

# WE HERITAGE ON DISPLAY



We Gatherin'  
2025

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# We Gatherin' in Barbados... to Celebrate who we are!

## ST. GEORGE

Barbados' main breadbasket - is one of two landlocked parishes. St. George, sitting in the centre of the island, experienced perhaps the most interesting beginning of any parish. This third largest Barbadian landmass is named for the patron saint of England and is bounded by St. Thomas, St. Joseph, St. John, St. Philip, Christ Church and St. Michael - out of which it was formed.

### Political Formation

In the very turbulent early years of settlement (1630 - 40), after the arrest and departure of original Bridgetown Governor **Sir Charles Wolverstone**, Henry Hawley's dark intrigue led to the assassination of **Governor Tufton** before **Hawley** himself assumed complete control of Barbados. It was likely Hawley who expanded the Bridgetown Land Grants deep into the St. George Valleys. Thus, early land holders like **James Drax**, the **Bulkeleys**, and the much scrutinized **James Holdip**, owed their subsequent enormous wealth to **Hawley**, for it now seems that it was he who eventually completed and extended holdings above and beyond the original Carlisle ten thousand acre grants. These powerful pioneer settlers would have craved an Administrative Centre outside of the Indian Bridge town, and a parish church other than the one at Cheapside.

St. George was virtually a renegade parish when Barbados was ruled by renegade **Governor Henry Hawley**. It therefore built its own church in the waning days of **Hawley's** "reign". Only after **Governor Sir Philip Belle's** quiet but assured and efficient diplomacy, was the parish officially established out of the land mass of St. Michael. Interestingly, when surveyor **Captain John Swan** completed the land survey, St. George turned out to be larger than its parent, St. Michael.

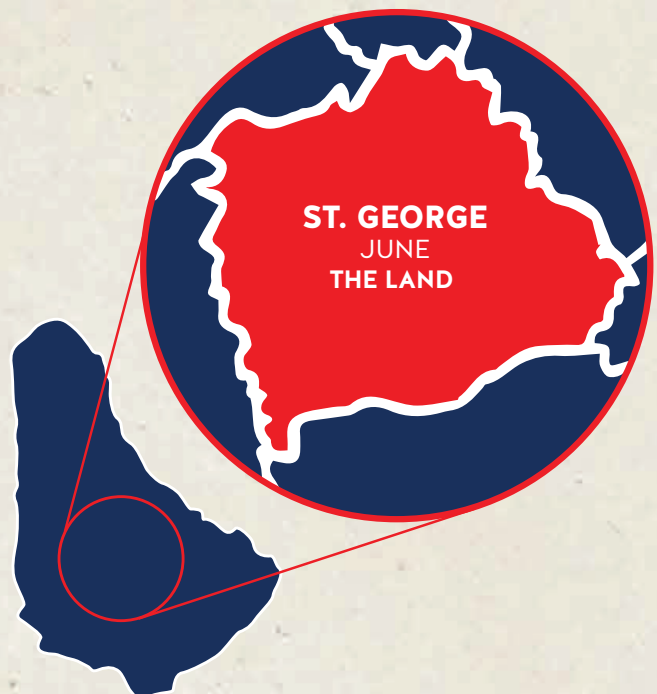
### Topography of St. George

The parish is dominated by the main Synclinal St. George Valley which lies between the Boarded Hall Ridge and the Middleton Mount/Ellerton Heights, known as the Bulkeley Valley. Then there is the secondary, northern valley, sometimes described as "Sweetwater Valley". This is the former sea channel which divided the two main islands that eventually formed Barbados.

This second channel falls between Wilson Hill, St. John and the Golden Ridge, and it starts as far east, near St. John Parish Church on the Hackleton Cliff. Dominated by the Sweet Bottom to Redland basin, and going west through Groves Fields, Applewhaites, through Jack-in-the-Box, Hopewell, Vaucluse to St James; or through Market Hill, Locust Hall, through Lower Estate to Hotheral Turning, it provides the remaining dark clay soil which, very early, established the parish as the main economic engine of the 17th century sugar revolution.

### St. George Parish Church

The first timber building was likely in use by 1635, but this was later (likely circa 1660) rebuilt of stone. That second structure was destroyed by the 1780 hurricane and rebuilt in 1784 as the classic Georgian Chapel with the Neo-Gothic additions which we now admire. The chapel is rich in works of art. There are marble sculptures by **Nollekens** and **Westmacott**; a magnificent painting on copper, "Descent from the Cross", artist unknown, is hung behind the pulpit, but the masterpiece, "Rise to Power" by **Benjamin West**, dominates the reredos above the altar.



