

PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE FIRST ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF ANGUILLA, WEST INDIES

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and George F. Tyson, Jr.**

During the five days from 21-25 November, 1979, a party of four archaeologists and historians undertook the first archaeological survey of the Island of Anguilla, West Indies. This party was under the joint auspices of Island Resources Foundation, 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.

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. 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.

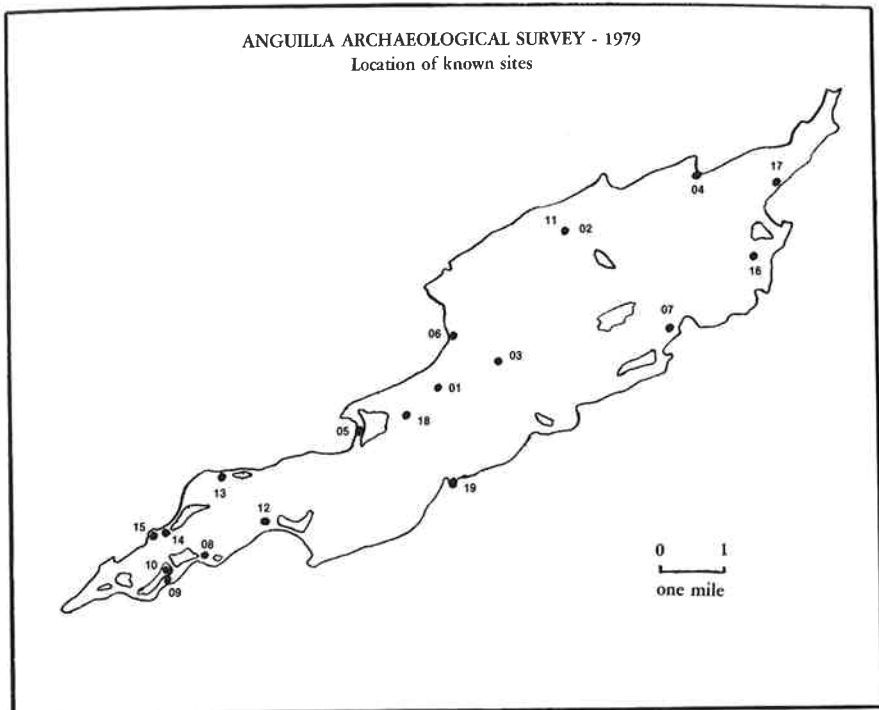
The fauna of Anguilla is relatively impoverished, as is the case on both sides of the 'Corner of the Antilles'. This area, comprised on the one side of the Virgin Islands and on the other of the St. Martin-Anguilla Bank and its many islands, is where the two major faunistic regions of the West Indies nearly touch, and are stretched each on its own side to a veritable tapering or thinning off. Were humans considered in biogeographical terms, one could argue in favor of a similar phenomenon on both sides of the 'Corner', with 'tramp' species or cultures being the only ones to effect successful crossings from one faunistic region to the other.

Despite the great deal of attention which has been given to the Virgin Islands by archaeologists, a similar intensity of interest has not been shown to the other side of the 'Corner of the Antilles'. Archaeological work has concentrated on St. Martin, where J. P. B. de Josselin de Jongh, Ripley P. Bullen, and Alfredo E. Figueredo have conducted investigations, with some work also done on St. Bartholomew, but not of a professional nature.

The nearby islands of Saba and St. Eustatius have received some attention from de Josselin de Jongh and Figueredo, while Antigua has an active and prosperous Archaeological Society and St. Christopher's has been explored intensely these last three years. Anguilla itself has received much less attention.

ANGUILLA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY - 1979

Location of known sites



The first archaeological report dealing with Anguilla was published in 1869, and concerned itself with an isolated artifact found in Cavannah 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.

In 1967, Mrs. June Flowers of St. Thomas visited The Fountain and informed Figueredo some time thereafter of the presence of petroglyphs on the Cave walls. Figueredo was unable to verify this report until this writing.

The last and only other archaeological information which is available for Anguilla, is the visit, on U.S. Navy business, of Mrs. Linda S. Robinson. She collected some pottery fragments around the Commissioner's house, according to unconfirmed hearsay.

The archaeological survey was more successful than anticipated. A total of 19 sites were located, some of truly large proportions by West Indian standards. A list of these sites follows.

01 Cavannah 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.

02 The Fountain

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

03 Commissioner's House

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

04 Island Harbour

A small midden partially disturbed by contemporary construction.

05 Sandy Ground

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

06 Crocus Bay

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

07 Sandy Hill

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

08 Cove Bay

A substantial site, with many features visible.

09 Maunday's Bay

A large site threatened by ongoing construction.

10 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.

11 Fountain Hill

Some pottery and other evidence was found outside The Fountain.

12 Rendezvous Bay

A very large Indian site, with mounds still visible.

13 Long Bay

A small midden, hardly more than a surface scatter.

14 Maid's Bay

A respectable site on high ground.

15 Barnes Bay

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

16 Indian Bottom Hill

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

17 Savannah Bay

A small midden.

18 The Spring

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

19 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 would remind one of Ostionoid-tending pottery from Guadeloupe and from the Virgin Islands. Some stone and shell tools were found as well.

In sum, it is fair to say that Anguilla has a rich archaeological heritage, which it would be well to protect and develop. Anguilla was populated heavily during Indian times, more so apparently than nearby St. Martin. This, coupled with its strategic position, renders the study of Anguillian archaeology of the greatest interest to anthropologists, historians, and human biogeographers. Hopefully, more will be done.

Bibliography

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