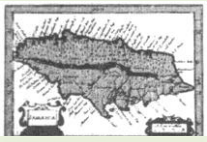
Stewart Castle Development Proposal



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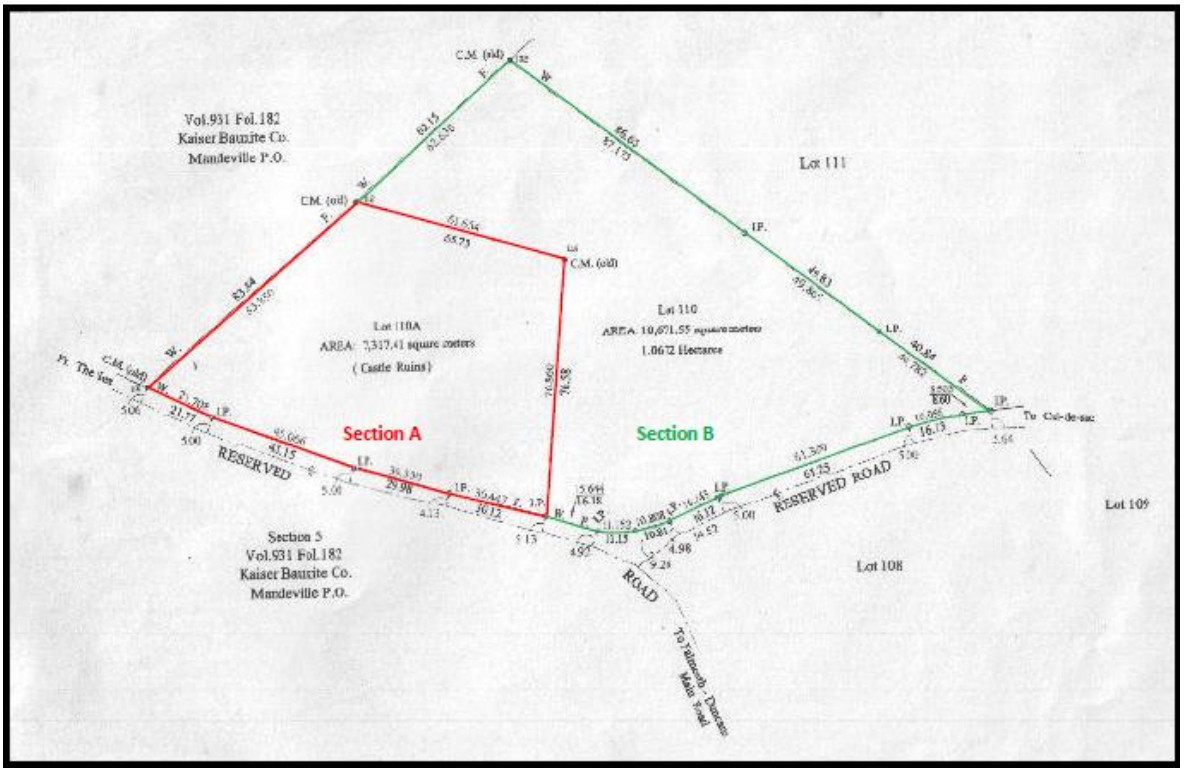
1.0 Introduction

In March 2010, a request was made to the Heritage Preservation and Planning Unit by the Executive Director to view and make recommendations for the aesthetic development of the historical site of Stewart Castle. The site was visited, assessed and surveyed on August 4 & 26, 2010. Participants in this project are from the Heritage Preservation and Planning Unit of the Archeology Division of the JNHT and include Selvenious Walters, Debra-Kay Palmer, Jasinth Simpson, June Heath and Edward Coore from the Finds Unit.

The proposal being put forward covers approximately 0.7317 ha (1.72 acres) – Section A, of the total Stewart Castle property and concentrates primarily on the creation of a proposal to develop a site that will be appealing to all users of the Stewart Castle estate. It looks at the present condition of the site and puts forward actions that will create a site of beauty and increased marketability.



