

SHORT REPORT

Archaeological Investigations on Carriacou, West Indies, 7th July - 9th August 2008: Fieldwork and Public Archaeology

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Introduction

Under the direction of Kaye, Fitzpatrick and Kappers, a total of 37 staff and students from UCL and various US universities conducted archaeological investigations on Carriacou, West Indies in July/August 2008. Our goal this year was to continue excavating Grand Bay's dense midden deposits and expand the investigation of Sabazan to obtain comparative site data. Other objectives this season were to continue to monitor and map coastal erosion at Grand Bay and intensify our efforts at public awareness and appreciation of archaeology by encouraging site visits, organising a public open day, conducting a series of television, radio, and newspaper interviews, and lobbying newly elected government ministers and other public officials to protect and preserve Grenada's rich cultural heritage. Here we present the brief results of the 2008 project and outline future goals for doing public archaeology in a nation that has not often considered such efforts.

Research Background

Carriacou is a small island (c. 32km²) in the Eastern Caribbean that lies approximately 250km north of Venezuela (Fig. 1). The island is politically part of Grenada and includes a third island, Petite Martinique. Because no systematic archaeological survey had been carried out on the island (see Bullen 1972: 4, 11, 18; Fewkes 1907 [1970]: 189-190; 1914: 667-668; Suttly 1990: 242-259), we visited Carriacou in 2003 and

identified or relocated six major areas of prehistoric settlement and five or six other major scatters of archaeological material. Grand Bay appeared to be the largest site and was highly eroded due to natural and human activities such as sand mining and looting (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2006; Kaye 2003; Kaye *et al.* 2004, 2005, 2007). As a result, we have focused our research efforts at this site and, in 2007, began investigating Sabazan under the guidance of Christina Giovas (PhD candidate, University of Washington).

