



The making of the docudrama

'TOBAGO 1677'

"Tobago 1677 explores a dramatic moment in Caribbean and world history, when European nations battled for domination of the New World. Now, three centuries later, a team of archaeologists, conservationists, filmmakers and scientists journey back in time, diving on twenty French and Dutch battleships that now lie covered by mud and sand in less than 60 feet of water in Scarborough Harbor, Tobago. Using historical re-enactments, high-end CGI animation, expert interviews, archival imagery, artifacts and state-of-the-art technologies, the film focuses on one of the most cruel and bloody sea battles ever fought by two European nations. The film also deals with the enormous wealth of artifacts uncovered, as these shipwrecks are windows into the world of our forgotten past."


This is Sky Vision's description of the film which they have the distribution rights to sell. The film was produced by Rick Haupt and Sylvia Kreuger of Oceans Discovery and by Kevin Kenny of Tobago.

Kevin Kenny recalls how the project started...

I met Sylvia and Rick in Jamaica some 9 years ago when they presented their documentary on the discovery of some of Captain Morgan's ships which

were wrecked off the coast of Haiti. Their company Oceans Discovery had been trying to increase the awareness of our underwater heritage which is so abundant in Caribbean waters. The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association's (CHTA) Development Conference seemed an ideal forum to launch their film the objective being to heighten interest and awareness in the threat to the regions underwater cultural heritage. All over the region islands sell the quintessential Caribbean holiday of sun, sand and sea. This sameness makes it difficult for holidaymakers to decide between one island and the next. This marketing dilemma is further exasperated by our prevalence to copy. When one island creates a new amenity others quickly follow, nullifying the point of difference, the competitive edge. Caribbean history has the ability to develop unique points of difference as many islands played different roles in the early development of the Caribbean. The Tobago battle in 1677 was unique in the region and provides the opportunity to develop a point of difference. As Rick and Sylvia were being mobbed by well wishers at the CHTA conference in Jamaica I managed to pull Rick aside and in two minutes attempted to excite him about the story of the battle for

Rockley bay. I must have done a convincing job because some three months later he called me to discuss the possibility of filming the story. He had done research and was very excited to develop a full-length documentary. Together we developed a rough storyboard printed some collateral material, calculated a rough budget and started selling the project to anyone who would listen. First to the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), then to the Tourism Development Authority (TDC) and finally to private sector sponsor that we thought would get value from being associated with this project. Initial seed money came from Angostura, the THA and the TDC. This was followed by a commitment from the Proman Group of companies who contributed the largest share of the private sector funding. The project started taking shape. The story board was improved with input from Eddy Hernandez who ran the Tobago museum and who had done considerable research on the topic. Rick



and Sylvia made a number of visits to museums in France and Holland while developing relationships with a number of international experts with knowledge of this time period. Eventually the complete story came together and the final budget prepared.

There were many other challenges on the way. Getting the approvals from the Trinidad and Tobago Film Company the entity responsible for "concession to encourage film makers to come to Trinidad and Tobago". Ministerial licenses, location of the main film set, making the costumes locally, finding 100 plus actors, deciding on the film locations and getting their permissions for the exclusive use while filming. Sourcing the weapons and in particular the firearms which provided us with a major challenge particularly with regard to the importation of black powder. There can be no question that the biggest challenge was finding the finance to produce a film of this magnitude. It goes without saying the Minister Stephen Cadiz support was invaluable in getting the project done particularly in helping to finance the final editing.

Thank goodness not everything was a challenge. Working with the cadet force and the coast guard in Tobago turned out to be a stroke of genius, as all of the individual cadets and coast guardsmen were familiar with the use of firearms and acting in a battle was second nature to them. The use of Fort George was one of the best sites we could have hoped for and all staff and management worked hand in hand with us to transform the site back in time and made the actual filming on site a success. Then there were the wonderful fisherman at Bloody Bay who performed all sorts of extraordinary feats to assist us in filming the shore landings. Perhaps the best support was given by the national helicopter service and the coast guard. The Minister had given permission to use three helicopters, which resulted in some extraordinary helicopter to helicopter

footage and showed the beauty of both islands in a way never seen before. Now the film is complete we await on the discoveries of Dr Kroum Batchvarov and his team from the University of Connecticut who are doing the actual underwater archeology. Over the next five years we expect some extraordinary archeological finds from the murky waters of Scarborough harbor all of which could lead to a possible third and final documentary on the Battle for control of Tobago in 1677.

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