

PRELIMINARY  
RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT  
ON THE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES OF ANGUILLA, W.I.

*sponsored by*

Island Resources Foundation

*with the assistance of*

Virgin Islands Archaeological Society  
CCA/Eastern Caribbean Natural Area Management Program

*Site Survey*  
21-25 November, 1979

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## INTRODUCTION

In the early months of 1979, the Eastern Caribbean Natural Area Management Program, headed by Mr. Allen D. Putney, sponsored a resource mapping effort in Anguilla as a component of its larger regional strategic planning program. The mapping team consisted of Dr. Edward L. Towle, from the Island Resources Foundation, and Mr. A. Lake, Mr. Kevin Gumbs and Mr. Gifford Connor, all from Anguilla. In the course of collecting the necessary information, it became obvious that data on Anguilla's archaeological and historical resources was marginal at best, and more than one Anguillian said there were no known pre-Columbian indian sites. Since this seemed unlikely, given Anguilla's geographical position in the Lesser Antillean archipelago, the Island Resources Foundation, at the request of the Government of Anguilla, moved ahead to mount and fund a systematic reconnaissance effort to identify archaeological and historical sites.

During the period 21-25 November, 1979, an interdisciplinary team of archaeologists, anthropologists and historians undertook the first comprehensive archaeological and historical resource survey of the Island of Anguilla, West Indies. This team was assembled under the auspices of Island Resources Foundation, with the cooperation of the Virgin Islands Archaeological Society, and the Government of Anguilla. The archaeologists and historians were Kenneth C. Dick, Alfredo E. Figueredo, Bruce E. Tilden, and George F. Tyson, Jr. The direction of the survey was entrusted to Mr. Figueredo. The team was ably assisted by Mr. David Carty, Anguilla's Director of Tourism.

Since the survey concentrated on the terrestrial resources of Anguilla, its findings must be considered as being very preliminary in nature. Excluded from its scope were underwater sites (historical and archaeological), which are known to be considerable, as well as possible sites on outlying islands and keys. Moreover, attention was focused on the coastal rather than interior area of Anguilla. Nevertheless, the survey has clearly demonstrated that Anguilla possesses significant cultural resources (particularly archaeological) which need to be protected, utilized and managed as part of the national development process.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Anguilla, one of the outer or "Limestone" Caribbees, is a low lying, albeit hilly, island of some 35 square miles surface area. It presents a characteristic Karst topography and an accidented coastline abounding in sheltered anchorages. Rainfall averages less than 30 inches per year, making it one of the driest Caribbean islands. Water flowing

on the surface is rare, but there are many fresh or brackish pools and lakes. Despite historical accounts of high forests, a scrub vegetation predominates, rendered patchy by the uneven and discontinuous soil pockets, themselves of different types.

Anguilla's archaeological resources have received scant attention. The first, and it would seem the only previous, archaeological report dealing with the island was published in 1868, and concerned itself with an isolated artifact found in Gavanah Cave. The possibility of an association between the shell celt discovered and the bones of an extinct and very large rodent also found in the cave has made for speculation. More recently, in 1979, a limited survey of selected sites (chiefly on Dog Island) was made by Ms. Linda Robinson as part of a U.S. Navy environmental survey team effort, but her findings have not been made available to the public. Very little was known, then, about the location or extent of Anguilla's cultural resources when the survey team arrived there on November 21, 1979.

From the standpoint of archaeological resources the survey was a major success. In all, nineteen (19) Indian sites were discovered, three of them major. The Fountain Cave site, in particular, promises to be a site of substantial regional importance. The sites are considered to be particularly valuable because of their size and their relatively undisturbed nature. A list of these sites, keyed to accompanying maps, follows:

A1 Gavanah Cave

The cave where the first archaeological find on Anguilla was made over a century ago. No new archaeological or palaeontological discoveries were made, as the cave has been dug out for fertilizer, and no prehistoric carvings or paintings were to be found on the cave walls.

A2 The Fountain

A cave containing a fountain, wherein were found petroglyphs and an Indian midden. A very important site worthy of further investigation.

A3 Commissioner's House

Site visited by Ms. Linda S. Robinson. No new finds were made.

A4 Island Harbour

A small midden partially disturbed by contemporary construction.

A5 Sandy Ground

One of the largest Indian sites in the West Indies, regrettably covered over in great part by a modern village.

A6 Crocus Bay

A small midden by the beach landing, containing possibly preceramic artifacts similar in shape to those found at Salt Pond, Antigua.

A7 Sandy Hill

A very large Indian site near the Old Fort and Police Station.

A8 Cove Bay

A substantial site, with many features visible.

