



The [Second Caribbean Conference of National Trusts](#) brought together delegates from 15 different countries including Spain, the USA, Curaçao, Jamaica, Guyana, Martinique and Barbados as well as local presenters from 19 – 22 May 2016. They told stories of the triumphs they had experienced and challenges they faced in the area of built heritage preservation in their communities and shared advice and possible solutions to the problems that face preservationists around the world such as inadequate financing, lack of governmental support and even climate change.

The Conference opened with a beautiful visual essay by photographer [Maria Nunes](#) who took us on a fascinating and colourful journey around Port of Spain's cultural heritage. Gorgeous images of carnival dancers set against the wonderful set of slightly in need of attention urban historic environment.

We also saw the Scottish church of Greyfriars before it was demolished last year – and the State Funeral of President Ellis Clarke in 2010 which brought everyone together from the mounted police to the Scouts – something that Maria believes will never happen again.



Delegates visiting Port of Spain on the opening day

The discussion touched on the importance of urban green space: how we can encourage governments to turn our cultural heritage into a tourist economy; the power of photography as a tool for outreach, tourism and record-keeping.



After an actual tour of the city we returned to the conference room where Michael Newton (left) showed delegates the work of the [Monuments Foundation](#) in Curacao. In the 1990s, Pietermaai, a district of Willemstad, was a rough place. 2 renovation projects had tentatively started on the edge of the district but no one dared to go any further in because of the drug trafficking.

Eventually a developer bought 3 houses and with the help of Dutch students, began to restore them. Then other groups started bringing boutique hotels, apartments and restaurants with a good mix of tourism and local benefit.

The Monument Fund made grants and loans of \$12m and \$40m came from other sources towards this new model for private investment in the historic environment. The challenges are: owners not prepared to do anything with their properties; lack of government support; threat of inappropriate development.



Iezora Edwards (above), a performing arts specialist, described her work with young people in Prince's Town, Trinidad and Tobago, to involve young people in researching and valorising local cultural heritage through story-telling and community theatre.

Alana Lancaster spoke about the natural heritage of the Caribbean region, its links with cultural heritage and the importance of streamlined management of sites.

[Kwynn Johnson](#) from Haiti described her experience there post-earthquake. She said that people attach more meaning to place particularly after a disaster; that material wealth and capitalism were more damaging to heritage than poverty and abandonment and she drew parallels with the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

In the ensuing discussion, the following interesting points were made:

- Even non-listed buildings can't just be demolished in a protected area
- Importance of sticking to surrounding dimensions and proportions when new buildings are introduced
- Not replicas – modern is better especially when it respects the environment
- Need for technological skill transfer, like the lime workshop
- When OAS launched national development scholarships, only one person applied to study restoration
- Need to reach out to young people

The PUS of the T & T Ministry of Planning opened Day 2 with very encouraging and supportive remarks. I'm hoping to get a copy but the highlights for me were:

- Role of state versus rights of individuals
- Planning positively
- Dilemmas: lack of finance; lack of craftsmen/knowledge; absence of awareness; theft and vandalism; abandonment
- Education as integral
- Revitalisation, restoration and re-appropriation of heritage assets
- Magnificent 7 now under the office of the Prime Minister
- \$1m investment in the motor industry brings 3.5 jobs. \$1m invested in heritage restoration brings 18.1 jobs.
- Do not be daunted by our limitations

Noting that she was taking to the converted, Celia Toppin presented the [OAS Cultural Heritage Project](#). She highlighted the challenge of dealing with colonial heritage and the fact that in small island economies there are competing priorities for governments.

The [Caribbean Heritage Network](#) now has a Secretariat based at UWI. The projects they are working on are to:

