

2011



Caribbean Volunteer Expeditions Newsletter

WINGFIELD ESTATE ST.

Volunteers at work

Imagine being in beautiful St.Kitts and helping archeologists unearth buildings and artifacts that are over 350 years old! Under the guidance of experienced archeologist David Rollinson, formerly of Nevis and now a resident in Nova Scotia, this dream became a reality for a fortunate few. St.Kitts is taking tourism into a new dimension and actually inviting and encouraging visitors staying at our hotels to participate with our local volunteers to dig for history. It's a truly exciting project and thrills the participants.

The site is unique. Established in 1625 it was the first land grant given by The English King in the West Indies and, its first owner, Sam Jefferson was the great, great, great grandfather of Thomas Jefferson, third President of United States of America. The site is developing daily and new finds are a regular occurrence. Originally the estate produced tobacco (plants can still be found) and indigo. However, in the mid 17th century the estate converted to sugar and remained as such until recently. The factory however ceased production in the early 20th century due to the establishment of a modern centrally located sugar factory. Wingfield estate will soon become an orientation centre with interpretive signage. Trained guides will demonstrate and explain the production of sugar from cane and rum from sugar. This impressive site currently consists of an aqueduct which carried water to the wheel. It also showcases: Mill house, Boiling House, Fire Wall Tunnel and an amazing new find, an intact rum distillery which pre dates 1685!

.The archaeological digs at Wingfield Estate are now available to the general public for participation. It is hoped that this will serve as encouragement for the development of more of the many historic sites around the island. St.Kitts' beauty is in its differences, it is in its unique history. Wingfield Estate, uniquely historic, uniquely fascinating, uniquely different, uniquely St.Kitts.. Commencing 31st January 2011 under the watchful eye of Mr. D. Rollinson, a group of "Caribbean Volunteer Expedition" persons joined forces with some local personnel to expose more of Wingfield secrets



Views of the 17th Century Distillery



Here are their stories:-

"We heard about the rum distillery discovery last year"; so said **Phillippa "Pippa" Anne Francq (originally of Belgium) who resides in St.Petersburg, Florida.** "We are truly amazed at the rum distillery stone work and are completely thrilled for David. "We hope to help him continue his work into new discoveries. We can only imagine how he felt discovering the rum distillery. We also knew we would love working at Wingfield Estate, it is so picturesque. This is a great find and an exciting step for St.Kitts in heritage tourism.

Allen Loyd of St.Petersburg, Florida said: "We knew about the distillery and thought it was very exciting to be working here. We have been to Wingfield Estate before and know there is a lot more work to be done. We have enjoyed working with David uncovering things that have not been seen for so many years. For every one question answered, ten more pops up. It is quite a puzzle here at Wingfield Estate in trying to fit together the discoveries so as to understand the people who lived here before. It is absolutely interesting."

Duane Marfisi (Ontario Canada) - "When I read about the dig, I was curious about this beautiful, magical, historical island. I wanted to lend a hand even though I had only recently arrived on the island to live. Imagine this structure was built over 400 years ago. This is great!! Besides, I like meeting people and would certainly want to be involved in another dig."



CACTI WALL

Curaçao NETHERLAND ANTILLES

Our hands-on project was working in an area known as the Canucu, traditionally an area of ground given by the plantation owner to his slaves so that they could dry out seeds for their gardens. The cacti wall, using kadushi cactus, is a way to keep the livestock out of the enclosed space. We assisted by building three segments that illustrate the types found on the island. The inner row had been previously established and taken root. In one portion we added the second row using traditional tools that will establish quite quickly. Then we built a rock wall. The middle section shows the thorn bush known as wabi. We then assembled an A frame structure on the inside of the enclosure. It was covered with dried banana tree fronds. Directing us were two descendents of slaves that worked on the plantation. Later for lunch we were rewarded with a pre-arranged Creole style lunch prepared by the museum staff. Yum!). "By Helen Ross"



Historic Jewish Cemetery Inventory Jamaica

My name is Sebastian Otway and I was born in Jamaica but currently reside in Panama. I attend the Isaac Rabin school where I learn Hebrew and Jewish Culture, I also attend the *Kol Shearith Israel Synagogue* and became a *Bar-Mitzvah* in 2010.

I mainly come to visit my family in Jamaica in January, because that's when I get my summer holiday. This year, my grandmother, Marilyn Delevante, told me about the Caribbean Volunteer Expedition (CVE) which would be in Jamaica for a week at the Orange Street Jewish Cemetery. The volunteers would be documenting the grave-stones in the Cemetery in order to preserve as much available information as possible. The graves we were documenting were primarily from the 19th century. These graves typically consist of a brick base with a large horizontal slab of stone upon which an epitaph and sometimes an image are incised. Some belong to my ancestors. To this day, the cemetery continues to serve as the final resting place for Jamaican Jews.

