

Issue #105

# Artifacts

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY MAGAZINE

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## 8 Membership/Staff Update



## Dear Member,

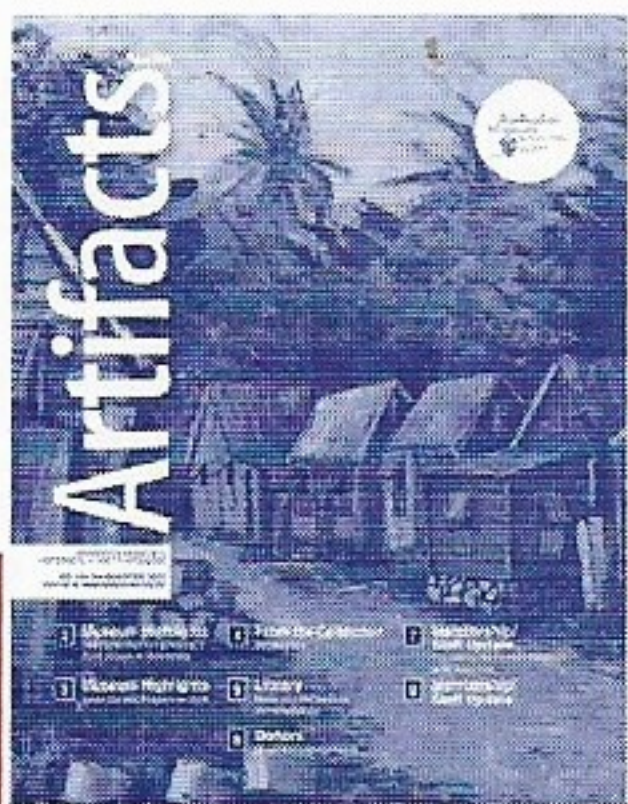
The Barbados Museum & Historical Society continues to increase opportunities for Museum members and Friends of the Museum to interact meaningfully with the institution. This was evidenced by the concept for the *Originals* exhibition, which was initiated and curated by Allison Callender, Curator – Art & Art History, specifically to allow all interested members to showcase their artistic abilities.

Kerron Hamblin, Assistant Curator – Natural History, similarly ensured that we offered a special activity exclusively for members of the Museum. This experience of monitoring the sea turtle nesting process was over-subscribed and we will attempt to offer this opportunity again sometime in the future. This programme emerged from the themes linked to the exhibition *2010: A Look at Biodiversity*. As you will see for yourself from the photos on this page, it was an exhibition with a difference. Live animals were displayed along with rarely-seen preserved specimens, and a video on sea turtles captivated viewers.

In this issue of *Artifacts*, the Friends of the Museum also discuss their tour of the cannon collection at St. Ann's Fort and there is a preview of our upcoming exhibitions that will give you the chance to appreciate art created by pioneering Barbadian artists in a variety of media, and to learn more about some of the exquisite objects in the Museum's collections.

*Christine Skeete*

Christine Skeete  
Marketing Officer



**On Cover:**  
Detail of 'Chapman Lane'  
by Fielding Babb

# Sea Turtle Monitoring Activity

By Kerron Hamblin, Assistant Curator – Natural History

As an added attraction and an activity for members, a sea turtle monitoring event was organized and coordinated by the Assistant Curator for Natural History. This event was held on July 17 and July 18 from 8:00 p.m. until midnight. Each night, groups of 10 museum members went on patrol with the Barbados Sea Turtle Project on Drill Hall Beach in the hopes of observing Hawksbill sea turtle nesting habits.

On the night of July 17, only one nesting female was observed; however, on the night of July 18, nine turtles were seen nesting. All members in attendance were extremely excited and grateful to have witnessed this once in a lifetime opportunity. The response from members was overwhelming, so much so that some interested parties had to be declined. Hopefully, programmes such as this will be a staple of the BMHS, so as to accommodate the growing interest of its members in environmental matters.