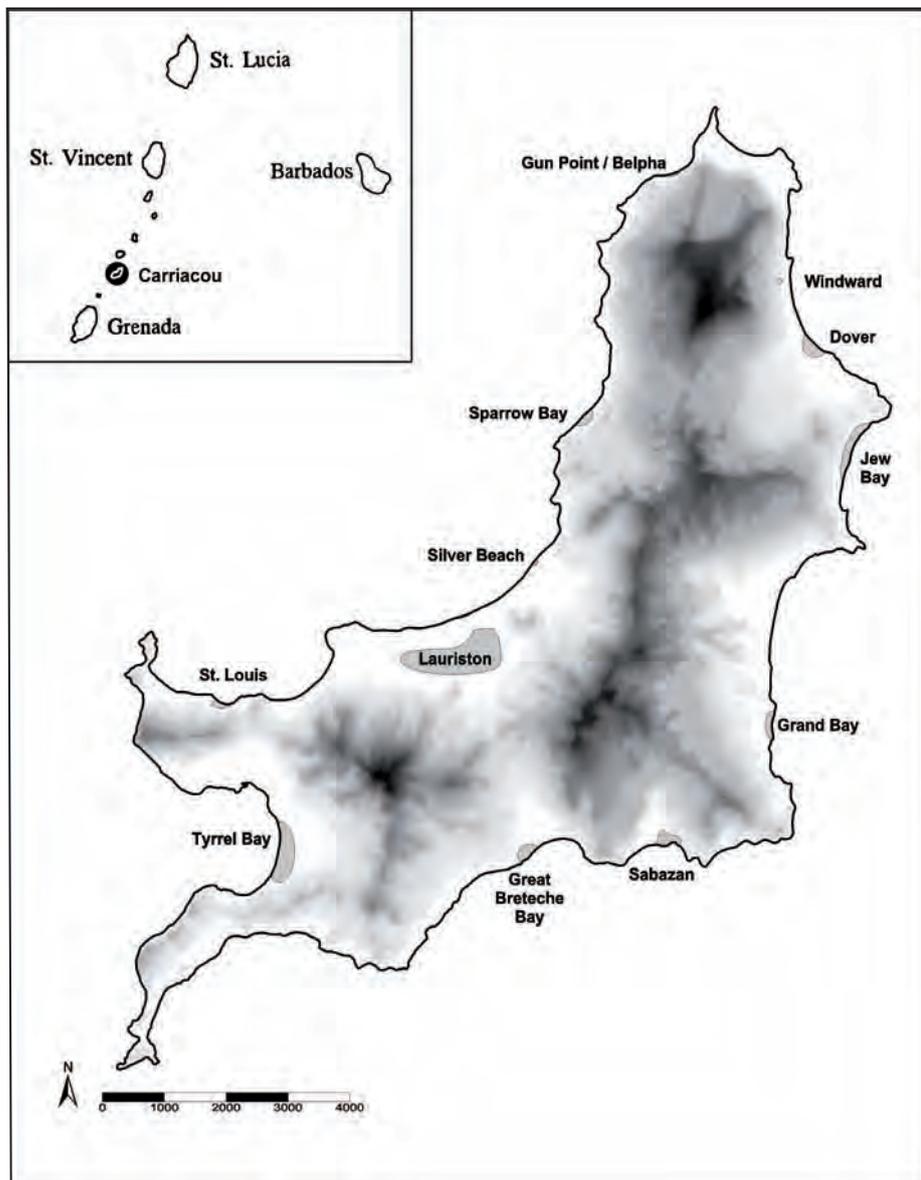


Figure 1. Map of Carriacou with site locations.

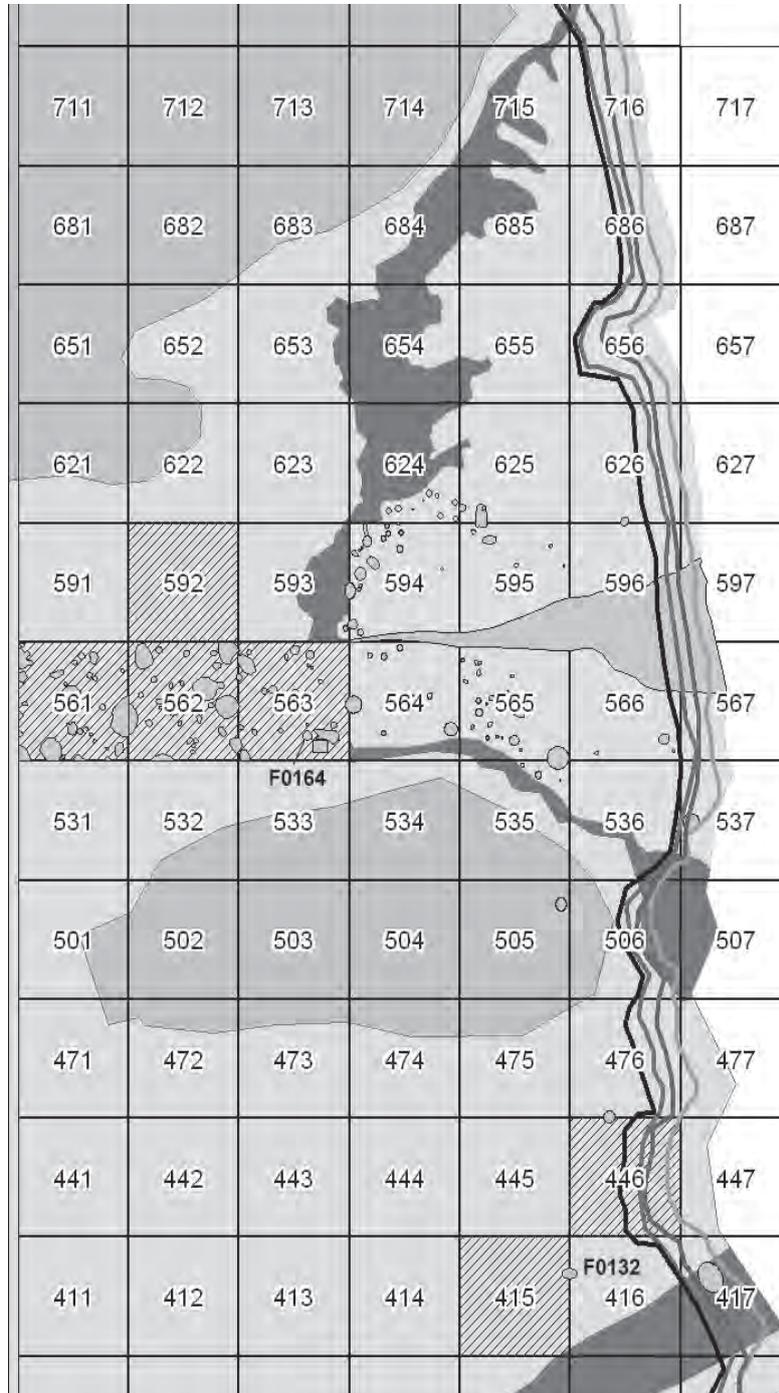


Figure 2. Map of Carriacou showing burials, excavated trenches (hatched) and coastal erosion along the profile.

