

Report on the excavation and survey at Caledonia Island in February 2018

Claudia Theune and Peter Hinterndorfer

After a survey on all of the „Five Islands“ in 2017, an excavation and closer examination of the structures at Site B at Caledonia Island was carried out between February 1st and February 8th 2018 as a cooperation between the University of the West Indies, the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago and the University of Vienna.

The aim of the excavation project was to find and analyse material remains, both infrastructural elements and small finds, of the different phases of use of the island. Site B is located at the south-western point of Caledonia Island on a narrow, but relatively flat platform situated in a north-western to south-eastern direction. When both Caledonia and Nelson Island were used as places of internment in 1940, men were detained at Nelson Island and women on Caledonia Island. The fact, that Site B is the only point from which it is possible to look over to Nelson Island and maybe wave at someone there, was among the reasons to start the examination in this place.

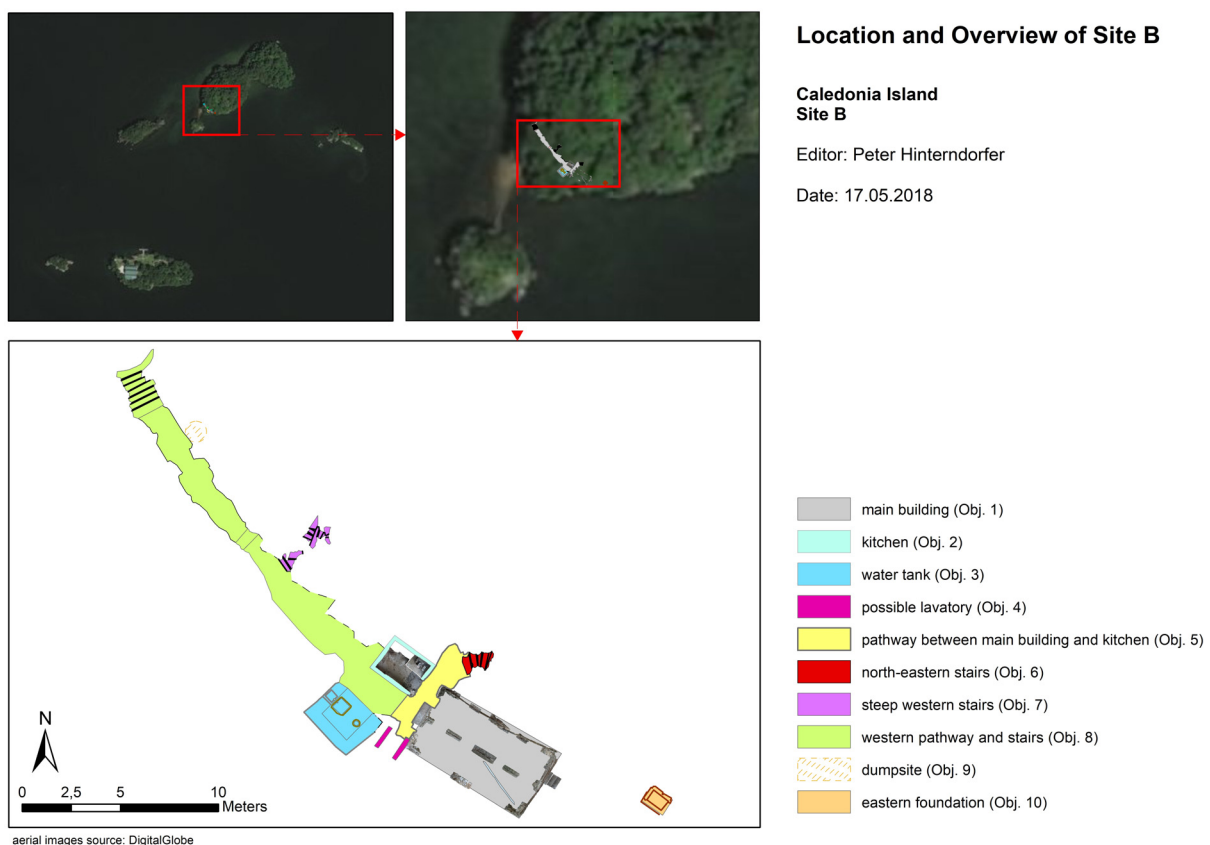


Figure 1: location of Site B and overview of remaining structures

The surrounding area is very rocky and steep, higher in the north-east and falling down to the sea in the south, south-west and west. There are remains of several building structures, connected via pathways and stairs. The entire island is overgrown with abundant vegetation.