## 2010: A Look at Biodiversity

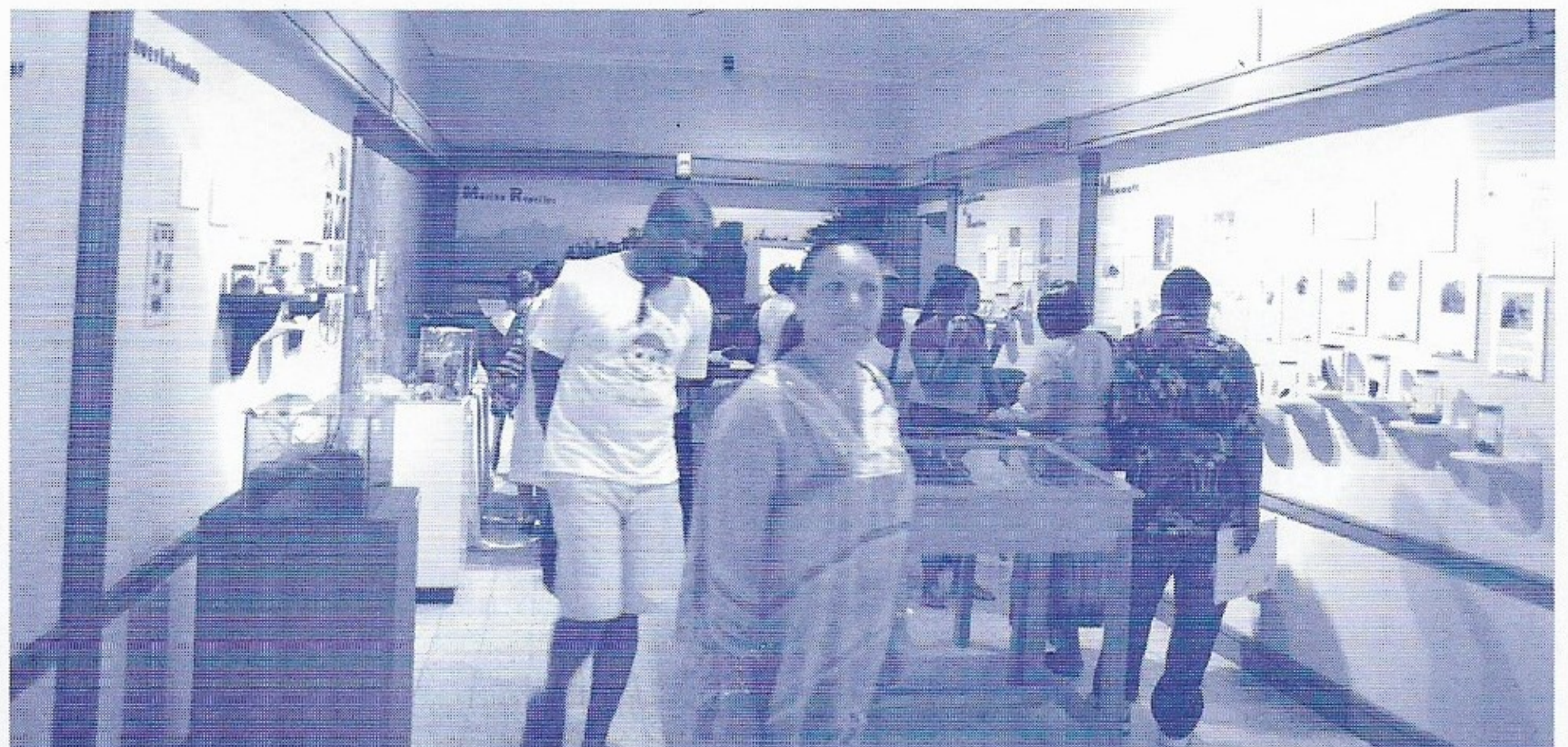
The exhibition *2010: A Look at Biodiversity* proved to be very popular and engaging for both children and adults. Here's a glimpse of the displays.



The butterfly collection is a well-loved display



Live fish and preserved sea turtle specimens



Visitors enjoying the exhibition



# Junior Curator Programme 2010



Left to right: Rhea, Tiffany, Ria and Jamal at the Jewish Museum during their visits to other museums and heritage sites. Missing is Kai-Ann Skeete.

The Museum's annual Junior Curator programme, coordinated by the Education Officer, Peggy McGeary, continues to expose the younger generation to careers and opportunities in the museum field. This year there were five participants whose backgrounds ranged from students of Combermere Secondary School and the Barbados Community College's Hospitality Institute to a PhD candidate.

During their time at the Museum, the Junior Curators guided tours, particularly to the overwhelming numbers of children from various government summer camps. They also assisted Kerron Hamblin, the Assistant Curator – Natural History, with the installation and other preparations for the 2010: A Look at Biodiversity exhibition. These preparations included crab hunting to fill the live crab display in the exhibition and re-bottling of preserved specimens.

They also helped Allison Callender, Curator – Art and Art History, to digitize and record historic documents and maps that were donated to the museum. "This very exciting for me as I got a firsthand look and feel of personal wills, property plans and ancient journals which dated back, some from even the 1600's," said Junior Curator Jamal Blenman.