A9 Maunday's Bay

A large site threatened by ongoing construction.

A10 Maunday's Bay Pond

The bottom of the pond has yielded what may be the earliest pottery on Anguilla, related to the Golden Rock Style of St. Eustatius and the Palo Seco Style of Trinidad.

A11 Fountain Hill

Some pottery and other evidence was found outside the Fountain.

A12 Rendezvous Bay

A very large Indian site, with mounds still visible.

A13 Long Bay

A small midden, hardly more than a surface scatter.

A14 Maid's Bay

A respectable site on high ground.

A15 Barnes Bay

A small Indian site where was found a valuable three-pointed stone.

A16 Indian Bottom Hill

A small and shallow midden in a spectacular, windward setting.

A17 Savannah Bay

A small midden.

A18 The Spring

A sherd scatter near the only flowing spring to be found by the party, on Road Salt Pond bottom.

A19 Little Harbour

A good-sized site on a promontory. Rather interesting cairns to be found there, probably of very recent origin.

Indian pottery was found at all except the first of the 19 sites. This pottery is almost all of the "Insular Saladoid" type, with a great emphasis placed on red paint. These traits remind one of Ostionoid-tending pottery from Guadeloupe and from the Virgin Islands. Some stone and shell tools were found as well.

Sixteen of the nineteen sites appear to date from 500 to 1500 A.D.; the other three are pre-ceramic sites, possibly dating as early as 2000 B.C. From the collective evidence, Anguilla was heavily populated during pre-Columbian times, more so apparently than neighboring St. Martin. In sum, Anguilla has one of the richest archaeological heritages in the region, which it should strive to protect and develop.

### HISTORICAL RESOURCES

European interest in Anguilla began in the seventeenth century. There are reports of seafarers visiting the island as early as 1609, and of abortive settlement attempts by the Dutch and French a few decades thereafter. The island was occupied by the British in 1650 and despite French invasions in 1666, 1745 and 1976, it has remained a British colonial possession from that date to the present. In 1967-68 Anguilla forcibly seceded from the Associated State of St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, and has since that time maintained a de facto status as a separate British colony.

Anguilla was too small, too arid and too impoverished of soil to support large-scale development as a plantation colony. Although a few sugar estates were established, economic activity has consisted primarily of small-scale cotton production, tobacco cultivation (in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), salt-raking, stock raising and subsistence farming. Fishing, seafaring and boat building have also been practiced.

The population grew gradually to a peak of about 10,500 people in 1800, after which it steadily declined due primarily to high levels of out-migration. Currently, on-island population stands at about 6,000 persons.

The survey found few visible remains of Anguilla's past, and the conclusion is inescapable that the island is impoverished with respect to historical sites or monuments.

Several prominent historical sites, such as the Old Fort at Sandy Hill and the Mount Fortune Plantation House, have been destroyed by physical-development projects during the last decade. Other sites, such as the Customs House at Blowing Point Harbor, are currently being destroyed by private property owners. Many other sites are badly deteriorated and overgrown.

