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An Archaeological Survey of Barbados Battery: The Good Shepherd Project

Ashby Muse Sturgis

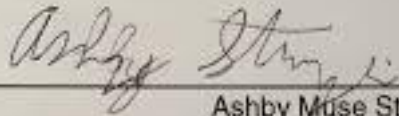
Virginia Beach, Virginia

A Thesis presented to the Undergraduate Faculty
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Anthropology

The College of William and Mary

This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors



Ashby Muse Sturgis

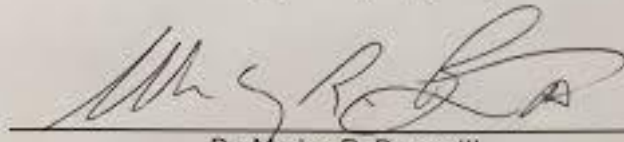
Approved by the Committee, May, 2015



Committee Chair

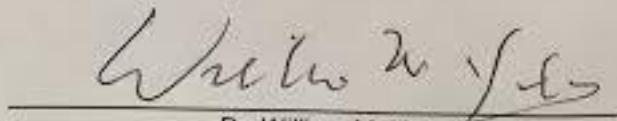
Dr. Frederick H. Smith

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Dr. Marley R. Brown III

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Dr. William M. Kelso

Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities



“Presently a soldier passing that way, and observing the dance, asked a mulatto who was standing by, for a cud of tobacco, and twisting it between his lower lip and his teeth, forced his way through the crowd, into the middle of the ring; and there placing himself, between the negro and the girl who were dancing, set the nymph in African step and figure. Wowski was responsive and they danced, cordially, together; but soon finished by footing it, in quick step, from the ring, happily enfolded in each others’ arms; to the great disappointment of poor Sambo, who, no doubt, thought to regain his partner as soon as the soldier had grown tired of the dance.”-George Pinckard, 1796.

For the first two hundred years after its settlement in 1627, Barbados was in a state of near constant war. Often considered the jewel of the Caribbean, Barbados held an integral place in the young and growing Anglosphere; it was the easternmost island of the Caribbean, making its position ideal for ships traveling on the northeasterly trade winds to trade and resupply. As vital to British interests in the region, a coastal defense system consisting of 40 forts and 364 cannons was constructed through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These forts were built on the west and southern coasts of the island, and served a dual purpose: to protect the island from foreign invasion, and to serve as physical marks on the landscape of English sovereignty, that sent a message of strength to the large enslaved population.

The ruins of one such battery can be found in a small fishing village on the west coast of the island. Set amid a scene of coral-strewn white sand and poisonous manchineel trees lies the Good Shepherd Archaeological site. Located in Fitts Village, St. James, Barbados, the site is a popular nesting ground for hawksbill sea turtles and also serves as a parking lot for Sunday churchgoers. During the summer of 2013 and 2014, I began conducting archaeological investigations at the site, which included opening several 1m x 1m test units adjoining a limestone wall erupting from the ground surface. The site, of which I was introduced to by Dr. Frederick Smith and Dr. Karl Watson, was the remains of an eighteenth century coastal artillery battery, which research revealed to have been have been designated “Barbados Bty” (Handler 2007, Bowen 1747). At one point, the Barbados Battery boasted 5 artillery guns and was, in 1780, appended to the St. James Artillery Division. According to several elderly residents of Fitts Village, cannons had been present at the site until the 1970’s, when

the government of Barbados moved them to the Bridgetown Garrison for display. The site is bounded by a residential area to the north, Highway One to the east, Good Shepherd Anglican church to the south, and Good Shepherd beach to the west.

A thick limestone wall at the southern end of the site is the only aboveground remains of the battery. The feature is approximately a meter wide and built out of limestone cobbles, and upon initial survey was covered by a thin layer of dirt and sour grass. The eastern portion of the wall is approximately half a meter above ground, while the western portion of the wall barely protruded through the ground surface, and had been highly deteriorated as a result of automobile traffic. West of the wall is a series of stone and concrete blocks, the majority of which appear to have belonged to a later structure. Just to the north of the wall is partially exposed stone rectangle, which is the remaining foundation of a house later built on the site during the twentieth century. The wall extends underneath the parking lot, encircling the western border of the lot. It is mostly covered in gravel and a small amount of asphalt.

The project was funded by the William and Mary Charles Center and performed with the advising of Dr. Frederick Smith of the William & Mary Anthropology Department. The initial goals of the project were to gather archaeological data on the Barbadian military in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, and to try and understand the battery's role as part of a larger series of fortifications. The project sought to investigate the nature of segregation in the Barbadian militia and the material culture of the British military in Barbados in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The plan was to first secure permission to excavate the site, and then to create a survey map by recording the location of the site's features. Once these steps were completed, test units

would be excavated in locations that would shed light on the layout of the battery and, ideally, be out of the way of traffic. Pictures were taken of the site often and throughout the entire investigations.

The project began in proper after a meeting with Church of Jesus the Good Shepherd's priest, Reverend Wayne Kirton. Rev. Kirton was aware of the site's history as a military installation, and had been interested prior to the project in having the battery wall studied and preserved, as wear from automobile traffic as well as litter had had a detrimental effect on the stonework. A rough sketch map of the site was created and the site was photographed prior to meeting Reverend Kirton. After securing permission from the church, the site was cleaned and the features defined. Starting July 17th, 2013 grass, small plants, and litter were removed from the wall. The stones to the west and north of the area were cleaned with a trowel and brush and small amounts of gravel and debris were pushed away from the edges of the stones. Once the site was cleaned, it was again photographed. After consulting Dr. Smith, the excavation began. From July 22nd to July 30th, two 1x1 meter test units were excavated.

I was the sole person conducting the archaeological investigations. It was my responsibility to provide and maintain tools and supplies for this project. Main concerns during excavation were ensuring an ample supply of water, as well as adequately protecting my skin to prevent sunburn and overexposure. The site typically had a light breeze, so keeping paperwork from blowing away was always a concern. Light rains occurred often, but not enough to significantly slow down excavation. On several occasions the excavation was mistaken as an attempt to dig up sea turtle eggs, which is illegal in Barbados. This led to a few situations where it was necessary to

explain my presence to local police, as from the road it appeared as though I was closer to the beach where the eggs were usually laid.

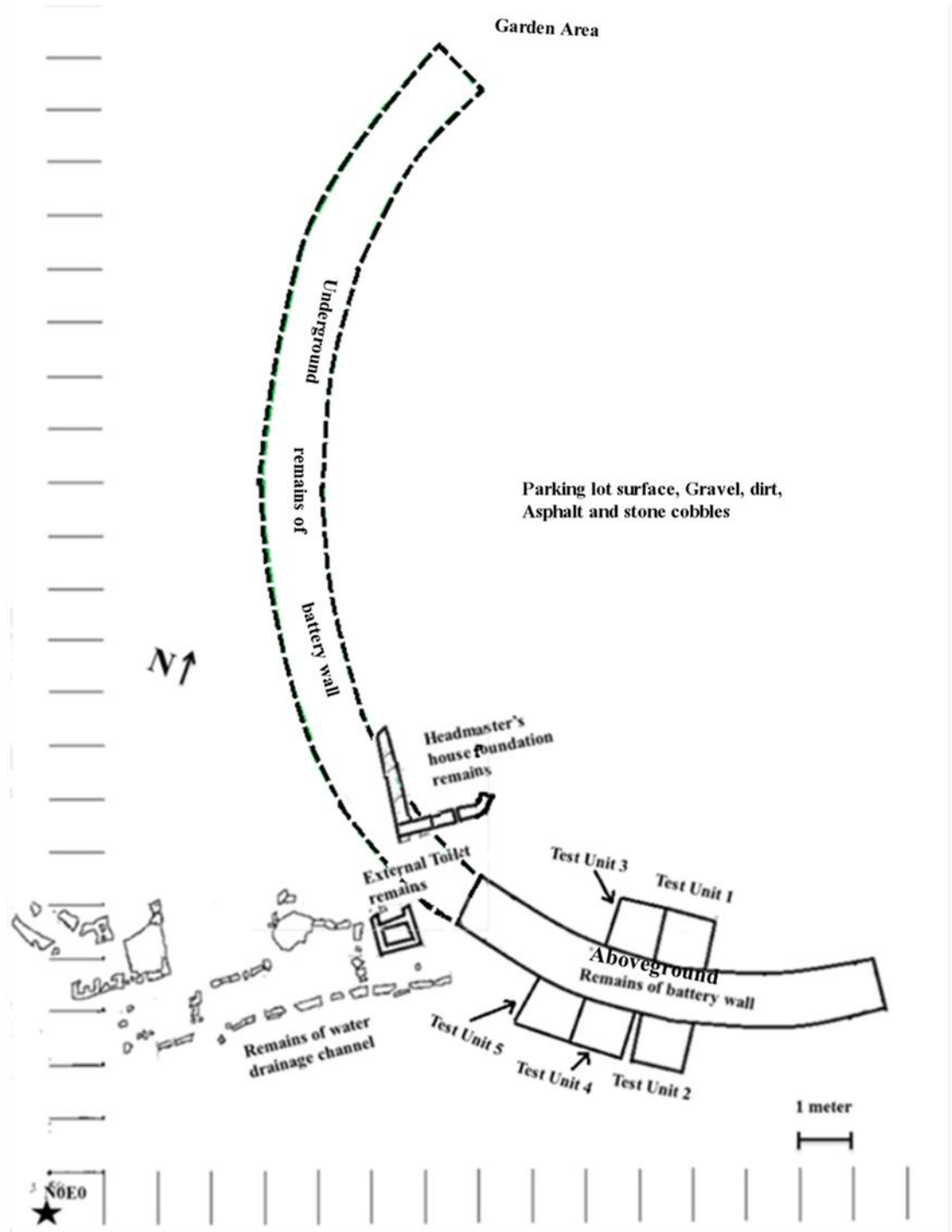


Figure 1 Map of the Good Shepherd Site (Sturgis 2013; Sturgis, Allasan, Soncrantz 2014).

Test Unit 1 was laid out on the interior of the wall, in a grassy area approximately in the middle of the arc. This location was chosen because it was sheltered from traffic, and relatively clear of larger debris. Excavation occurred from July 22nd to July 24th, and reached an average depth of 17.5 centimeters. The test unit was closed after one stratigraphic layer because I hit a cobblestone surface. The soil consisted of dark sandy clay, and a high amount of concrete and limestone rubble were present. The majority of the artifacts gathered were relatively modern, and a few particular artifacts, such as a Barbadian penny, a plastic button, and several Banks bottle caps date the layer to the late half of the twentieth century. However, at the lower level of this context were a piece of pearlware as well as tin glazed earthenware, along with two white clay pipestem fragments. The pipestems dated by their bore diameters from 1720-1750 and 1750-1800. The Mean Ceramic Date for this context is 1823 (Samford Underglazed Painted Earthenwares 2002).

After again consulting with Dr. Smith, Test unit 1 was closed and Test unit 2 was laid out on the exterior of the wall, positioned parallel to Test unit 1. This location was chosen because it would likely offer a look at the foundation of the wall, which also might yield artifacts of an older date. Test Unit 2 was excavated from July 24th to July 29th, and reached an average depth of 102.8 centimeters. Excavation ended and the test unit was closed upon reaching the bottom of the wall. The soil consisted of three layers, with the top two layers being silty sand and the bottom consisting of only sand, with pieces of coral and rubble present in all the layers.