Archaeological Investigations

One of our primary goals this year was to complete two partially excavated 5×5m trenches (numbered 415 and 446 in our grid system) that we began in 2004 and 2005 (see Fig. 2) and to expose a wider area along a gulley that runs through the middle of the site. These exercises were of particular concern considering that ongoing erosion over the past decade had reduced one of the trenches located along the coastal profile (446), to less than half its former width. Unfortunately, poor weather with heavy rains inhibited our best efforts to completely finish either of the trenches, although we did reach the earliest layers of occupation dating to the Terminal Saladoid period (c. AD 400-600).

Our previous excavation of Trench 561 in 2005 revealed numerous dark, largely circular stains from posthole construction as well as several human burials in the yellowish-brown subsoil. This year we removed the overburden partially covering Trenches 562 and 563, thereby linking the two previously explored areas (see Fig. 2) to examine the arrangement of habitation structures and other associated features (Kaye *et al.* 2004: 86). Giovas also worked to excavate several 1×1m test units at Sabazan to recover comparative information on foraging strategies.

Results

This season's work at Grand Bay and Sabazan continued to produce some interesting and unexpected results. The lower levels of the two main trenches at Grand Bay produced a great deal of finely decorated and incised ceramics (Fig. 3), faunal material, charcoal and human skeletal remains (Tables 1 and 2).

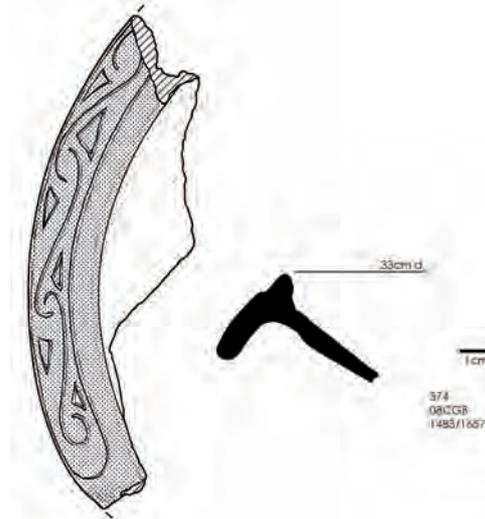


Figure 3. Decorated rim sherd from Grand Bay.

Investigation of the latter included the continued excavation of a burial (F0132) encountered last year in the profile of Trench 415. Further excavation of this feature, which revealed femoral and *os coxa* fragments during the prior season (Kaye *et al.* 2007: 173), resulted in the recovery of a near complete middle-aged female interred in a tightly flexed position on her back. In Trench 563, a circular feature (F0164) revealed an isolated human skull which subsequent investigation found to be resting above a crouched full skeleton (probable male). Several disarticulated bones from a late-term fetus were found in the fill underneath the isolated skull and above the skeleton. These human remains were transported to Eckerd College for full laboratory examination in conjunction with others recovered in previous years.

Category	Weight in Kilos
Animal Bone	5.739
Ceramics	299.655
Charcoal	0.714
Coral	1.929
Charred Seeds	1.638
Shell (excl Str.G.)	44.809
Stone	8.887
Total	363.371

Table 1. Summary of material excavated at Grand Bay 2008.

Category	Weight in Kilos
Animal Bone	117.029
Human Bone	6.644
Ceramics	2594.478
Charcoal	5.696
Coral	2.079
Charred Seeds	25.230
Shell (excl Str.G.)	282.205
Stone	19.470
Wood	0.057
Total	3052.888

Table 2. Summary of material excavated at Grand Bay 2004-2008.

Test pits at Sabazan also produced some unusual ceramic forms including an ‘owl-eyed’ *adorno* (Fig. 4), shell tools, worked turtle bone, and a deer mandible that was incised and drilled. Ongoing analysis of these remains should provide us with a better understanding of how people were exploiting local Sabazan resources compared to Grand Bay. The positive identification of deer adds to the growing corpus of mammals, including opossum, agouti, armadillo, guinea pig, and peccary which were translocated by humans to Carriacou (see LeFebvre *et al. n.d.*).

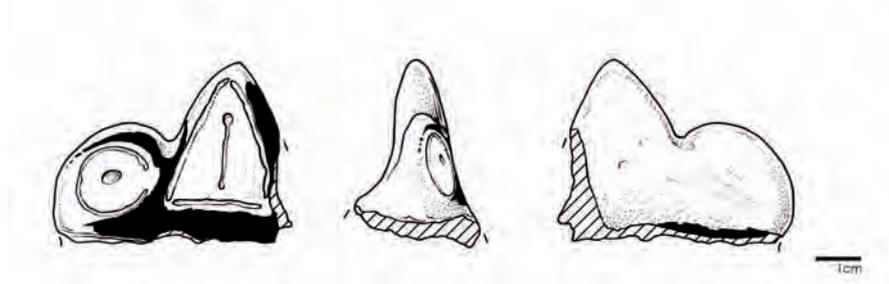


Figure 4. ‘Owl-eyed’ *adorno* found at Sabazan.

