

PROJECT TITLE: Volcanic Risk Cultures in the English-speaking Eastern Caribbean

Research Group(s): Volcanology and the Caribbean Studies Studio

Lead Supervisor: Jenni Barclay, Earth Sciences

Co-Supervisor: Jerry Phillips, Earth Sciences, Richard Robertson (University of West Indies) and Adom Philogene Heron, Anthropology and Archaeology

Project enquiries: J.Barclay@bristol.ac.uk

Project keywords:

Funder: Leverhulme Trust Research Project Grant



Explosion during eruption of St Vincent 2021 (Photo: R Robertson)



Living with the impacts of volcanic activity, St Vincent 2021 (Photo J Barclay)

Project Background

This 36 month fully-funded PhD project will join a team of investigators from the Universities of Bristol, Oxford, Plymouth and the West Indies on the Leverhulme-funded research grant 'Volcanic Histories'.

Led by the University of Bristol, *Volcanic Histories* is an interdisciplinary project that aims to understand the complex relationship between volcanic eruptions and the societal disruption they cause. The wider project will bring together volcanology, history, archaeology and disaster science to understand the drivers of volcanic disruption on several Eastern Caribbean volcanic islands. Being a part of *Volcanic Histories* offers you the opportunity to participate in an interdisciplinary project, gaining knowledge of geological, historical and archaeological research practice, and to integrate your own research on how communities view past volcanism, and current scientific knowledge with these findings to improve how we communicate volcanic hazards. You should have an enthusiasm for collaborative working and knowledge sharing.

Project Aims and Methods

The specific aim of this PhD project (within *Volcanic Histories*) is to compare and understand the enduring cultural markers, impacts and responses to volcanic activity on two islands. These two islands will most likely be St Vincent (with multiple eruptions in living memory) and Dominica (with

only minor phreatic explosions in living memory). This will be finalised in collaboration with the successful applicant.

The researcher will work with communities at risk to explore local (creole and indigenous) ways of knowing and remembering volcanic activity. They will then consider this knowledge's relationship with western scientific knowledge and try to understand how it might be better integrated to improve disaster risk communication, and encourage more effective societal responses to activity and unrest.

This will build on existing work and explore, via a series of community engagements practices and attitudes towards past and future eruptions. In this way, existing cultural materials (literature, songs, sayings, poetry, material culture) and archival materials will be coupled with workshops, focus groups and interviews. The PhD researcher will particularly benefit from the wider project (and its findings) and the networks and connections of the supervisory team. They should expect to spend relatively long periods of time undertaking fieldwork, but initial work will involve the synthesis and collation of existing information.

Candidate

This PhD project will particularly appeal to students with a degree level background in geography, human geography, the environmental humanities or interdisciplinary geosciences (with at least some exposure to modes of enquiry associated with the social sciences or humanities). **We particularly seek students with an excellent knowledge of the Eastern Caribbean cultural and geographical context.**

You should have some experience of undertaking research, through to the completion of a project. The Leverhulme funding covers international fees, stipend and research expenses.

Project partners

The project supervisory team will be from both the University of Bristol, and the University of the West Indies and in the field the PhD researcher can expect to collaborate with the outreach and engagement team of the Seismic Research Centre, with their findings being of direct relevance to their programs.

Training

Specialist training in volcanology and multimodal research, data analysis, and gathering, as well as archival research will be provided. There will be the opportunity to work with communities at risk in the Eastern Caribbean, participate in and learn from the wider research program (Volcanic Histories) and to benefit from developing storytelling research methodologies in collaboration with colleagues at the Bristol Caribbean Studies Studio.

Background reading and references

- Barclay, J. Robertson, R. Scarlett, J. Pyle, D.M. and M.T. Armijos (2022) *Disaster Aid? Mapping historical response to volcanic eruptions from 1800-2000 in the English-speaking Eastern Caribbean their role in creating vulnerabilities*. Disasters: 46, S1
- Barclay, J., Wilkinson, E., White, C.S., Shelton, C., Forster, J. Few, R., Lorenzoni, I., Woolhouse, G. Jowitt, C., Stone, H. and Honychurch, L. (2019) *Historical Trajectories of Disaster Risk in Dominica*. International Journal of Disaster Risk Science. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13753-019-0215-z>
- Few, R., Barclay, J. and M.T. Armijos (2022) *Working with communities on disaster risk research: reflections from cross-disciplinary practice*. International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction: [10.1016/j.ijdr.2022.102815](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2022.102815)
- Monteil, C. Barclay, J., Hicks, A. (2021) Remembering, forgetting and absencing disasters in the post-disaster recovery process. International Journal, Disaster Risk Science: 11,287-299
- Philogene Heron, A (2024) [Plotting Survival](#) (To live in the Hurricanes' Path). *Plurivers*.

Useful links

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/earthsciences/courses/postgraduate/>

Application deadline: 31st October 2025, 23.59 GMT

How to apply to the University of Bristol: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/apply/>

Please select PhD in Geology as the programme in the online application system.