

NO: 18

4th Quarter, 1986

Newsletter



The Barbados Museum & Historical Society

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Another year is almost finished and time just seems to have flown by. We are very pleased to note the growing numbers of Museum members and indeed Museum visitors entering our doors and participating in the various activities taking place. We look forward to encouraging other conservation and cultural activities by simply making what space we have available to interested and enthusiastic groups. And certainly we regard this as a primary function of the Museum and look forward to consolidating our relationships with these groups. For instance we note particularly the work of the Jewish Synagogue Restoration Group in preparing and presenting an exhibit on the work on the past year or so and some of the remaining artifacts from the original building.

On another note the African exhibit opening on December 1, 1986 was a great success with over two hundred members and friends attending and generally adding to the lively and vital atmosphere of this Museum. It is heartwarming to note the continuing support from the members and we think we have a very exciting programme of exhibitions planned for next year. Unfortunately the simultaneous opening of the Museum Café did not take place as planned due to unavoidable delays in construction and organisation of the kitchen space. Never mind! we shall just have another special function for that historic moment - hopefully early in the New Year.

An unexpected honour was extended to the Museum by the visit and informal address given at the Opening by His Excellency, The Nigerian Ambassador to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, Mr. Ayo Ajakaiye, who indicated that he was most impressed with the work being carried out by the Society.

Finally it gave us great pleasure to be able to offer Museum Members an additional experience in the form of a marvellous exhibit by Bill Grace, one of the island's foremost artists' and ceramicists. That his exhibit was prepared on schedule and in such a short space of time was almost entirely due to the artist's dedication and the support of good friends. We are thrilled to note that this exhibit entitled "EXPLORATION" is probably the best to date to be held in the Exhibition Gallery. It has made a considerable impact on natives and visitors alike and encourages all others to strive for excellence in aesthetic vision.

MERRY XMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

NATIONAL TRAINING BOARD - Museum Trainees

Trainees Ms. Patsy Small and Ms. Marcelle Kellman have been sponsored at the Barbados Museum by the National Training Board since July. Their six month service ends early this January.

During their assignment they have performed in the areas of clerical assistance, exhibit research and design. They have also gained skills in camera operation, film development and photographic printing.

Patsy Small has researched topics for the Museum's new African Heritage Exhibit (see article this issue) and prepared portions of the exhibits storyline text. Ms. Small has worked helping to conserve artifacts for the exhibit, construction of an exhibit model and then construct the exhibit.

Marcelle Kellman has worked to copy and catalogue the Museum's historic photograph collection beginning with Barbados post-cards. Ms. Kellman has also helped begin the Museum's oral history project with Loran Cutsinger (see article this issue).

Both Patsy and Marcelle are learning job skills and gaining experience that has furthered their education and will help their future career. The Museum hopes to lend assistance to the National Training Board in placing Patsy and Marcelle with new employers.

If you are currently seeking young starting employees, please contact Steve Hackenberger (Curator) at the Barbados Museum regarding opportunities that may suit Patsy and Marcelle.

The Museum would like to thank Ms. Small and Ms. Kellman for their service to the Museum and to acknowledge the assistance of Mr. Tony Drakes and the National Training Board. We know the Museum has gained from the experience and hope the project has contributed to the work of the Board and the goals of the Ministry of Education.

A HARVEST OF KNOWLEDGE

The West African Heritage of the Caribbean is explored in a six month exhibit opened on December 1, 1986.

A historical section of the exhibit describes the development of West African Kingdoms from 500 B.C. to 1700 A.D. as the result of trade and wars of conquest; first between West African societies and later between West African, North African Moslems and European Christians.

Displays on everyday life show the extensive fashion in which daily life was enriched through forms of cultural expression ranging from clothes to household items. The exhibit also incorporates a life size re-construction of the facade of a West African earth dwelling.

Explanation is given for the purposes of masks and dances in African communities. The role of kings is shown and the function of their symbols of power, created by "court artists", is interpreted.