Figure 2: View in north-western direction showing the steep and rocky surroundings and the dense vegetation

Prior to the excavation the remains were covered by leaves and dead wood, partly also with a layer of accumulated humus. Beverage cans, bottles, plastic spoons and other modern garbage spread all over the surface indicate that the site had been visited and used for holding picnics or drinking in recent times.



Figure 3: remains of main building prior to excavation, covered by leaves, dead wood and recent garbage

After the documentation of the situation prior to the excavation work, the site was cleaned of the modern garbage (which was looked through but not kept), leaves and dead wood. Humus that had accumulated upon parts of the site was defined as separate layer and also removed. The exposed remains at Site B were grouped as part of 10 Objects.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 – main building | 6 – north-eastern stairs |
| 2 – kitchen | 7 – steep western stairs |
| 3 – water tank | 8 – western pathway and stairs |
| 4 – possible lavatory | 9 – dumpsite |
| 5 – pathway between main building and kitchen | 10 – eastern foundation |

Main building (Obj. 1)

The main building is situated in the south-eastern part of Site B and about 7 metres long and 4 metres wide. The remains consist of 13 footing piers (SU003 – 015), a small stair in the south-eastern part (SU038) and 4 wooden beams, 3 of which were in situ (SU017 – 019). The footing piers served as foundation upon which a wooden house was set. The preserved beams were presumably part of the floor construction. Impressions of wooden beams on top of the footing piers show the original position of those that are not preserved. The stair in the south-east and the single step that is part of the footing pier 004 in the north-west formed the two entrances to the building. Concerning the two entrances opposing each other it is also notable, that because of the steep topography it is not possible to bypass the building without having to climb over rocks, so that it was necessary to have the opportunity to leave the building on both sides. The footing piers 006, 007, 011 and 012 differ from the others by the size and the type of masonry and seemingly belong to a younger phase. This suggests that the wooden construction above was replaced at least once and these piers were added to the foundation in this context.

