University of Winchester South-Eastern Caribbean Heritage and Community Archaeology Projects 2015

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With contributions by Lucy Willans
1. Introduction and context

This year’s Caribbean fieldwork ran from Wednesday 2nd September to Thursday 17th September 2015 and took in work in Barbados and Bequia (St Vincent Grenadines). The University of Winchester team comprised: Dr Niall Finneran (Director), Dan Heale, Adela Murray Brown, Alex Grey, Lucy Willans (supervisors), Harvey Doolan, Alice McGahon and Alex Rowbottom (Archaeology undergraduates) and Jayne Wheatley (University of Plymouth). We were working alongside Rachel Lichtenstein, a UK-based historian and author and her collaborator Jonny Wells. This year our Caribbean-based partners included: Barbados Museum and Historical Society; Barbados National Trust; Annalee Davies (Freshmilk Initiative); David Michael (ECHOS Caribbean heritage initiative) University of the West Indies (Cave Hill); St Vincent National Trust; Nicola Redway (Visit Bequia) and community representatives from Speightstown, Barbados and Bequia. The kind help, support and input from Alissandra Cummins, Kevin Farmer, Dr Tara Inniss-Gibbs, Lennox Honeychurch, Professor Karl Watson, Paul Altman, Clement Armstrong, Bellairs Institute (Barbados), Herman Belmar and Quirin Schaedle (Bequia) is gratefully acknowledged. This year we sought to reconsolidate the original Speightstown Community Archaeology Project which ran from 2010-15 with additional collaboration with Rachel Lichtenstein and Jonny Wells; continue to develop our heritage and education project ‘unearthing voices’ with Annalee Davies and to continue archaeological survey and excavation on Bequia in the Grenadines.

2. Urban history and creole identities: Speightstown

This year it was decided to re-orientate work in Speightstown and develop a second phase of work there. Alex Grey, a MA cultural heritage student from the University of Winchester was tasked as part of his dissertation research to build a dossier on the condition and management potential of the historic townscape in Speightstown. In previous years MA and BA students from the University of Winchester have undertaken work on graveyard and monument survey at St Peters Parish Church, All Saints Church and St James Church (Holetown), as well as underwater survey work, and excavation of fortifications at Haycocks Bay and Denmark Fort. This material is now being brought together for publication by Niall Finneran as a British Archaeological Reports volume on Speightstown history, heritage and archaeology. Publications have also appeared or will shortly appear in the Antiquaries Journal (2013), the Barbados Museum and Historical Society
For 2015 the core team was joined by Rachel Lichtenstein and Jonny Wells. Rachel Lichtenstein is well known in the UK for her work on Jewish history in London’s East End, and she has published widely. Her interest is in the location and excavation of the old Jewish synagogue at Speightstown, which is well recorded historically but as yet the site remains unidentified. The whole Winchester team joined her for two days in Speightstown to investigate likely localities for the site. Rachel was also conducting both an extensive archival search and a number of oral history interviews as well. A number of sites have been identified for future investigation, probably using the University ground penetrating radar, which will also give additional information on the wider townscape as well.

The ground is now well set for a long-term collaboration between historical and archaeological disciplines to study the biography of the town from the mid 17th century to the present day. Using archaeological survey and investigation, combined with extensive oral history and archival work, we aim to develop a detailed overview of Speightstown’s history as an important urban centre within the wider south-eastern Caribbean social, ecumenic and cultural system. In the framework of Caribbean studies this is an unprecedented project in terms of methodological integration and scope, and in addition the community and training angle of our work is stressed. We aim to involve as many local stakeholders as possible, to offer, as in previous years, the chance for University of West Indies students to obtain quality archaeological and heritage training, now with the exciting and added dimension of Rachel Lichtenstein’s skillsets.

Work will start in the Summer of 2016 with an initial GPR survey, and this will be followed by excavation. It is also intended to reintroduce an extensive programme of underwater survey (last directed by Niall Finneran in 2012) which can involve PADI training and underwater archaeology training.