Layer 1 of Test Unit 2 had an average depth of 17.2 centimeters. Artifacts found included pieces of glass, red earthenware, and charcoal. The mean ceramic date for this

context is 1832 (Samford Printed Underglaze Earthenware 2002). Layer II had an average depth of 28.6 centimeters, and was started due to increasing amounts of charcoal in the western end of the unit. There were no diagnostic ceramics found in this layer, artifacts found include glass, red earthenware, charcoal, shell, and bones with butcher marks. Layer III ended at the bottom of the wall, which marked the finishing elevation of 102.8 centimeters for the test unit. Artifacts from layer III include red earthenware, pearlware, North Devon plain earthenware, tin-enameled glazed earthenware and a few pieces of prehistoric Amerindian pottery. The mean ceramic date for this context without including the Amerindian pottery is 1680 (Grant 1983, Samford Tin-glazed 2002, Samford Underglazed Painted Earthenwares 2002.) The Amerindian pottery is of the style known as the “Suazey complex,” and date to approximately 1000 to 1500 A.D. (Handler, J; Lange, F. 1980.) It likely is from a Suazoid (Carib) settlement or fishery located at the site before the arrival of European settlers. The foundation of the wall extended below the surface as a cobblestone structure without an exterior finish. A piece of tin-enameled glazed earthenware was found partially mortared to the foundation, and the North Devon ceramic can be dated to 1650-1700 (Grant 1983).

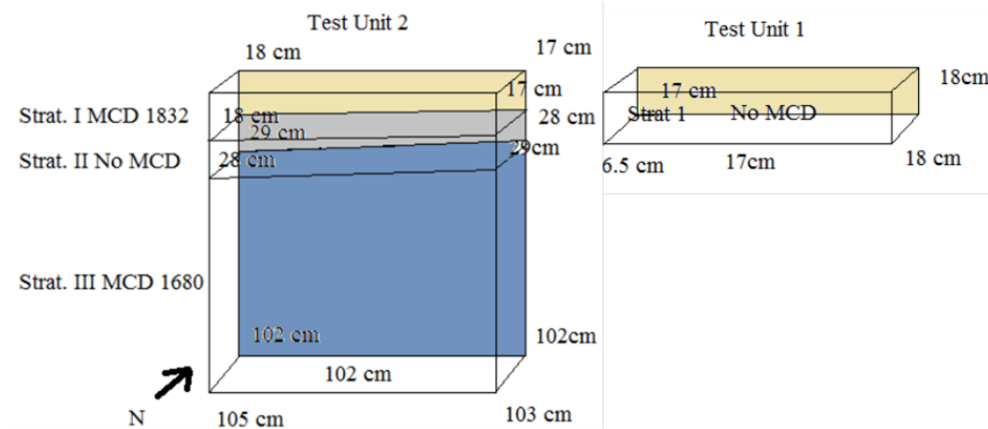


Figure 2 Stratigraphic Layers and Mean Ceramic Dates of Test Units 1 & 2 (Sturgis 2013).

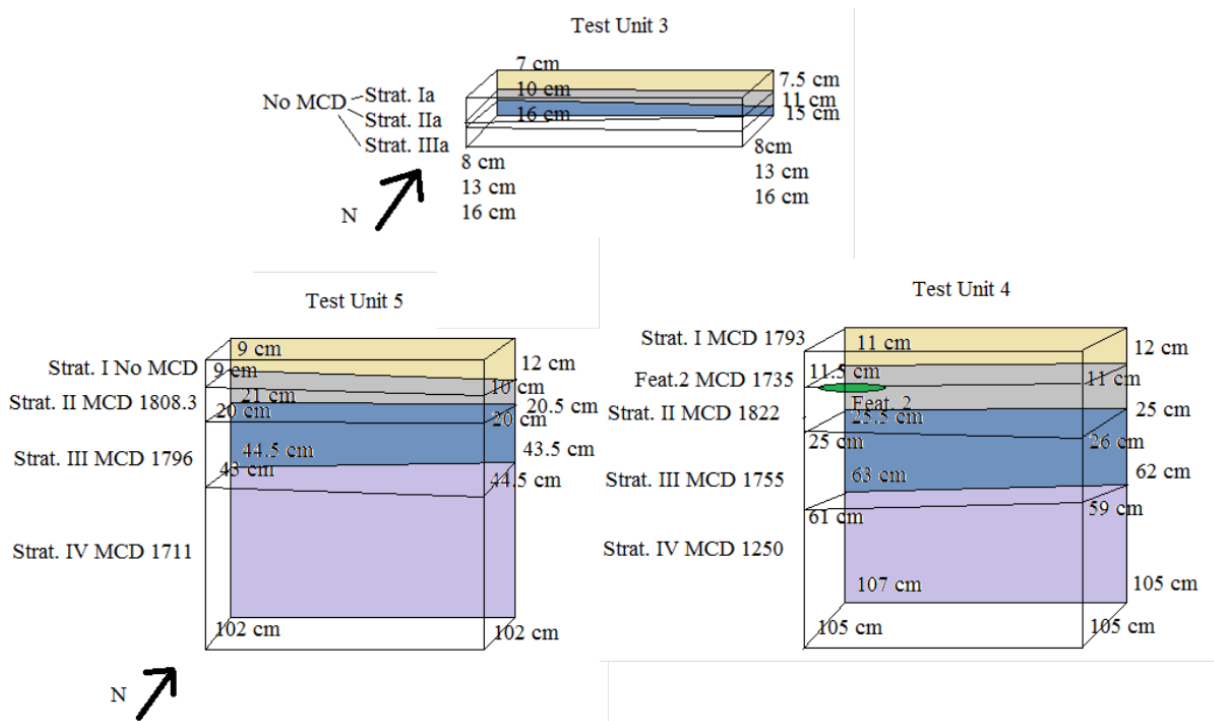


Figure 3 Stratigraphic Layers and mean Ceramic Dates of Test Units 3, 4 & 5 (Sturgis, Allassan, Soncrantz 2014).

The second phase of excavation took place from July 17th to August 5th, 2014.

Test Unit number 1 was re-excavated in order to view the floor that had previously been uncovered. Research over the year between excavation periods solidified the idea that

stone surface was a cobblestone floor, with the white chalky substance found between the stones being the remains of a limestone-based mortar. No artifacts were recovered during the re-excavation, which reached an average depth of 20.8 centimeters.

Test Unit 3 was excavated between July 8th and July 22nd, and reached an average depth of 16 centimeters. It was located adjacent to the west of Test Unit 1, and was recorded as three separate contexts, all of which were composed of silty loam and rocks. The first two contexts produced relatively modern artifacts, such as an abundance of bottlecaps, electrical components, metal pieces, glass, and plastics. Unfortunately, on July 21st, 2014 during the excavation and before artifact cataloguing, these artifacts were stolen, along with much of my equipment. This was an unfortunate setback, but the paperwork, as well as the artifacts from the then-deepest context's artifacts, (Layer Ic) were not on site and were thus kept in my custody. These artifacts included red earthenware, whiteware, refined stoneware, and creamware. None of these sherds were large enough to provide a mean ceramic date.

Test Unit 4 was excavated between July 22nd and July 29th. Placing this test unit was somewhat tricky, as it had to conform to the outer curve of the wall but still be in line with the other test units. My solution was to place it on the exterior of the wall, with the western wall placed in line with the westernmost wall of Test Unit 2. A 10-18 centimeter gap was left between Test Unit 4 and Test Unit 2, in order to prevent the wall from collapsing.

Layer 1 of test unit 4 had an average finishing elevation of 11.5 cm. The soil was a sandy loam, and artifacts found included glazed redware from a sugar vessel,

basaltware, whiteware, a Chinese porcelain plate with a willow print pattern, and a pipestem with a bore diameter of 6/64ths suggesting a date of around 1680-1720. The mean ceramic date for this context is 1793 (Samford English Dry Bodied 2002, Samford Printed Underglaze Earthenware 2002.) Layer II had a final depth of 25.5 cm and was loamy sand with coral and limestone chunks throughout. Artifacts included glass, redware, willow-patterned and sponge-patterned whiteware, as well as chrome painted ware and creamware. The two pipestems from this context date from 1720-1750 and from 1750-1800. The mean ceramic date for this context is 1822 (Samford Printed Underglaze Earthenware 2002, Samford Underglazed Painted Earthenwares, 2002 Samford Sponge Decorated Wares 2002.) Between Strat I and Strat II was a feature that indicates the remains of a fire. A small assemblage of artifacts in the central eastern portion of the unit included a redware molasses drip jar remains of an English brown stoneware beer mug, glass shards and bones with butcher marks on them. The MCD for this feature is 1735 (DAACS 2006)

Layer III of Test Unit 4 had an average finishing elevation of 61.2 cm, and was the first stratigraphic layer in the test unit composed entirely of sand. It was extremely easy to excavate, unlike the hard, black clay soils typical of the Barbadian interior. The amount of artifacts recovered from this context massively spiked in this context with 32 pieces of redware being recovered, along with mochaware and saltglazed stoneware. The pipestems from this context both have bore diameters suggesting a date around 1650-1680. In addition, one of these pipestems had a notable length of approximately 11 cm. The mean ceramic date for this context is 1755 (DAACS 2006, Samford Staffordshire-

type Slipware 2002, Samford Dipped earthenware 2002). This seemed to have been a time of especially intense activity at the battery.

Layer IV of Test Unit 4 had an average finishing elevation of 105.3 cm, and while one of the oldest contexts, was somewhat barren, especially when compared to the preceding layer. This level included more Amerindian pottery dating 1000-1500 A.D, and these were the deepest artifacts found in the unit. This was included with large amounts of bone and unbroken shells, which considering the reef-like nature of the nearby water, and the absence of intact shells in any other context, are indications of deeper water shellfishing by the indigenous Carib population.

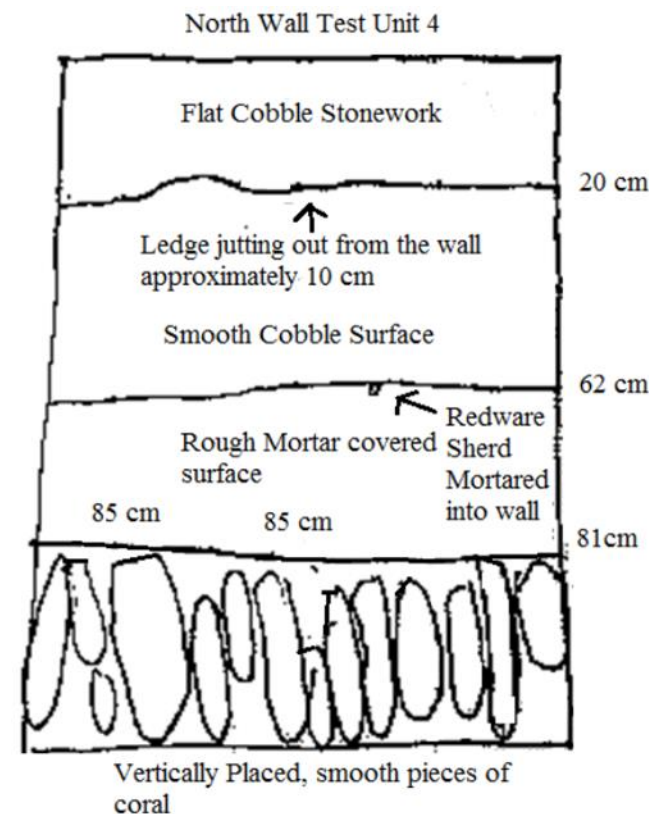


Figure 4 Composition of the Battery Wall underneath the surface

Test Unit 5 was excavated from July 29th to August 5th, and reached a maximum depth of 102.5 cm. The test unit was laid out directly to the west of test unit 4, along the southern side of the above ground portion of the battery wall. Layer I consisted of loamy silt and had a finishing elevation of 9.8 cm. Artifacts recovered included redware, bricks, glass, rubber, and plastic. The debris was almost entirely modern, and a mean ceramic date could not be determined.