Map 1: Showing Stewart Castle site boundaries

2.0 Background

The Stewart Castle ruins can be found 3 km west of Duncans and 11 km east of Falmouth, Trelawny. It has to its credit two theories which speak to its origins. One theory according to the late Dan L. Ogilvie in his book titled *"History of the Parish of Trelawny"* claims the castle was originally built by a Frenchman named Carlos Latebeaudare who used the castle as a lure for ships which once crashed on the rocks would be robbed and any survivors killed. Latebeaudare was reported to have been eventually killed by his slaves. However, the more popular and widely believed theory is that James Stewart having fled to Jamaica from Scotland in 1754 bought the property consisting of 167 acres in 1756 and built the fortified Stewart castle (plate 1).

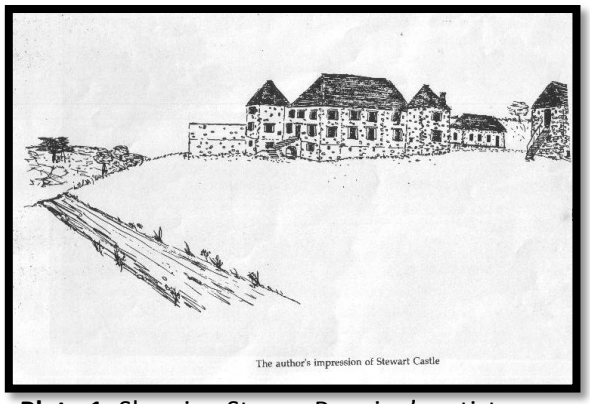


Plate 1: Showing Steven Panning's artist impression of Stewart Castle

The castle consisted of three floors, a cellar and two floors above and had loop holes in each room to ward off attack.

There were also fire places on the ground and first floors one directly above the other. The estate (plate 2) remained in the hands of the Stewart family for three generations and then was sold to Robert Sheldon in 1829 after the death of James Stewart II in 1828. Before his death, James Stewart II was known for having set up the free slave village subsequently named after him called Stewart Town. The estate when passed to Mr. Sheldon was 167 acres but when it was sold to Dr. C. T. Dallas it had increased in size to 1240 acres. The property was owned in the 1930's by Mrs. George Dewar, who passed it on at her death to her daughter Mrs. Watson-Taylor, who then passed it on to her son Mr. Noel Viera.

The property was used both for sugar and grazing and according to the *Jamaica Almanac* had an average stock of 300 between 1811 and 1832. In 1912 the property use was for mixed cultivation and went entirely towards grazing in 1920. The property was then bought by the Kaiser Bauxite Company in 1930's for housing and they gave the ruin to the National Trust Commission in 1960.

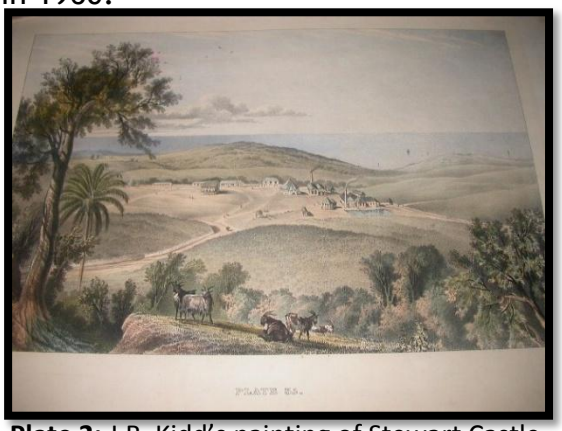


Plate 2: J.B. Kidd's painting of Stewart Castle (1835)

3.0 Observations

In approaching the Stewart castle ruins the absence of directional signs to the site was noted. The turn off onto the road named *Stewart Castle Boulevard* was the only indication that the site was nearby. The site is located at the top of a path which narrows to single lane vehicular traffic as it nears the property and is not labeled. There is also an absence of signs to indicate arrival to the site or story boards to provide historical information. The entrance to the property is through an open section between two trees (plate 3).