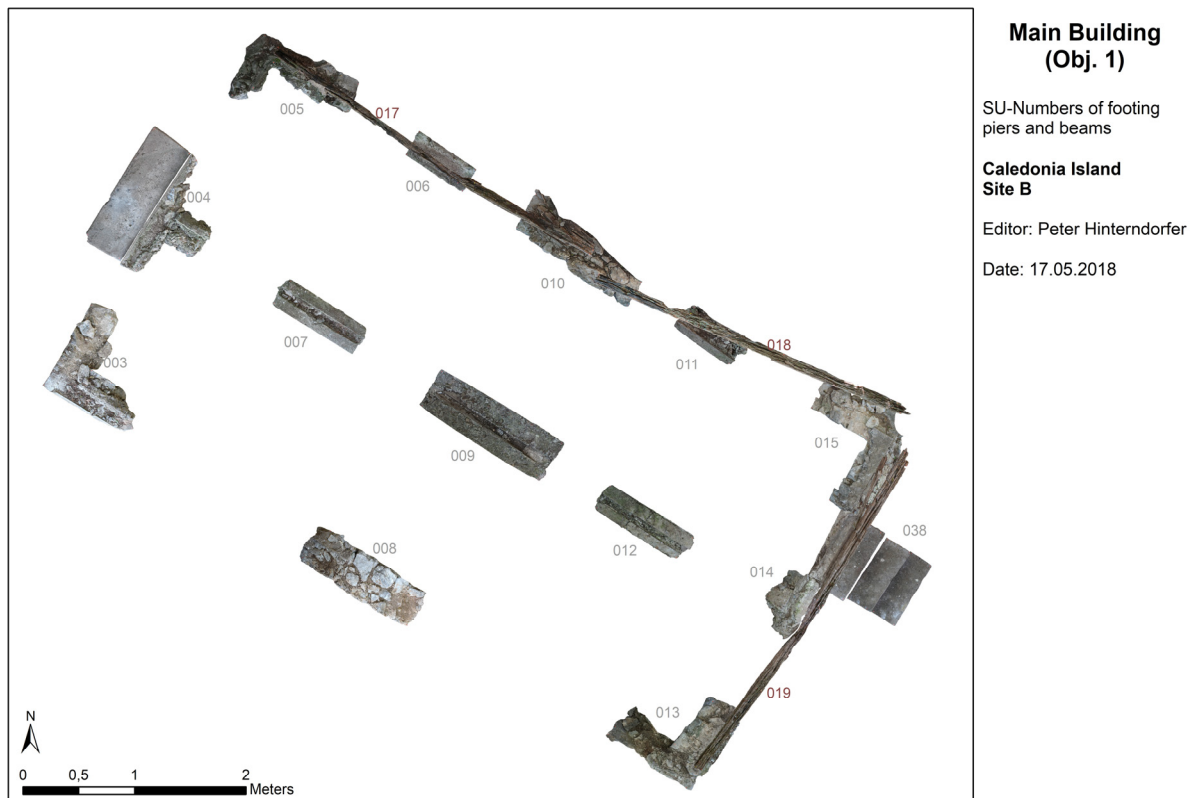


Figure 4: photogrammetric layout of the main building

Kitchen (Obj. 2)

The kitchen building north-west of the main building is 2.6 by 2 metres large. The masoned part of the wall is only about 1 metre high and a construction of wooden beams holds the roof. Both at the roof construction and at the upper parts of the north-eastern and south-eastern walls a covering of corrugated sheet iron is preserved. More corrugated sheet iron was found next to the building.



Figure 5: Kitchen building as seen from the south-east

Nails and furrows for horizontal beams at the outside of the upper part of the wall point to more wood or iron sheet originally covering the beams. The pitched roof is lower at the south-western side where two hooks for a rain pipe are preserved in situ. The entrance to the building is on the south-eastern side. Remains of hinges on the opposing north-western wall indicate that there has been a window.



Inside the building there is a flat cast-in-situ floor and a masoned stove in the eastern corner. Beam-holes in the north-western wall and the north-western part of the floor point to a wooden construction, like a table or a cupboard, originally installed in this place. As a further detail, a walled-in fragment of a stoneware bottle was discovered in the south-western wall.

Figure 6: Details of kitchen building. a) hook for rain pipe, b) hinge for window in north-western wall, c) walled-in fragment of bottle in south-western wall, d) stove in eastern corner

Water tank (Obj. 3)

Due to the fact, that there is no natural water source on any of the Five Islands. All Sites are equipped with big tanks to store water. In case of Site B on Caledonia Island, the water tank is an ashlar-formed masoned structure with a ground area of 1.8 x 1.8 metres and a height of about 2 metres. The foundation has a larger base (3 by 2.5 metres) and sits directly upon the bedrock. The southern part facing the sea is partly scoured. On the north-western side a discharge and an overflow pipe are embedded in the wall, directly over a rectangular basin. Remains of three layers of paint (whitish, grey and ochre) are preserved on the outside of the walls. The upper part of the tank has two openings (1 square 62 x 62cm, 1 circular 24 cm diameter) each with a concrete rim around it. Although these openings were presumably closed when the water tank was in use, no traces of coverings could be detected.



Figure 7: Water Tank as seen from a) the east and b) the north-west, showing the pipes and basin

Possible lavatory (Obj. 4)

A structure consisting of two low walls was interpreted as foundation for a lavatory. The two walls, each about 1.3 metres long and 30 to 40 centimetres high are positioned parallel to each other in a distance of 85 centimetres. The eastern wall is adjoining one of the foundation piers of the main building and both walls were painted using similar colours as detected on the water tank. In between the walls a gorge that leads towards the sea was formed from concrete. Beamholes or other elements to hold a superstructure could not be detected. Whereas it is possible that there was a wooden lavatory placed on this foundation walls, this cannot be ascertained without doubt.

Pathway between main building and kitchen (Obj. 5)

The concrete pathway forms a connection between the main building in the south-east, the kitchen building in the north-west, the possible lavatory in the south-west and stairs in the north-east. On the eastern side, it is connected to another pathway (Object 8).

North-eastern stairs (Obj. 6)

The stairs sit directly upon the bedrock and lead from the platform, on which all structures of Site B are placed, up the hill from where a path leads to Site A and the other parts of the island. It is a cast-in-situ construction made of concrete.

Steep western stairs (Obj. 7)

These very steep and narrow stairs also connect the platform with the uphill path to Site A. The steps are irregularly shaped and sit directly upon and between the rocks. Not all of the steps are directly connected.