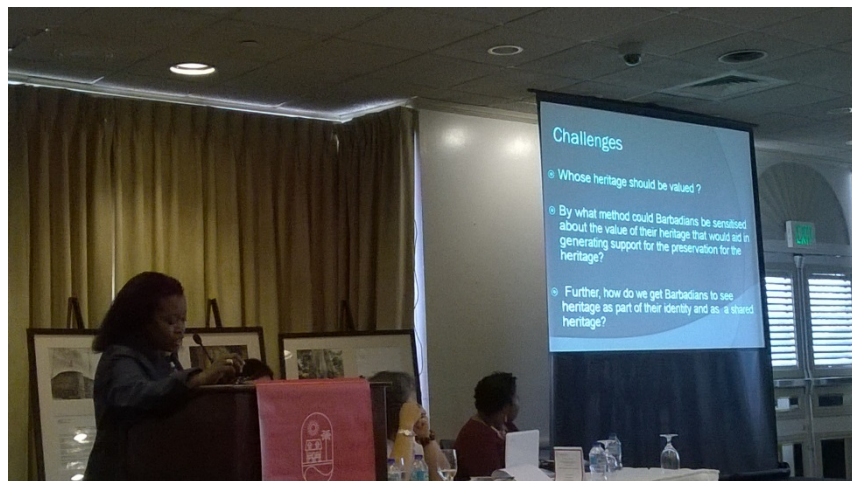
- Identify the components of model heritage policies/laws
- Develop a model for establishing national registers of heritage places using Arches software (St Christopher National Trust)
- Engage the public in sustainable heritage tourism (Grenada National Trust)
- Develop heritage education programmes

There was concern about sustainability once the project finishes next year. (Might there be a role for this group – or for INTO as a whole?)

In the session on heritage economics, we heard from Diana McIntyre-Pike about developing ‘community tourism’ opportunities in Jamaica through the ‘Villages as Businesses’ programme. Diana stressed the importance of getting the community motivated first, both wheedling out the entrepreneurs and risk-takers but also helping to identify heritage. She mentioned the ‘adopt a village’ programme for holiday makers and faith tourism.

Melisse Ellis presented a new model village project in Santa Rosa, T & T. A way of researching and archiving history and providing space for First Peoples to live and work.

Sheron Johnson from Barbados (left) talked about the need to understand value and not to let one value exclude the others. She also mentioned the rewriting of history debate around the desire to remove/or not the statue of Nelson and the importance of national pride and identity.



Other ways of reaching out included: free publications, June as Heritage Month; enactments and exhibitions; children painting garbage cans; open air cinema; 5k heritage run. She stressed the need for emotional connection and that heritage must be brought to life, must be shared, must get the message across.



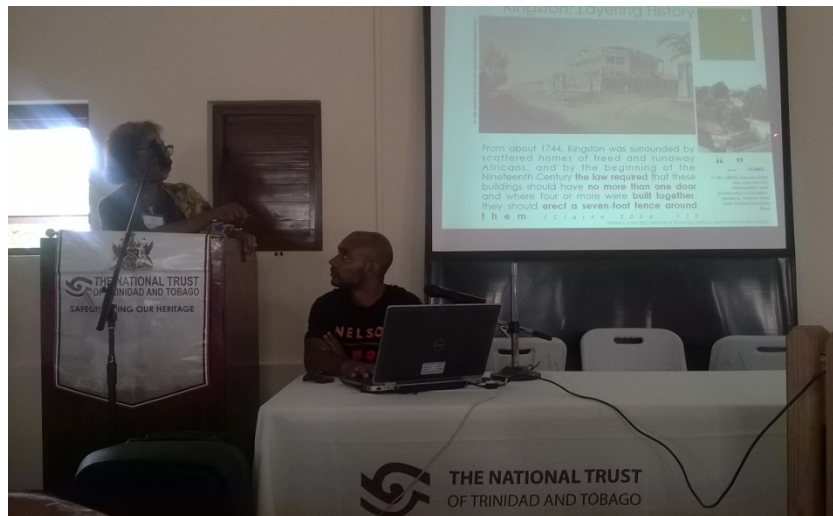
The afternoon was spent at [Nelson Island](#), Trinidad’s version of Ellis Island where indentured Indians disembarked in the nineteenth and early twentieth century; where Uriah Butler in the 1940s for speaking out for workers’ rights, Jewish Germans and Black Power protesters of the 1970s were all incarcerated.

The layering history session began with a presentation by Dr Kumar Mahabir on his vision for the future adaptive reuse of traditional cocoa drying houses that would embrace agriculture and tourism (T & T's oil based economy is floundering and diversification is needed). As well as the cocoa great houses re-envisioned as guest houses and visitor attractions.