Plate 3: Showing entrance to the site

The property boundary is marked using a barbed wire fence which has broken down in some sections and not clearly visible in others (plate 4).

Plate 4: Showing section of property with barbed wire

The castle grounds are generally in good condition with most areas of the site grounds having grass and some trees. There are several foundations throughout the grounds some of which are visible (plate 5). The foundation located under the large red birch tree at the north of the property shows evidence that some stones have been removed (plates 6 and 7).

Plate 5: Showing foundations at the south - west section of the property

Plate 6: Showing foundations at the north of the property

Plate 7: Showing removal of stones from the foundation at the north of the property

Much of the castle grounds are surrounded by forest. There are large fruit trees such as tamarind, ackee and guinep which are found around the periphery of the castle, along with red birch and acacia trees (plates 8 and 9).

Plates 8 & 9: Showing trees on the periphery of the property

Several trees throughout the property have been cut down and in some cases burnt (plate 10); however, some of these trees show signs of re-growth (plate 11). There is also evidence of trees that show the effect of being scorched due to burning occurring too close to them (plate 12).

Plate 10: Showing burnt tree stumps

Plate 11: Showing re-growth on tree stumps that have been chopped down

Plate 12: Showing trees that have been scorched

Towards the west end of the estate, there is a section that is devoid of grass (plate 13). To the left of this section, there is a path obscured by an overgrowth of bushes which is said to lead down to *Fisherman's Beach* (plate 14).

Plate 13: Showing cleared area

Plate 14: Showing overgrown path

There is evidence of goats and other animals roaming the property due to the excrement found throughout the site (plate 15). There is also a pumpkin vine located at the foundations near the red birch tree (plate 16) and also at the north-west section of the property a bed of white periwinkle (plate 17).

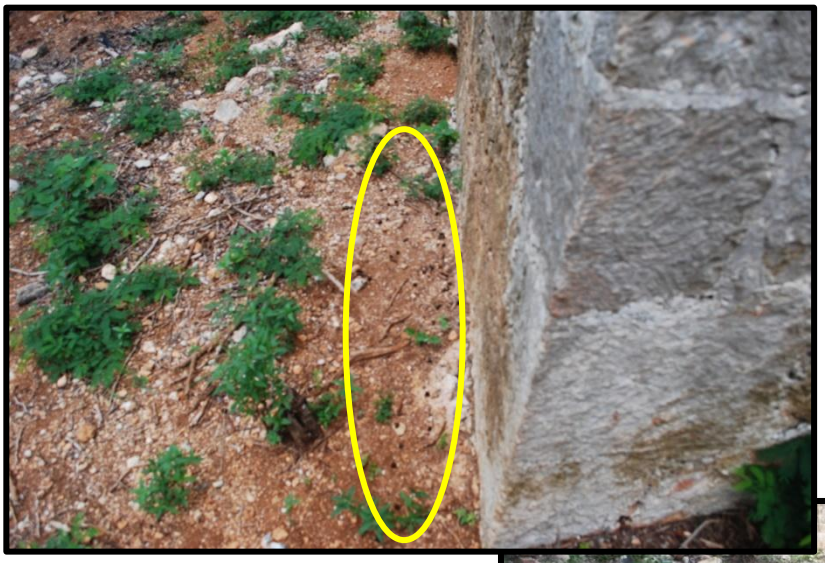


Plate 15: Showing goat excrement

Plate 16: Showing pumpkin vine at the base of foundation

Plate 17: Showing periwinkle bed

Found also on the grounds of the site are the remains of artifacts specifically ceramic sherds and slate. The ground colour on this section is also darker which may indicate that more information may be revealed on further investigation (plates 18 & 19).

Plates 18 & 19: Showing surface artifacts

At the south-west section of the property is an earth mound outlined with stones which may be foundations (plate 20).

