

National Heroes Square and Gallery Development Committee

- Report of the Committee
- Location of the Statue of Horatio Lord Viscount Nelson
- Redevelopment of National Heroes Square
- Redevelopment of National Heroes Square
Courtyard of Parliament Buildings
Palmetto Square
- Development of a National Heroes Gallery

LOCATION

OF

THE STATUE

OF

HORATIO LORD VISCOUNT NELSON

which Lord Nelson does not qualify.

5. Suggestions for Relocation of Nelson's Statue

5.1 The Committee proceeded to consider the suggestions received for a possible new home for the Nelson statue.

5.2 Embedded in the 81 oral and written submissions received by the Committee and in the newspaper reports considered by the Committee were 24 concrete suggestions for the statue. These were as follows:-

- ▶ The east coast of Barbados - backing Barbados and facing England
- ▶ The Barbados Museum and Historical Society
- ▶ The Pierhead in Bridgetown
- ▶ Trevor's Way in Bridgetown
- ▶ Nelson Street, St. Michael
- ▶ Piccadilly Square, London, England
- ▶ The vicinity of the Drill Hall, Garrison, St. Michael
- ▶ The vicinity of Carlisle Car Park, Bridgetown
- ▶ The Courtyard of Parliament Buildings, Bridgetown
- ▶ Glenburnie, St. John
- ▶ The "backwoods" of St. George
- ▶ A platform in the sea off Port St. Charles, St. Peter
- ▶ Millennium Heights, St. Thomas

- ▶ Shirley Heights, overlooking Nelson's Dockyard, Antigua
- ▶ The Old Naval Dockyard, Mobil Park, near Pebbles Beach, St. Michael
- ▶ A platform, out to sea, off Carlisle Bay
- ▶ A platform, out to sea, off Speightstown
- ▶ The Ernie Bourne Highway, St. Andrew
- ▶ Barclays Park, St. Andrew
- ▶ The area of land south of the Main Guard, The Garrison, St. Michael
- ▶ The site of the old Harbour Police Station, Bay Street, Bridgetown
- ▶ The proposed Maritime Museum, planned for the Fort Willoughby site, Bridgetown
- ▶ The courtyard of the British High Commission
- ▶ The Queen's Park, Bridgetown.

6. **Basis of the Committee's Recommendation**

6.1 In making its choice of the most suitable relocation site, the Committee took into account the following considerations:-

- ◆ Submissions received or heard by the Committee overwhelmingly proposed the relocation of Nelson's statue from National Heroes Square.
- ◆ While Lord Nelson can by no means be considered a

national hero of Barbados, both he and his statue are undoubtedly part of the history of Barbados.

- ◆ The Nelson statue, the third oldest such monument to the memory of Lord Nelson after those in Birmingham, England and Montreal, Canada, has significant value as one of the tourist attractions of Barbados.
- ◆ Based on the history of its commissioning and erection, the Nelson statue should be considered to be part of the public property of Barbados and treated as such.
- ◆ The location of the Nelson statue should bear some relation to Lord Nelson's place in the overall sweep of Barbadian history, modest though it is on the evidence available.
- ◆ In view of Lord Nelson's pro-slavery proclivities and activities the location of the statue must not be such as to suggest that Nelson is a hero of the Barbadian people.
- ◆ It is in the best interests of Barbados that the Nelson statue be relocated expeditiously from National Heroes Square.

7. The Decision

7.1 Based on the foregoing considerations, the Committee

agreed that the most appropriate location for the Nelson statue is the proposed Maritime Museum or Maritime Heritage Centre planned for the Fort Willoughby area, Bridgetown. The Coast Guard's base was the dry dock yard. The dry dock is not now in service.

7.2 In his Heritage Review of the Bridgetown Dry Dock (1993) submitted to the Barbados Museum and Historical Society and the Barbados National Trust, **Mr. David Rollinson** noted that as early as 1719 a ship building and repair yard was established on the site of the dry dock. The dry dock was built by John Blackwood. The property was leased to him by the colonial Government and operated from 1893. It has served inter-island traders, local ship owners and the Royal Navy for approaching 100 years. Mr. Rollinson describes the dry dock as:

“an important cultural asset for Barbados. The screw lift mechanism that forms an integral part of the dry dock operation is thought to be the only one of its type in the world. This uniqueness gives the Dry Dock site international historical significance.

