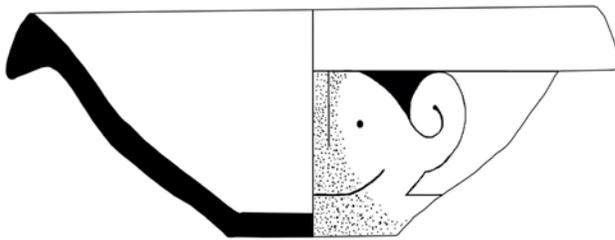


**Preliminary Report for the Castle Excavation
Barbuda Historical Ecology Project
January 2010 Season**

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History and Context

Barbuda, in the Leeward Islands, is the sister island to Antigua. It has a small population, roughly 1500 people, the great majority of whom live in the village of Codrington. The island itself covers roughly 100 square miles and lies generally to the windward of the rest of the Leeward Islands, being farther out (east) in the Atlantic.

The island was held, by lease, by the Codrington family, from the year 1685 until 1870. It gained independence along with Antigua in 1981.

The Barbuda Council asked the Barbuda Historical Ecology Project to survey and investigate the site known as the Castle in downtown Codrington during the 2010 January field season. A team, lead by the authors, mapped out the existing surface elements of the site and excavated four test pits, three down to bedrock. Two of these test pits, G1 and G2, were within the surface structural remains. The other two, H and I, were attempting to find intact middens

associated with the Castle (figure 2) ¹. Our investigation was focused on all time periods that the Castle was in use and we believe (artifact analysis is still in process) that we have found stratigraphic layers associated with the whole lifespan of the site from the 1680's until it was razed in the early 20th century. The temporal resolution of these stratum still need to be determined but our initial impression is that possibly apart from the lowest layers there was a lot of mixing and intrusion on this site.

In 1978 to 1979 the Castle surface was examined and one test pit was put in by David Watters in the context of his study of the island as a whole. Our archaeological investigations in 2010 corroborate the work done by David Watters and add more depth to it. Just as important as his archaeological work on the Castle was David Watters' in depth documentary investigation of the site. The findings for both were published in Aug of 1997 in the Annals of the Carnegie Museum. The historical context section that follows is based on Watters' research.

The Castle was built sometime in the 1680's and then razed in the early 20th century. Watters' concludes, from his documentary study, that the Castle had three different iterations. The first structure was built sometime in the 1680's and was destroyed by the French and possibly Irish indentured servants in 1710. The Castle was rebuilt by 1720 and then its maintenance and state of care was dependant on the varying abilities and priorities of the managers of Barbuda. The Castle was then severely damaged by an earthquake in 1843. A third Castle structure, on a much smaller scale, is claimed to have been built sometime around or after 1854. This structure was apparently dilapidated and decayed throughout the second half of the 19th century. The structure was slowly razed to supply building stone for other structures in the surrounding village of Codrington, especially for the Ginnery, a building that lies right to the east of the Castle site. The Ginnery was built as part of an attempt at creating a cotton industry on the island. Today it houses the meeting hall for the Barbuda Council as well as the offices of the Barbuda Parks Department.

Codrington was the only village on Barbuda throughout the historic period, and the whole population of the island, a few thousand at most during the 18th and 19th centuries, was required to live within its walls. Codrington remains the only town on Barbuda. The Castle was built between the village and the lagoon and it served many purposes. It was a fortified store house for goods being exported from or imported into Barbuda. It served as a guesthouse for visitors. It was most likely a managerial center for the island as a whole. It was a strongpoint in the defense of the village against outsiders. Perhaps most importantly it served as a fortified place of authority and protection for the white overseers of Barbuda. A number of visitors in the 18th century remarked that the Castle would have been at best a minor problem for any invading European naval forces. These visitors missed a main point of the Castle. The village itself lies at the inner edge of a lagoon. Naval forces would have not been able to bombard the Castle with

¹ Area I is not shown on this map due to the distance from the other units. The scale of the map would be too great if area I was shown.

their onboard guns. The Martello tower near the main anchorage for historic Barbuda to the south would have been built for the purposes of resisting naval attacks. The Castle would have been built to resist any forces landed from boats. Yet the main threat to the European managers of Barbuda would have been from the slave population itself. The Castle was attacked during the slave rebellion of 1745 and the leaders of this revolt were eventually burnt alive outside the Castle after the revolt was put down by forces from neighboring Antigua.