Oshane Robinson talked about Jamaica's long history of tourism – since the 1850s – but noted its current decline due to people's fear of exploring Kingston, where all the museums are. He also showed the amazing underwater virtual tour of Old Port Royal.

Germaine Joseph of the Saint Lucia National Trust explained that the [Walcott House](#) had been vested in the Trust in 2010 and that Phase 1 was reconstructing the building and creating a museum. Phase 2 is to open a café in this previously depressed area. Phase 3 is an ambitious plan to acquire much of the largely abandoned block and make a viable heritage area.

Patricia Green presented Kingston, Jamaica, the largest English Caribbean city, noting that it was built on slavery (Philipsburg being a site of memory around salt, Bridgetown around sugar). After the 1907 earthquake, there was lots of great modern new building – a tradition that continues to today (Digicel HQ). When talking about her role in establishing the Bob Marley House, she said 'You have no idea 20/30 years later what will become of your ideas'.



We heard from the delegates about tourist visits to the favelas in Rio; the need for craft skills training; people being at the heart of development.

In the session on adaptive reuse following my presentation, Henry Fraser talked about how heritage will save the Bajan economy and that adaptive reuse was common sense and good value for money because it:

- Is cheaper
- Preserves cultural heritage
- Saves foreign exchange – labour intensive and low on imported materials

He highlighted the survival and reuse of the chattel houses as a major success and indicator of people's enthusiasm for heritage buildings. The discussion focussed on the importance of being business like and getting business of board. In Aruba, pension funds approached the Foundation in order to invest. We need people like that to have faith in us!

Alicia Oxley talked about heritage conservation in the Bahamas – statues of Queen Victoria and Columbus were mentioned as not being too popular here too.

Marie Louise Norton Murray talked about EU partnerships with Trinidad and Tobago with the goal of making Port of Spain a revitalised and sustainable city by supporting market access.

Francis Maude of [Donald Insall Associates](#) gave a very well-received presentation about project management planning based around the cost, time, quality triangle and beginning with the significance of the site (be that architectural, structural, design, occupants, wider community).

His tips were to:

- Assemble the right design team
- Allow for preliminary investigations
- Research and specify appropriately
- Allow time and budget for compliance with all appropriate legislation
- Appoint the best contractors
- Retain the trusted design team to administer the contract
- Develop the programme with allowance for the risk factors already set out, with the Key Actions Tracking Schedule
- Have regular cost reviews as the project progresses
- Allow a contingency for the unknown unknowns

Andy de Gruchy of [Limeworks](#) spoke passionately about his work and what dreams for the future. A self-confessed masonry 'geek', Andy has bought an historic farm in Pennsylvania which he is converting into a craft skills training centre to share his expertise with, and inspire, a new generation. He quoted Deuteronomy 27:2 to underline his point:

“So it shall be on the day when you cross the Jordan to the land which the Lord your God gives you, that you shall set up for yourself large stones and **coat them with lime** and write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over, so that you may enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, **a land flowing with milk and honey ...**” (Lime = land of milk and honey!)

Terry Suthers, retired Director of the [Harewood House Trust](#) introduced us to the magnificent property, with its amazing collection of Chippendale furniture, its Turner paintings and Capability Brown landscape. He briefly outlined work done to increase visitor numbers from 120k to 250k over three years (in fact, they got 350k!) and some of the strategies used to build awareness, drive visitors numbers and engage with the local community.

The following discussion touched on a number of things including the need for more opportunities like Andy's (note his trademark ArtIsAn Objective®); how to build on the relationship between big houses in the UK and the Caribbean (note Patricia Green's journey from discomfort in visiting these places built on the back of slavery and her journey into taking pride of them as 'my heritage'); requests for a simplified version/starter kit of project management planning guidance (role for INTO – NTHP guides, NT framework, SPAB advice?); Anne spoke about the artist community building they developed in Aruba and the hurdles encountered (from getting government approval to getting the artists to come!); Michele Celestine highlighted the need for good business planning (don't just talk about it!).

The last session focussed on some amazing conservation case studies from Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana. As they were very technically detailed I know I won't do them justice through a quick summary so am going to wait for the conference team to circulate details.

It was announced that the next edition of the Conference of Caribbean National Trusts will take place in Curacao in November 2017, to dovetail with their celebrations of 20 years of World Heritage Site status.