

Carriacou

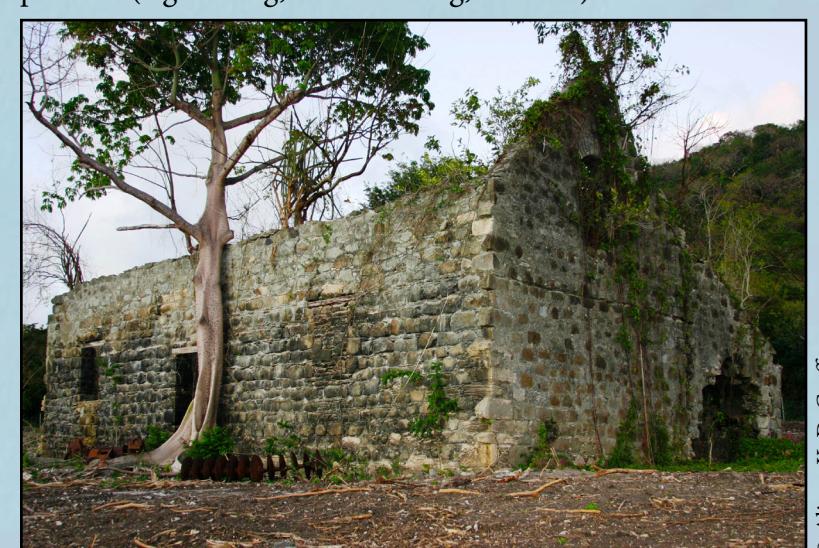
—Grenada—
Land of Reefs



HISTORY:

Carriacou is part of the tri-island country of Grenada in the West Indies, and the largest (at a mere 32km²) of the trans-boundary Grenadine islands that span between the larger islands of Grenada and St. Vincent. Located at the southeastern end of the Lesser Antilles chain in the Caribbean Sea, these volcanic islands were first inhabited by the hunter-gatherer Ortoiroid people from northern South America as early as 5400–3000BC. Between 400BC and 1200AD, at least four waves of the horticulturalist Arawak people followed the same path through the Grenadines. The last Amerindian people to arrive in the Grenadines pre-colonial were the Caribs or Kalinas/Kalinagos, emanating from the lands now divided between the countries of Guyana and Venezuela. The Caribs inhabited the entire Lesser Antilles chain for almost 500 years, through the 1700s, using their warrior skills to prevent colonisation of the Grenadines for longer than the majority of the other islands in the eastern Caribbean.

The first Europeans in the Grenadines, the French, arrived in the middle of the seventeenth century and fought for control of the islands against both the Carib inhabitants and the British. The colonists brought slaves from Africa to work plantations and mills producing cotton, sugar, rum, indigo, coffee, and cocoa for trade throughout the Caribbean and export to Europe. France and Britain exchanged governance of the islands several times, until 1783 when the Treaty of Versailles formally declared the islands as British colonies. In 1834, slavery was abolished and plantation agriculture turned largely to sharecropping. Isolated in the Grenadines, and geographically restricted to relatively small land masses, the emancipated peoples had fewer migration options and were required to give up large percentages of any products or proceeds to European land owners. As large sugar and cotton estates failed after emancipation on Carriacou, alternative crops such as limes began to be processed, some factories surviving until the late twentieth century. Today locals survive on subsistence farming (e.g. corn, pigeon peas) and livestock rearing (e.g. goats, sheep) with an economy largely derived from maritime pursuits (e.g. fishing, boat building, tourism).



An estate house in Dumfries serves as a reminder of the important contribution of slaves to Carriacou's industrial heritage.

ENVIRONMENT:

The name Carriacou originates from a Carib word, Kayrooiācou, meaning "land of (many) reefs"—referring to the Grenadines' extensive coral reef, which is the largest in the Eastern Caribbean. Carriacou and its nearby islands, cays, and surrounding waters are home to endemic birds and important seabird breeding colonies, sea turtle nesting beaches (including the critically endangered Leatherback), and mangroves forests which are important for coastal resilience. Situated along the interface of the Caribbean and South American tectonic plates, Carriacou, like most of the Antillean islands, is volcanic in origin and geologically young (< 50 million years). It has a tropical climate and its vegetation is primarily shrubby savannah and dry scrub forest. Distinct dry and wet seasons cause dramatic changes in vegetation cover throughout the year and with very limited surface and groundwater, results water collection tanks and community cisterns being heavily used.



School children observe a nesting endangered Leatherback sea turtle in the Sandy Island/Oyster Bed MPA.

CULTURE:

Carriacouan culture is as diverse and vibrant as the reefs by which it is surrounded. The people of Carriacou are proud of their African heritage and can still call their tribes by name—Ibo, Congo, Temne, Mandinka, Chamba, and Kromati—however, their heritage also includes the native Caribs, French and British colonisers, and Scottish immigrant boat builders. This melting pot of peoples has created a distinctively unique Carriacouan culture, highlighted by traditions such as the Big Drum Nation Dance (an African heritage dance to folk songs accompanied by a series of locally made drums and performed at celebrations and festivals), traditional boat launching ceremony (a community celebration involving food, drinks, blessings, and lots of muscle), and Shakespeare Mas (a dramatic performance of parts of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar held as a part of Carriacou's Carnival). From fishing sloops to larger trading schooners, boats are expertly constructed on local beaches using traditional methods and locally sourced white cedar, Carriacou is renowned for its elaborate boatbuilding industry, introduced by Scottish immigrants in the 19th century.



Villages challenge each other in Shakespeare Mas to recite Shakespeare verses without making any mistakes.

