
THEME FIVE: PLAIN LANGUAGE RESOURCES AND ACCESSIBILITY TO NEVIS HERITAGE

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Over the past year one of our students, Andy Conner who received his Master's degree in Art and Representation, has been working on writing the text and drafting the illustrations for a storybook for primary school children. Andy has based his story on what life might have been like in the early 1700's on Nevis when local militia could have been based at the battery or small fort at Newcastle, known as The Redoubt. The militia may have defended white settlers and their African-Nevisian slaves against the French. As you know The Redoubt was demolished at the beginning of 1997 in order for the Newcastle Airport runway to be extended as a result of the increase in tourism to Nevis (Morris, *et al.* 1999).

Andy had created a similar storybook for his practical work in the degree course, but that book was based on life in a village on the Red Sea in Egypt during the Medieval period. Nevis and the 18th century are a long way from that experience but Andy was delighted to give it a try. He wrote a first draft of the text and I brought it out to show several people in late December to see what they thought - and everyone had comments to make! He has now incorporated those suggestions into his second draft, and is working on creating the full illustrations which will be a set of watercolours - one for each page of the storybook. One of the draft originals is presented here to give you an idea of what the story might be about.



Fig. 5.1 Draft original painting by Andy Connor for the storybook

Andy has been trying to include in the pictures some of the finds, or artefacts, found during our excavations at The Redoubt before it was demolished - things like a barrel, items of clothing, glass bottles and pottery vessels. One of these artefacts was the rim of a very thick-walled large jar which I knew from my research was not a British pot. The pot appeared to have been very big, probably a large storage jar of some kind since it was so thick-walled but had a small rim diameter. The illustration we published of that rim is reproduced below.

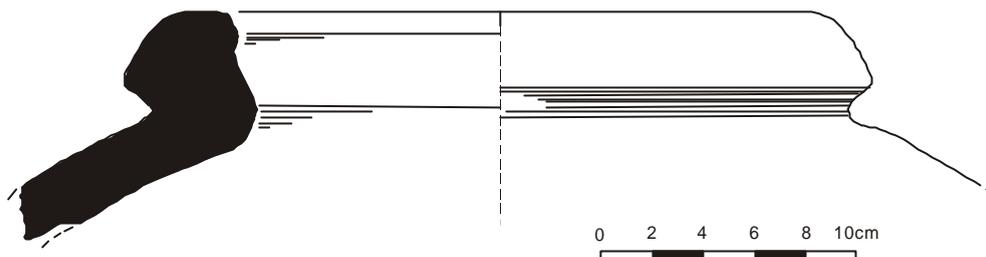


Fig. 5.2 Montelupo jar (From Morris, et al. 1999, fig. 8, no. 6)

I gave a lecture about The Redoubt finds at a ceramics research group meeting in London and a member of the audience, Dr. Alan Vince, a specialist in historical period pottery from Europe and the Mediterranean, recognised it as the rim sherd from a Montelupo (Italy) jar, used to store and transport olive oil. I suddenly realised that I had seen many of these before - in a book which you might actually have: *Caribbean Style* (Slesin, et al. 1985). The Nevis Historical and Conservation Society has a copy in their library in the Nelson Museum at Belle Vue. Turn to pages 85 (Parham Hill, Jamaica), 138 (Rose Hall, Jamaica), and 144 (Good Hope, Jamaica). The most famous examples on Nevis are at The Hermitage (page 99). The NHCS has recently acquired a Montelupo jar, a kind donation from the Trott family, which had been stored for many years in the Trott House next to the Museum of Nevis History. Hopefully this complete example of a Montelupo oil jar will be on display in the future for everyone to see.

The story is that these vessels were frequently transported from Italy to London and Bristol, as well as to other English ports, in the 17th-18th centuries and undoubtedly were re-transported with their olive oil still inside to the Caribbean on ships along with many other foods. There was no point in throwing these large storage jars away once the oil had been used or decanted to smaller pots; instead they made outstanding water jars. Their durability and usefulness are obvious since so many excellent examples are still treasured by their owners on Nevis and elsewhere in the former British-owned islands of the Caribbean today.

Andy will be finalising his paintings this summer, and will be making the books this autumn for distribution (one to each pre-school and primary school on Nevis) this Christmas - if all goes well! At least 50 copies will be given to the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society for selling in their museum shops, and the proceeds donated to the Society.

We hope that everyone will enjoy the story!

There are plans for a booklet about The Redoubt for teenagers and adults to be written next year and published to sell alongside the children's storybook which will detail the story of this battery, past and present.

References

- Morris, E. L., Read, R., James, S. E. and Machling, T. 1999, '... the old stone fort at Newcastle...' The Redoubt, Nevis, eastern Caribbean, *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 33, 194-221.
- Slesin, S., Cliff, S., Berthelot, J., Gaume, M., Rozensztroch, D. and de Chabaneix, G. 1985, *Caribbean Style* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter Inc.; London: Thames and Hudson).