Several African specialists in the United States have contributed information to the project, including: David Binkley of the Nelson Atkins Museums, Kansas City; Deirdre Bibby of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, U.S.A.; Francine Farr of the Brooklyn Museum, N.Y.; Dr. Pearl Primus, University of Massachusetts Smith College, U.S.A.; Dr. Moni Adams of Peabody Museum, Harvard University; Dr. Judith Bettelheim, San Francisco State University; Barbara Frank, College of Wooster, Ohio; staff members of the National Museum of African Art (Smithsonian Institution); and Dr. Samella Lewis, Afro-American Museum, Los Angeles. On the basis of the current exhibit project, the Museum now also has a long list of experts working in Nigerian Museums who are interested in developing future exchanges between their museums and museums of the Eastern Caribbean Nations.

The African Heritage Exhibition strengthens the Barbados Museum's role in education and cultural awareness in the Caribbean, and increases the Museum's service to the widest possible cross-section of the Barbadian public.

The geographic origins of Afro-Caribbean people are described and examples are given of vestiges of African ways found in the Caribbean. The influence of African culture in the development of modern western Art is also highlighted.

EXPLORATION

"Exploration" , an exhibition of ceramics and paintings by Barbadian potter Bill Grace will be on show at the Barbados Museum and Historical Society from December 1st until January 2nd, 1987. Inspired by the interrelationships between man and his natural environment, Bill describes three of the areas his works explores such as:

. Sandrift Series:

Sculptural patterns created by wind and tide.

. Pre Columbian Images:

Pottery evolved from the ancient Caribbean peoples.

. Bathsheba Series:

Rythms and colours of Barbados' East Coast.

A prolific potter, Bill studied his craft in Canada and the U.S.A. during the late 70's to early 80's. Since then, his creativity and drive as an artist and organiser have provided the base from which he has been able to adopt many roles such as: Founding Member of the Barbados Craft Guild, Tutor, Exhibitor, Curator and Art Judge.

LIBRARY NEWS

During the period o October 13 - October 26th volunteer Ms. Constance Younglao maintained library services while the Librarian was on leave. Research requests from overseas, as well as locally, were demanding during that period. Research on Ms. Shirley Chisholm for a documentary for WGBY-TV in Springfield Massachusetts has been lengthy. Genealogical research remains the primary topic of research for several persons and overseas calls have been received requesting such assistance.

On Friday November 28, the Library held a Book Fair during the period 10.00 a.m. - 2.00 p.m. Contributions of books and library records were received from Museum Members. Donations were received from Mr. Edward Stoute (who gave a sizeable collection of books), Mr. Andrew Steel, Mrs. M.C. Bertalan, Mrs. G. Kearns, Miss Joan Armstrong, Lady Chandler, Mr. Andy Taitt of the Book Place and Ms. Ann Musgrave from the Cloister Bookstore who donated new paperback books. Their contributions were most gratefully received.

Staff Members who donated material were Mr. Fraser and Mr. Hackenberger. There were a number of other small donations which were eagerly accepted.

The Volunteers assisting us that day at the Coffee Table were Mrs. Sheila Parker, Mrs. Alice Lamoureux, and Ms. Constance Younglao whose efforts contributed \$70.00 to the fund.

In the Library Section the Volunteers were Mrs. Karen Moon, Mrs. Gail Hallgarth, Mrs. Post, Mrs. Beryl Birch and Mrs. Medford. Their efforts totalled \$393.23 from the sales of the books which were donated and \$174.00 from the new books which came from the Museum Shop. A grand total of \$657.23 was collected. These funds will go toward the conservation of library materials and the purchase of new items desperately needed.

The Book Fair was a success and we wish to thank the following organisations who gave donations to the Coffee Morning: ECAF Ltd, Wonder Bakeries Ltd, Purity Bakeries Ltd and Zephirin's Bakery Ltd and to the public and Museum Members who attended, who bought and gave books to the collection. Thank you for your generous support.

All of the books were not sold and we will be holding another Book Fair next year.

WII JOHN WINSTON BERESFORD CHENERY

An Appreciation by Jack Dear

The Museum regrets to record the death of Mr. John Chenery who died in England on the 31st day of January 1986. Mr. Chenery was a distinguished scholar at Harrison College and was one of the youngest students to win the Barbados Scholarship which he did in 1923 at the age of 16, enjoying as he then did the unique distinction of winning the Scholarship in his first year in the Sixth Form.