Plate 20: Showing mound with foundations

The main castle fortification has trees and bushes growing out of the crevices and the top section (plate 21). The state of the walls is in relatively good condition however, there are still structural areas of concern.

Plate 21: Showing plants growing from crevices in the castle

There are three stairs which lead from the castle on the north and south sections which show signs of stones being removed or of wearing away (plates 22 and 23).

Plates 22 &23: Showing stairs leading from the castle

There are specific areas at the window openings which show that stones and wooden support beams may have fallen out or been removed over time (plates 24 & 25).

Plates 24 & 25: Showing stone and wood loss

Also, found in some openings were wasp nests (plates 26 & 27).

Plates 26 & 27: Showing wasp nests in the openings

Inside the castle structure there are several foundations and the evidence of various rooms within the castle. There is a tank or cistern located at the north - western section of the castle however, the base of the tank is overgrown with trees and is filled with soil (plate 28).

Plate 28: Showing tank within the castle

In some of the rooms, stone has been placed to create a leveled off area. Plants have also grown up in some of these areas (plates 29 and 30).

Plates 29 & 30: Showing rooms with piled up stones

At the left of the stairs on entering the castle, the foundation of what may have been a chapel can be clearly seen. The areas are covered with grass and seem to be maintained periodically. There is some uncertainty about the foundations leading to the chapel and therefore investigations to expose the area are necessary (plates 31 and 32).

Plates 31 & 32: Showing the remains of the chapel and the foundations

There is one acacia tree in this area with several tree stumps observed throughout (plates 33 & 34).

Plates 33 & 34: Showing Acacia tree and tree stumps inside castle fortifications

The small outbuilding described also as a privy according to Digital Archeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS's) 2007 research, located at the north-east of the castle shows plant life growing out of the top and cracks in the building as well as hanging roots from the top (plates 35, 36 & 37).

Plates 35: Showing outbuilding

Plate 36: Showing red birch tree growing from privy (outbuilding)

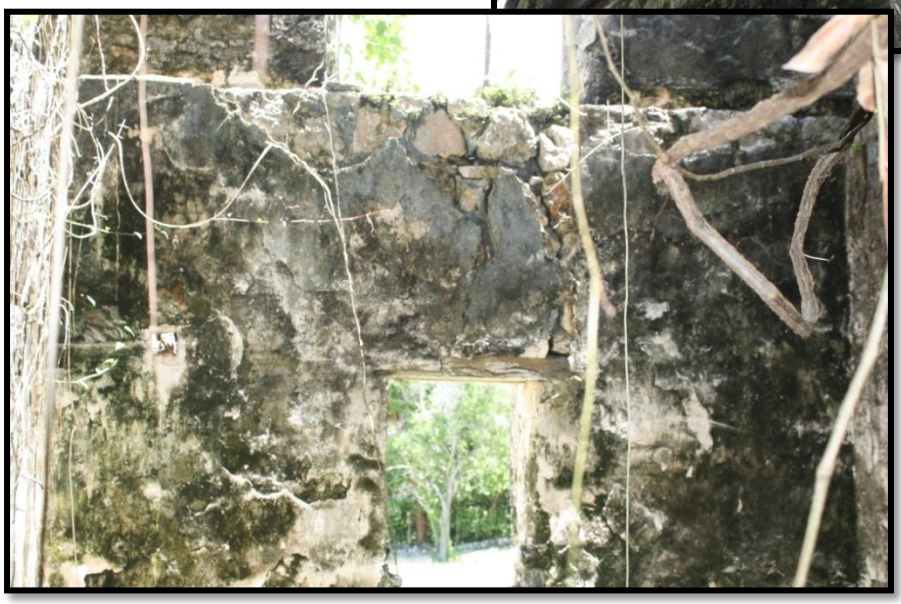


Plate 37: Showing hanging roots from privy (out building)

A large crack was observed running the length of the building and evidence that the supportive wooden beams have been lost. In addition, the stones seem loose in this area and are almost ready to fall out, which can cause damage to any visitors to the site (Plates 38 & 39).