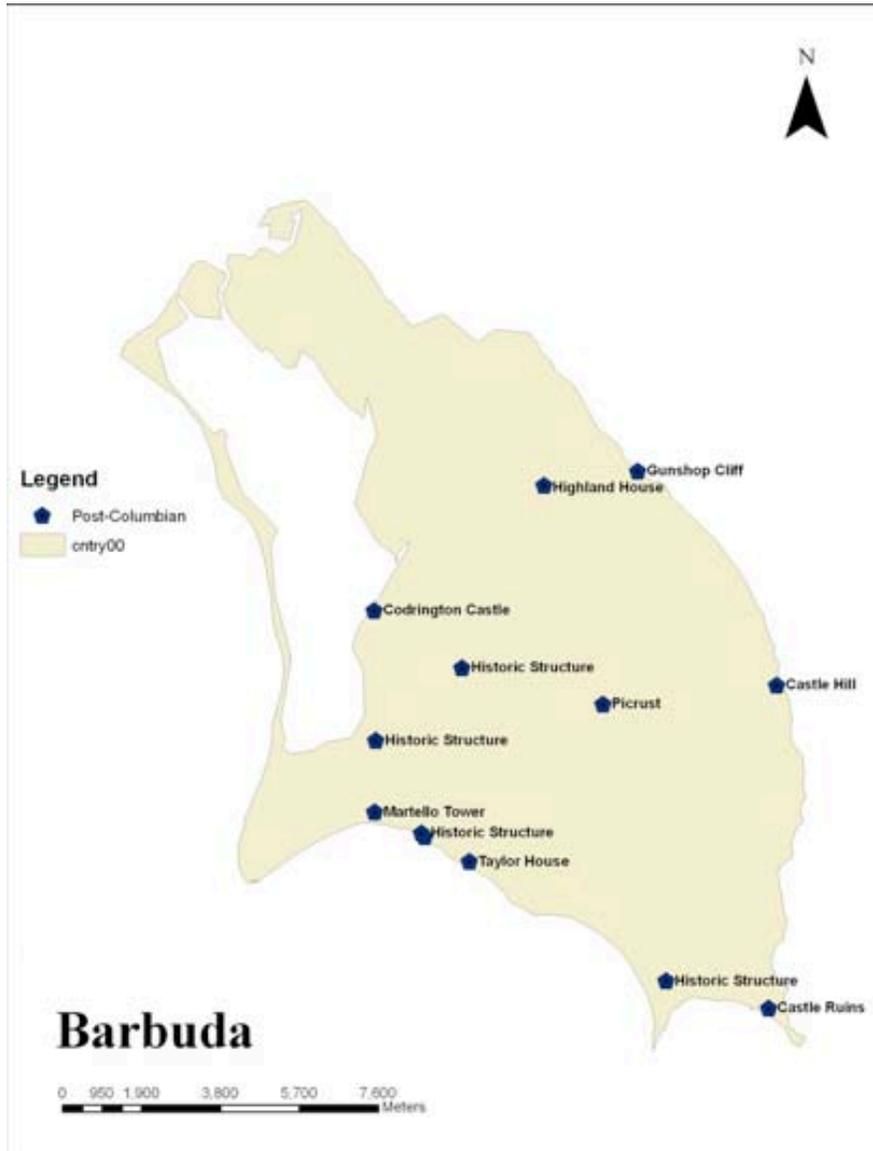


Figure 1 – A map of Barbuda with the main post-Columbian sites noted. Codrington Castle lies on the Lagoon and in downtown Codrington.