After his call to the Bar of England he returned to Barbados to practise his profession, but soon the lure of journalism enticed him to its service. Mr. Chenery was the son of Charles L. Chenery, a man of outstanding intellect and commanding literary style who dominated the journalistic work of Barbados for 30 years.

He was the first Barbados Scholar to act as Attorney General or Chief Justice of Barbados. He was the last to sit on the old West Indian Court of Appeal.

In 1946 he responded with alacrity to the invitation of the Headmaster of Lodge School, Mr. T.L. Evans, to undertake classical teaching of the Sixth Form.

His interests in Barbadian life were wide and varied. Between 1949-1957 he acted as Honorary Editor of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society Journal. He was one of the early members of the Barbados Public Service Commission and became a member of the shortlived Federal Public Service Commission when the Federation was formed in 1958. He was also a trustee of the Barbados Public Library for many years. But of all his loves the greatest and most enduring was his love of cricket. It would be no exaggeration to suggest that his Epitaph should read that he was the greatest armchair cricketer ever produced by Barbados.

Winston Chenery also took interest in the realms of athletics and cycling, and for years was President of the Amateur Athletic Association of Barbados.

Some odd stereotypes of museums curators still prevail. One image is that of the reticent gentleman-scholar, jealously guarding artifacts from the burly-burly and ignorance of the general public. Another is that of the museum worker as a kind of genteel shop assistant who says "shh" and watches the merchandise.

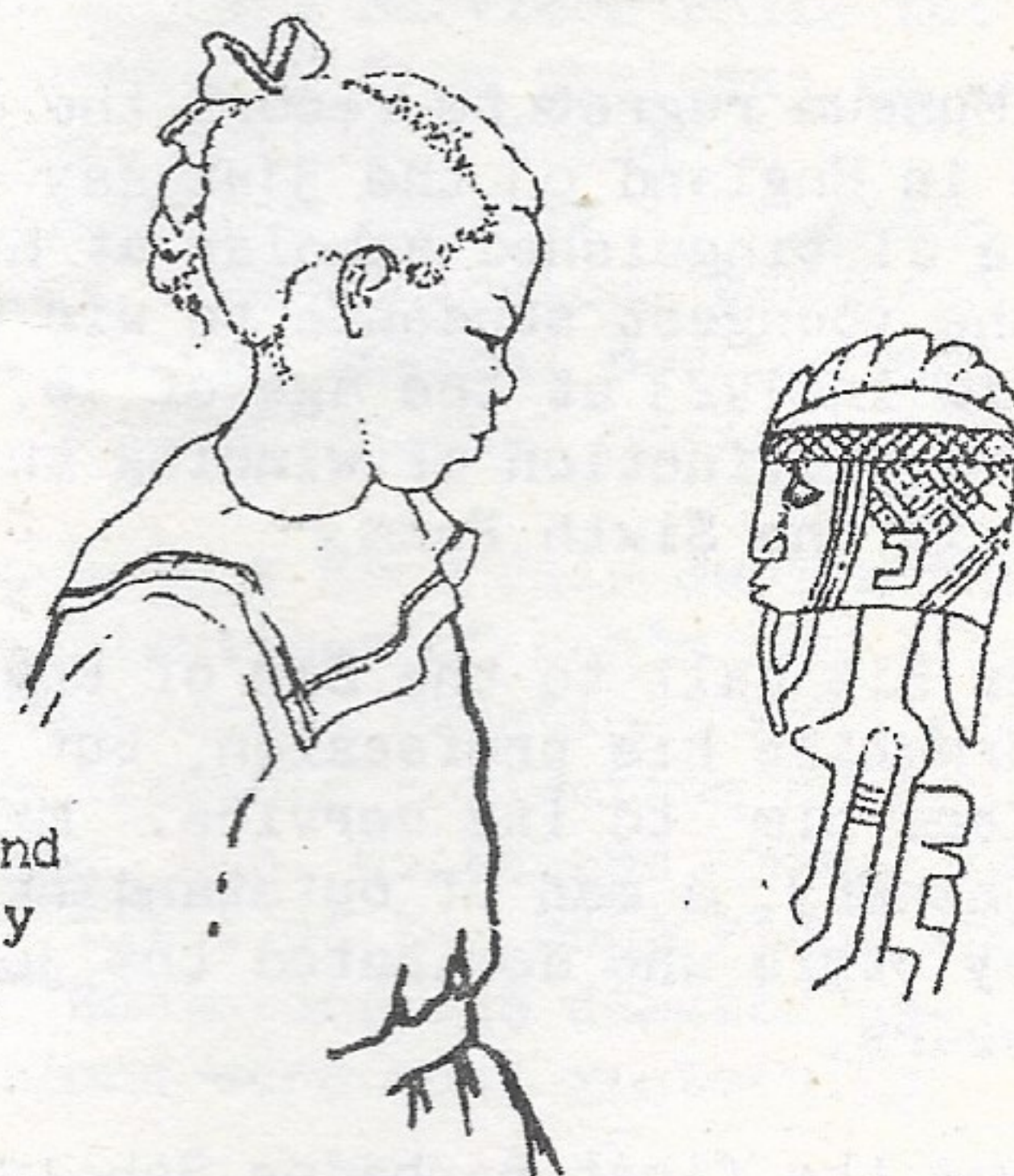
Such stereotypes are understandable; they had some truth until relatively recently. The Museum profession is a "young" vocation. Even in industrialized countries it is only in this century that the Museum's cloistered and scholarly mode has been balanced by a dynamic sense of its cultural and educational mission.