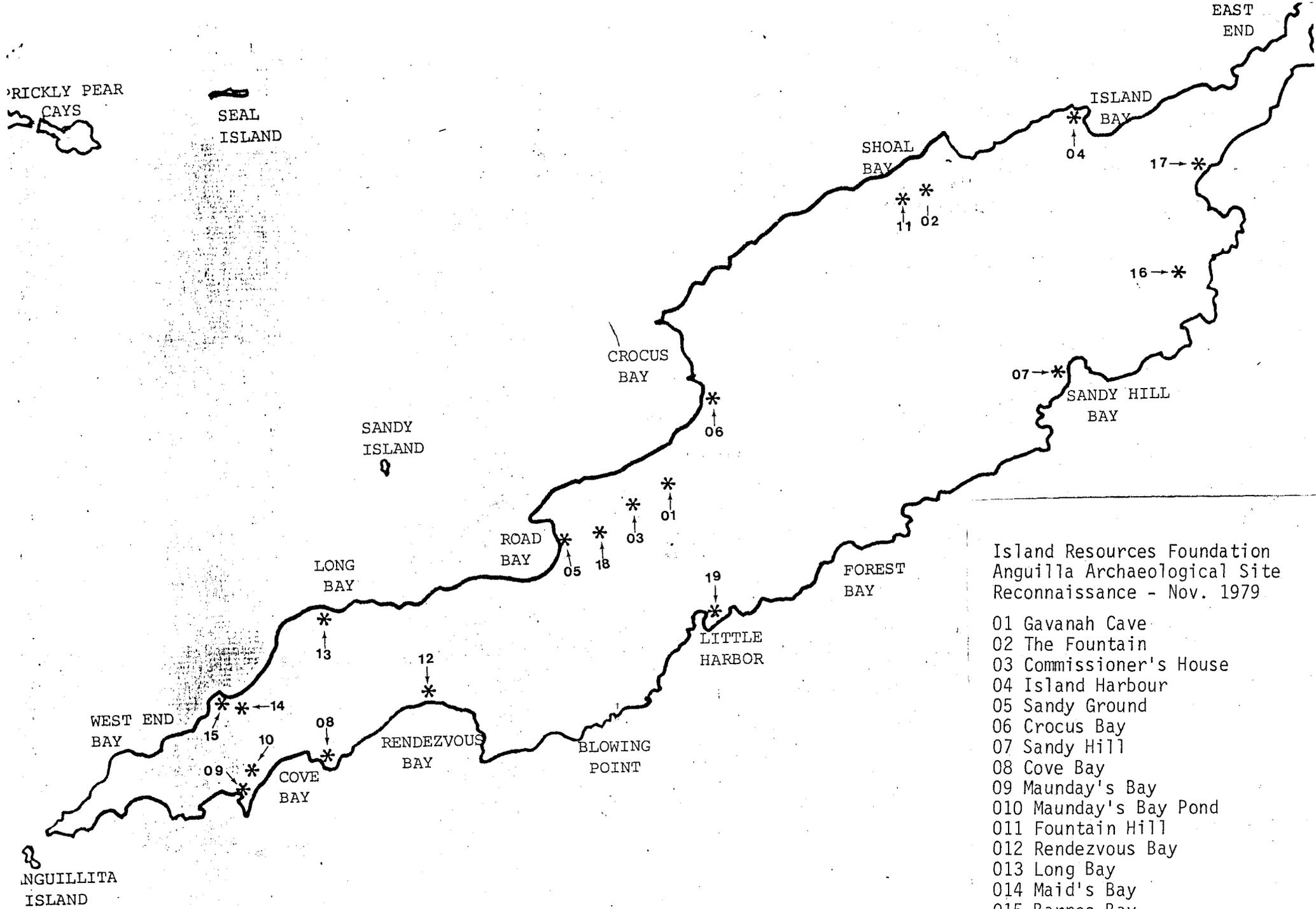
### Site Survey

The most important historical monuments and sites surveyed were:

- Wallblake House, which is about to be converted into a museum.
- The cemetery of the plantocracy behind the Road Salt Pond.
- The slave cemetery near the airport.
- Former great houses at Road Salt Pond (in use) and at Lower South Hill (abandoned).
- Some early churches, such as the Valley Methodist Church, St. Augustine's Church at Sandy Ground, and the Anglican Church at the Copse, all of which have been renovated and are still in use.
- The French landing sites at Katouche and Rendezvous Bays, which have scenic values.

Additionally, there are ruins of plantation sugar works, at Lower South Hill (Hughes), at Sandy Hill, at the Copse, and at Shannon Hill. Except for the Hughes Plantation, none of these has any buildings completely intact. Most are badly overgrown, with only foundations in evidence.

In sum, Anguilla has little to offer in the form of major historic sites and monuments. Of outstanding importance, however, are surviving folk (cultural) traditions, which are reflected in the vernacular architecture, boat building and racing, salt raking, fishing and farming. Parc Naturel de Guadeloupe has demonstrated in Marie Galante that much can be done to highlight these traditions in small islands which are still community oriented and relatively undeveloped. Its approach ought to be considered as a relevant model. Already these "popular" or "folk" traditions of Anguilla appear to be undergoing some major and extensive changes. This is particularly noticeable with respect to architecture (where people are turning from wood to concrete, and styles are changing from hip-roofed cottages to flat-roofed neo-Puerto Rican/ Dominican Republic ) and boat-building (where steel and fiberglass hulls are replacing wooden ones). The onslaught of tourism can be expected to accelerate the process of cultural transformation.



Island Resources Foundation  
 Anguilla Archaeological Site  
 Reconnaissance - Nov. 1979

- 01 Gavanah Cave
- 02 The Fountain
- 03 Commissioner's House
- 04 Island Harbour
- 05 Sandy Ground
- 06 Crocus Bay
- 07 Sandy Hill
- 08 Cove Bay
- 09 Maunday's Bay
- 010 Maunday's Bay Pond
- 011 Fountain Hill
- 012 Rendezvous Bay
- 013 Long Bay
- 014 Maid's Bay
- 015 Barnes Bay
- 016 Indian Bottom Hill
- 017 Savannah Bay
- 018 The Spring
- 019 Little Harbour