The documentation process consisted of locating each grave stone in relation to the cemetery walls and the other grave stones, transcribing the inscriptions, assessing the condition of the grave stone and its material composition, recording the measurements of the grave stones. The newer, 20th century part of the cemetery is in good condition and well maintained. Unfortunately the older section, where we worked, has suffered much damage over the decades. Vandals have removed and in many cases destroyed the stone slabs in order to pilfer the red bricks of the bases. Also, due to Kingston's insufficient municipal garbage collection, residents neglectfully toss their debris over the wall in order to dispose of it.

Rachel Frankel was in charge of the expedition and this is her fifth visit to Jamaica, she was assisted by two other volunteers from The United States: Lauren Stahl, architectural conservator, for whom this was a third CVE trip to Jamaica, and Heidi Kaufman, Professor of English at the University of Delaware. Branka Franicevic, a third volunteer, came from England. My mother, Alison, and I also joined the volunteers. Marc Goodman, a Jamaican also volunteered and he too has ancestors buried in the cemetery. I found the work interesting, and my main job was to read aloud the inscriptions to another volunteer so they could be transcribed. My mother helped with the measurements and locations of each grave. Our volunteer efforts were supported by staff from the office of Ainsley Henriques including Arthur MacBrown, Dennis Parrish, and Clinton Douglas. Jerome Wilson (aka Cristi) who worked with CVE in 2009 and 2008 to document the Hunt's Bay Cemetery, also joined the team.

After three days of working in the Orange Street Jewish Cemetery, we traveled to two other Jewish cemeteries in rural Jamaica. One of the cemeteries was located in Lacovia, St. Elizabeth where we were surprised to find both Hebrew and Portuguese inscriptions on the graves, some of which I transcribed. The second cemetery was somewhat hidden in Rowe's Corner near the town of Alligator Pond by the coast. Many of the graves in that cemetery belong to members of the Sampson family, who evidently lived in that area. It was a very interesting expedition and I enjoyed the experience. By Sebastian Otway



CVE/Road Scholar Trip to St. Eustatius

In January, six participants joined the 2011 trip to St. Eustatius. The group stayed at the Kings Well Resort just outside of the town of Oranjestad, where the proprietors, Win and Laura, made their best effort to spoil them rotten with large amounts of food and some of the best views of the beach and ocean anywhere.



The view from King's Well.

From January 16 to January 23, the CVE/Road Scholar group worked with Dr. Grant Gilmore of the St. Eustatius Center for Archeological Research (SECAR) doing some archeological testing at the Schotshoek Plantation site. Located outside of the main town of Oranjestad, Schotshoek is the remains of a seventeenth century plantation house. Under the supervision of Dr. Gilmore and his SECAR intern, Stafford Smith, the CVE/Road Scholar group contributed to the ongoing excavations at the site.



The volunteers in the trenches.

The group assisted with testing the area along the foundation of a building thought to be the former kitchen. The members of the group not only excavated a 7 meter trench along the outside wall of the kitchen foundation, digging and screening the soil for artifacts, they also worked in the laboratory to clean and identify the artifacts they had collected in the field. Their excavations produced a variety of materials such as coins that reflected household activities, as well as architectural materials including bricks and nails. They also found large numbers of items that reflect both the foods that were consumed (bones) and the dishes the former inhabitants used for eating and cooking.



Volunteers Sandra Lovell and Ira Grushow with their finds.

By all accounts, the participants in the group had a very good time and left feeling a little more informed about the value of archeology in general and the value of archeology on St. Eustatius in particular. CVE/Road Scholar appreciates the time spent by Dr. Gilmore, Gay Soetekouw and Stafford Smith of SECAR for the time they spent with the group, and Win and Laura Piechutski at Kings Well for their excellent hospitality. We also appreciate the contributions made by the volunteers and we look forward to returning in January 2012 to continue to assist SECAR with their ongoing research.



The 2011 group: From Left; Celeste Huecker from Maryland, Sandra Lovell from Massachusetts, Ira and Jane Grushow from Pennsylvania, Virginia and Richard Van Druten from California

www.cvexp.org

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

Hunts Bay and Orange Street Kingston Jamaica
 Brimstone Hill St. Kitts*
 St. Kitts Cemetery Inventory*
 San Pedro de Macoris Historic Buildings Survey
 Dominican Republic
 San Salvador, Bahamas: Archeology Project

2010

Curacao Fort Knip Site Assessment
 San Juan Historic Site Perseveration
 Archeology in St. Eustatius
 St. Kitts cemetery Inventory
 Wingfield Archeology, St. Kitts

2011

Cacti Wall Curacao
 Orange Street Historic Jewish Cemetery
 Wingfield Archaeology St. Kitts
 Historic Cemetery Inventory St. Kitts
 Archaeology in St. Eustatius
 Projects with Road Scholar Volunteers

Winter 2012 Projects

Road Scholar
 St. Kitts Cemetery January 22-29
 St. Eustatius Archeology January 15-22

CVE

Curacao
 St. John mapping for NPS February 12-18
 Wingfield Archeology
 San Salvador
 "Custom" Nevis Project—any dates

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.