Their willingness to lend a helping hand did not end there. The young people worked with Marcia Griffith, Administration Assistant – Merchandising, to price and code all the merchandise in the

Museum Gift Shop in preparation for the implementation of a new point of sale system.

The Shilstone Memorial Library also benefited from the Junior Curator's enthusiasm. They clipped important articles out of magazines and newspapers to preserve vital information on a range of topics for future research.

They also developed our own workbooks which the museum could use to enhance learning beyond the Museum's walls.

Jamal Blenman reported that he gained communication and multi-tasking skills, experienced the daily duties of a tour guide and acquired a new interest in Barbadian history.

Ria Rollock said, "Overall I had a wonderful time volunteering at the museum. I met new and exciting people, experienced so many different events, I've learned a lot of interesting facts about Barbados that I never knew before and of course I made some new friends."

Tiffany Lashley summarized her experience, "I must say that it was a joy working at the Barbados Museum and Historical Society. I gained a tremendous amount of knowledge about the island I live in and if I could do it all over again I would."



# Upcoming Exhibitions

## Homecoming

By Allison Callender, Curator – Art & Art History

**T**he museum has been fortunate to obtain a recent donation of approximately 72 works of art from Mrs. Nancy Sonis and her late husband Mr. Richard Sonis.

Richard and Nancy Sonis have been visitors to Barbados for over forty years, during which time they built a collection of Barbadian art. They have been honorary patrons of the Art Collection Foundation, and until 2010 they housed their Barbadian collection in their home in the United States. They then repatriated the collection for the pleasure of the Barbadian people and visitors to the island. It is their hope that their gift will inspire other collectors to give their artworks to the nation. This collection was officially donated on June 09, 2010 and arrived at the museum on August 12, 2010.

It is a well known fact that the nucleus of the museum's fine art collection was acquired during 1962 when Sir Edward Cunard bequeathed a collection of 66 prints. These prints depict aspects of the history and topography of the West Indies from various artists, but since then, there has not been such a significant collection of fine art donated.

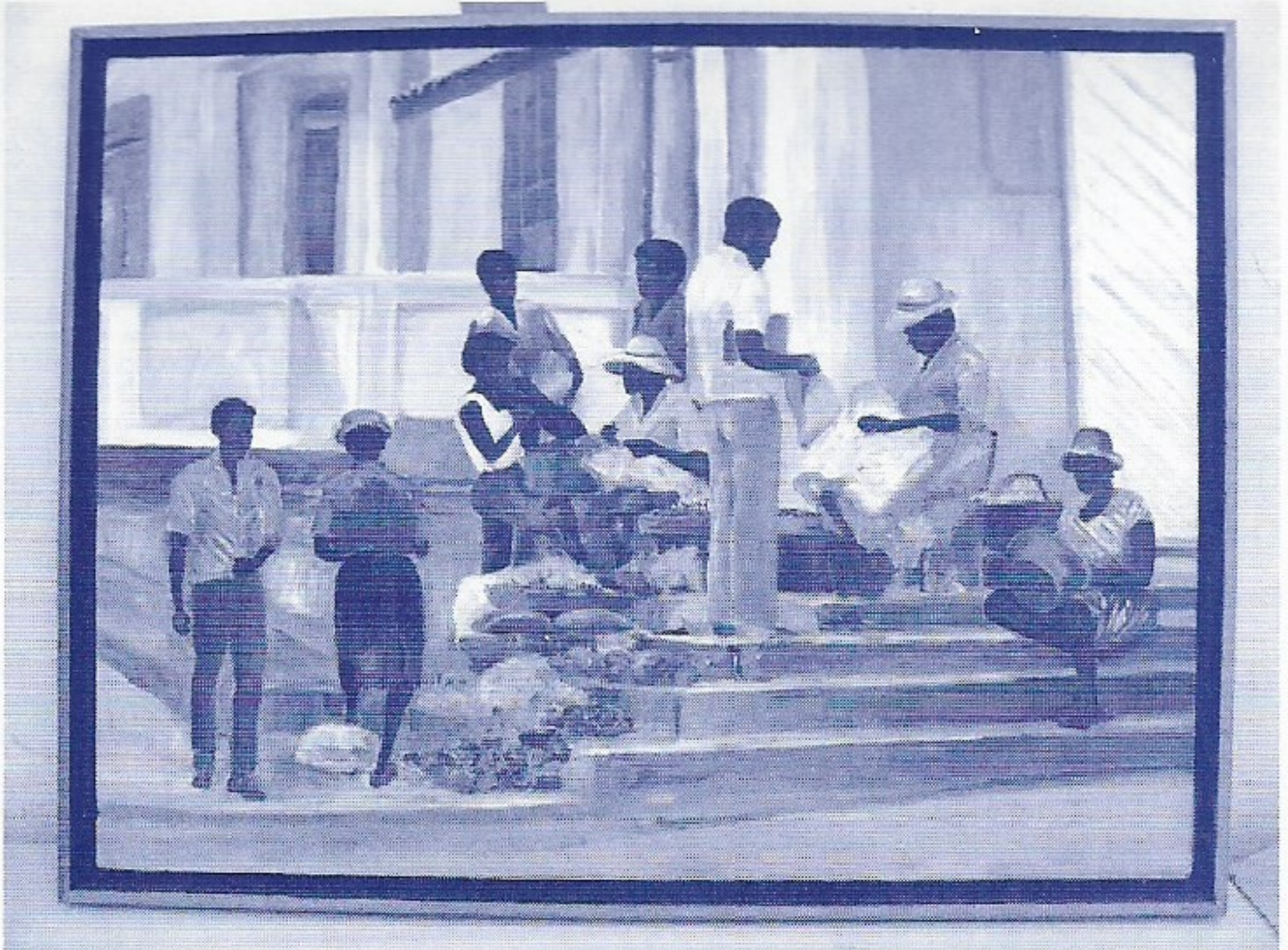
The Sonis collection can be classified as being on par with the Cunard bequest in that it comprises a wide selection of art work from one donor. The predominantly Barbadian themes are executed mostly in oils and acrylic on canvas, watercolors and mixed media from 27 well known Barbadian artists, spanning from the mid 1960s to the mid 90s, with well known names like Clifford Hobbs, Oscar Walkes, Fielding Babb, Neville Legall, Winston Kellman, Heather-dawn Scott for example. The earliest work from this collection, however, is one piece dated 1960 from Golde White, while the latest is a 1999 Francis Griffith painting.