Plates 38 & 39: Showing areas in wall with cracks along missing wood support

Found around the base of this structure is a bed of Aloe Vera and cacti. It is important to note that the property has no lighting or running water (plate 40).

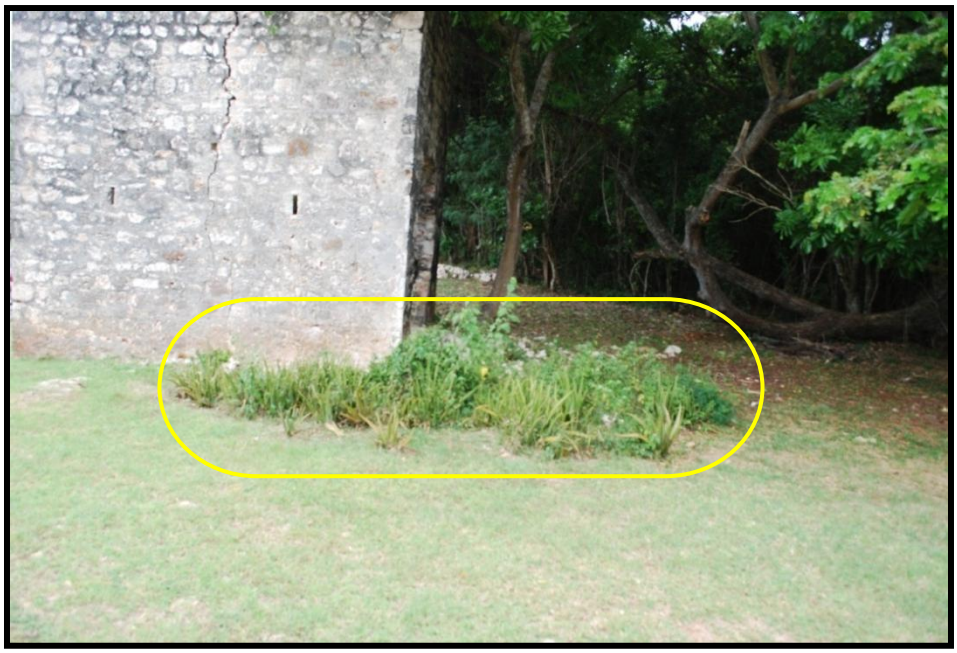


Plate 40: Showing area with Aloe Vera and cacti

4.0 Recommendations

The Stewart Castle property is a beautiful scenic property which has in its current state the potential to be a site perfect for several events. The site can be geared towards being used for educational activities, picnics, corporate and public events. The land space of the property is large enough to house several events at one time. The general concept as a park and picnic area is one that can attract visitors both nationally and internationally while creating opportunities for sustainability for the local community.

4.1 Signage and Storyboards

Directional signs to the site should be placed at specific points along the journey for ease of access to the site as well as to increase anticipation.

The following points are suggested areas for sign placement: (**Map 1: Proposed directional signs to Stewart Castle**)

- Along the main road at Braco and Duncans
- At the turn off at Stewart Castle Boulevard.
- A sign to indicate the first left turn at the juncture off of Stewart Castle Boulevard
- A welcome sign should be placed at the entrance to the site.

Story boards made of weather resistant material (plate 41) should be placed at specific points throughout the property to allow for a complete experience for those persons visiting the site.

A story board should be placed at the following points:

- At the castle itself to give a brief history of the estate
- At the two main foundations on the property
- At the privy including information on foundations
- Labels for trees on the property

Plate 41: Example of outdoor sign

Map 2: Proposed Directional Signs

b	Road to Site
	Proposed Directional Signs

4.2 Access and Parking

The access road to the site has some rough patches but in general it is a clear access to the site. As the road is only wide enough to accommodate 2-way vehicular traffic up the point just before the site, it is recommended that the path be widened. It is further recommended that because there is no gate, an iron and stone gate (plate 42) be placed at the entrance using the stones from the site.