Surface Survey

The site is in the middle of downtown Codrington and is sandwiched between two government buildings to the east and west and a new sports facility to the north. The main road borders the site to the south and across the road is the Elementary School. This site has been the site of extensive activity and a marshalling site for government builders. It has also served as a parking lot for the downtown area. All of this is reflected in the surface archaeology.

The surface of the area is extremely compacted. The top of much of the area is covered in thin (never thicker than 2 cm and often under 1 cm) washes of modern concrete. These concrete layers were attempts at controlling dust in the area and also seem to be the residue from larger building projects in the immediate vicinity. The compaction is clearly a function of the constant presence of cars driving over the site as well as the concrete layers.

Walls from Castle structures are immediately visible on the surface. In order to get a better idea of the extent of these surface walls the first week of the project consisted of scraping back the compacted surface of as much of the walls and the southwest area of the site as we could. This was done with hand-picks as well as pick-axes. Trowels had no place on this surface.

We chose the southwest area of the site (see figure 2), as our main area of investigation for the surviving structural elements due to the fact that this area had the most surface walls and these walls seemed to connect into a larger cohesive structure.

After clearing area G of the layers of concrete and surface accumulation we began mapping in the features with a total station (see figure 2).

According to many of the drawings, plans and memories of the Castle it was surrounded by a wall. It is uncertain but Watters' report suggests that at times the Castle had an outer wall with an inner structure made up of rooms facing a central courtyard that contained the main town well (still extant though capped). Watters' report also suggests that the earlier Castle structures had towers either at all corners or at least at the southwest and north east corners.

There were a number of areas that when exposed revealed walls. Though this is all speculation at this point features 105 and 107 seem related to each other in a 90 degree fashion. They could be perimeter walls. Feature 107 revealed what looked like an entrance through this wall (figure 3). Feature 102, though the survey does not make this clear, was roughly square in shape and would make sense as a possible tower structure at the southwest corner of the structure.

Feature 100 was revealed to be a relatively long and intact wall (figure 4). There also were suggestions of openings in the wall as well as other walls coming off of it to the west. The level of structural activity here led us to choose this area for our initial excavations.