What is Museum education? Perhaps it is easier to say what it is not. It is not 200 children being marched military fashion in one end of the museum and out the other. It is not the tiny girl I saw copying, in careful, wobbly letters, latin names longer than she.

At its best, museum education helps children develop skills of observation and inferential thinking. It also fosters their interest in and respect for the artifacts of their own environment.

For this reason, learning activities at the Museum are not built around "right" and "wrong" answers, names, dates or rote memory tasks. Instead, children observe and question until they are able to infer answers that will be meaningful and memorable. For instance, a group of 10 year olds exploring the plantation exhibit stopped at that slave schedule. I provided only minimal back-ground information. Eventually a small voice said "But how a slave can only be two years old?". The questions began: how would his mummy feel? Who was his mummy? Why were most of the slaves so young? Why didn't they have last names? When did slavery happen? Why did it happen?.

THE CLASSROOM COMES TO THE MUSEUM



A dry historical phenomenon had become disturbingly alive and real to them. They asked important questions, on a 10 year old level, about the human condition. Why do people behave as they do? What conditions structure their lives? How does the past relate to us?

Names and dates can come later, and will fall into place more easily.

Why is the Museum setting particularly appropriate for this kind of learning?

For one thing, we aren't bound by the classroom format. Mass visits are being phased out and replaced by smaller, project-centered groups. Rather than whizzing through the entire museum, each group focusses intensively on one exhibit. Booklets, worksheets even crossword puzzles are provided to stimulate curiosity and imagination; teachers are offered suggestions for follow-up classroom activity.

It's not one-way traffic. Next term we begin outreach: "discovery learning" teaching kits on loan to schools. Boxed materials - artifacts, posters, literature, lesson plans - will be available for weekly loans to teachers who have difficulty bringing children to the Museum, or who simply wish to enrich the teaching of a particular topic.

Developing a teaching kit is more than stuffing cultural goodies into a Christmas stocking. Artifacts must be selected and text researched with the same professional thoroughness the Museum requires in all its exhibits. Information and teaching suggestions must be absolutely unambiguous, so issues cannot be misunderstood, and so mis-taught. Graphics and visual aids must be eye-catching and nearly indestructible. And of course, the kits must be publicized, signed out and in, checked for wear and tear, repaired.

At present we are development two kits for the 9-13 year group: "Vertabrates" and "Archaeology and Amerindians", for upper Secondary pupils, topics are CXC - related: "Art in Barbados", "Plantations: Sugar and slavery", "Socio-economic conditions in early 20th century Barbados".

The response has been, so far, encouraging. But tradition dies hard. There are still planners who think 200 children who don't touch the glass imply more learning than 25 children discussing archaeology. There is still the little boy who said "A railway in Barbados?. It does go all the way to Canada?".

We have a long way to go.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS

Field work is in progress at Kensington on the site of a new discount center to be constructed in January. Dense pottery finds occur with conch shell refuse, and one burial has been excavated (estimated date A.D. 1200 to 1500).