Plates 42: Showing examples of stone and iron gates

Parking for the property could be at and around the mound and foundations located specifically at the west of the property, towards the left of the entrance. The mound could be used as a round-a-bout which would provide direction for entrance to and exit from the property. The foundation walls would require building up and stabilization using stones from the property to the highest point currently visible and be exposed by the activity of the staff of the Archaeology Division. The area would also require filling in at the depressions with smaller stones and gravel to allow for access by smaller vehicles.

4.3 Grounds

The barbed wire perimeter fencing should be reinforced around the property and a colourful hedging (plate 43) e.g. *Hibiscus* or *Bougainvillea* be placed around to camouflage and soften it in addition to bringing beauty to the site. This will also be a deterrent to the stray animals currently straying onto the property.

Plates 43: Showing examples flowering hedges for the boundary

In the areas where there is no grass, it is recommended that grass be planted at these points to allow for a complete presentation of the property. The area is interspersed with many stones which could be removed and used to fill in the depressions on the surface and grass planted. It is important to note that stones should be moved only under the watchful eye of the Archeology Division. The periwinkle bed can be re-created in other areas of the property using differing varieties and colours (plate 44).

Plates 44: Showing examples of different varieties of *periwinkle*

On the south side of the property, in the sections where grass has not yet grown up, growth can be encouraged by removing large stones and filling depressions with gravel and small stones. With the addition of soil enrichment strategies and care, this area can become more lush (plate 45). Floral beds can be planted around the trees in this area and throughout the property to further add to the beauty of the site (plates 46 & 47). The tree stumps also must be removed from the lawn in this area to prevent injury to visitors.

Plates 45: Showing area with sparse grass growth

Plates 46 & 47: Showing examples of floral beds around trees

It is recommended that an archeological team investigate the foundations found under the large red birch tree located to north of the property and expose it to allow for greater understanding by visitors to the site. Once exposed the walls of the

foundation can be built up by at least 1 ft using stones from the property and flowers planted around the tree creating a small garden. Therefore, there should be no further removal of the stones from this section. Also, the pumpkin vine growing in this area should be removed. Trees throughout the property that have been cut down which are showing signs of re-growth need to be allowed to grow as they will provide shade. Shade trees such as the Poinciana tree, Tamarind or Guango, some of which are already present on the site and would add beauty to the natural environment of this property (plates 48 & 49) should be planted in the bare areas.

Plates 48 & 49: Showing examples of *Poinciana* and *Guango* trees

In addition, it is recommended that no additional trees be cut down and burnt especially fruit trees as these also add value to the holistic visitor experience. Further to this, burning is not recommended as it damages other plant life including other trees. There are some trees on the property that have shown evidence of dead branches or dried stumps. These should be removed as they can become havens for

termites. To add to the educational aspect of the site, the trees and other plant life should be labeled (plate 50) for ease in identification.

Plates 50: Showing examples of tree labels

The path which leads to Fisherman's Beach once cleared can be made into a nature walk or hike which can culminate into a refreshing swim for those adventurous visitors, if the legalities with the owner can be worked out. The trees along the path should also be labeled. To the left of the path an area with three large tamarind trees as well as guinep and red birch trees which can be created into a small picnic area with a path that could link with the Fisherman's Beach path. All-in-one picnic benches and tables (plates 51 & 52) would be used at specific areas within the property however, eating would not be limited to these areas. The wooden picnic benches would have to be sealed and lacquered to ensure durability.

Plates 51 & 52: Showing examples of picnic benches

It is recommended that in the section north-east of the castle ruin which has large stones and several large shade trees, the undergrowth of bushes be cleared and used as a secluded sitting area for patrons of the site, a rock garden could also be created (plates 53 & 54).

Plates 53 & 54: Showing examples rock gardens

In the grassy sections throughout the property, wooden park benches or concrete or a mixture of both can be placed at various points throughout the property to provide seating for visitors (plate 55 & 56). A lovers' bench could also be placed between the intertwined ackee trees at the front of the property to facilitate pictures and relaxation (plate 57).