Layer II of Test Unit 5 was a completely different story. With a sandy loam soil and an average depth of 20.3 cm, this context contained a wealth of artifacts. Large pieces of redware, multiple pieces of willow-patterned whiteware, sponge patterned ware, pearl ware, and an English stoneware jug were recovered, with the context having a mean ceramic date of 1808.3 (DAACS 2006, Samford Printed Underglaze Earthenware 2002, Samford Sponge Decorated Wares 2002).

Layer III of Test Unit 5 had an average depth of 44 cm and continued the general trend in terms of age of the previous context. The two pipestems recovered from this context have bores that date to around 1680-1720 and 1750-1800. Artifacts include fragments of red earthenware, a molasses drip jar, sponge and willow patterned whiteware, a pearlware mug handle, saltglazed stoneware, scalloped shell edged pearlware, and most notably, a glass marble and a .50 caliber musketball. The mean ceramic date for this context is 1796. (DAACS 2006, Samford Printed Underglaze Earthenware 2002, Samford Sponge Decorated Wares 2002, Samford Edged Earthenwares 2002). Based on the Mean ceramic date, the musketball more likely than not belonged to a Shortland pattern "Brown Bess" Musket, produced from 1769 to the 1796 (Buckley 1998).

Layer IV of Test Unit 5 had an average finishing elevation of 102.5 and unlike its loamy antecedent was entirely sand. The artifacts found there ranged from delftware to Westerwald, to a cowrie shell and Amerindian pottery. The pipestem found in this context had a bore diameter dating from 1720-1750. The mean ceramic date for this context is 1711 (Samford Tin-glazed 2002, Samford Rhenish 2002).

Based on the data generated from these test units, there were at least three periods of intense activity at the site. These were Strat. III of Test unit 4, with an MCD of 1755, Strat III of Test Unit 5 with an MCD of 1796, and Strat III of Test Unit 4 with an MCD of 1808.3. These dates align, respectively, with the Seven Years War (1754-1763), and the late to middle Napoleonic Wars, specifically the War of the First Coalition (1792-1797) and the Peninsular War (1807-1814). The mean ceramic dates also coincide with several alarms raised on the island, specifically those raised in 1759 and 1805 (Handler 1984).

Socio-historical Context of Barbados Battery

During the eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries, Barbados battery was part of the island's coastal defense system: a series of forty forts and batteries protecting the west coast (Hartland 2009). The batteries were assets of the Barbados militia, who were the primary force protecting the island until 1780, when the main Garrison in St. Michael was established. With the end of most conflicts in the region, the advent of more advanced artillery in the nineteenth century, as well as the lack of an enslaved population to suppress, the battery was abandoned, as were most of the other fortifications on the island. In the early twentieth century, a school was built adjacent to

the site and a school headmasters house was built on top of the stone surface the battery
Many of the older inhabitants of Fitts Village went to school at the site. One of these
former students informed me that the square concrete structure to the west of the wall
was the remnant of what used to be the headmaster's outdoor toilet, and that the series of
stones running parallel to the water were the remains of a drainage ditch from the house
to the beach. In the mid-to-late twentieth century the land was given to the Anglican
Diocese of Barbados to build a church, who demolished the then-rotting housing.

The earliest available record of Barbados battery is from a map of the island's
military installations in February of 1746. Printed by Emanuel Bowen the following
year, the map includes small illustrations of the individual batteries found along the coast,
with a table listing the number of cannons at each fortification. According to the map, the
battery's walls consisted of a semicircular center flanked by two box shaped parapets.
Barbados battery was armed with four cannons, giving it more firepower than the
adjacent batteries (Bowen 1747). A later survey from 1780 records Barbados battery as
having had five cannons (Hartman 2007). An increase in armament, as well as the survey
itself, seems have been prompted by the French naval threat and American privateering
during the American Revolutionary War, as well as the custody of the coastal defense
system being handed over to the newly garrisoned imperial military.

While few of the conflicts that raged across the Caribbean in the eighteenth
century took place on Barbados, Barbados functioned as an important staging ground for
various British military campaigns. According to George Pinckard, a surgeon serving
with the military who visited the island in 1796 "Carlisle bay is become quite the busy
Thames of the West Indies" (Pickard 1806: 463).

According to Dr. Jerome Handler, the primary reason for the colonial interest in Barbados for militia organization and maintenance of the islands fortifications was a concern over external attack by foreign forces, particularly the French (Handler 1984). However this was not their only concern. In the early seventeenth century there was concern over the threat of revolts by the island's white indentured servants, who were mostly Irish and Scottish prisoners who had been exiled. Starting in the last half of the seventeenth century, there also were concerns about slave revolts. While there were many slave plots suspected and discovered, the only actual slave revolt occurred in 1816 (Handler 1984, Hartman 2007).

To understand the place of the forts in Barbados' military history, it is necessary to understand that these forts are visible representations of the tangled web of racial tensions, class hierarchies, and anxieties in Barbadian society. Barbados is and has always been one of the most densely populated places in the world. At 166 square miles, the island has been described as being "on one hand...barren rugged rocks-on the other rich and fertile plains" (Pinckard 1806). Starting in the mid seventeenth century, the island was a plantation society based on sugar monoculture. The vast majority of agricultural land and the enslaved population were involved, directly or indirectly, in sugar cultivation. Due to the lower limits of profitability and upper limit of technology, sugar was typically grown in factory based units of land that were no smaller than 150 acres and no larger than 600 acres. (Craton 2009: 33).

A racially stratified society, it was only at a colonial level and in legal theory a society of whites wholly divorced from that of slaves: on a functional level blacks and whites interacted within a complicated network of interdependence. Barbadian society

was the nearest equivalent in the Caribbean to U.S. south: the government was the strongest plantocracy found anywhere, with aristocratic councils, a self-legislating assembly, magistracy and an organized militia. The organization, control, and replacement of the labor force was critical to each plantation, the division into separate gangs, separation of factory field and stock laborers, and “book value” or replacement cost of each slave were all factors in the production of sugar. Enslaved peoples were not central to the social order. The same laws that restricted their activities and legally treated them as property also treated them as individuals. Planters had the legal responsibility to care for their enslaved workers on their estates, including the elderly, although valuation of older enslaved workers in records shows this was done more or less begrudgingly (Craon 2009 :31-52).

Slave laws were instituted in Barbados with the purpose to “hive off” the plantations into separate units. Barbados had a cellular socio-economic structure, with each plantation being a miniature society, complete with hierarchies and a small-scale economy. The villages where the enslaved workers lived were often built next to windmills, which “dotted like ships in a sea of canes” (Craon 2009: 33). Due to the relatively flat nature of the land in Barbados, enslaved Barbadians had more points of contact with those on other plantations adjacent to them due to the lack of physical barriers, unlike in other colonies such as Jamaica. By at least the mid-eighteenth century, plantations were inhabited by slaves that were so rooted in the island and so creolized that they already called themselves Barbadians. They, as well as the whites, belonged to the island, rather than Africa and Europe, and the population began to see the island as belonging to them, rather than the white minority (Craon 2009: 49).

The Historian Richard Ligon wrote in 1657 that the enslaved peoples of Barbados had not committed a massacre on their oppressors because “They are fetch’d from several parts of *Africa*, who speak several languages, and by that means, one of them understands not another” (Craton 2009: 108). The enslaved population in Barbados lived in roughly 400 distinct communities; each slave quarters being attached to each sugar estate, with 50-350 inhabitants each. Archaeological investigations at Newton Plantation burial ground in Christ Church, Barbados by Jerome Handler and Frederick Lange (1978) have shown that these quarters were villages, with a high degree of uniformity but a character owed more to the creole Barbadian culture than the economic imperatives of the plantation system (Craton 2009: 257). Within each village, the enslaved workers lived in family units, which were based around their own convenience rather than that of the owner’s direction or planning. Each family unit was based around a small house and African type yard. Governor Perry explains this pattern of village settlement in 1789:

“There are small Portions of land annexed to each Negro House, but not assigned as Part of their Subsistence; and there is also in most Plantations a Field of Land called the Negro Ground, the Profits of which are taken to the Use of those who cultivate them, independently of the Allowance they receive from their Owners in common with other Slaves” (Craton 2009).

Food from the Negro Ground was eaten and traded through an island-wide network of both enslaved and freed “hucksters,” or petty salesmen. Much of the ginger exported from Barbados at the time was grown by enslaved peoples in their meager free time in the gardens. Some particularly industrious individuals were known to make 10 to 20 pounds per annum from the sale of their ginger.

Economic autonomy was seen as a dangerous indulgence of the planter class. According to Joseph Gittens, by 1816 this industry had allowed some enslaved peoples to accumulate a mild amount of (comparative) wealth, “all of which induced the negroes to assume airs of consequence, and put a value on themselves unknown among the slaves of former periods.” Edward Thomas, the attorney of Bromefield plantation, wrote around the same time that “There has been an obvious change in the negro character within the last ten years and...they are fully sensible of their importance” (Craton 2009: 258).

In the enslaved community, it was dances and holidays that allowed large numbers of slaves to get together and socialize. According to George Pinckard:

“They assemble, in crowds, upon the open green, or in any square or corner of the town, and, forming a ring in the center of the throng, dance to the sound of their beloved music, and the singing of their favorite African yell...The instrumental parts if the band consist of a species of drum, a kind of rattle, and their ever-delighting Banjar” (Pinckard 1806: 264-265).

Funerals functioned in the same manner and allowed the enslaved the opportunity to gather unsupervised. Funerals, having deep spiritual significance, played a large role in cementing black solidarity. Always present at funerals was the “obeahman” or doctor, a practitioner of traditional medicine. Obeahmen were found on nearly every estate, well into the nineteenth century. In 1789 it was said that Obeahmen were “as often Natives as Africans” who could either challenge or reinforce authority of the plantation elite, as they were “the leaders to whom the others are in slavery for fear of being bewitched” (Craton 2009: 259). The slaves with most authority were the “rangers, whose job included

looking after boundaries and fences of the plantation and facilitating matters of communication and business between estates. Rangers were often the closest thing in the village to a chief, and many had more than one house and family and owned cattle or even horses (Craton 2009).

In Barbados, domestic slaves were often people of mixed race. They formed both a cultural and genetic bridge between the slave quarters and the planter's great house, and may have had some degree of unofficial status over other slaves. Domestic slaves were usually well informed as to the plantations affairs, as whites would openly talk in front of them. Many domestics were women. In Barbados, domestic slaves were approximately twenty percent of the enslaved population (Craton 2009: 257).