This entire training package could have very important commercial implications for opening up the project to a wider audience, e.g. North America. Further excavation work is planned at Haycock’s Fort and in other localities in the north of the island. In addition, a recent recruit to the University of Winchester’s MA in cultural heritage and resource management course, Laura Hampden, is going to bring her skillsets as a worker on Surrey County Council’s Historic Environment Record (HER) to help develop the outline infrastructure for a similar GIS-based database system for use in Barbados. This will have important implications for heritage planning.
3. Unearthing Voices: Primary and pre-primary children's engagement with the shared heritage of Barbados and the United Kingdom (Lucy Willans)

The Unearthing Voices project facilitates community engagement within heritage, archaeology and art activities in Barbados and the UK, to explore the artefacts and the emotions of a shared heritage of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It is a collaboration between Winchester University (Heritage) Brown University, Rhode Island, U.S.A. (Archaeology) and the Fresh Milk community arts platform, Walkers Dairy, St George, Barbados (Art). Throughout 2013/15 the team has been consulting with heritage professionals, community and educators in Barbados and the UK to develop a project that has relevance and purpose within both countries. Central to this was addressing the shared concerns of low teacher confidence in covering the subject of enslavement with young children, and the lack of age-appropriate resources. Initial activities are geographically centred on an archaeological excavation at Walkers Dairy, formerly a sugar plantation dating from the 1660s. Here Brown University intend to locate and excavate original plantation buildings.

The Winchester University team will be placing a strong emphasis on facilitating the involvement of primary and pre-primary children from local schools within these activities. This will include children using technology, engaging with outdoor experiential learning and relating their own understanding of heritage through photography and art. Winchester University will also join Brown University in training members of the adult community, teachers and children to become heritage champions. Recognising the need for a holistic solution, the project places an emphasis on cultural, social, economic and environmental sustainability within its activities. The approach is rhizomatic, acknowledging that professionals, adult communities and children will enter, interact with and influence the project via diverse pathways.

For Lucy Willans and Jayne Wheatley, the focus for 2015 was on establishing the groundwork for a pilot project with local primary and pre-primary schools. In week one Annalee Davis (artist and director of the Fresh Milk project) hosted a meeting with representatives of Workman’s Primary School, St George Primary School and St Nicholas Nursery. There was enthusiastic agreement on the need to re-think heritage resources and dialogic spaces, to encourage children’s engagement in a way that not only acknowledges the past, but also seeks new understanding and ideas for the future. Also agreed was that the project should be long-term in nature, to build a sustainable, robust process. This would also facilitate a longitudinal study of its impact, potentially with a focus on the 200th anniversary of the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act. Also in
the first week, we joined Niall Finneran and members of the other Winchester student groups working in Barbados, for an informal meeting with Alissandra Cummins (Director of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society) David Michael, (Editor of the Caribbean Echoes heritage magazine), Annalee Davis and Rachael Lichtenstein. Here discussion on Unearthing Voices explored how the project sits within the broader cultural heritage context of a historically diverse, multi-cultural Barbados, and in relation to modern childhood and youth in Barbados.

There was a meeting later in the week with Dr Tara Inniss-Gibbs from the History and Philosophy department of the University of the West Indies. Tara has been contributing ideas to this project since its conception. This discussion highlighted the importance of building sustainability into the project, and to conserving heritage resources and developing heritage tourism on the island. In week two, we had the opportunity to visit the three schools. Our thanks to Margot Gadsby, Donna Waithe-Jones, Liesja Pragnell and their teams for their warm welcome. Here we were able to explore, first-hand, the resources that were available and the general approaches taken to teaching. What was evident was the commitment of staff, their enthusiasm for developing new ideas and a willingness to experiment with new forms of engagement within cultural heritage.

At the end of the second week there was also the opportunity to meet with Lennox Honeychurch, Director of the Barbados National Trust. There was agreement on the need to encourage pre and primary school children to develop an interest in both natural and cultural heritage and the importance of appropriate educational material. Scattered amongst these meetings were informal discussions with community members of all ages, from a wide range of backgrounds, which helped to flesh out our understanding of issues surrounding heritage engagement in Barbados. These discussions often challenged the team to consider the appropriate application of both tangible and intangible heritage within education and community engagement, and the importance of its relevance to both traditional family values and future lifestyles. It is also important to mention those back in the UK who have also contributed knowledge and experience to this project, in particular John Siraj-Blatchford, Caroline Leeson, Louise Bunce and Julian Vayne.