Fieldwork will also be necessary at the Greenland location in St. Andrew where highway construction has exposed a possible living floor and at least one burial (estimated date A.D. 1000 to 1200).

The Archaeological Research team from the University of London will return to work at Chancery Lane. Excavations will be conducted in the last half of February 1987. The Chancery Lane site includes occupations dating as early as A.D. 400 to 500.

A date about A.D. 1000 has just been reported for the Shell Oil Depot site by the Alpha Analytic Laboratory, Florida. Using thermoluminescence to date a pottery sherd found encrusted with marine deposit it is suggested that a relatively higher sea level probably existed on Barbados about 1000 years ago. Funding for this date was provided by the Shell Oil Company; while further change will be made available by the Coastal Conservation Project and the Ministry of Housing and Lands.

The Archaeology Society continues to meet on the third Wednesday of each month. Upcoming lectures will include project updates; a presentation of Guyana's Museum and Amerindian Communities (December) a Marine Archaeology lecture (January) and a report of activities by the University of London archaeological team (February).

HELP NEEDED - INFORMATION ON GOLDE WHITE

The Museum is seeking any information which members and friends might have on the life and works of the late artist, Golde White. At present we are carrying out in depth research on the artist with the intention of mounting a retrospective exhibit to commemorate the 10th anniversary of her death.

Anyone willing to offer information or to loan paintings for this purpose is asked to contact Curator Lesley Whatley at 427-0201.

STAFF TRAINING IN ROME, ITALY

As part of this Museum's commitment to support the development of professional training for its staff, Curator of History/Art Lesley Whatley was able to attend a course on Preventative Conservation in September at the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), Rome, Italy.

The ~~three~~ week interim course was designed to familiarize us with environmental problems which arise in the care and conservation of museum collections, and also to assist us in arriving at practical solutions through relatively simple steps.

Focussing on four main areas; Climate, Theft and Security, Fire and Lighting, theory was reinforced through the use of practical experiments, lab exercises, case studies and field trips.

How Does the Museum Benefit

Presently the practise of daily and hourly climatic monitors, fire equipment and security mechanism is undertaken by the guards. Management recognised that this routine was adequate only up to a point.

What the training provided was an understanding of how problems occur in the first place; knowing the peculiar and particular physical properties of objects in the collections and, understanding the behaviour of both natural and artificial elements on these objects and their environments.

What was evident to me therefore, was the role and responsibility curatorial staff have to employ in the planning, controlling and monitoring of micro and macro environments housing our collections.

Fortunately, we received three valuable pieces of equipment from ICCROM which will help us in implementing a more systematic approach to the aspects of our job relating to the main topics of the ICCROM Course.

The Museum was fortunate in being the recipient of a study grant from UNESCO which covered the cost of travel and subsistence.

By: Philippa Newton

During the period July 14 - October 20, 1986 I visited the Carnegie Museum of Natural History under their International Programme as a Resident Museum Specialist. This programme afforded the opportunity to interact and work with many of the Museum's departments, and generally provided a rewarding experience of life in one of the U.S.A.'s leading natural history museums. I was particularly impressed with the Carnegie's efforts at unifying the diverse forces of science, art, literature and music. The Carnegie comprises the Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Art, the Library of Pittsburgh and the Music Hall.

Financially, the venture was covered by the Carnegie which provided a grant covering a per diem and a most comfortable apartment. The Barbados Museum was responsible for international travel and was fortunate in receiving funding from the Organisation of American States (O.A.S.) to cover this. This arrangement is highly commendable on the part of the Carnegie and also illustrates the willingness of a major funding agency to assist in the development of museums in the Caribbean.

For varying lengths of time, ranging from several weeks to a few days, I worked with the Anthropology Division, all of the Life Science Departments, the Division of Exhibit Design and production, the Education Division, the Museum Library and the Powdermill Nature Reserve. I was also able to visit several other museums in New York City, Albany and Washington D.C.

The Conservation of the collections at the Barbados Museum is of the utmost concern, and my exposure to the methods used at the Carnegie and especially to the experimental work in progress there, will serve as a good guideline in the further development of such procedures suitable to our tropical climate. I shall follow with great interest, the developments in this area of museology.