Apart from collecting archaeological data, we have also been actively involved in doing public archaeology on Carriacou. Below we outline some possible areas of future work in this arena and ones that are already in progress to help promote the importance and need to protect and preserve archaeological and historical sites here and elsewhere in Grenada.

Public Archaeology on Carriacou

For a variety of reasons, not least of which being the recent change of government, the summer of 2008 saw a change in conditions under which archaeological work on Carriacou will take place. There is now an impetus to establish meaningful, working dialogues between archaeologists, local communities, and government agencies. This development has in turn brought about the realistic prospect of establishing lasting local interest in the richness of the island’s cultural resources. It has also fostered an understanding at community and government levels of the challenges and responsibilities involved in protecting and preserving those resources, an appreciation of the economic potential for tourism and the positive social and cultural capital inherent in their sympathetic management. This provides us with a unique opportunity to contribute at a very early stage to the creation of new, mutually beneficial research relationships. Such relationships have great potential to help shape policy and alter public opinion, creating an environment in which archaeology is valued and protected and where research, tourism and education benefit as a result.

Goals

The long-term objective of any archaeological work on Carriacou is clear: To aid the protection and management of the cultural heritage of Carriacou and Grenada in a way

that ensures the viability of present and future research and which brings tangible economic and social benefits at local and national levels.

This simple statement can be broken down into a list of specific goals that we have developed over the past five field seasons and which will guide our future research:

1. To protect archaeological sites from vandalism, looting and casual destruction; to promote the enacting and enforcing of legislation to protect sites from development, sand mining and intentional damage.
2. To encourage sympathetic management and stewardship of sites; to help find value in archaeology meaningful at both a local and national level; to bring prehistoric and historic archaeology into the same sphere as other aspects of cultural heritage; to make prehistoric and historic archaeology part of the national identity.
3. To present archaeological research as a valuable source of information; to encourage links between archaeological research and educational achievement; to make clear the role of archaeological work in the creation of international identity, reputation and prestige.

It is critical that if any of these goals are to be achieved, they must be pursued at both a local and national level. In a community as small as Carriacou, engagement with schools, churches, youth groups, civic and community organisations will be as important as engaging those within the government to change existing public policies that provide no protection to these valuable cultural resources.

Conclusions - What Next?

Our project has made a strong effort to work closely with the Carriacou Historical Society (CHS) and Museum and other local agencies and organisations to promote archaeology as an educational tool and tourist attraction. The mere presence of professional archaeologists and a large student team in Carriacou for a 35 day project benefits the island's economy (estimated expenses, including incidentals, reached nearly US \$130,000 in 2008). However, community involvement in various planned activities has historically been lacking and the mining of sand at Grand Bay, which we have been extremely vocal about stopping, has continued unabated until just recently – at the end of August, the government finally made it illegal to mine sand on Carriacou after seeing at first hand the destruction it was causing to the site and local environment.

The election of a new government on July 8th after 13 years suggests that changes may be taking place. One positive step occurred after a meeting with George Prime, the new Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs. He arranged for the newly elected Prime Minister's first official visit to Carriacou to include a tour of Grand Bay, along with other Cabinet Ministers and a television crew (Fig. 5). During their trip they also visited the CHS Museum to view our 2008 finds and laboratory processing. At the

invitation of the Prime Minister, Kaye and Swogger were then flown to Grenada three days later to meet with the full Cabinet where they presented our research findings to date and discussed ways to preserve and protect archaeological sites throughout the country.



Figure 5. Prime Minister (centre front) with Cabinet Members and crew at Grand Bay.

With our fifth year of fieldwork complete, we have found an astounding array of archaeological remains which reinforce the importance of Carriacou in understanding the timing and extent of pre-Columbian settlement in the Caribbean. As we continue our work and strive to find ways to promote archaeology in Grenada, it will be imperative that we illustrate, through various media, the significance of Carriacou's prehistory to a wider audience and its inherent value to local communities.

Acknowledgements

Our projects on Carriacou could not have been done without assistance from the Grenada Ministry of Tourism, the Carriacou Historical Society and the Grenada and Carriacou Tourist Offices. We thank the landowners at Grand Bay and Sabazan for their support and permission to conduct excavation and the people of Carriacou for their interest in our fieldwork. Special thanks go to all of the students without whom our project could not have happened.

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