

uninhabited. He went back to England where a return trip to settle the island was financed by Sir William Courteen in 1627. The country remained under British rule until 1966 when the island was brought to independence by the late Errol Barrow, first prime minister of Barbados.

It is the only island in the region to escape changing hands from one European power to another during the long colonial tussle for control of the Eastern Caribbean during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

## Government

The government is run under the Westminster System. With its House of Assembly first having met in 1639, it is the third-oldest legislative body in the Western hemisphere.

Parliament consists of an elected lower house and a senate of appointed representatives. The head of state is the Governor General.

There are two major political parties in Barbados. The ruling Democratic Labour Party, in power since 1986, is led by Prime Minister Erskine Sandiford, and the opposition, the Barbados Labour Party, is led by Henry Forde.

Democratic elections are held every five years.

The judicial system is based on British Common Law, and the judiciary is separate from the Legislature and Administration. The Attorney General is the principal legal advisor to the government.