As with other whites in the Caribbean, white Barbadian culture, politics, and identity were shaped by slavery and it 'was whiteness which distinguished them from those they held as slaves' (Lambert 2005: 18). Whiteness as an identity was an amalgamation of English, Scottish, and Irish identities, and functioned as a means of solidarity against the overwhelmingly larger enslaved population. Doubts of the "Englishness" of white West Indian men were a huge factor in the creation of a white Barbadian identity. There were attempts by those in Britain to recast white Barbadians as "mimic men" who were not "English English" because of their economic reliance on slavery, their living in a tropical region, and their "nouveaux rich" status (Lambert 2005: 38).

There were varied reactions between loyalty and opposition to such claims of false whiteness. Many Barbadians claimed their rights and identity as freeborn

Englishmen, and repudiated accusations of their creoleness through claims of allegiance and indispensability to the British Empire. In the early nineteenth century, changing attitudes about slavery and a general anti-Caribbean sentiment in Britain were seen as threats to the Barbadian planter way of life. Assertions of inherent West Indian difference, creole self-fashioning, and countercultural patriotisms created a complex pattern of antagonistic relationships with the Imperial Atlantic world (Lambert 2005: 39). The articulation of a white identity in Barbados was an expression of colonial self-identity, in Barbados this was connected with a support of the plantocracy, and was based primarily of being ancestrally English, Anglican and proslavery. White culture, politics, and identity were also a focus of the slavery controversy and part of internal power struggles in the colony.

The Apex of Barbadian society was the planter class. In general, many plantation owners in the West Indies were often absentees, living in Britain. Barbados had a higher than average proportion of resident landowners than most islands, as well as a deeply entrenched middle class of white merchants, managers, and professional men (Lambert 2005). In Barbados, the planter class was fully formed by 1660, and dominated by an elite sub-class with 400 estates between 200 and 1000 acres of land. Barbadian planters typically had smaller holdings than planters on other islands, and few could afford to retire to Britain (Lambert 2005: 18, Dunn 1973).

The Plantocracy dominated Barbados economically, and maintained their power through political, military and social institutions such as the Generally Assembly and council, the Anglican Church, and the Barbados militia. The Barbadian planters were considered to have an unparalleled degree of arrogance, due to the higher ratio of whites

on the island than in other colonies (Craton 2009: 254). This, combined with the anxieties and fears of slave rebellion may have led to a degree of cognitive dissonance (mental stress experienced by those who hold contradictory beliefs at the same time) among the planters. Local Barbadian historian John Poyer described the planter class's view in 1801:

“Two grand distinctions result from the state of society: First, between masters and slaves. Nature has strongly defined the difference not only in complexion, but in the mental, intellectual, and corporeal faculties of the different species. Our colonial code has acknowledged and adopted the distinction” (Craton 2009: 254).

On the other end of the class spectrum were poor whites. Many of these were the descendants of Irish laborers brought in the early seventeenth century to serve as indentured laborers. Socio-racial tensions between poor whites and enslaved blacks were common, especially in areas where jobs performed by poor whites could also be performed by slaves. For the planter class, choosing which group would perform which job was a matter of deciding between the relative cheapness of slavery versus the perceived reliability of whites. Among all the poor whites in the Caribbean, the tensions were highest of all in Barbados, where poor whites were called “Redlegs” by rich whites and “Ecky-Becky” by slaves. Redlegs were found as carpenters, blacksmiths, and factory specialists until end of the slavery period (Craton 2009: 45).

An important part of Redleg identity was a self-belief in their importance to the British imperial project, particularly through participation in the militia (Lambert 2005: 102). However, with their economic role being increasingly replaced by slave labor, the

white population of Barbados declined through the latter half of the seventeenth century, primarily affecting the poor free and indentured groups that formed the militia's backbone. Poor whites left on a massive scale, and by the 1670s and 1680s immigration of new whites was practically nonexistent (Handler 1984). Despite this, Barbados was considered to have a "relatively stable white population" proportionally larger than other West Indian islands (Lambert 2005: 4). The decrease in white males seriously affected the militia, and through the seventeenth century concerns on the deficiency were expressed from governors, legislative bodies, and private individuals over the depletion of white men needed "to keep their vast number of Negroes in subjection and defend the islands" (Handler 1984).

Barbados Militia

The shortage of white males available for militia service as well as fear of a foreign invasion caused colonial officials and planters to view Barbados as being particularly vulnerable. Measures were taken to prevent servants and poor whites from emigrating and to provide incentives for importation of immigration, with varying degrees of effectiveness (Handler 1984). Despite relying on them to protect the island in case of invasion, the planter class despised redlegs. One planter described them as being: "as proud as Lucifer himself, and in virtue of their freckled ditchwater faces consider themselves on a level with every gentleman in the island" (Lambert 2005: 102).

In 1798 Dr. J.W. Williamson wrote of redlegs: "I saw some of them; tall, awkward made, and ill-looking fellows, much of a quadroon colour, unmeaning, yet vain of ancestry, as degenerate and useless a race as can be imagined" (Lambert 2005: 100).

Redlegs were often described as being inferior to blacks and coloreds. Some considered redlegs to be of “tainted whiteness,” which the poor whites often contested. George Pinckard wrote in 1796 that the redlegs had pride in their identity as “neither Carib, nor Creole, but true Barbadian” (Pinckard1806: 76, 78, 133, 134).

Poor whites in Barbados numbered around 8000 in the early nineteenth century, half of which were employed as an upper-lower class of militia tenants, small holders, shopkeepers, fishermen and craftsmen. A Lower-lower class of whites consisting of a quarter of the white population lived in extreme poverty, relying on charity and the church to survive. This subclass was unable to vote due to property and income requirements, and lived on land unsuitable for sugar cultivation in the remote northern and eastern portions of Barbados, especially the parts of St. Andrew and St. Joseph known locally as “Scotland” (Lambert 2005: 78).

Poor whites suffered harshly from tropical diseases and lived in conditions little better than those enslaved people, though they of course were free. Their marginalized status and association with rebellious and criminal origins (as many were descended from Irish and Scottish convicts and prisoners of war, as well as those declared undesirable by the seventeenth century English state) prevented them from climbing the social ladder, and a poor opinion was held of them by both the planters and the slaves (Lambert 2005: 78, 99).

Redlegs had a particularly antagonistic relationship with the free colored Barbadians. The referral of poor whites as being “red” put them in a similar category of free blacks and coloreds, an ambiguous space of partial non-whiteness. Resentment at

the success of some free people of color was manifested in verbal abuse, theft, and assault. Colored Barbadians were particularly vulnerable to these outbursts, as they could not legally testify in court (Lambert 2005: 79).

For most of Barbados's colonial history, freedmen and women were relatively few in number. The population of free-colored people emerged through manumission by will or by the orders of the slaveholders, often as a reward for good service, for sexual partners and children associated, or when enslaved persons economically useful life was over. Other means were self-purchase and acts of legislature for those who informed on slave conspiracies (Lambert 2005: 79). The population grew naturally as its women had children, and the maternal nature of slave status meant that their children were free. In 1801 the population was just over 2000 in Barbados, a unique situation in British West Indies. Despite having a relatively small population, the free coloreds were a highly visible group due to their concentration in urban areas. Over half the population of free blacks lived in Bridgetown by 1800 (Lambert 2005: 79).

Most freedmen and women shunned plantation work, were hucksters (petty traders) or worked in or shops in the city. These roles led to competition for jobs with the poor whites, who had traditionally held these roles. Competition was particularly fierce in the hospitality sector, especially in taverns serving the maritime trade. The free coloreds adopted Methodism as their primary denomination and by the 1820's freedmen and women comprised a fourth of the free population of the island (Handler 1984, Lambert 2005).

Freedmen in Barbados, observed an American visitor in 1814, “possessed one privilege of citizenship which the same class of men do not have in the United States” (Handler 1984). This was the right to bear arms. Until very end of the slave period, militia laws did not prohibit freedmen from bearing the firearms that were denied to slaves, nor were they kept in non-combatant roles. Freedmen could not, however, become commissioned officers and were segregated into units of their own.

Freedmen viewed militia service positively; despite the discrimination they faced, it was an important aspect their self-image as freemen and citizens. Enrolling in militia service was one of the first steps taken by freed slaves in establishing their new identities (Handler 1984). The act of permitting free blacks to participate in the Barbados militia was, however, not an act of kindness. It was a pragmatic solution, similar to other islands, to the ongoing issue of Barbadian security and the size of the militia. Elements within the Barbadian plantocracy were also aware that further discrimination against the free coloreds would increase their separation from the whites and bring them closer to slaves, weakening the island security as had previously occurred in St. Dominique and Grenada (Lambert 2005: 95). This proved to be a well informed decision, as free-coloreds and blacks would later participate in militia during the 1816 slave revolt, rather than assisting the insurrectionists.

It was not until July, 1833, with impending slave emancipation that the Barbados legislature passed the first act designed to limit the number of nonwhites in the militia. The legislature established minimal property qualifications for service, with the intent to exclude many non-whites “who may hereafter become free.” By 1833 act, persons

ineligible for militia service because they lacked the minimal property were prohibited from keeping “any firearms or warlike weapons of any description” (Handler 1984).

All groups in Barbadian society played a role in the Barbadian militia, to varying degrees. Barbados may have been first British island to arm slaves for militia service (Handler 1984: 13). The arming of enslaved men in Barbados occurred off and on throughout Barbadian history when prompted by considerations of practical expediency. The practice started in in the 1660s, a period when many whites were leaving the island. The population change was stimulated by the economic and social unrest that occurred as Barbados transformed during the Sugar Revolution. Measures were taken were to keep whites from leaving, and in situations of emergency the government had the ability to “arm part of their blackmen” (Handler 1984).

The earliest provision for slave recruitment was in 1666. Poor white emigration had been particularly heavy the preceding years and England was at war with France and Holland. The governor of Barbados and the general assembly were concerned about the state of the island’s defenses, and in the preceding year Barbados had been attacked by a large Dutch fleet that sailed into Bridgetown harbor. On July 14th, 1666 an ordinance was decreed by the governor “with the advice and consent of his council” directed “that every troop have two lusty able Negro-men, well-armed, to attend such service, as shall be required on alarms” (Handler 1984).

It was the militia’s role to respond to internal and external threats in the same manner they used the forts. Their role as an internally-oriented martial body manifested

through the deployment of militia to police gatherings by enslaved people and to capture runaways.

In the late seventeenth century the importation of a higher proportion of Coromantees from Africa led to the first great slave plot of 1675. Described in the pamphlet "Great Newes from the Barbadoes," it was one of the first articles in England to describe to readers the reality of slave unrest. The anonymous writer quoted an unidentified slave saying: "The Devil was in the Englishman that he makes everything work; he makes the Negro work, the Horse work, the Ass work, the Wood work, the Water work, and the Winde work" (Craton 2009: 109). The Slave rebellion plotted by the Coromantees would make Cuffee, "an ancient Gold-Coast negro" their king. Several non-Coramantee slaves revealed a plot to burn down sugar cane fields and massacre the white Barbadians. Governor Atkins was informed and arrested the potential slave rebels. Martial law declared, and more than 100 suspects were tried and seventeen slaves were found guilty. Six were burned alive and eleven were beheaded. The beheaded slaves' bodies were dragged through Speightstown, believed to be the center of the plot, and then publicly burned (Craton 2009: 109). The convicted conspirators refused. Conspirators refused to inform the authorities the identities of other conspirators; despite their silence another twenty five slaves were executed. Five committed suicide in jail, and the remaining seventy were deported or sent back to owners after flogging.

