

BY DALE SANDERS

BarbadosBottle Diving Ground Zero

Barbados, can only be described as a Caribbean destination that personifies the ultimate in bottle diving! A bold statement, yet true in every measure. What made this limestone island an underwater graveyard for bottles? Well, it seems Barbados was a "stopping-off point", of sorts, for many of the early trading ships in the 15th to 17th centuries. Being the easternmost island of the Caribbean with large tranquil leeward bays, made this an island destination of choice for the thousands of ships that annually visited this rum rich island.

Rum in fact plays a major role in why there are sooooo many bottles here. Barbados is considered the birthplace of rum, also known as rumbullion back in the 1600's. It appears that black glass bottles were in fact a dead head ballast cargo of sorts for those ships coming from Europe. Barbados with its deep seated crop of sugarcane dating back to 1637 has provided a rich source of sugar mills and rum distilleries spanning four centuries. Presently, Mount Gay and Cockspur rum are distilled on island, and memorable luncheon tours of their facilities are available daily. At the epicenter of this historical bottle diving island is a turquoise blue harbor known as Carlisle Bay. Needham's Point, with old Fort Charles, guards this southernmost portion of the bay. Once fortified by her majesties cannons



(which only fired once..at a friendly ship) now stands as a known landmark to local divers as a rich anchorage which has provided free blown black glass of every variety.

This authors favorite dive is in the clear sandy bottom bay itself. Here the typical visibility is well over 80 feet. The bottom is littered with all types of maritime artifacts from the over 500 shipwrecks that went down here during hurricanes, and the jetti-