Fort Rodney Restoration - Traditional methods for adaptability

The Saint Lucia National Trust has a mandate to preserve and protect the patrimony of Saint Lucia. In this light the Trust has a responsibility to implement the listing of Buildings Project which is crucial to the preservation of the patrimony of Saint Lucia, in that it will provide a framework for the listing and preservation of historic buildings of Architectural merit.

In recent years the Trust has documented 250 historic Buildings Island wide and has an active campaign to sensitize Saint Lucians about the value of built heritage. Climate change has been recognized as a clear threat to the condition and the outstanding universal value of our built heritage, with extended periods of rain, flash flooding and other weather phenomenon continuing to have a detrimental impact on our built heritage.

In 2017, the western corner of Fort Rodney, an 18th century fortification which played a pivotal role in the war between the British and the French for possession of the island, collapsed after the passing of tropical storm Maria. The collapse of the wall was exacerbated by a tree lodged in the south western corner of the Fort.

In 2019 the Trust received support from a volunteer, Mr. Johnny Martin (see figure 1 & 2), a Conservator and specialist in lime mortar to repair Fort Rodney.

Although the root was dead it took a considerable amount of skill and strategy to remove it from the corner of Fort Rodney. Mr. Martin systematically sledged the hillside for fallen rocks from the side of the existing structure to restore the Fort. After the collapse the rocks rolled and scattered down the hillside. Mr. Martin followed the traditional method of construction by inserting shims and binding them with lime mortar to restore the fort to its original standing.

The project was subject to heavy rains from a tropical wave during the restoration. The first test for the restoration works to Fort Rodney. In the same light we adopted the strategy of applying wet towels overnight and spraying with water, to deal with the effects of extreme rise in temperature during the day which would adversely affected the drying of the lime mortar. Spraying with water prevented the lime mortar from drying too fast from the extreme heat.

Currently most of our built heritage is in disrepair and threatened by the effects of climate change. The two extreme conditions during the restoration of Fort Rodney served as an eye opener to the unstable weather patterns that the Caribbean has had to endure in recent years.

The Trust is encouraged by the successful restoration of Fort Rodney and is working towards the preservation of our built heritage. We continue to monitor the restored south western corner of the Fort for the effects of climate change.