

Published Monday May 30, 2011
By: Past Horizons : adventures in archaeology
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In June 2010, a team of Canadian archaeologists spearheaded a public archaeology program on the island of St. Vincent, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), one of the southernmost island chains in the Caribbean. The archaeological program was designed to give volunteers hands-on experience on a professionally run excavation, as well as a unique immersion into Caribbean culture, while at the same time rescuing and recording a significant archaeological site prior to the construction of an international airport.



2011 volunteer team.

The 2011 field season successfully identified numerous archaeological features, as well as a number of burials and significant finds and as a result a 2012 season has been approved by the International Airport Company (IADC) of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The SVG Public Archaeology Program was developed in June 2010 to conduct an excavation at the site of Argyle 2. This program had developed from previous work in 2009 and 2010, where team members had participated in archaeological projects at the site of Escape, managed by Bison Historical Services and later the University of Calgary. Both projects had proved to be highly significant in archaeological terms, resulting in the discovery of 36 burials, a large quantity of pottery, and over 700 archaeological features, which were highly indicative of multiple prehistoric and/or historic structures, including a longhouse (previously undocumented anywhere else in the Caribbean).

Site of Argyle 2 rich in archaeology

In 2010, a brief survey of Argyle 2 was conducted, along with Mrs. Kathy Martin of the National Trust. It became apparent that the Argyle 2 area was rich in archaeology, with multiple features, burials and a large quantity of pottery, as well as other types of artefacts such as stone tools, beads and food remains present on the surface and in eroding cut banks.



Longhouse post-holes. No other longhouses have previously been documented in the Caribbean.

The SVG Public Archaeology Program was subsequently designed to conduct professional archaeological excavations at Argyle 2, whilst raising the profile for the [SVG National Trust](#), such that future archaeological finds on the island could be recorded and preserved in a systematic fashion.

Volunteers from around the world (including Canada, Greece and the United States) assembled and journeyed to St. Vincent to participate in the archaeological project, raising funds for both the public program and for the Argyle International Airport Contributory Fund, as well as the SVG National Trust Heritage Fund. These contributions helped to repay the people of SVG and the IADC for allowing the archaeological work to continue, as well as to provide support for the continued development of this small country.

Continuous occupation for up to 2,000 years

The archaeological site of Argyle 2 extends from the coast one kilometre inland and half a kilometre north to south, on the leeward coast of St. Vincent. In 2010, preliminary surface surveys indicated that occupation at Argyle 2 spanned from the [Saladoid period](#) (ca. 500 BC – AD 545), through Colonial times and up to the present, demonstrating continuous occupation for up to 2,000 years. Investigations conducted during the SVG Public Archaeology Program in 2011 mapped 147 archaeological features, such as post-holes and small pits, and identified a total of 19 burials (six of which were previously identified by Mrs. Kathy Martin and Mr. Roydon Lampkin between May 2010 and January 2011). It is from these burials that the most significant archaeological findings have been recovered thus far.

Significant burials



Burials B8 and B11.

Of particular significance are two related burials, Burial 8 (B8) and Burial 11 (B11).

B11 appears to be a primary, extended burial, in complete articulation. In comparison to other burials at the site and throughout the area, B11 is significant because of its specific nature; this burial was identified face-down on its stomach and may indicate a rather hasty burial. No artefacts were recovered in direct association with B11; however, B8, which is a secondary burial, was located directly above the lower limbs of B11. B8 is disarticulated, i.e., its bones are not in anatomically correct position, and also not deposited in any particularly specified manner.

This reassembled pot was highly significant for the site because its construction and decorative style placed B8 definitively within the Saladoid period

B8 was recovered with 17 lithic (stone) artefacts, and two ground stone tools, as well as a number of pottery sherds that would later be reassembled to form a complete pot. This reassembled pot was highly significant for the site because its construction and decorative style placed B8 definitively within the Saladoid period. Furthermore, this particular ceramic vessel form has not yet been documented in St. Vincent; preliminary discussions with other Caribbean archaeologists indicate that this form has not yet been identified elsewhere in the Caribbean.