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Chapels of ease in the parish are at St. AugSt. Jude's, and St. Luke's, whilst the Moravians constructed Missions Penuel at Sweet Bottom and Fulnec at Watts' Village. About one hundred years ago the Methodists built a chapel at South District. Interestingly, these latter three are all located in free villages.

## Only in St. George

Only in this parish will one find the Lion of Gun Hill and the best preserved of the 1817-18 line of Barbados Signal Stations which were planned, then built immediately after **The Right Excellent General Bussa's** revolution of 1816. This Signal Station, completed during the tenure of **Sir Stapleton Cotton** (the Lord Combermere), commands a comprehensive view of much of the island, but its main signals came from Cotton Tower (St. Joseph) and Moncrieffe (St. Philip). The house of the officer in charge was last used as the residence for **Captain C. E. Raison**, Director of the Police Band (1946-64). At the bottom of Fusilier Hill, as if guarding the Signal Station, stands the Lion, rampant and triumphant.

In the days when Gun Hill served as a convalescent station for injured or sick soldiers of the Barbados Garrison, recuperating **Captain Henry Wilkinson**, in 1868, with the help of labourers, carved the Lion from a block of local coral stone. The beast represents Britain's domination over the globe at that time of Empire.

And only in the parish church, can be found Benjamin West's representation of the Resurrection of Christ mentioned earlier. This work was commissioned in 1786 by President of Council, **Sir Henry Frere**, but when it arrived in Barbados it had to be stored in a barn at Frere's Lower Estate Plantation. It is alleged that a thief was so mesmerized by the

accusing eyes of the Centurion that he poked one eye out before leaving the barn empty handed. No artist



Drax Hall Plantation

would agree to repair the damage, only to paint a pirate's patch over the eye. The painting, titled "Rise to Power", was finally hung in 1820.

The final mentioned parish peculiarities are at "Bamboo Pond", said by residents to have been an Arawak source of water. It is located south of Union Ridge and north-west of St. Luke's Chapel; then, at Groves is the Barbados Agricultural Station and the West Indies Central Sugar Cane Breeding Station which has been involved in the propagation of new varieties of cane since 1888.

## Settlement Landholders

Apart from the Courteen St. James holdings and a very few of **Sir Marmaduke Rawdon's** Bridgetown neighbours, most settlement landholders remained unknown. However, expansion into the St. George Valley has shone a spotlight on several persons who either received or were successors to original land grants which soon forced the award of "parish" status.

**James Drax's** enormous holdings necessitated at least five tenancies for his workers at Drax Hall, the Woods, Green, Jump and Hope. In the 1630s were **Thomas Wiltshire** at Brighton, **John Spendlove** at Frenches, **Robert Green** at Greens, **George Bowyer** at Moonshine Hall; then Constant Sylvester at Carmichael and Constant, **Gerard Hawtaine** at Windsor, **Thomas Newbold** at Woodland, possibly the brothers **Bulkeley** and certainly the **Holdips** of Locust Hall of whom, **James** was later accused of cheating and raiding the estate of Marmaduke Rawdon, leader of Courteen's Barbados Syndicate of Investors.

The above shrieks assumption that **Henry Hawley**, after his disposal (and later assassination) of **Governor Tufton** in 1630, must have been the major grantor of this massive land expansion. It also considers the possibility that more than the 10,000 acres (Lord Carlisle's Mandate) were thus allocated and dispensed.



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Bottom, were the result of paternalistic bequests to illegitimate children. Most, however, resulted from marginally arable or non-arable hillside lands – and there are legion – which were sold to black and brown relatives of more substantial landholders.

Villages named, from Airy Hill, through Bairds and Bournes; Charles Rowe Bridge and Dash Valley; Flat Rock, First Step and Free Hill, and through the alphabet to Walkers Valley, Watts Village, Waverley Cot and Workmans; these new landowners literally enlarged the franchise in the parish. By the advent of “Panama Money” at the dawn of the 20th century, Ellerton and Eastlyn Plantations were being subdivided by **Dr. E. G. Pilgrim**, but this was decades after earlier speculators, including **C. J. Greenidge**, had dissected and distributed small estates like Middleton and Newbury.

The net result was that by the 1930s, despite the dominant landholdings of the **Piles, Dowdings et al.**, a sufficient number of small holdings could empower coloured **Charles Elder**, then **H. W. Springer (The Right Excellent Sir Hugh Worrell Springer)** to lead the way; then in the 1950s, for **E. W. Barrow (The Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow)** and **Honourable F. E. Miller** to follow. These were among the first sent by the St. George proletariat as their

representatives in the House of Assembly. By 1961 the labouring class claimed both seats. **A. E. S. ‘TT’ Lewis**, the White Rebel, was born at Drax Hall but represented the City of Bridgetown as an Assemblyman from 1946.