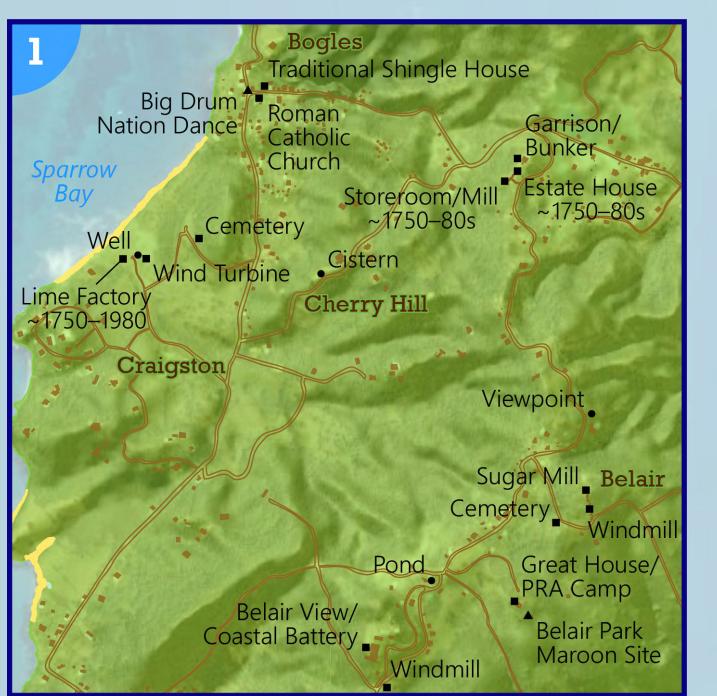
PROTECTION:

When Carriacouans refer to their heritage resources, they frequently claim "we had [e.g. sugar mill], but it mash up". Hurricanes, sand mining, development, tourism, vegetation overgrowth, and failure to pass on traditions to the younger generation are threatening the integrity of Carriacouan culture. Sand mining, for use in concrete for construction, has had an especially devastating impact on Carriacou's beaches, causing erosion which damages or destroys historical artefacts and has severe implications in the face of climate change and sea level rise. The growing tourism industry coupled with the increasing needs of the local population and limited environmental management, has led to problems such as pollution, deforestation, and overfishing. While each factor alone is problematic, the cumulative impact of these factors can be detrimental to the Carriacouan environment.

The creation of the newly established Sandy Island Oyster Bed Marine Protected Area (SIOBMPA) in 2010 is a milestone towards the conservation & preservation of the coastal and marine ecosystem. This is in conjunction of the implementation of the marine multi-use zoning plan collaboratively developed for the Grenadines Islands in 2012.



Sand mining has caused substantial ecological degradation, resulting in two-thirds of Tibeau Cemetery, the oldest cemetery on the island, disappearing beneath the waves.



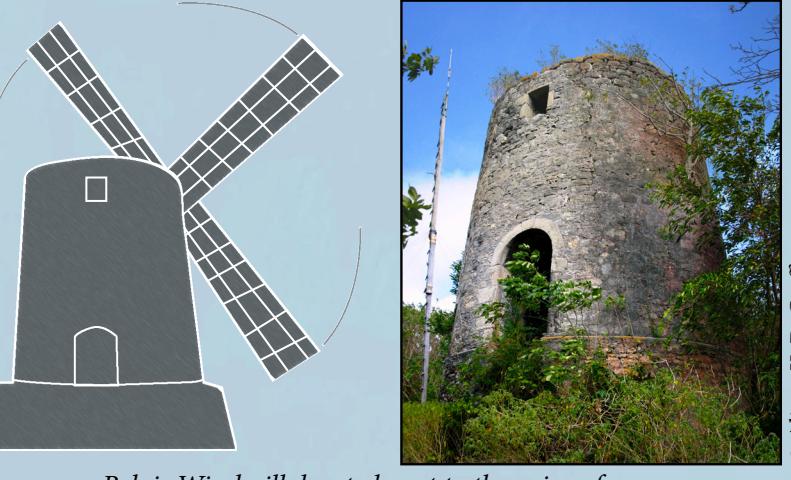
- Historical Sites
 - ▲ Cultural Sites
 - Ecological Sites
 - ⊗ Seabird Breeding Colony
 - ⊗ Important Bird Areas
 - Roads
 - Coral Reef
 - Beaches
 - Mangroves
 - Buildings
- Main Map
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0 500 1000 meters
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PARTICIPATORY MAPPING:

Space is extremely limited in the Grenadine islands, and increasing human populations, reliance on resource-based economies, high levels of poverty, and poorly planned development accentuate the need for management that considers conservation of cultural and natural resources. Participatory mapping, an emerging field, is a useful tool for stakeholder involvement in development planning, and is exemplified by this project.

Alison DeGraff, Middlebury Compton Fellow, mentored by Dr. Kimberly Baldwin, University of the West Indies—Cave Hill Campus, used a participatory approach to document and map important historical, cultural, and ecological sites in the transboundary Grenadine Islands. Over three hundred local stakeholders were involved as interviewees, field guides, and workshop participants, allowing for the creation of heritage maps that are detailed and representative. This information supplements the Grenadines Marine Resource and Space-use Information System (MarSIS), a multi-knowledge database for St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada. Both countries utilized this information for a joint application for a UNESCO World Heritage Site. If approved, such a designation would assist in raising international awareness of and encourage protection for the Grenadines' heritage sites and its fragile coastal and marine ecosystems.

Participatory Data Collection and Cartography: Alison K. DeGraff
Coordinate System/Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 20N/Transverse Mercator
Data Sources: Grenadines Marine resource and Space-use Information System (MarSIS), The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC), and Bing Aerial Imagery



Belair Windmill, located next to the ruins of a sugar mill, was most likely used to crush sugar cane for export and trade throughout the Caribbean and Europe.