Plates 55 & 56: Showing examples of concrete and wooden park benches

A circular bench could be placed around the large red birch tree at the northern end of the property (plate 57).

Plate 57: Showing example of circular park benches

The property can be further tailored to visitors by placing gazebos at specific locations throughout the site. A gazebo (plates 58 & 59) can be placed at the mound and foundations located west of the property (near to the entrance of the site). The gazebo could have small gardens around it with stone borders as shown in plate 58 and the stones used would be taken from the property.

Plates 58: Showing examples of a gazebo

Plates 59: Showing examples of a gazebo

4.4 Castle

The weeds, small plants and trees growing from the top of the castle structure and along the sides need to be removed with the involvement of the Conservation Unit to minimize any damage to the structural integrity of the castle.

The three steps used to gain access to the inside of the structure require stabilizing and the stone on the property can be used for this purpose. The tank located to the front of the castle can in the long term be used for water storage once the base has been repaired and sealed.

Inside the castle grounds, the foundations to what may have been the chapel path need to be further exposed by an Archaeological team to reveal the exact path that was used to enter the chapel. These foundations once exposed together with the beautiful lawn and ruin can be used for weddings, both the ceremony and the reception due to its beauty and ambiance (plates 60 & 61).

Plates 60 & 61: Showing examples of weddings at historical ruins

The piles of stones can be used to create benches along the periphery of this area and flowers can be planted along the walls approximately one foot away in the gutters. It is recommended that the acacia tree in the middle of the property be removed and replaced with another type of tree. The wasp nests in the smaller rooms of the ruins must be removed to prevent injury to patrons of the site. Gravel in the rooms should be used to level of the surface along with cut stone from the property. It is recommended that this section with the rooms be blocked off to visitors with chains as some of the sections may prove unsafe (plates 62 & 63).

Plates 62 & 63: Showing examples of chains

The red birch tree growing from the top of the privy along with other plant life should be removed. In addition, the aloe vera and cacti beside the structure also needs to be removed and flowering plants planted around the base in and around the area where the foundation is located. Also, the wall and window needs to be stabilized due to the large cracks on the wall to ensure visitors safety.

A picnic setting can also be placed at the guango tree in front of the privy.

4.5 Lighting

The absence of lighting must be addressed if the site is going to be used during the evening and at night. This should not be difficult as the site is located in a residential community which has electricity. Lamps with a historic feel should be placed throughout the property and on the gate posts so that the property is well lit (plates 64, 65 & 66).

Plates 64, 65 & 66: Showing examples of standing lamps and gate lamps

4.6 Restroom Facilities

The restroom facilities could be placed behind the mound near to the trees. The trees would create some privacy for the facilities as well as camouflage it. At least four cubicles separated into male and female would need to be located here. A trailer could be re-conditioned for this purpose or a building constructed depending on cost.

It is further recommended that running water or tank water be made available for the restrooms. The availability of the facilities would have to be provided within the small to medium term development of the site.