The themes are significant, as there are depictions of early Barbadian scenes and landscapes, which have changed considerably, such as "The Fairchild Street Market", "A Street Scene at Oistins", and "The Chattel House at Dayrells Road".

Never before has the BMHS received such a significant collection encompassing a wide variety of media from Barbadian artists in such excellent condition.

This is testimony to the fact that the donors understood the significance of both acquiring and maintaining artwork. The fine art collection has therefore increased, specifically covering the late 20th century period, 1967-1999, from 28 works to 93 works. What is even more noteworthy is that while all of the artists represented have exhibited at the Barbados Museum before, only five were previously represented in the fine art collection. Therefore, the fine art collection is now improved with 22 new artists represented, including pioneer artist Golde White, who was one of the first to exhibit at the museum from as early as 1950, and Barbadian folk artist Francis Griffith who exhibited his first ever solo exhibition at the Museum in 1995, as he approached his 80th year. His exhibition, entitled "Son Et Luimere: the Paintings of Francis Griffith" [sic], can be seen on four of the 15 pieces donated from this collection. The museum has only ever had works from one other folk artist, namely Madeline Norris.

This collection allows the BMHS to better investigate the importance of the artists represented by comparing their earlier works, style and themes in relation to their existing works and role as Barbadian artists. It is therefore fitting that this collection forms the nucleus of an exhibition in the donors' honour entitled Homecoming. We invite you to come by and view it between January 10 and February 27, 2011.



"Market Scene", Fairchild Street Market by Virgil Broodhagen

## Paperweights Mini-Exhibition

A mini exhibition of exquisite glass paper weights from the Fine Art collection will be on display in the Jubilee Gallery from 13th December. Look out for the two cases nestled among the permanent exhibitions.



# News from the Shilstone Memorial Library

By Joan Brathwaite, Librarian

## International Literacy Day 2010

The National Library Service invited the Barbados Museum and Historical Society to participate in their events for International Literacy Day 2010, by showcasing our products and information on the Museum and its work. The event was held on Saturday, 4 September 2010 in Independence Square from 9.30 a.m. – 4.30 p.m., and the theme was Literacy: The Power of a Nation. The participants and those visiting the Literacy Fair were welcomed by the Acting Director of the National Library Service, Mrs. Evonda Callender. The Fair was very well attended, with some persons speaking about their work, others reading poetry, and the many children present were entertained by their "Aunties" from the National Library Service reading stories for them.