The opportunity of working in the fully functional environment of the scientific departments has given me tremendous insights

into the many and varied functions of a natural history museum; functions which on a smaller scale can aptly be applied to our own natural history department at the Barbados Museum. Despite critical differences between our department and the Carnegie's life science departments, in terms of operating procedures due to substantially different sizes of collections and staff, I was able to identify many areas of similarity, and am confident that our small collections can become valuable tools for scientific research and environmental planning.

Much of my hands-on experience was gained in the Exhibits Department and while many of the techniques used there were not unfamiliar, they somehow seemed much more simple and easier to conquer than previously. This was of course due to the expertise of the personnel in this department and to their eagerness to share knowledge gained over many long years.

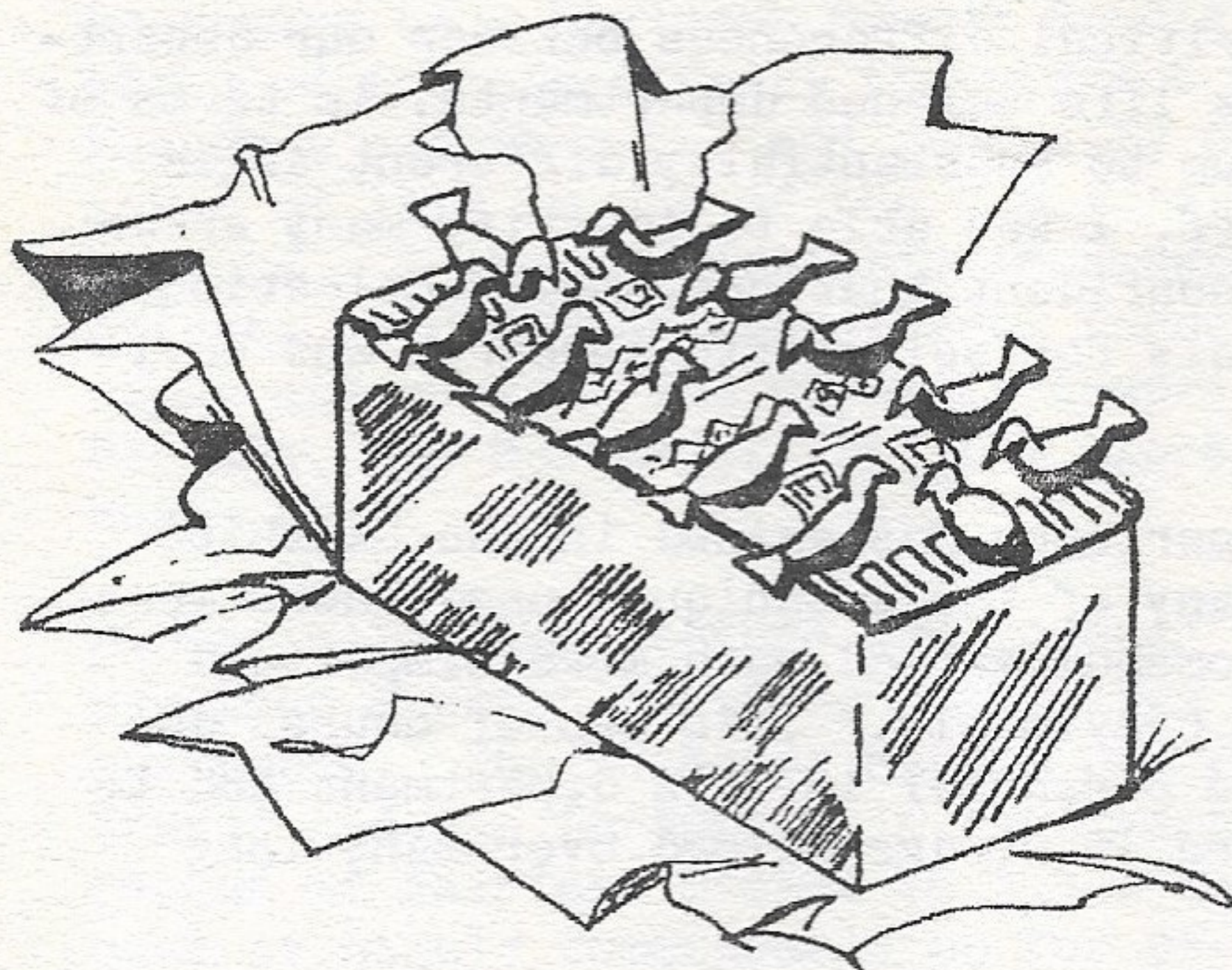
I was able to collect quite a substantial amount of literature on biological museum methods, which is normally available only at considerable expense. The staff of the Carnegie was particularly helpful in referring me to various sources for this material.

