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MARITIMES

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ROYAL APPROVAL

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Documenting Dockyard discovery

Archaeological team records tunnel and cobblestone street found under Casemates

By Dr. John R. Triggs

Excavation at Casemate Barracks last year revealed the archaeological remains of a tunnel, cobblestone road, and other 19th-century structures in the Lower Ordnance Yard. The ruins were photographed and left untouched until they could be more carefully documented by trained archaeologists.



Triggs on site

Dr. Lisabeth Robinson, of Western Reserve Academy, Ohio, and myself were called in

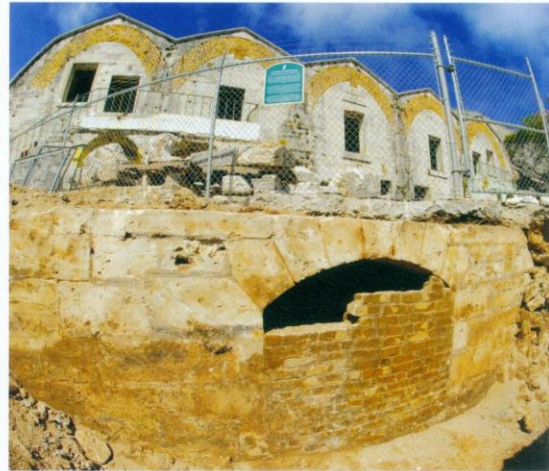
by long-time colleague Dr. Edward Harris. He proposed we document the discoveries by completing scale drawings, taking comprehensive digital photographs, and ultimately producing publishable-quality graphics. Always eager to do archaeology in Bermuda, we jumped at the chance to work on the project, and before we knew it, we found ourselves at the bottom of a two-metre trench, in the hot sun, without the hint of a breeze, drawing the cobblestone street and walls stone by stone—in other words, as archaeologists we felt right at home.

Why is this level of detailed recording necessary—wouldn't a series of photographs suffice? In the eyes of an archaeologist, architectural remains represent a special type of artifact that must be accorded the same treatment as a traditional 'buried' archaeological site. In this sense, the archaeological process consists of excavation and

discovery, systematic documentation, interpretation, publication and dissemination.

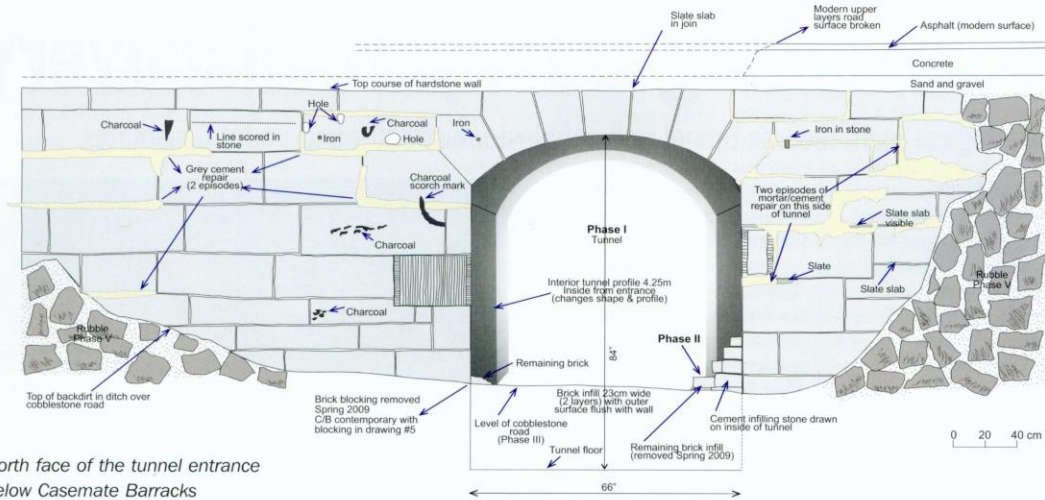
Excavation methods vary depending on the nature of the site. For example, factors such as scale, period, depth, and level of disturbance will often dictate whether a site should be subjected to manual or machine excavation.