Pot associated with B8 burial dating to the Saladoid period. This form type has not been identified elsewhere in the Caribbean.

In an adjacent area of the site, a group of burials (Burial 13 – 19) were identified in rather close proximity to one another. Amongst them was another intact pot of the same new vessel form as B8, though this second pot was smaller in size and left undecorated. Further investigations in the area by Mrs. Kathy Martin and Mr. Roydon Lampkin, former Cultural Officer of the IADC, recovered a number of pottery fragments that appear to belong to a similar vessel form and may be associated with yet other burials. The recovery and restoration of both complete pots (from B8 and from B13 to B19) is highly significant for its contribution to ceramic style and function, and has provided excellent specimens for the national archaeological collection operated by the SVG National Trust. They are currently being housed in the National Trust Museum in Kingstown, St. Vincent.



Undecorated pot found with group of burials 13-19.

Given the significance of these findings, and the extent of archaeology that remains under threat of impact by airport construction, the IADC has kindly approved the Program to continue at the site of Argyle 2, for the 2012 field season. The site of Argyle 2 is currently fenced to prevent vehicular traffic and preserve the remains of the archaeological materials.

The SVG Public Archaeology Program has been a continued and growing success and has raised awareness for archaeology among the Vincentians, as well as on an international scale. The continuation of the SVG Public Archaeology Program will

continue to increase this awareness, but would not be possible without the hard work and contributions of volunteers.

Volunteer information for 2012

Dates: The 2012 archaeology program will commence on January 3, 2012 and will run until January 25, 2012, with three 1-week sessions. Each session will be seven days in duration, with the first five days assigned to field work on the site; the sixth day will be an excursion day within the island of St. Vincent or further afield into the surrounding Grenadine islands. The seventh day will be work-free to allow for errands, shopping and travel. Within each session, Saturdays will be planned as a Public Day for local Vincentians to visit the site and participate in the on-going excavation.

Cost: Volunteers will pay a [mandatory fee](#), which will cover room and board, as well as a weekly excursion in SVG. Included in this fee will be a \$100 US per person donation to the SVG National Trust Heritage Fund, in order to promote preservation and recording of archaeological sites, as well as an additional \$100 US per person donation to the Argyle International Airport Contributory Fund. Not only will this project provide monetary benefits to the people of SVG, it will provide contiguous support for further development of local cultural heritage. The project aims outside of the interest of archaeology, include promoting the beauty of St. Vincent and the Grenadines internationally as a tourist destination, as well as providing Vincentians with a deeper sense of place and pride about their nation.

Anyone wishing to participate should visit www.svgdigs.com and follow the appropriate links.

This project will be affiliated with Dr. Richard Callaghan of the University of Calgary, who has worked extensively in St. Vincent in the last decade; the project itself will be run by its co-directors, Margarita de Guzman and Jode MacKay, both consulting archaeologists from Calgary, Alberta. The SVG Public Archaeology Program would like to thank Dr. Richard Callaghan for his continued support, Mrs. Kathy Martin and her dedicated team at the SVG National Trust, Dr. Rudy Matthias and his fabulous team at the IADC, Rhona and her team at Rhona's Apartments, Shirley and the Roti Hut for the fabulous meals, our archaeologists Taylor Graham, Kristin Soucey and Meghan Simper, and, last but not least, our wonderful volunteers: Kate Beaucage, Alan Rae, Joan Connor, Andy Ciofalo, Kristen Chew, Theofania Tsempera, Sue Graham, Dave McGrath and Sandra McGrath.

Tags: [archaeological dig](#), [Caribbean](#), [Jode MacKay](#), [Margarita de Guzman](#), [Saladoid period](#), [St. Vincent and the Grenadines](#), [University of Calgary](#), [volunteer dig](#)



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