## Later Plantocracy

Subsequent land grantees included the Morgans of Buttals, **Christopher Lynne** at the Valley, **Richard Bendyshe** at Byde Mill, the Lords Willoughby of Walkers, the Middletons, **Sir Henry Frere** at Lower Estate, the **Birneys** and, much, much later, the **Skeetes, Dowdings, Chandlers, Robinsons**, and finally, the **Piles** who “talked only to the **Sealys** who spoke only to God”. The **Piles’** vast holdings included one tract which stretched from Highway 5, opposite Bentleys, to Highway 4 at Middleton’s Mount.

## Geography, Topography, and the Free Village

Part of the enduring legacy of St. George is the large number of free villages in the parish. Some, like Sweet

## Developments

In earlier times several educational endowments contributed to the welfare of parish children. Chief of these was Rowland Bulkeley’s 1686 long serving grant to open and fund a school for children of the poor of the parish; **Francis Butcher** of Golden Ridge, later made available funds for St. George scholarships.

A more modern benefit was the arrival of the 1880 Barbados Railway whose train made two stops in the parish: at Bulkeley and at Windsor. These stops would have afforded any school teachers easier walking access

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to schools like the parish church school or the school at St. Luke's.

At long last, in 1971 the St. George Secondary School was opened by Government at Constant Hill on Dash Valley; In 2005 the privately owned Providence (Secondary and Primary) opened at Francia. Six Government primary schools currently operate from St. Helen's, Workmans, Constant/Glebe, Ellerton, St. Jude's and St. Luke's, respectively.

## Arts and Sports

Emerging from a vibrant Church Lads Brigade of past moons, the musical band "Unity" provided entertainment even beyond parish boundaries and, as an individual artiste, **Ricardo "Lil Rick" Reid** stands supreme in the entertainment field.

Sports are also well served through the likes of World Champion Draughts player **Ronald Suki King**; professional football player **Gregory Goodridge** and **Ricky Barnes**, but a more modern discipline, volleyball, started at St. Jude's Progressive Club five decades ago and sent several players including **Holdman Adamson**, **John** and **Roy Stuart**, **Malcolm Graham**, **Emerson Herbert** and **Nigel Grant** to National Duty. The traditional sport of cricket was even better served.

St. George was one of the regions to benefit from **Mitchie Hewitt's** Barbados Cricket League, formed in 1937 to extend the sport to country districts, to the masses, and to



World Draughts Champion  
Ronald Suki King



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eventually expose the whole of Barbados to the game which had been previously restricted to the few elite clubs and colleges. Since then, this cricket crazy parish has produced former West Indies Captain, **Jason Holder** and a former captain, now coach, **Floyd Reifer**; several Barbados and A List players including **Elvis, George, Anthony and Leslie Reifer Sr., Geoffrey Mapp, Nigel Johnson, Ryan Layne, Ellis Brathwaite, Shawn and Hattien Graham, Corey Glasgow, Kirk Wilkinson, Shawn and Alcindor Holder**; outstanding Master batsman **George Brathwaite**; and ICC's youngest International Umpire on record, **Leslie Reifer Jr.**, who served in his first International Match at age 26, and was also the youngest to stand in a First Class match.

## Large Families

Our revered teachers would have catered to some of the large families in the parish. These include the **Stuarts, Pitts, Stoutes, Lashleys, Sisnetts, Massiahs** and **Taskers**. These and other St. George families have produced our final category of parishioner:

## Our Beloved Centenarians



Ranking only behind St. Lucy and the urban parish of St. Michael, this central Barbadian parish has produced **Clarice Murrell, Cyrilissa Brewster, Delphine Goodman, Elise Rock, Ercilla Sealy, Eunice Golda Phillips, Hestina Belle, James Stuart, Joseph Gittens, Martin Alleyne, Sisters, Mary Coward and Desdemona Gibson, Louise Thorne, Marie**

**Brereton, Lilian Williams, Lilian Sargeant, Rosetta Wickham, Valera Barrow, Gwendolyn Smith-Holdip,** and Super Centenarian **James Sisnett**. We salute them all!

*They ploughed the fields and scattered*

*The good seed on the land*

*God gave them grace to persevere, and now we reap*

*From His Almighty hand*



## WE GATHERIN' EVENTS JUNE



Scan the QR code to see the full calendar of events for St. George

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