip Wright examined and recorded the facts and inscriptions of 1,456 Jewish tombstones to preserve the history of the Jewish community. This information was published as *The Jews of Jamaica, Tombstone Inscriptions 1663-1880* by Ben Svi Institute and the Hebrew University, 1997.

Curacao- 2012

By Anne Hersh

CVE volunteers returned to Curacao for the third year to work with NAAM (National Archeological-Anthropological Museum) a Curacao organization devoted to preserving Curacao heritage and cultural resources. CVE group leader, Helen Ross, an architectural historian with the Virginia DOT, organized this project. The group also included Deborah Joy, an archeologist from North Carolina, and her husband Mike Davey, as well as Adrian Ross and Anne Hersh, Architect.



Fort Engelenberg



Pietermaai Apartments

Monday morning, Francois van der Hoeven an archeologist , accompanied us up steps carved in the rock cliff to the battery, overlooking one of the most beautiful beaches on the island. The fort is on the Curacao monument list, and is typical of the small batteries built along the coast in the 18th century. The battery has low bastion walls, and the walls of the powder magazine. Our work included carefully digging near the walls where we discovered parts of the bastions, as well as the floor paving stone, and taking measurements of the fort layout. We really appreciated the location- the beach had wonderful swimming, food and drink concessions, and bathrooms-(and even massages were available!) which was a welcome change from many of CVE's projects in the hot thorny brush far from any roads.

Afternoons were spent washing and sorting archeological artifacts at the NAAM laboratory, with archeologist Claudia Kraan, and producing CAD drawings of the layout of the fort.

Our accommodations were at the Pietermaai Smal Apartments- a recently restored complex of historic buildings- including a great house. I stayed in one of the "slave quarters" with kitchenette, and sleeping loft- all tastefully appointed .

The apartments were right in the downtown capital city of Willemstad, a World Heritage Site, and we had a great time wandering around the historic city with its picturesque and colorful Dutch influenced buildings.



Summary of Recent Projects

2008

Wingfield Archeology
St. Kitts Cemetery Inventory
Brimstone Hill Restoration
Hunts Bay Jamaica, Jewish Cemetery Inventory
St. John Preservation
St. Eustatius Wattle and Daub construction
San Salvador Archeology

2009

Historic Jewish Cemetery Inventory Jamaica
Brimstone Hill Archeology, St. Kitts
St Kitts Cemetery Inventory
San Pedro de Macoris Historic Building
Survey, Dominican Republic
San Salvador, Bahamas Archeology

2010

Curacao Fort Knip Site Assessment
San Juan Historic Site Preservation
St Kitts Cemetery Inventory
Wingfield Archeology, St Kitts
Archeology in St Eustatius

2011

Construction of Cacti Wall, Curacao
Orange Street Historic Jewish Cemetery Jamaica
Wingfield archeology, St Kitts
Historic Cemetery Inventory
Archeology in St Eustatius

2012

Archeology in St. Eustatius
Winfield and Brimstone archeology, St. Kitts
Historic Jewish Cemetery Survey, Jamaica
Documentation for USVI National Park Service at
Hassel Island and Beverhoutsberg
Drawings of Fort Engelenberg, Curacao.

Upcoming Schedule 2013

Archeology in St Eustatius—Dates to be announced
Historic Jewish Cemetery Inventory, Jamaica—Dates TBA
Documentation for USVI National Park Service Jan 6-12
Wingfield Manor Estate archeology on water wheel and water supply—Feb. 10-16
Brimstone Hill, St Kitts, exploration of overgrown ruins—Feb. 17-23

USVI February 2012

In February seven CVE volunteers worked on documenting historic ruins in the United States Virgin Islands. The National Park Service administers the USVI National Park located in St. John as well as the historic site at Hassel Island, situated in the harbor of Charlotte Amalie in St. Thomas.

The National Park archeologist Ken Wild offered the group lodging at the "Archeology" tents at the Cinnamon Bay Campground- on one of the most beautiful beaches in St. John. The campground has a restaurant as well as a commissary.

The group was able to accomplish a variety of tasks. Two days were spent at Hassel Island. The Danish used Hassel Island to defend Charlotte Amalie, an important shipping center, in the 18th and 19th centuries. During the Napoleonic Wars, the British built several forts, and barracks; During the 1840's and into the twentieth century coaling steamships was a major activity on the island, and a coal powered marine railway was built on the island.

We were ferried by Ken to Hassel Island from St John in the NPS boat- a beautiful 40 minute ride along the south coast of St. Thomas. Once there, we walked to the structures which were on a hill overlooking the harbor. The ruins included foundations and some walls of the former barracks and cook houses built by the British. We measured and photographed these structures. Copies of these drawings can be seen on our web site. www.cvexp.org



Hassel Island Cook House

Another day was spent washing and sorting through archeological finds at the Cinnamon Bay archeology laboratory. One of the group also manned the museum located at the lab for a few days.

We also explored the ruins at Beverhoudtsberg- a plantation dating from the early 1700's. The ruins included a large sugar factory- with its remnants of the sugar boiling area, a great house foundation, and several other related buildings. The group was amazed to see several large wild boars in the area. Measurements for drawings, as well as photographs were taken.

The group had time for other activities including swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, and hiking.



Beverhoudtsberg, St John



Arriving by boat at Hassel island

Comment from David, one of our volunteers:

My CVE experience on St. John was fantastic! We had a good little group of six people. We stayed at the NPS interns' campsite within the Cinnamon Bay campground, part of the Virgin Islands National Park. The campsite was very comfortable and just moments from one of the most beautiful beaches I've ever seen! The interns were very friendly and showed us the ropes of both camping life and our archaeology work, which was very rewarding. We worked four days- two on Hassel Island, one at the campground, and one at a very remote site called Beaverhoutsberg, where three very large feral pigs paid us a visit! Evenings were spent over leisurely dinners and relaxing in camp.

Other than the no-see-ums that bit my feet many times, it was a perfect week! I look forward to participating in more CVE trips in the future.

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