In 1683 a minor conspiracy was discovered after notes were found encouraging slaves to rebel. It was believed at the time to be an act of sabotage but may have been work of slaves themselves. In February 1686 another scare occurred lieutenant governor

encouraged fellow planters to lock up firearms more securely, and to keep better watches, especially on Sundays (Craton 2009: 110-111).

A Scare in 1692 revealed a slave plot that was more organized and island wide than any previous, and included Creole, elite and “confidential” slaves, not just Coramantees. Upon its discovery, Governor Kendall sentenced two slaves, Ben and Sambo to be executed by starving to death in gibbets. After their deaths, they were decapitated and quartered, and their bodies burned. Ben cracked after four days in a gibbet and confessed, giving up dozens of other plotters. The plan was to seize weapons and horses from the planters, raid the Bridgetown magazine to obtain 300 muskets and sidearms, 440 barrels of gunpowder, and 160 swords. After that the rebels would take control of Needleham’s fort which commanded the entrance to Bridgetown, and a black armorer at the magazine would kill Captain Came. Sympathetic Irish servants would help by getting the garrisoned troops drunk on liquor, and then the rebels would rush the door. The rebels planned to use the forts to keep away any warships that would act as reinforcements, panic the people of Bridgetown by setting fire to specifically located houses, then have a few chosen slaves from each plantation assassinate their masters (Craton 2009: 112).

The plan failed because of assumption that all of the slaves would join the cause, however there was a breach of secrecy. Planters often relied on the division between creole and African slaves, as creole were less likely to rebel than Africans. Documentation left by the rebels included a list of current government positions and the enslaved people who would fill those positions. The revolt planned to replace the

Barbadian Government with a similar European style one, rather than one of an African style (Craton 2009: 114).

During the latter part of the seventeenth century and continuing until the first decade of the nineteenth, slaves were recruited and mobilized through provisions in various legislative enactments and gubernatorial proclamations, in order to supplement the militia. Enslaved men were recruited again during 3rd Anglo-Dutch war (1672-1674,) a period in which a maximum of 5000 white men were capable of military service (Handler 1984).

In 1697 the Barbados legislature observed that “by good experience it is well know that many...slaves are worthy of great trust and confidence” and a 1697 militia act ordered that all landowners were to provide one mounted militiaman for every hundred acres owned and were to send “With each horseman...one able man-slave armed...with a bill and lance, and apparell’d with a black hat and red jacket upon every alarm.” In addition, every landowner with at least 40 acres was required to provide a male slave per every forty acres owned when the alarm was sounded that enemy ships had been sighted (Handler 1984). There was no codification of the criteria to be considered a “trustworthy slave,” which implied that slave-owners were free to exercise their own judgement in choosing those to be armed.

The major features of the 1697 Militia Act were to remain in force until the end of the eighteenth century. Although the number of blacks vastly outnumbered whites, with the lack of slave revolts in the eighteenth century and no discovered slave plots, a general view seems to have evolved among Barbadian whites that the enslaved population were

not of the temperament to organize slave rebellions. As late as July 1795 a militia act provided “for the furnishing of negroes in the several regiments...to be drawn out on alarms” (Handler 1984).

For most of slave period, the militia included at least two or 3 mounted regiments, composes of sixty troops each, one troop of life guards and six to seven foot regiments, consisting of about from eight to twelve companies (Handler 1984). The officers of the militia were almost always drawn from among the wealthier members of plantocracy, while the regular membership consisted of small land holders, landless freemen, and indentured servants. Free militia men were expected to provide their own uniforms, weapons, and ammunition, and units were expected to train regularly, usually once a month (Handler 1984).

While the militia itself was mostly white, much of its work was performed by blacks. In the Caribbean, The British military often employed local slaves to work as pioneers. The pioneer’s role was to perform labor intensive tasks, as a way to conserve the health of white soldiers. Eighteenth century medicine believed that exposure to the sun was unhealthy for Europeans, and employing slaves was seen as a measure taken to preserve white soldiers’ “shelf life” (Buckley 1979). Pioneers worked in all branches of the British military, most often in artillery and naval roles due to the heavy lifting involved.

From the seventeenth century onward, slave labor was regularly commandeered for public works projects, including repair of roads and fortifications; enslaved men were also called on to move artillery and military stores. Provisions were also sometimes made

to press enslaved men into service as pioneers "upon the approach of an enemy" or under similar alarm conditions." However, most militia acts or other directives for slave recruitment clearly or explicitly stated that the major expectation of slaves in was that they were to actively fight (handler 1984).

Militia size statistics are unavailable for most of slave period, and are somewhat unreliable. The general trend however is a reduction in numbers from the middle of the seventeenth century to the early decades of the seventeenth century (Handler 1984). Mounted militia units were disbanded in 1795, and the militia was reorganized into eleven regiments organized by parish, later to be defined as battalions or corps (Handler 1984).

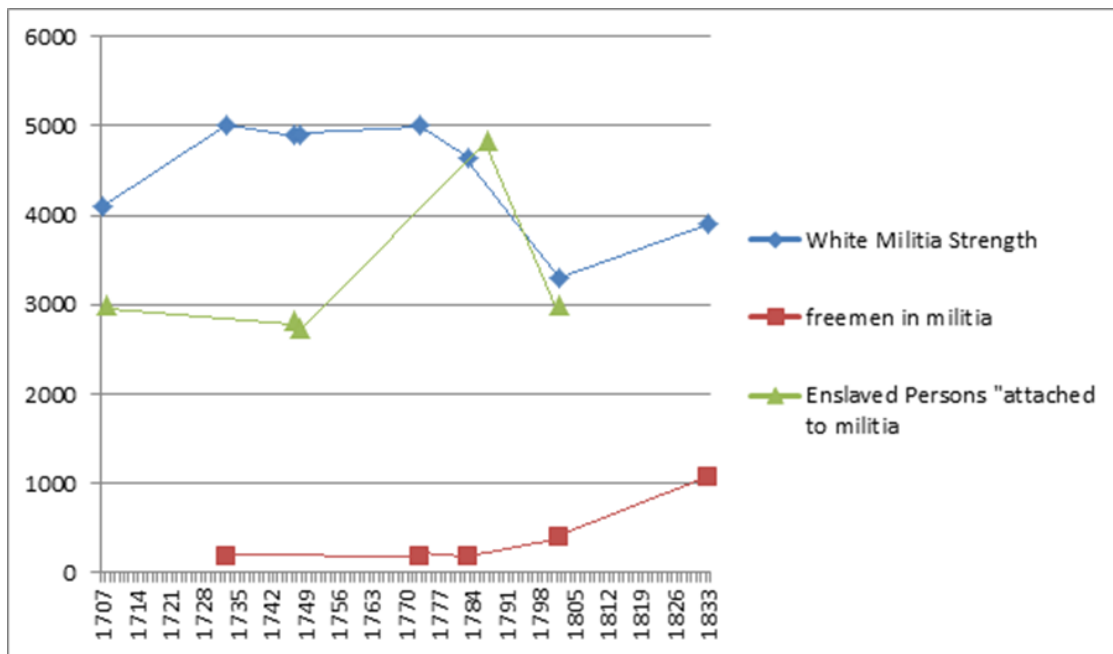


Figure 5 Racial Composition of the Barbados Militia 1707-1833 (Handler 1984).

The Barbados militia functioned during peacetime as a police force, and was sometimes used to patrol enslaved gatherings and dances when officials feared these

activities had potential for disrupting public order. The militia also employed to capture runaways. Barbados conformed to the general pattern of militia systems of other British colonies, and the militia was established soon after Holetown was founded in 1627. By the 1630's all of the officers of the militia were large plantation owners. In the 1640's the militia was reorganized, several acts pertaining to military defense of the island were passed, and militia training was occurring with some degree of regularity (Handler 1984). By the late 1640s, the formally organized militia, codified by law and numbering in thousands was an important feature of Barbadian society, similar to other British colonies. In 1650 and 1651, additional legislation was passed that set up a more formal militia structure, and further reorganization took place in 1652 and 1656 (Handler 1984). As an institution the militia was to persist for the entirety of the slavery period and well into the nineteenth century.

Barbados was involved in every conflict involving the British in the Caribbean. The first attack on Barbados was made in October 1651, during the English Civil War. Barbados had sided with the royalists and a Cromwellian fleet had arrived to subdue the island. The fleet was unable to land due to the militia's coastal artillery batteries, and so opted to blockade the island until the royalists were forced to surrender. An agreement was reached in January 1652 in Oistins at the Mermaid Tavern, where the Charter of Barbados was signed (Hartland 2009: 12). During the blockade, however, Sir George Ayscue had seized 27 Dutch ships which had been trading with the royalists, one of the several causes leading to the 1st Anglo-Dutch war (Handler 1973).

Barbados was put on alert for a potential invasion during the 2nd Anglo-Dutch war (4 March 1665-31 July 1667,) which was fought between England, the United

Provinces, and France. At this time, Barbados was approaching its peak in terms of economic prosperity, and its preservation as an English asset was of great concern. Aside from the condition of fortifications, the militia was, to many observers, considerably weakened by the decline in European population, due to increased emigration of poor whites due to increased competition brought on by the adoption of slave labor on the plantations (Handler 1973). A Dutch fleet under the command of Admiral Michiel de Ruyter arrived in Carlisle bay on the morning of April 29th 1665, with a fleet of 12 to 13 battleships. However, the plans for his attack had been leaked, and the batteries in the bay opened fire along with a docked Man-o'-war and several armed merchant vessels in the harbor. After exchanging fire and sinking many of the ships in the bay, Admiral de Ruyter was unable to destroy the batteries and thus retreated to French Martinique for repairs (Hartland 2007).

Although a minor incident, in 1682 *The Trinity*, a Buccaneer ship, was warded off by the HMS Richmond docked in the bay. Stopped by a barge for the ship, the privateers refused to come aboard due to worries they might be arrested for piracy (Cordingly: 72).

For the majority of its history the primary martial body on the island was the Barbados militia, although imperial troops were occasionally and temporarily quartered in Barbados in times of war. This became increasingly common during the last half of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Handler 1984). These stays were always short, at most for a month or two while preparing to attack other European held colonies, usually those of the French. For two years during King Williams War (1694-1696), an imperial regiment of around 200 men was stationed in Barbados for its own protection.

However, during most of eighteenth century no forces remained formally stationed on the island.

In late 1707 Barbados feared a French attack, so the Governor “put the island into the best posture of defence” (Handler 1984). In 1712 the British historian John Oldmixon wrote of the island “In case of an alarm, the government can arm 10,000 stout Negroes, dexterous at handling a pike, who would defend ...against any invader.” A census of the island's population in 1712 included over 11,000 slaves out of a slave population of almost 42,000 who were “fit to bear arms” (Handler 1984).