The Museum displayed its products and work through a book display, a large poster, and give-aways of Museum brochures, *Artifacts* newsletters, and workbooks (Study Guides) on the Amerindians, Birds, Plants, Africa, Art Museums, and HIV-AIDS, prepared by our Education Officer, Peggy McGeary, the Curators, and Junior Curators. In addition, we also had on display (and for sale) copies of our Journals of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, and our 75th Anniversary Booklet Barbados Museum and Historical Society 75th Anniversary Celebrations: Reflecting our Past – Shaping our Future.

The poster, which was used as our backdrop, was our 75th Anniversary poster entitled "Us: 75 Years Of Barbadiana At The BMHS", and this encouraged persons visiting our table to ask questions, and also gave us the opportunity to inform them about the Museum. Indeed, Miguel Pena, our Research Officer/Ag. Assistant Curator

(History) did a fantastic job of informing them about Rev. N.B. Watson, whose collection of natural history objects formed the nucleus of the Museum's collection in 1933, as well as pointing out several persons in one of the images on the poster, one of whom was no less a person than the Museum's first Librarian, and a Director, Mr. Eustace Maxwell Shilstone, for whom the Museum Library, the Shilstone Memorial Library is named, and whose Collection of Notebooks in the Library has recently been digitized, kindly funded by a U.S. Embassy grant received in December 2009.

Among the books displayed were those dealing with our early cultural beginnings, such as the series *The People who Came*, as well as books from the *Rewriting History* series, *Bussa*, *King Ja Ja* (one of the images in our Poster), and *Old Doll*, matriarch of Newton Plantation. Since we were also mindful of the literacy concerns of our nation, we also had on display books suitable for children such as a *Nelson's Reader*, *Eli the Elephant*, and some colourful books about Africa and Barbados.

Museum staff and volunteers assisted throughout the day with Miguel Pena and volunteer Cheryl Small in the first shift, followed by volunteer Emelda Browne, and Administrative Assistant - Merchandising, Marcia Griffith later. The Director, Ms. Alissandra Cummins, also joined us in the afternoon for a brief period. The Librarian, Joan Brathwaite, co-ordinated the event for the Museum, and was present throughout the day.

As a result of our involvement for the first time at this event, the Director has agreed that the Museum will participate in all future events for International Literacy Day, organized by the National Library Service, in an effort towards closer co-operation and partnership with governmental agencies.



## Library Volunteers

Congratulations are extended to Library Volunteer, Mrs. Emelda Browne, on completing her studies at the UWI Cave Hill and Codrington College. Emelda will be graduating with a Licentiate in Theology at the Graduation Ceremony on October 23. Congratulations are also extended to Library Volunteer, Mr. Orley Jones, who took up an appointment at the UWI Main Library from September 6 in their systems section. Orley, a professional librarian, and returning national, had only joined the volunteer corps on June 18. We wish both our volunteers continued success, and look forward to their continued assistance as time permits. The Library also received assistance from the Junior Curators during this period, particularly with newspaper clippings. A special mention should be made of Mr. Gavin Hope, who also assisted with other duties in the Library.

We hope you'll come by in the near future and benefit from the wealth of resources in The Shilstone Memorial Library. Opening hours are 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m., Monday to Friday.



## Donor Acknowledgements - January 01, 2010 – September 30, 2010

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## Farewell to Jenny Randall

The BMHS regrets to announce the passing of dedicated Museum member, Mrs. Jenny Randall. The late Mrs. Randall gave of her time and skills to the Finance and General Management Committee. She and husband Adrian also gave valuable assistance to the Shilstone Memorial Library's Book Stall at various Museum events over the years. Our condolences go out to her family and friends. She will be greatly missed.

## Discovering the Cannon Collection at St. Ann's Fort

By Sharon Hurley Hall

On September 25 the Friends of the Barbados Museum visited the Military Museum as guests of Major Mike Hartland. After meeting at the Main Guard, we piled into jeeps, military style to head across the road to the Defence Force. The first stop was the Museum itself, with an impressive collection of 17th and 18th century cannon and shot. Major Mike did a great job of showing the Friends how to identify the dates and makers of the guns, as well as the ships on which they were deployed. A video reconstruction showed the guns in action, while several of the visitors took the chance to feel the weight of the cannonballs. Then it was off to the Officers' Mess to check out the plaques from visiting military, see the dining room used for Queen Elizabeth II's last state dinner in Barbados and see the West India Regiment collection, including the actual flag raised when Barbados became independent on November 30, 1966. It was an enlightening and inspirational tour. Thanks, Major Mike!



Major Mike Hartland discusses the cannon collection with the Friends of the Museum

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