Having excavated in Bermuda for more than 20 years on different types of sites, I can say I have used every tool from the dental pick and mason's trowel (five years of excavation at the Grove, 2004–08) to a backhoe (Bastion E, 2007) and even a bulldozer and backhoe in tandem (at Fort Cunningham, 1991 and 1992). Casemates represents a site that because of its depth and scale and later disturbances, requires mechanical equipment for excavating the metres-deep layers of fill in the Lower Ordnance Yard. Despite the somewhat unrefined methodology, the trained eyes of the archaeologist, coupled with the skill of the machine operator, can differentiate the significant from the mundane and separate the fill from the features. A good archaeologist working alongside machines will document photographically the finds as they are made and, equipped with a working knowledge of the history of the site, will be able to interpret features as they are found, thereby preventing the destruction of significant archaeological remains. Such was the case when volunteers at Casemates discovered the tunnel and cobblestone street.



The tunnel at time of discovery in 2009. Below, the excavated cobblestone road is measured in preparation for recording





North face of the tunnel entrance below Casemate Barracks

PAM SCHAUS

Documentation of the finds is done during field work through digital photography, the aim of which is to create a record of the work in progress, and to provide some context to the finds by taking shots of the surrounding architecture or landscape. A formal record of the archaeological finds is made after discovery when time allows for a more thorough recording of features both photographically and by measured drawing. The final step should include a survey of the site within the context of its overall setting. All methods of documentation together comprise the archaeological archive, the purpose of which is the preservation of the monument in paper and digital form. In cases where the actual remains cannot be preserved, this archive is meant to be a lasting record, which may be studied or referred to at some later date.

Formal field photographs aim to document the finds in an 'as found' state, after they have been manually cleaned to expose all variations in stonework for the discernment of colour, mortar differ-

entiation, and construction details. A scale and north arrow is featured in each photograph and an attempt is made to reduce distortion by having overlapping photos. Tagging each image with date and time is greatly facilitated now with digital technology.

Measured drawings are arguably the most important records in the archive. Done at a suitable scale—1:10 for details and 1:20 or 1:50 depending on the size of the monument to be recorded—a scale drawing differs from a photograph in that it is interpretative, rather than a passive record of the remains. A photograph does not speak to the viewer. The best time for interpretation is when you are in the field with all the evidence accessible and visible before your eyes. Training someone to draw a masonry wall stone by stone is not in itself a difficult task, but learning to 'read' the architecture for clues as to construction style and technique, and looking for evidence of the evolution of the structure by noting modifications and repairs, does require some practice. A good drawing

produced in the field should be covered with annotations because it is the archaeologist's translation of the life history of the architecture.

Once completed, the records of the archaeological archive are studied in conjunction with various pieces of documentary evidence to provide context for the architectural remains. For example, using maps and photographs, construction and demolition dates might be established, as well as insight into building use through time. Also, these documents can sometimes provide context for the monument by situating it within the larger complex of which it was a part.

As is the case with all field projects, it is the archaeologist's responsibility to publish the findings after the work is completed. Too often the records in the archaeological archive languish in files and filing cabinets as unpublished field notes. The goal should be to convert the field drawings into publishable images accompanied by the interpretations arrived at through the archaeological process. A professional cartographer is

the best person to produce such drawings. For this project, Pamela Schaus, from the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, produced the finished drawings.

Dissemination of information through publication is important not only as a means of keeping academic colleagues up to date, but also as a way to engage public interest. For the interested reader, work of this kind fosters heritage awareness and the need to investigate and preserve archaeological monuments.

Each discovery, no matter the scale, increases our knowledge and provides us with a better understanding of the larger historical drama that is of interest to all who are intrigued by the past. *Dr. John Triggs is an Associate Professor of Archaeology and Classical Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario. He recently completed a five-year study of the Grove, Southampton, site of Governor Daniel Tucker's 1617 mansion house. He has worked on projects in Bermuda since 1988*