In 1745, during the War of Jenkins Ear (1739-1748), six or seven French ships came within sight of Bridgetown. The island was put under alarm, however no attack materialized. In and in 1747, toward the end of the War of Jenkins Ear and Barbados's slave population had approached 68,000, the Barbadian Richard Hall wrote that “in case of invasion 10 to 12,000 able Negroes may be raised for ...de-fence.” William Dickson, former secretary to Barbados's governor and who lived on the island for about thirteen years since 1772 wrote: “I have often heard it affirmed that though the French might take Barbados... they could not possibly keep it; and one reason always assigned was that the Negroes would cut their garrisons to pieces, which I verily believe would be the case. The very slaves in Barbadoes are inspired with something like loyalty” (Handler 1984: 16).

The raising of alarms was a fairly regular occurrence during the eighteenth century, especially during the governorship of Thomas Robinson (1742-1747). There were alarms in Barbados in 1759, many in the late 1770s and early 1780s, and another in

1805 (Handler 1984). In November 1761, During the Seven Years war (1754-1763), Admiral George Rodney arrived in Barbados with 13,000 troops and stayed for several months, preparing for an attack on Martinique early in 1762.

During “The American War” (1775-1783) A special provision was raised for “a considerable body of slaves [to be] trusted with pikes and cutlasses for the defense of Barbados.” During this period it was said that American privateers “infested the seas” (Handler 1984).

On two occasions in 1777 American privateers appeared in Barbadian waters. In April 1777 an American ship came into Speightstown bay and was driven off by coastal artillery battery, and in May 1777 a privateer “captured several fishing boats, with many valuable slaves on board.” The arming of slaves may have resulted from the privateering “exciting the apprehensions of the inhabitants of Speight’s Town for their safety” (Handler 1984: 13).

In 1778 an imperial regiment was sent from Britain to defend Barbados from the threat of a potential French invasion. No permanent accommodations were available for them, and so a garrison was planned to be built in Bridgetown (Hartland 2007). In February 1780 the Garrison was established as a permanent residence for imperial troops, thus ending the 153 year period militia control of the coastal defense system (Handler 1984). At this time a survey of the forts was undertaken which found a total of 40 forts and batteries with 364 serviceable guns sited along south and west coasts, a total distance of 30 miles (Hartland 2009: 12).

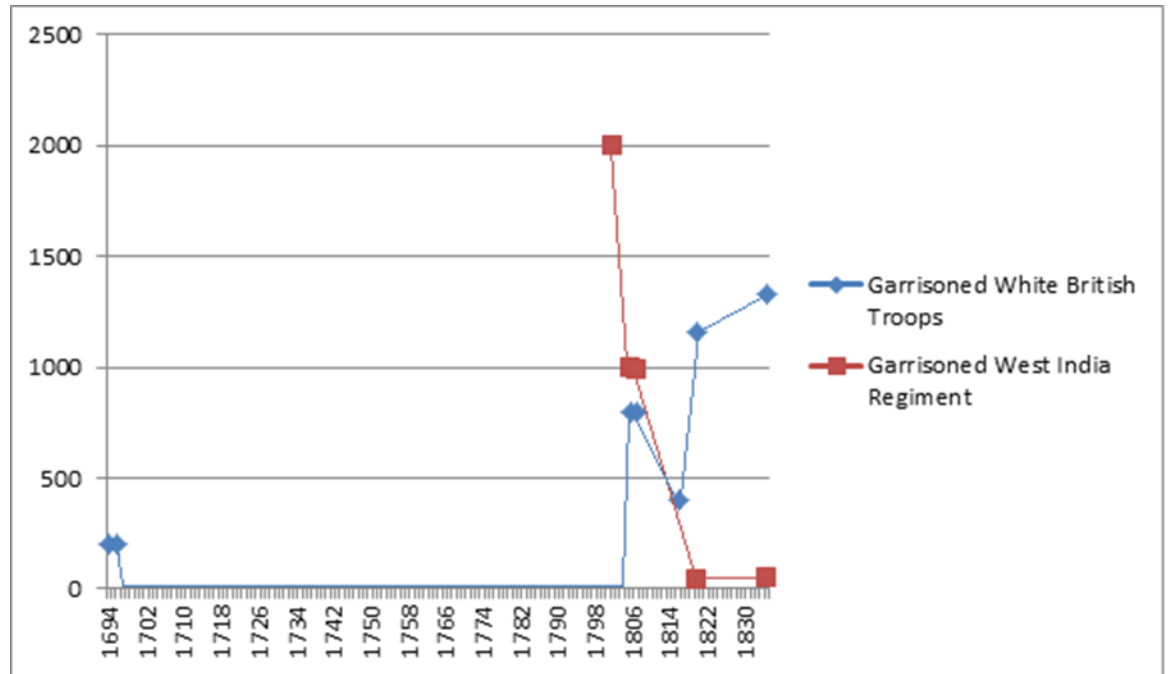


Figure 6 Garrisoned Imperial Troop numbers in Barbados 1694-1833 (Handler 1984).

In 1795 the British army authorized the recruitment of slaves who had been freed or captured from the various French islands in the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815) to be organized into several West India regiments. Granting freedom to slaves who won military distinctions became a universal practice in West Indian Warfare (Handler 1984: 17, Buckley 1979: 26). The 2nd West India Regiment was raised primarily in Barbados and remained stationed there for much of the early nineteenth century (Hartland 2007: 24).

In February 1796, George Pinckard visited an encampment of black men near Bridgetown on constitution hill. These men, he wrote, were enlisted from revolted French islands or evacuated by troops. Pinckard described them as “Active and expert,” and they were being “trained into a corps to assist in our intended expeditions.” 1500 of these men were able to bear arms, and 1200 of them were to be employed as pioneers

(Pinckard 1806: 382-383). According to Pinckard, these men were very different from the black population of the island. “John Bull differs not more widely from a Parisian *petit-maitre* than many of the Barbadoes slaves from the *sable fops* of this sprightly corps” (Pinckard 1806: 383). These were presumably some of the men who would join the newly formed West India Regiments. Pinckard tells an interesting anecdote of one of these soldier’s interactions at a slave dance in 1796:

“Presently a soldier passing that way, and observing the dance, asked a mulatto who was standing by, for a cud of tobacco, and twisting it between his lower lip and his teeth, forced his way through the crowd, into the middle of the ring; and there placing himself, between the negro and the girl who were dancing, set the nymph in African step and figure. Wowski (a term for a Mulatta woman) was responsive and they danced, cordially, together; but soon finished by footing it, in quick step, from the ring, happily enfolded in each others’ arms; to the great disappointment of poor Sambo, who, no doubt, thought to regain his partner as soon as the soldier had grown tired of the dance” (Pinckard 1806: 268-269).

According to Pinckard in 1796, the island was in a tense state as “Between five and six thousand troops have reached Barbadoes in the ships already arrived, and the inhabitants express sad regret and impatience at seeing such a body of men remain so long unemployed... We still remain without any accurate intelligence respecting the great body of our convoy, and having no tidings of the commander in chief, we continue in equal uncertainty when we may proceed to our original destination, at St. Domingo. All here is suspense and anxiety... Most unhappily our disappointment and our regrets are further

augmented by the painful intelligence of frequent captures being made by the enemy's privateers" (Pinckard 1806: 320-322)

In March 1796 on several occasions Carlisle Bay was disturbed by press gangs. In one instance a press gang boarded a merchant ship in the harbor in an attempt to press the crew into service. The crew fought the gang off, beating up a naval agent and two boat-fulls of men. "Resistance soon followed by the appearance of a party of soldiers, with firelocks and fixed bayonets, who had been called upon to aid the press-gang, and to force the sailors into submission" (Pinckard 1806: 403). The sailors rowed a boat to shore, and "several shots were fired at them in vain." Some of the sailors were able to escape, but a group of them were captured and forced to submit to service (Pinckard 1806: 404).

In another, more direct encounter, Pinckard describes the boarding of the Lord Sheffield, the ship he stayed on during his time in Barbados. During the night the ship was disturbed by two separate press gangs, at midnight and two in the morning. Pinckard made a specific note that he remained on the deck to observe their conduct. "A Lieutenant of the navy was stalking up and down with a huge drawn sabre in his hand, calling out, with boatswain's lungs, for the steward to bring up a light. His men were running about every part of the ship armed with cutlasses, pistols, hangers, and various other weapons, and instruments of death" (Pinckard 1806: 405). Sailors who had been found onboard initially were pushed off the side into boats filled with armed men, while some of the others on board hid themselves as the steward intentionally delayed bringing a light. Once the light was obtained the entire ship was searched for more men. After taking those they found useful, the press gang left. The second press gang took nobody

upon their visit, as the previous gang had taken all the men fit for service (Pinckard 1806: 405-408).

In March 1796, a French spy was detected amongst the fleet in Barbados. According to Pinckard the spy was hung for “watching the proceedings of the fleet at Barbadoes” (Pinckard 1806: 430).

During the waiting period which Pinckard so vividly describes in his letters, the majority of soldiers were kept in transport ships for housing. The cramped conditions in the ships facilitated the rapid spread of illness, so a field hospital was set up on St. Anne’s Hill. By the time the British forces had been rallied and their orders were understood, hurricane season had set in, forcing the fleet to remain in Bridgetown harbor. The constant presence of troops for six months had started to put a strain on the food supplies of the island. According to Pinckard, “Barbadoes is the best supplied or all our colonies to windward of Jamaica. The island abounds with provisions and stock, but from the late repeated, and multiplied arrivals, and from a numerous fleet being so long detained in the bay, the demand has been so great that a degree of scarcity, or, at least, that mark of it, an increased and extravagant price begins to prevail” Pinckard 1806: 18).

The Denny affair occurred on September 6, 1796. A standoff between the Barbados militia and the garrisoned imperial troops, the cause of which was Joseph Denny, a free man of mixed race arrested for the shooting and killing of John Stroud, a poor white neighbor. Denny had reportedly thought that Stroud was a burglar, which his family attested but due to their race could not testify in court. Denny was sentenced to death by Chief Justice Philip Gibbes Jr. and an all-white jury. However, Gibbes and

Denny's legal counsel were sympathetic to Denny's plight, and asked for a pardon from the governor of Barbados, George Poyntz Ricketts. Denny's sentence was altered to exile, and he was to be transported off the island in secret. In his attempt to leave Barbados, the militia fired upon his brig in the harbor from Rickett's Battery. "The effect of this intelligence could not have been greater if the capital had been invaded. The whole town was a scene of uproar and confusion...Knowing of no authority for transporting the cause of this disturbance, several of the most eminent merchants ran to Rickett's battery and fired upon the brig." A crowd of militia members captured Denny and took him back to prison. Even when the Governor's pardon became common knowledge the white population still believed him guilty. This caused a standoff between local militia members and the relatively new presence of imperial troops, who were charged with guarding Denny, who later was transported to Roatan (Lambert 2005: 83-90).

Horatio Nelson's victory over the combined Spanish and French fleet at Trafalgar in 1805 brought an end to the threat of invasion to the island. The forts were maintained but no longer used, and over the next half century would gradually be abandoned. Many of the cannons present on the island are from the mid-to-late nineteenth century, so this decline was not immediate. Before this date guns were continually replaced from England as they reached the end of their lives, but with no significant navy to oppose them the forts became increasingly obsolete against external threat (Hartland 2009). At this point the main purpose of the forts shifted away from preventing invasion, and closer to reinforcing the plantocracy's grasp on Barbados and its enslaved population.