Their highly developed educational programme includes activities based at the Museum as well as in schools and children's hospitals. While Museum staff is responsible for the organisation of these activities, a large number of volunteers **are** involved in their implementation. Interestingly, the Museum's guides or docents, are required to undertake an extensive training programme, lasting several months and are paid for each tour.

During my stay there were also two other interns, one from Brazil, the other from India with whom I exchanged several ideas on the development of our respective institutions. Altogether the internship was very fulfilling and I trust that as the Carnegie begins to explore the Caribbean area, our professional ties will grow.

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STERLING IDEA!

FINE REPRODUCTION OF AFRICAN GOLD WEIGHTS

Cast in STERLING SILVER
By Artist DISA ALLSOPP

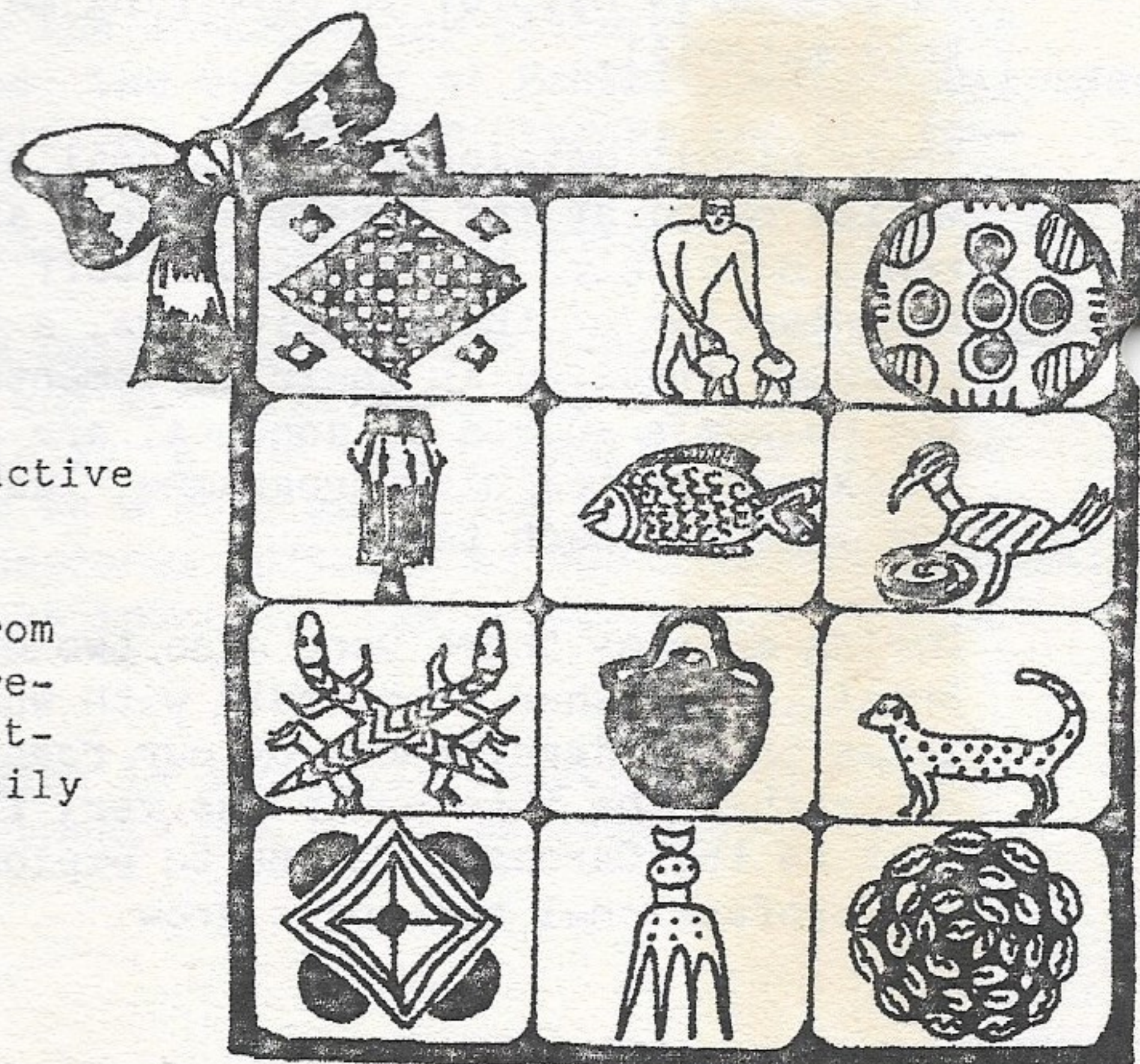
Use as ornaments
or wear as jewelry.