Western pathway and stairs (Obj. 8)

The western pathway connects the pathway (Obj. 5) and the steep western stairs (Obj. 7) and runs down to the sea. It forms the closest access path to the whole ensemble of Site B. This structure consists of two sections, separated by a single step, and stairs that lead down to the water. The lowest parts of these stairs are broken down, but

some heavily corroded metal fixation points and other remains indicate that there has likely been a jetty. The stairs are very regular, wider, less steep and with some of them being rounded or having little semi circled bulges also more elaborated, compared to the other stairs at site B. The lowest preserved step bears the inscription "MATHEWS".

Figure 9: Stairs as seen from near the water →

Figure 10: Inscription on lowest preserved step "MATHEWS" ↓



Figure 8: the very steep and narrow western stairs



Dumpsite (Obj. 9)

A crevice next to the lower part of the western pathway was interpreted as a dumpsite due to the high amount of finds discovered there. Fragments of bottles and dishes, made of glass and stoneware, were found at the bottom of the rocks directly adjoining the north-eastern edge of the concrete pathway.

Eastern foundation (Obj. 10)

The south-easternmost structure of Site B is a concrete foundation of unknown function. It has a rectangular layout covering an area of 1.2 by 1 metres and consists of a lower part and an upper part, which is separated into a middle section and a frame. The south-eastern and south-western parts of this frame are broken and missing. Three beamholes in the north-eastern part of the frame point at a superstructure that had been placed on this foundation.



Figure 11: Eastern foundation as seen from the west

Finds

Most of the finds discovered both during excavation work and on surveys in the surrounding areas can be sorted into three main categories.

- 1) Relics of modern use
- 2) Bottles and tableware from 19th and early 20th century
- 3) Remains of Infrastructure

Relics of modern use



Figure 12: plastic spoons point at recent visitors eating at the site

Remains of modern use were discovered mostly on the surface in the whole area. This category includes objects which point at people eating and drinking in this place, like aluminium beverage cans, plastic spoons or food packaging. Also there were other items that probably were lost or disposed of by more recent visitors of the Site, like ignition plugs, a small light bulb, a plastic bead, part of a clothespin or three coins (TTD, 2 x 5 cents (1979 and 1981, 1 x 25 cents 1977).

Bottles and tableware from 19th and early 20th century

At the dumpsite as well as south of the main building, several fragments of tableware from the 19th and early 20th century were found. Fine pieces like a drinking glass with a foot or a decorated jug and plates and also the stoneware mineral water bottles are most likely remains from the use as place of recreation.

Some of the mineral water bottles are from Selters (Germany), where reference objects from the 19th century with similar bottlenecks and impressed stamps exist. Furthermore there are beer bottles. A stoneware bottle, which is embedded in the south-western wall of the kitchen building, could be identified as a mid-19th century bottle for ginger beer from a Scottish brewery. Several finds were detected to be from England, for example a transparent perfume bottle marked with the brand "Piesse and Lubin London" that was established in 1855. Pieces of porcelain, bearing the stamp "Dresden Ironstone China" are from a manufactory in Staffordshire. The fragment of a white porcelain plate with a stamp of "J&G Meakin" was



identified as a piece of the series "celeste" which had been produced between 1940 and 1970.

Figure 13: fragments of a) a richly decorated jug and b) a drinking glass with foot, both found at the dumpsite

Remains of infrastructure

Inside the area of the main building several pieces were excavated, that most likely were part of the buildings wooden superstructure. Parts of a window locking catch, a door fitting assembly.

Other finds

Few finds do not fit into the main categories. These are for example a hollow point bullet, parts of a fishing rod, a brush or a sole of a shoe, all of them found inside the main building. A complete metal bedframe, situated between the footing piers of the main building, has according to the stratigraphic sequence been placed there after the collapse of the superstructure. It is also questionable whether it was used in context with the other elements at Site B or brought here at a later point in time.



Figure 14: hollow point bullet, caliber .458"

Conclusion

At Site B several infrastructural elements are preserved, especially those made of concrete and mortar but also some wooden and metal elements. The ensemble contains a main building as well as a separate kitchen building, a water tank and likely a lavatory. Pathways and stairs were installed to make the area accessible both from the sea via a jetty and from other parts of the island and to make it easier to move around between the buildings. The discovered small finds represent a phase of use in the late 19th and/or early 20th century. Mineral water bottles and fine tableware show the high economic status of the people using the island for recreation. Beverage cans, food packaging and throwaway cutlery point at recent visits in the 2nd half of the 20th century.