From 1806 to 1807, a regiment of 600 to 800 white troops were garrisoned in Barbados, in addition to close to 1000 men of 7th West India Regiment (Handler 1984). An account of these recruits for the West India regiments is present in the writings of Major Richard A. Wyvill:

“On the arrival of Negroes as recruits for black regiments, a piece of paper is suspended round their necks with the name that has been given them by their captains. This they are taught to understand, also the different words of command as they are drilled. Our Surgeon Allen understands the several languages of the coast these Negroes come from, and on that account, and his humanity, he is adored by them and called their father. Although the black soldiers appear to feel less pain when flogged than the Europeans, yet, from the quivering flesh and the quantity of blood that flows from them on the application of the cat, it must be their fortitude which prevents them from expressing their feelings so loudly as the white soldiers...A black sergeant is as proud of his rank as a general officer could be, particularly among the French Negroes who are civil, obliging, and sober” (Handler 1975).

The West India Regiments were units of black troops commanded by white officers whose formation was authorized by British government in 1795. These regiments initially numbered 10 to 11, with a strength that was ideally 1000 men each. By 1798 there were 12 regiments, and in 1807, all serving black soldiers recruited as slaves in the West India Regiments of the British Army were freed under the Mutiny Act, which had been passed by the British parliament earlier that year. In 1808, the Abolition Act caused all trading in slaves within the British empire to be "utterly abolished,

prohibited and declared to be unlawful,” and in 1812 a West African recruiting depot was established on Blance Island in Sierra Leone to recruit and train West African volunteers for the West India Regiments. By 1816, with the end of Napoleonic wars, half of these regiments were disbanded and the recruiting depot was closed” (Dyde 1997: 32).

The companies of each regiment were often moved and were usually distributed among garrisons on several islands. In 1802 there were 2000 West India Regiment troops garrisoned in Barbados, and by 1807 there were 984 troops. By March 1816 all ten companies of the 1st West India Regiment stationed in Barbados (Handler 1984). In 1816, the 1st West India Regiment, along with the Barbados militia and 400 white soldiers of the British Garrison suppressed the first and only large-scale slave rebellion in Barbadian history, “Bussa’s rebellion,” named after one of its leaders, a slave ranger from Bailey’s plantation (Handler 1984).

Leading up to the slave revolt, it was noted by many white Barbadians that the enslaved population had become increasingly prideful and belligerent towards the white hegemony over the island. A military commander noted that the general attitude among the enslaved population was “that the Island belonged to them, and not the White Men” (Craton 2009: 258).

The rebellion began on two plantations: Bailey’s plantation, near the easternmost point of Barbados; and Simmons’ Plantation, two and a half miles west of Baileys. At the middle of these twin epicenters were Bussa, the ranger at Bailey’s, and Jackey, the driver at Simmons’. Bussa’s lieutenants in the revolt were “King Wiltshire, the carpenter; Dick Bailey, the mason, Johnny the *standard bearer*; and Johnny Cooper, a

cooper” (Craton 2009: 260). These men had a huge amount of influence on the five adjacent states: The River, Mapp’s, The Thicket, Three Houses, and Golden Grove. Alongside Jackey at Simmons’ estate were John the ranger and a woman called Nanny Grigg. Jackey had relations with the chief enslaved men on three adjacent states: William Green and Thomas at Congo Road, King William at Sunbury, and Toby of The Chapel. Free colored plotters included a man named Roach, Cain Davis, John Richard Sargeant and Joseph Pitt Washington Franklin, who was thought by the militia forces to have ambitions to become the new governor. Additional leaders and organizers formed a network on more distant estates, covering St. Philips and parts of neighboring parishes.

The fullest account comes from Robert, a slave from Simmons’ estate. According to this source, Nanny Grigg, a literate domestic slave in the great house had been telling other enslaved persons in that they were to be freed on New Year’s Day, 1816. Griggs claimed to have read it in the newspapers, and that her owner was very uneasy about it. She said that the other enslaved workers should go on strike, and “that they were damned fools to work, for that she would not, as freedom they were sure to get” (Craton 2009: 261).

The enslaved Barbadians were not freed on New Year’s as her sources had said, and Nanny Grigg became increasingly more militant in her outbursts. According to Robert, “About a fortnight after New-year’s Day, she said the negroes were to be freed on Easter-Monday, and the only way to get it was to fight for it, otherwise they would not get it; and the way they were to do, was to set fire, as that was the way they did in Saint Domingo.”(Craton 2009: 262). The leaders of the rebellion met between Christmas and Easter at Sunday dances and Jackey’s house on some nights. During this period the

leaders were recruiting enslaved persons that they could trust and preparing them for the outbreak. The final plans seem to have been laid at a dance on The River estate on Good Friday, 1816 (Craton 2009: 261).

The aim of rebellion was to take advantage of the four day Easter holiday, when many of the whites would be away in town and the governor would be off the island. On Easter night the crack of a drivers whip would summon the slaves at Simmons and Baileys, and cornstalk and cane trash fires would act as beacons. At this signal the rebels would be mustered on each estate and break open storehouses and stables to obtain arms and horses. The rebels would set more fires, and would turn the windmills towards to the wind in order to signal rebels in other parts of the island and to terrify the whites. Once mustered and armed, they would assemble at predetermined rendezvous points, with some building defensive works and others who would march off to guard approaches from town, and if possible seize the parish militia armories before the whites could reach them.

The plans were exceptionally vague and reflected the slaves' decided confusion, as their preference for a nonviolent strike against the whites with limited property damage was at odds with the reality that their success could come only through "a desperate war of destruction and extirpation of the Barbadian white population" (Craton 2009: 261). Despite the alarm of Barbadian whites, there was little evidence of a plan to kill all white Barbadians, at least an organized and widespread one. More plausible was the often repeated testimony of the rebellion as a consequence of wish-fulfilling rumors that the slaves had external allies (the French and the West India regiments, perhaps) and had to act only to show their resolve to receive supports from their benefactors, who

would defeat the local whites, and obtain their freedom (Craton 2009: 262). In the days prior to the rebellion, a rumor was circulating that Governor Leith was bringing a “free paper” with him when he returned from his trip and that the imperial troops in Barbados (both white and black) would not assist the militia in subduing any enslaved uprising. This misinformation compounded the fact that despite significant property damage by slaves during revolt, the overwhelming majority of bloodshed was by whites (Craton 2009: 262).

Despite their ill-placed hopes in a secret benefactor, the initial stages of the rebellion were successful. The first fires were lit around 8:00 pm on Easter Sunday, April 14, 1816. Within six hours the revolt had spread to the enslaved persons on seventy of the largest estates. Approximately one-third of the island was set aflame, including the whole of St. Philips parish, the eastern part of Christ Church, and much of St. George’s and St. Johns, with isolated outbreaks in St. Thomas and St. Lucy. The uprising was so rapid that the St. Philips armory was seized before the militia could gather to defend it. No whites were harmed at this stage, and only one was killed in the entire revolt. Those whites not barricaded in the great houses fled towards Oistin’s fort and the Bridgetown Garrison.

The first news of rebellion reached Bridgetown at 1:00 a.m. on Monday, April 15. An alarm gun was fired, the militia was mustered, and the imperial garrison was put on alert at St. Anne’s fort. Barbados was placed under martial law, and Col. Edward Codd, the senior officer of the regular troops, was named commander in chief of both the militia and imperial forces.

The first troops to see action were the Christ Church Militia battalion, acting independently under Colonel Eversley. Converging at Fairy Valley, two columns of the militia clashed with the advancing rebels at the factory yard of Lowther's estate at noon. After a short skirmish, the rebels, who were carrying the arms and flags taken from the St. Philips militia, were routed. At the same time Colonel Codd was still at the Garrison in Bridgetown, and was having difficulty ascertaining the extent and direction of the rebellion. He organized a fighting column of 400 white regulars, 200 men of the 1st West India Regiment (also known by the sobriquet, "Bourbon Blacks,") and 250 militia, along with three mobile field guns. The loyalist force set off through Dash Valley and Bearded Hall for St. Philips at 10:00 am, to find the parish had been practically destroyed by the rebels. In his reports, Codd indicated that he was increasingly frustrated by the rebel's guerilla tactics and unwillingness to fight in the European style. "Such, indeed, was the Warfare pursued by those people, that in no position could I discover them in sufficient numbers for attack. Wherever I made my appearance they fled, but still pursued their System of devastation" (Craton 2009: 262-263).

Due to their unwillingness to engage, Colonel Codd split his force into three groups. In the first group, Colonel Mayers and the militia were sent forward to make camp for the night at the Thicket estate, and the black troops under the command of Colonel Cassidy moved towards Bailey's. Codd himself stayed with the main force of regulars near St. Philips Church. During the night, Colonel Codd received word from Cassidy that the black regulars were faced by an "armed horde" of rebels, but the commander declined to send aid because of the "harassed" condition of his troops.

On the morning of April 16, 1816, Cassidy's troops were attacked by a party of rebels "armed with Firelocks, Bills, Pikes, Hatchets & who gave three Cheers and dared him to come on...under an impression that the black Troops would not fight against them" (Craton 2009: 263). Cassidy ordered his men to load their muskets, where upon the rebels fired, killing a black private and wounding a sergeant. The regiment returned fire and the rebels were routed with a bayonet charge, leaving forty dead or wounded and seventy captured. Fleeing rebels reportedly made a stand at "Mr. Grosset's house," where in the words of another regular officer present many were:

"Killed & wounded, leaping from the windows & rushing from the doors, a very pretty scene did it exhibit, our men following them across the fields, & firing as fast as possible...The Insurgents did not think our men would fight against black men but thank God were deceived...I assure you the conduct of our Bourbon Blacks, particularly the light company under Capt. Firth (an old twelfth hand) has been the admiration of every body & deservedly" (Craton 2009: 263).

Captured items at Bailey's estate included "an extraordinary emblematic flag" that was either one described later as being white cotton with crudely drawn figures and a motto that "from the spelling of words...is conjectured to have been the work of a Frenchman," or one of the several lost flags "on which the Black men and White Women were introduced together" (Craton 2009: 263).

The battle at Bailey's estate on April 16 essentially broke the armed resistance. Colonel Codd received urgent appeals for aid in both Bridgetown, which was said to be threatened from the Christ church side, and from the militia commander of St. John's

Parish, into which the remnant of Bussa's men had fled. Alarmed by length of his supply line, Codd sent Mayers and Bridgetown Militia back as far as Bearded hall to guard his flank, while leading the regulars in into St. John's himself. In St. John's he found that the reports of massed rebels were greatly exaggerated, and this divided his men into detachments to man posts and to carry out scouting raids (Craton 2009: 264).

The reprisals against the rebels were swift and disproportionately bloody. Colonel Codd, still frustrated at the lack of a distinct enemy of which to fight, ordered the villages of suspected rebels to be put to the torch. He wrote that "the only plan I could then adopt was to destroy their Houses, in order to deprive them of some of their hiding places, and resources, and to recover their Plunder" (Craton 2009: 264). Due to their houses being burned, many enslaved person returned to beg mercy or to save their possessions from the fires. During the reprisals, the behavior of the imperial regulars was not nearly as bad as militia, who were not as well disciplined and many of which's property had been razed during the rebellion. As Codd described it, "Under the irritation of the Moment and exasperated at the atrocity of the Insurgents some of the Militia of the Parishes in Insurrection were induced to use their Arms rather too indiscriminately in pursuit of the Fugitives." Rear Admiral Harvey, writing from the H.M.S. Antelope in Carlisle Bay on April 30, was a less mild in his description: "The Militia, who could not be restrained by the same discipline as the Troops, put many Men, Women, & Children to Death, I fear without much discrimination" (Craton 2009: 264).