The following long term goals were identified:

• New modes of engagement within primary and pre-primary schools
- Longitudinal study – impact of engagement from pre-primary education to young adult
- Parallel activities in Barbados and UK, building a community of practice
- Emphasis on using free, natural resources and accessible technology
- Building an online community
- Student exchange
- Summer schools/activity sessions/family days
- Training and supporting heritage champions
- Talks and conferences, monographs
- Local and international exhibitions – art and artefacts

Based upon these discussions, some potential activities for 2016 are as follows:

- Small trials of individual methods of engagement
- Building relationships with contributing artists, including video/animation
- Consulting experienced outdoor experiential learning to develop new ideas on delivering cultural heritage studies through natural resources.
- Field walking/test pits /initial community engagement with these.
- Reviewing heritage and art in the Barbados primary curriculum
- Researching the history of Walkers Plantation, buildings survey, landscape survey.
- Consulting further with teachers, parents, children and young people
- Facilitating children building a photographic/audio record of their own heritage

4. Bequia Heritage Project

Five team members (Finneran, Heale, Murray-Brown, Doolan, McGahon and Rowbottom) spent a week undertaking survey and excavation work on the Grenadine island of Bequia. This is part of a collaboration started in 2014 with Nicola Redway, a local resident, and supported financially this year by Visit Bequia, to whom we offer our gratitude for the help towards transportation costs. A number of sites were identified by NF during a preliminary visit in September 2014, and these were investigated in detail by the team in 2015. A general survey of the historic archaeology by Finneran and Redway is currently in preparation, and another thematic study on the archaeology of Caribbean whaling is under preparation by NF.
We focused upon the survey and planning of historic estate structures at Old Fort and Belmont (and we thank Quirin Schedule for offering us access to theses properties). Mr Schaele has offered us the chance to excavate at Old Fort, and it may well serve as a small-scale archaeological training project for 2017. In addition we undertook survey work and historical mapping study round the island and were able to identify a number of important pre-contact (i.e. Kalinago/Carib, Suazoid-Troumassoid and Saladoid) sites which should be investigated. It is planned to involve a regional expert, Dr Maaike De Waal Lesparre of Leiden University in the Netherlands in this study. Harvey Doolan was tasked with planning the remains of the old fortification at Hamilton on the north side of Admiralty Bay as part of his dissertation on Caribbean military material culture and armaments of the 18th century.

Maritime archaeological work focused on recording ('taking lines from') a number of historic whaling boats on display in the Bequia Boat Museum (and grateful acknowledgements here to the help and support from Herman Belmar), and also planning and excavating a mid-19th century whaling try works on the north side of Friendship Bay. A further planning visit was undertaken by boat to the more recently abandoned whaling works on the island of Petit Nevis. Much of this work forms the basis of Finneran’s forthcoming paper on the archaeology of Caribbean whaling, but also contributes towards Alice McGahon’s undergraduate dissertation topic on whaling heritage and museums.

Finally, it had been hoped to undertake a scoping visit to the island of Balliceaux. In 2014 the head of the SVG National Trust, Louise Mitchell-Joseph, requested that an archaeological study be undertaken of this island. In 1797 the British held c 4500 ‘Black Carib’ peoples here in the aftermath of the carib wars and prior to their deportation to Roatan in the Honduras. Descendants of these peoples still live there today as the Garifuna. Some 2500 Black Carib men, women and children died here of disease, and as a result it is described as a significant Garifuna site of memory and loss. The Garifuna have asked the SVG Government to undertake work on the sailed and put together a management plan which respects the site as a place of profound meaning to the Diaspora. This task has been placed in the hands of the University of Winchester team, and it is anticipated that work will start here in 2017 (a British Academy grant has been submitted to assist the study).

5. Conclusion
Overall although this was a smaller field team than previous years, we have undertaken a great deal of valuable work in collaboration with our local partners. The University of Winchester is helping develop capacity building in heritage management and education in this corner of the Caribbean, and it is to be hoped that the three core initiatives outlined above, plus the planned work on Balliceaux, will add greatly to our wider approach to heritage practice and theory in a wider context.
6. Graphics

View over the historic townscape of Speightstown, Barbados

Film interviewing: Rachel Lichtenstein talks with former head of Barbados National Trust, Paul Altman about aspects of Jewish history and heritage in Barbados
Rachel Lichtenstein undertaking oral history interviews, here with long-time Speightstown resident, Clement Armstrong.

Bequia: historic map study with Nicola Redway
Alice McGahon interviewing Herman Belmar as part of her undergraduate dissertation research on whaling heritage

Planning historic cistern structures at the Old Fort
Planning the historic whaling centre at Petit Nevis island

Harvey Doolan and Alex Rowbottom planning and recoding historic cannon at Hamilton Fort
Balliceaux island (right) target of future survey work by the University of Winchester