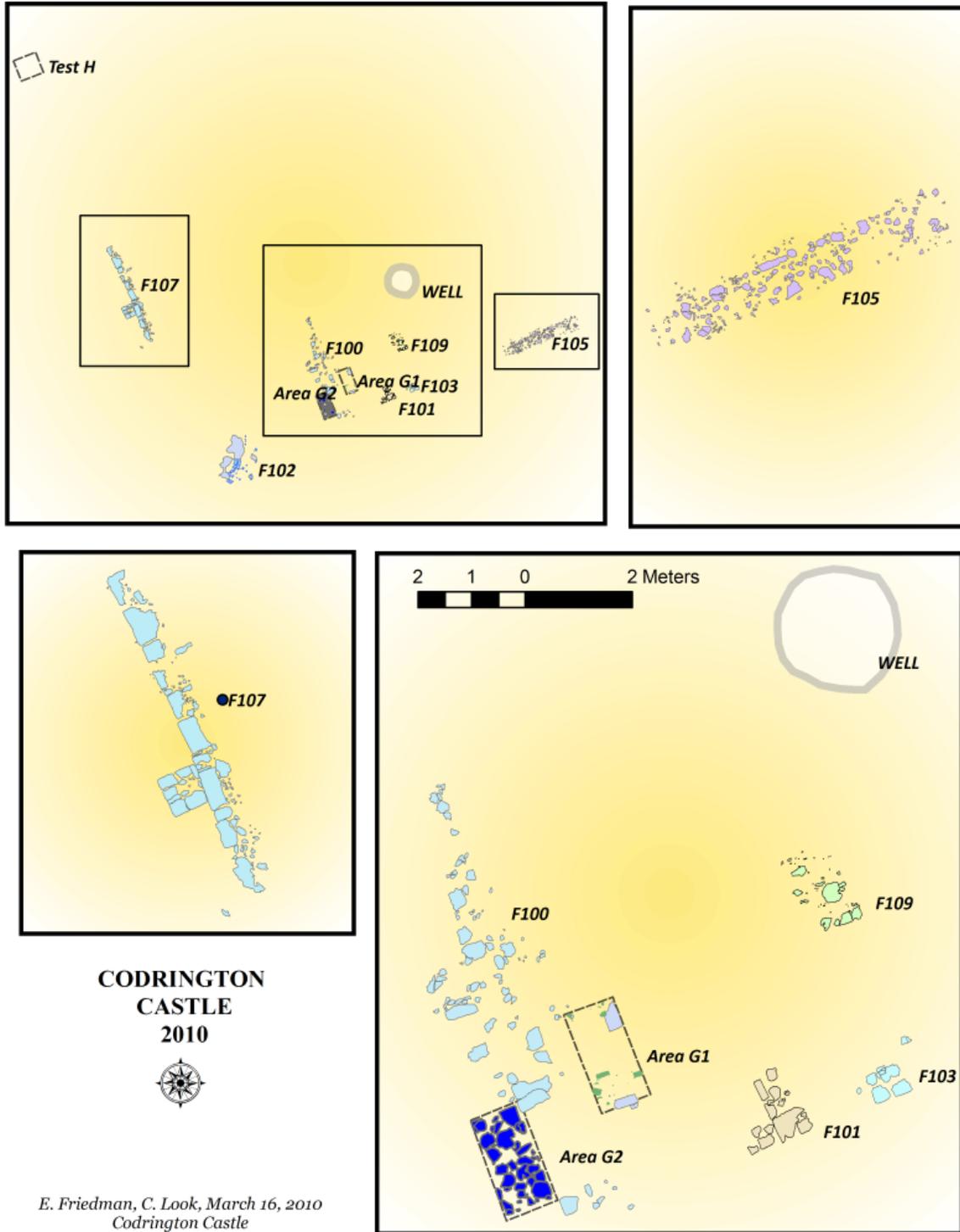


Figure 2 – The survey of the Castle site with insets showing areas of greater details. Note that area I is to the west of area H and Feature 107 on the other side of the ginnery near the edge of the lagoon.



Figure 3 – Feature 107, a possible perimeter wall with entrance.

Structural excavations

As the surface mapping was completed it was decided to put a test trench, G1, in next to feature 100. This test trench was 2X1 meters and placed alongside and flush against feature 100. The idea was to get a glimpse of what sort of subsurface deposits might have survived.



Figure 4 – Facing south towards the main road and the school. G1 is on the left of the photo with Frank Feeley drawing the north profile. G2 is to the right. Feature 100 can be seen between G1 and G2. A possible opening in Feature 100 can be seen immediately to the left of G2. In the foreground a wall can be seen heading west off of Feature 100.

G1 was brought down to natural limestone while G2 was not finished. Both areas revealed alternating layers of structural debris made up of stone and mortar. The mortar was at times degraded and at other times almost solid. These solid layers were almost banana yellow in color and had few inclusions except for some marine shell.

After the initial surface layers were removed from G1 a layer, context 14, was excavated that contained a mix of artifacts spanning the 17th to the early 20th centuries. This layer also sealed feature 108, made up of three 19th century English bricks, two of which looked possibly in-situ for a brick floor. Subsequent excavation made this look very unlikely. Feature 100 showed at least 2 courses upon excavation and context 14 abuts it. A preliminary analysis, before all the artifacts have been looked at, suggests that Feature 100 is associated with either 19th century rebuilding after the earthquake in 1854 or the 18th century structure that was eventually filled with a mix of debris from all the periods of the Castle's life.



Figure 5 – The top layers of G1 – note the layers of construction/destruction debris and the darker layers containing charcoal.