- Pill boxes
- Pendants
- Table ornaments
- Brooches and rings.

TAKE OUR COLLECTIONS HOME WITH YOU FOR 1987

In the form of an attractive
glossy CALENDAR.

Items of African art from
our collection are repre-
sented on colourful post-
cards which you can easily
detach and use again.



NEW MEMBERS

The Barbados Museum and Historical Society is very pleased to welcome so many new members to our list. We are very much encouraged by your growing interest and involvement in the development of the Museum and for showing your support in this way.

| | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Barr | Barbados | Joint Annual |
| Dr. & Mrs. Charles Edwards | " | " " |
| Mr. & Mrs. Robert Fedel | " | " " |
| Mrs. Allison Thompson | " | " " |
| Mr. & Mrs. John Wickham | " | " " |
| Miss Denise Bellamy | United Kingdom | Annual |
| Mr. Frank Coppin | Barbados | " |
| Mr. John Donald | " | " |
| Miss Lena Gumbs | Anquilla | " |
| Miss Jane Hinson | U.S.A. | " |
| Dr. Cecilia Karch | Barbados | " |
| Mrs. Jane McKeller | U.S.A. | " |
| Ms. Lilian M. Nicholson | Barbados | " |
| Mrs. Kathy Yearwood | " | " |
| Mstr. Darren Jones | " | Junior |
| Mstr. Ryan Jones | " | " |
| Casuarina Beach Club | " | Firm & Company |
| Sand Acres Hotel | " | " " |
| Mrs. Joscelyn Gardner | " | Life |

Cont'd. from Pg. 7

I remember Mr. Justice Chenery as a patient and courteous Judge from whom ~~young lawyers~~ - of whom I was one at that time - received nothing but help and encouragement. He was a rare soul, quite distinct from the ordinary run of humanity and, as long as cricket is played and the classics are read, his name evocative of those two streams of activity, will be held in affectionate and appreciate remembrance.

MUSEUM HOURS

& EVENTS

The Barbados Museum &
Historical Society
St. Ann's Garrison
ST. MICHAEL

Museum Staff Hours

Monday - Friday

8.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.

Open for Visitors

Monday - Saturday

9.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.

Bill Grace Exhibition

"Exploration"

Dec 1st - Jan 2nd 1987

African Art Exhibition

"A Harvest of Knowledge"

From Dec 1st for 6 months

Museum Closed

Dec 24th - Dec 28th

Reopens Dec 29th

Closed Jan 1st

Public Holiday

Philatelic Society

Meeting

Every 2nd Wednesday

of the month

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Archaeology Group

Meeting

Every 3rd Wednesday

of the month

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Beginning

January every

1st Wednesday of

the month we hope

to schedule lectures

on "African Culture"

Contact Museum

Office for further

details.

(Tentative Schedule)

Professor Nichols of

the University of

Virginia "Early

Houses of the

Western Hemisphere "

Jan 27th 8.00 p.m.

Joint Exhibition :

Ras Akyem & Ras Ishi

Opens Jan 9th

CARIBBEANA :

an exhibition

of West Indian

artworks from

18th - 20th

Centuries

compiled by Mrs

Maureen Hanton

and Mr. Mark

Hunte - in the

Cunard Gallery

Jan 31st - Feb 20th

Mr. Michael Ridley
Appliques
St. Thomas



ON SERVICE