The Dry Dock and screw-lift are in a generally good state of preservation. Little structural change has taken place on the dock yard or the screw-lift mechanism. An extensive 'as found' survey determined the restoration potential for the site and the screw-lift to be excellent.

Restoration and conservation measures designed to ensure the continued survival of the dry dock and screw-lift can be implemented successfully given a well designed and detailed work-plan, adequate funding and long-term legal protection for the site and its artifacts.

The development of a Maritime Heritage Centre, featuring innovative maritime based programmes, interpretation and activities in the former dry dock area, in conjunction with the sympathetic restoration and innovative adaptive re-use of the adjacent warehouses, could provide a unique and exciting way to honour and interpret the maritime heritage of Barbados while making a significant contribution to the economic health of Bridgetown and the appeal of the island's tourism industry."

7.3 It is against that background and those proposals that the Committee makes its recommendation.

This site was considered to be the most appropriate for the statue on the following grounds:

- ▶ the Nelson statue will be properly treated as an historical artifact and Nelson and the statue will be accorded their appropriate place within the maritime history of Barbados;

- ▶ the value of the statue as an easily accessible monument will be preserved and indeed will help in the development of the new Maritime Museum or Heritage Centre as a tourist attraction
- ▶ the statue will be in a prime location but not so as to give an impression that Nelson is a hero of the Barbadian people.

8. The Committee, however, felt the need to propose certain qualifications or conditions to the recommendation:

- ◆ That Government will have a significant stake in the ownership or direction of the proposed Maritime Museum or Heritage Centre. The Committee felt that it might well be inappropriate for Government to turn the statue, which is public property, over to a private sector interest who might simply apply it in a commercial venture, while it is true that several private sector entities have expressed an interest in acquiring the statue. Most important, however, is the fact that the establishment of the Museum or Heritage Centre should be a major cultural intervention by the private sector in collaboration with Government for the benefit of Barbadians and visitors alike.

- ◆ That Government would arrange for the taking down, storing, restoration and preservation of the statue in the short term, in preparation for its relocation in the new Museum or Heritage Centre. The Committee felt that when once a decision to move the Nelson statue has been taken, it would be counter-productive to allow the statue to remain in National Heroes Square for any substantial period of time, since this state of affairs may unnecessarily fuel public controversy.

- ◆ That there is credible evidence to suggest that the proposed Maritime Museum or Heritage Centre will be constructed in the very near future. The Committee felt that it would be both wrong and financially costly to have the statue stored and unavailable for public viewing for a prolonged period of time. The statue remains one of the tourist attractions of Barbados and should therefore be utilised as such.

- ◆ Restoration of the dry dock and screw-lift are regarded as imperative even though they should not be applied to commercial service.

9. In the event that the qualifications or conditions submitted with its recommendation cannot be achieved, the Committee recommends that another site should be preferred and

that the statue should be relocated on the compound of the Old Naval Dockyard at "Mobil Park", near Pebbles Beach, St. Michael.

9.1 The Old Naval Dockyard was considered to be the most appropriate alternative site for the following principal reasons:-

- ◆ Preferences to that effect were expressed in submissions to the Committee.
- ◆ The marine area from the sea wall at the back of the Yacht Club, Bay Street past the pier at Grand Barbados Beach Resort and the Barbados Cruising Club along to the former Barbados Hilton Gravesend and behind the Drill Hall, and the buildings and land on that stretch of coastline on to Bay Street were the main dockyard of the British navy in the Caribbean before, during and after Nelson's career. The Garrison Savannah and the barracks and officers houses around it, and the present base of the Barbados Defence Force at St. Ann's Garrison (including the Drill Hall and the Main Guard both approved locations for Nelson's statue in submissions to the Committee) were then applied to military and/or naval uses.
- ◆ The site is also within the Garrison Historic Area, a locality very much associated with military and naval history, and in this sense connected to Lord Nelson.