Figure 6 – The solid limestone surface found at the bottom of G1. Note the dark layer at the bottom of G1. These lower layers seem to date to the earlier 18th century and possible to the late 17th century.

After the layers of structural debris and the mixed 19th century layer came another layer, feature 109, of structural debris, that *might* be an in-situ wall feature. Regardless it is made up of structural material that also might be a destruction layer. G2 should help us understand this layer as it is brought down to the natural limestone in the 2011 season. This layer was sealed by a layer of dark sandy soil that contained a 1672 English farthing. Below this feature was a layer of dark soil with significant organic content that lied directly on top of the natural limestone bedrock. Feature 109 might be remains of the 1st Castle structure that was destroyed in the early 18th century.

As G1 progressed and labor was freed up by the completion of surface clearing and mapping it was decided to put another test pit, G2, on the other side of feature 100, in order to try to make sense of the deposits we were finding that went underneath feature 100. G2 was not finished in 2010 and it is anticipated that it will be during the 2011 season. If the structural elements that we found in the deeper layers of G1, underneath feature 100, continue to the west and are exposed in G2 we should be able to say with greater certainty that structural elements of the first Castle do in fact exist.

After a mix of structural debris G2 came down onto a stone pavement. This pavement either goes underneath Feature 100 or it was built at the same time and as part of the feature itself. The relationship between these two will be cleared up next season.

Midden Excavations

Areas H and I were attempts at finding midden associated with the Castle. Area H was an attempt at recovering midden material from the same area as Watters' test pit in 1979. Area I was working under an assumption that midden material would have been deposited near the edge of the lagoon. Both areas recovered midden material.

Area H revealed clear stratigraphy, especially underneath the top layers of highly compacted modern construction debris. Artifacts from the layers below the modern construction debris were a mix of 19th and 20th century material. Below this was another layer of older structural materials. The artifacts from the layer sealed by this second layer of structural material looked, upon excavation, to be of early 19th and possibly 18th century origin.

Area I produced a fair amount of midden material. The top three layers contained a mix of modern and historic artifacts. The bottom layer contained primarily historic artifacts, though mixing with more modern material likely occurred as well. This material needs analysis before this can be said with any real confidence. The lower layer of this area came down onto natural limestone bedrock. This lower layer was made up of black, goeey and wet soil that made any further stratigraphic excavation very difficult. In other words this bottom layer might have been made up of a number of stratigraphic layers but conditions made it impossible to see them. This layer was most likely decayed mangrove (Haviser, personal communication).



Figure 7 – Area H northern profile – Note the light colored layer of modern compacted construction debris at the top of the profile. Underneath this is midden material sealing a layer of structural material that seals another midden containing older, possibly 18th century artifacts on top of the natural limestone bedrock.

Discussion

The January 2010 season made it very clear that the Castle site has seen a number of construction and destruction as well as renovation episodes. As Watters suggests in his report the Castle site is not one structure but at least three. On top of this the site has been a center of civic activity up to the present date. Significant compaction as well as mixing has occurred. Artifact analysis will give us a better idea of what sort of temporal control is possible with the site stratigraphy, but at the time of writing it seems likely that only the lowest layers will have a resolution under a century level. This is especially the case for the structural remains. The structural remains themselves so far show themselves to never be more than two courses thick and the lower structural material needs further investigation to determine if any of it is in-situ. The midden excavations might have more promise for tight temporal resolution.

Aside from purely archaeological concerns it must be noted that the act of conducting an archaeological excavation in the middle of town, sandwiched between government and school buildings was extremely productive in terms of outreach. It is highly probably that a majority of the population of Barbuda saw our project in operation numerous times. Many people stopped by to talk and we made a point of always being willing to stop what we were doing in order to

discuss the project. The 2010 season revealed a heavy amount of mixing and compaction in the site itself. The Castle site might be an ideal place to begin training Barbudan archaeologists as well as establish a permanent outreach operation.

Acknowledgements

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