5.0 Conclusion

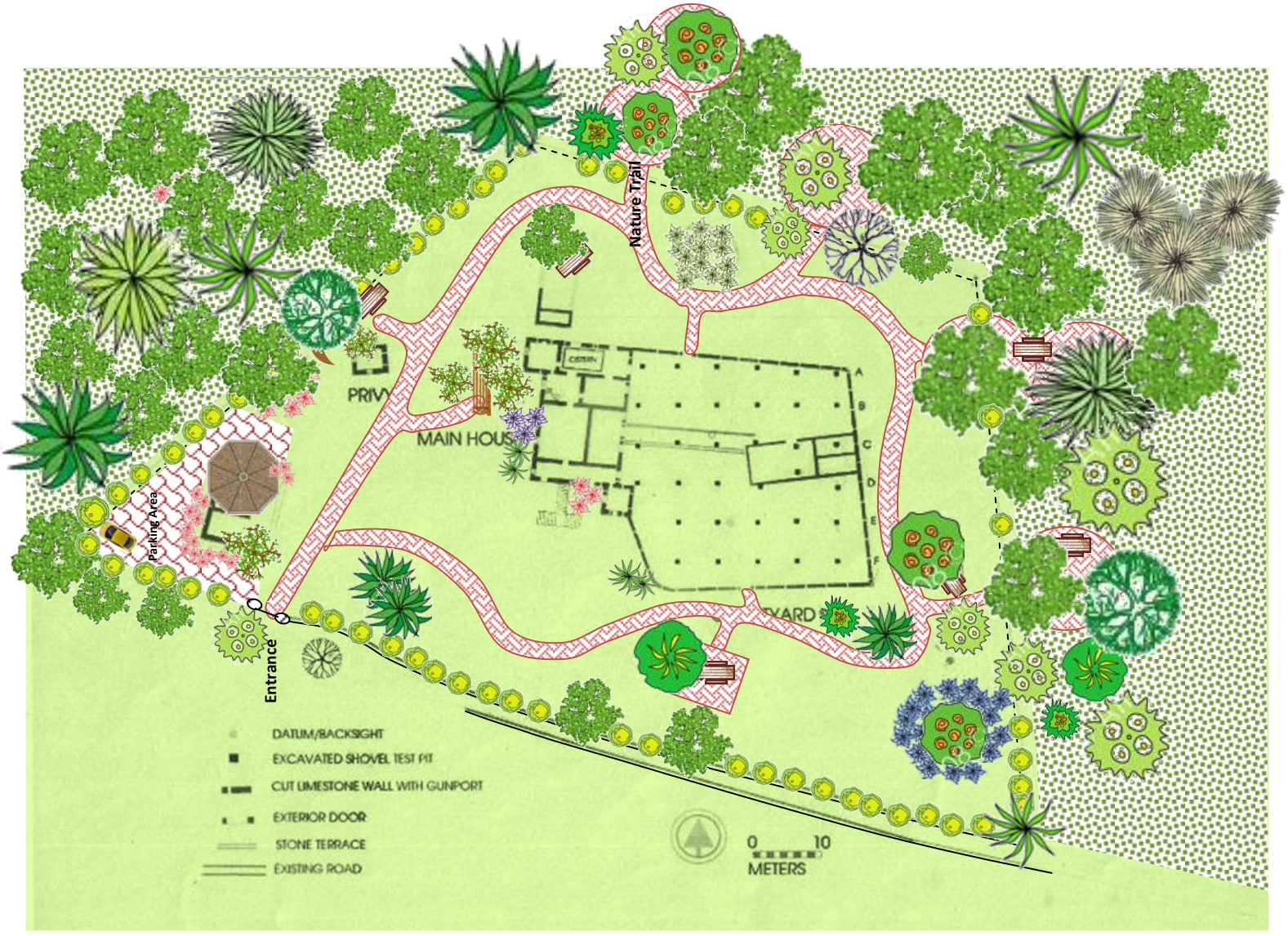
The Stewart Castle site development has great potential to be a significant heritage tourism site with the ability to engage not only the community, but local and international visitors.

Fulfilling the recommendations made regarding the site's development, will result in a greater exposure of the site's aesthetic, historical and educational values and enhance community participation and development. This will stimulate capacity building and job creation that will ensure sustainability of the heritage product.

It is important to note that the property is a significant archaeological site that requires further investigation. Therefore, any development or expansion of the site should take this into consideration, thereby ensuring the safeguarding of the archeological remains.

Development Proposal:

Development Plan for Stewart Castle Site



Walkway
Parking Area
Grass
Palm Tree
Tamarind Tree
Guinep Tree
Red Birch Tree
Ackee Tree
GuangoTree
Cedar Tree
White Periwinkle
Pink Periwinkle
Flower
Picnic Bench
Gazebo