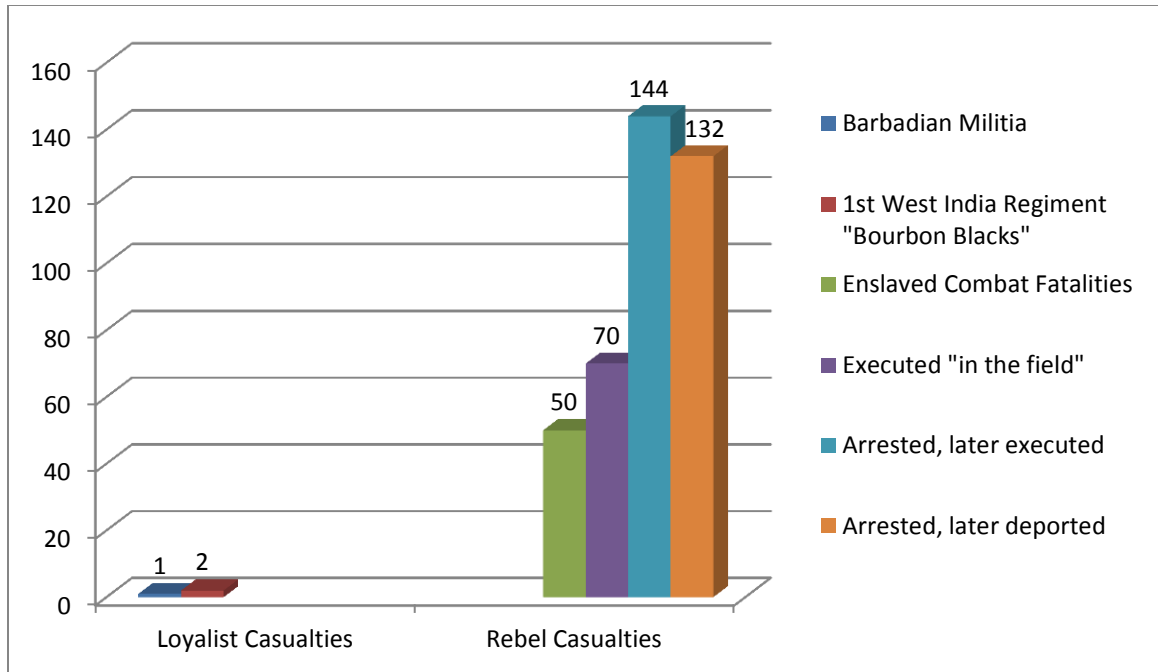


Figure 7 Casualties during Bussa's Rebellion (Handler 1984).

Casualties were overwhelmingly one sided. Rebels who were convicted were publicly executed in different parts of the island, with their bodies and sometimes heads displayed on their home estates as an example to others who might harbor rebellious tendencies. When the period of martial law ended, slave captives still continued to be tried and executed by what Governor Leith described as “the extremely defective law” of 1688. As late as September 21, 1816, 70 slaves awaited sentence and 100 awaited trial. The governor was “thoroughly fatigued, if not sickened” by the policy of retribution and before his death in late 1816, convinced the Barbados council and General Assembly to authorize the deportation of all those who were condemned for death and not yet executed, and the return to estates of all slaves sentenced to less than capital punishment. On January 25, 1817, 106 slaves sentenced of death and 18 “dangerous persons” were exiled to Belize on the transport ship *William and Mary* (Craton 2009: 265).

The suppression of Bussa's Rebellion seems to have neither decreased the unrest among the enslaved population nor the planter classes' fears. In an anonymous letter dated June 1816, "The disposition of the Slaves in general is very bad...They are sullen and sulky and seem to cherish feelings of deep revenge. We hold the West Indies by a very precarious Tenure, that of military strength only and if they do not change at home their system of reduction I would not give a year's purchase for any Island we have" (Craton 2009, Anonymous 1816).

As a direct result of 1816 slave revolt, as well as the presence of the British Garrison, slaves were no longer recruited to serve in the Barbados militia. As one planter wrote, "It will be very difficult to regain the confidence we all had in our slaves" (Handler 1984). At the same time however, there was an increasing number of freedmen in the ranks of the militia, most if not all of whom who remained loyal during the rebellion.

To retain their local autonomy and to appease the abolitionist sentiments stirring in Britain, the Barbadian legislature passed its own Slave Registration Act in 1817. Although it was resisted by the planters, it passed and militia leader, judge, and planter Conrade Howell was appointed as the registrar. Later on, the legislature of Barbados would increase civil rights for free coloreds and amend the slave code based on this legal principal; but in the wake of Bussa's Rebellion there was a far greater willingness to vote money for forts and a strengthened militia than to support the new governor, Lord Combermere, in his plea to reconsider the slave laws.

Due to the quick spread of the 1816 slave revolt and the general miscommunication amongst the troops during, in 1817 a series of signal stations were built along the interior of the island under the order of Lord Combermere. The Barbadian government paid for its upkeep and they were manned by imperial troops. These signal stations communicated by using a system of flags, and due to the lack of further slave rebellions were used mostly to signal remote parts of the island when mail ships had arrived. During the rainy seasons, many troops were moved to the signal stations, in particular Gun Hill, in order to use the breezy area as a means to protect against outbreaks of malaria at the Garrison (Hartman 2007: 48).

In January 1820 there were 1,197 British troops present in Barbados, and by early 1835 about 1,384. Both of these figures include 39 and 51 men, respectively, of the West India Regiments (Handler 1984). In 1838, after an apprenticeship period of four years, slavery was outlawed in Barbados. With no population to suppress, in 1869, after 247 years of activity, the Barbados Militia and mounted Yeomanry were disbanded (Hartland 2007: 44).

Seven years later a period of unrest known as the Federation Riots broke out in Barbados on Easter, 1876. The riots were the result of the long smoldering resentment of Afro-Barbadians which were ignited by the proposal of a reorganization of power in the region. As part of a policy favoring retrenchment and rationalization, the British imperial government proposed a federation of the Windward Islands, which would include Barbados. The Barbadian plantocracy resisted the idea with the same vigor they had shown in opposing the Slave Registration Bill. To the Barbadian black, something their “masters” so adamantly opposed was something they felt they should support, especially

when it was advocated by the outspokenly liberal governor, Sir John Pope Hennessy (Craton 2009: 329).

Reportedly, Hennessy listened to black petitioners and visited ordinary laborers in their chattel houses. In dispatches he wrote of the starvation wages and social injustices against blacks in Barbados, and openly condemned practices in the courts and the horrid conditions of the Bridgetown jail. In a speech on March 3, 1876 to the General Assembly, he announced minor constitutional changes and promoted the federation proposal, as well as criticizing the tax difference between the rich and the poor. This speech pushed the whites of the General Assembly to the edge of mutiny, while blacks in Bridgetown were so overjoyed dragged Governor's carriage back to the Government house in Bridgetown (Craton 2009: 329).

Unrest spread rapidly through Barbados from Bridgetown, especially after a black man was shot at the Prospect estate on March 28. Rumors reported that the General Assembly was withholding funds from the Governor which were intended to help the poor blacks. "Di gubnor say de Queen gib de rest of Gubnor's money fe help we, but dey no gib we...He gwine gib we, and gib we land too" (Craton 2009: 329). An uprising was planned for Easter Monday, April 17, and was kicked off the following day by Dottin brothers, who marched through Bridgetown, one waving a red flag and the other carrying a sword. For a week, approximately a thousand black Barbadians roamed the island in well-organized bands, raiding estate provision grounds, slaughtering cattle, and burning the cane fields. The actions of the rioters caused a panic across Barbados, with whites from all over the island taking refuge in the Garrison and in ships in Carlisle bay. The Governor condemned the insurgents' actions, mobilized the military, and swore in 500

special constables to combat the threat. Hennessy would however, not allow police to carry firearms or to flog prisoners.

As a result of the riots, eight blacks were killed and thirty were wounded, hundreds arrested and ninety were sentenced for looting and arson. The suppression of the riots was a victory for the plantocracy, which both reinforced the status quo by forcing the black laborers back into line, and retained their self-legislating assembly and sank the project of a Windward Island Federation. Due to his speech having sparked the riots, Governor Hennessy was transferred to Hong Kong in November, 1876 (Craon 2009: 330).

In 1883, telephones were introduced to Barbados, and the signal station system fell into disrepair, although the plots were still used to seasonally quarter troops. Up to 1906 the military organized horse races at the Garrison savannah, which is a tradition that has been revived and carried on today. Barbados went on to play an active role throughout the twentieth century, participating in both World Wars, however that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Conclusion

The guns (cannons) collected in Barbados are some of the rarest in the world. Most of the guns were manufactured in the early to mid-eighteenth century, but some date to the English Civil War. After the abandonment of the forts in the late-to-mid nineteenth century, most guns were left abandoned and rotted off their carriages. Some guns were incorporated into the corners of buildings or used to tie horses to. In the twentieth century many guns were taken to the Garrison for display.

I have been able to locate and visit several fortifications that remain on the island, some of which are in varying states of ruin. St. Anne's Castle is today still maintained by the Barbados Defence Force. It is the largest fort built on island, and has a hexagonal shape. Construction started in 1705 but didn't finish until 1716 (Hartland 2007: 16). Charles Fort on Carlisle bay has been renovated by the adjacent Hilton Barbados Resort; Dover fort is currently under dispute between the Government of Barbados and a private company who owns the land. Only three of these forts have been archaeologically surveyed: my own survey at Barbados Battery, Maureen Bennell's survey of Holetown Fort, and Dr. Niall Finneran's work at Maycock's Fort in St. Lucy (Finneran 2012). As of 2007, 186 guns were located, identified and catalogued, and 130 are in the custody of the government of Barbados and 58 are in private hands, leaving 170 guns unaccounted for (Hartland 2009).

Many of the artifacts found at the site are related to smoking and drinking, which were understandable considering the dull nature of militia duty at a shore battery. From the archaeological evidence, it seems that Barbados Battery experienced intense spikes in activity during the Seven Year War and the Napoleonic wars. The increased presence of ceramic table and drinking wares indicates that during times of increased military activity, armed detachments were been stationed there in semi-permanent camps, both to ensure that the battery was manned at all times and in the case of imperial troops, to provide the soldiers with something to do. Boredom was almost like a plague to eighteenth century militaries, and large numbers of troops being idle for too long caused tensions to flare with local residents at least once in Barbadian history. Too many men being housed in one place, such as aboard ships in Bridgetown harbor or the Garrison,

could also cause the spread of disease due to unsanitary and cramped conditions.

Maintaining a presence at the forts and batteries gave imperial troops a sense of direction, although the boredom appears to have led them to drink and gamble in the absence of an actual invasion. The purpose of the coastal defense system shifted from its initial purpose of protecting Barbados as a British holding in the seventeenth century, to serving a dual purpose of fending off foreign invasion from the sea and preventing the enslaved population from revolting. In the nineteenth century, with the threat of foreign invasion effectively removed, the forts functioned primarily as a physical presence of British control and the hegemony of the planter elite, and with the abolition of slavery and the enemy gone entirely, the forts were abandoned.

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