

NEWSLETTER

NO. 50

4TH QUARTER, 1994

MISSION STATEMENT

The Barbados Museum is a non-profit institution. Its mandate is to collect, document and conserve evidence of Barbados' cultural, historical and environmental heritage; and to interpret and present this evidence for all sectors of society.

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Director of the Museum
Ms. Alissandra Cummins

MEMBERSHIP

Best Wishes for 1995! First let us thank you for your support in 1994. This meant a great deal to us in allowing us to maintain our programmes in education, conservation and communication.

We were very pleased to have been able to present to you our most popular issue of the Journal (Vol. XL1, 1993) last year, and we are already at work for our special 60th Anniversary issue to be disseminated later this year. Our newsletter continues to be a popular voice for the institution and we hope to develop this resource even further this year. During 1994 we were fortunate to have attracted some generous grant funding enabling us to make a significant impact on the conservation and management of our collections. This is a course which the staff of the Museum will diligently continue to pursue.

Nonetheless, as a private, non-profit organisation, we still depend on the support of our friends. By representing your interests in the areas of cultural and environmental education and conservation, together we can maintain and strengthen the cultural heritage community of Barbados.

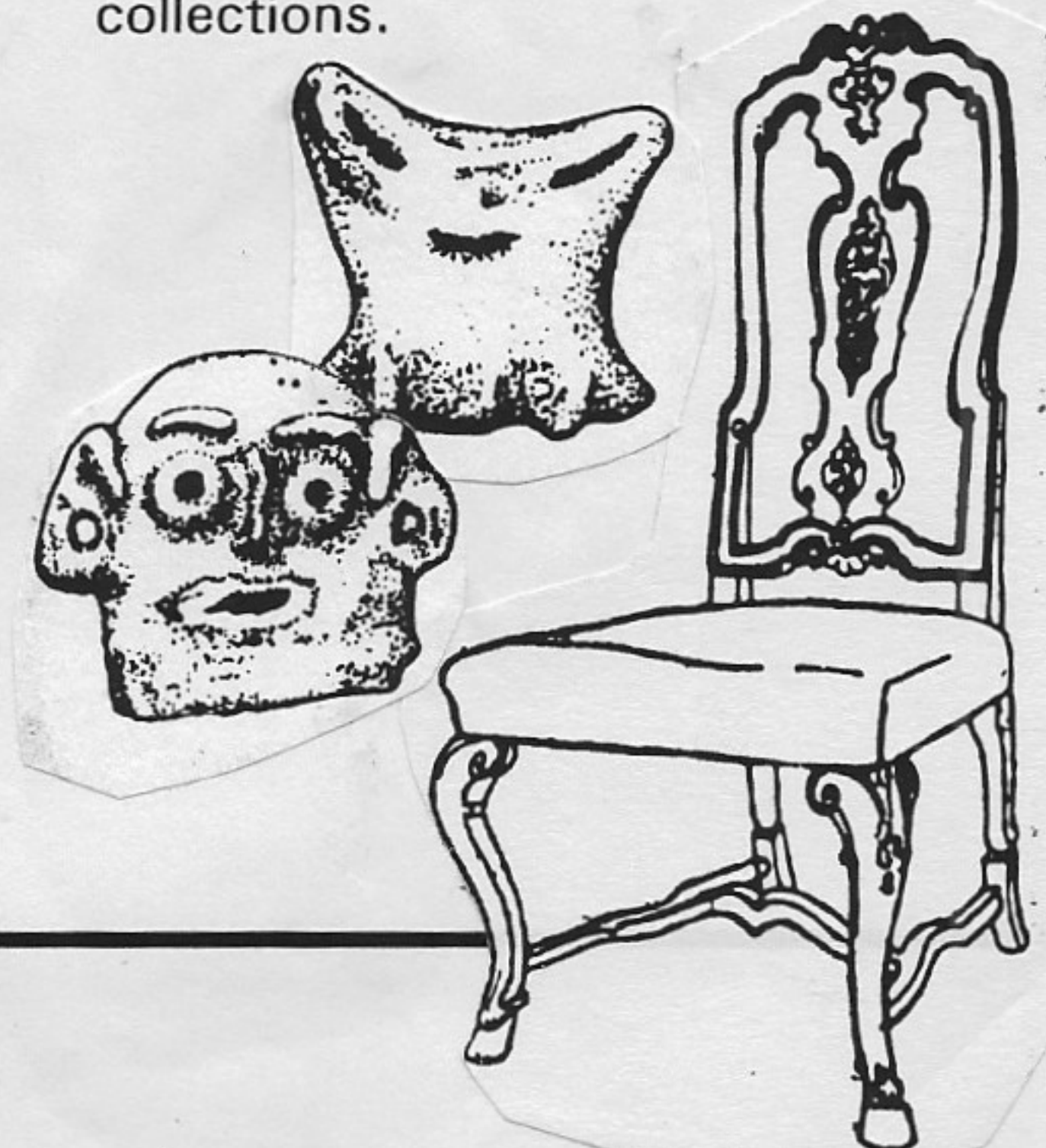
Your membership in the Barbados Museum and Historical Society is an indication of your commitment to our community. You help to strengthen our network and our voice.

Why not sign up a new member today.

MUSEUM ON THE MOVE

Six months of intensive labour, involving the work of 3 curators, 3 consultant conservators, 1 curatorial assistant, and 2 maintenance staff, has paid off. The Barbados Museum now has a comprehensive collections condition survey, to inform us of the state of our artifacts, particularly in the areas of furniture and archaeology, two of the most important facets of our decorative art collections.

Poking about in nooks and crannies (going where almost no one has gone before), reviewing all the existing documentation, interviewing staff, contractors and other museum associates, the consultants have done everything possible within a short space of time to paint as clear a picture as possible. It isn't pretty! Decades of benign neglect, before the present staff arrived, a non-existent conservation budget and a 10-year delay in the implementation of our capital works plans has led to the slow deterioration of some collections.



Lack of environmentally controlled gallery and storage spaces (airconditioned to the unitiated), due to the institution's attempt to contain massive energy costs, has contributed to the degeneration, as have the poor conditions related to a leaking roof, over our main storeroom. (See *Raising the Roof*) The Museum's limited human resources have wracked an overworked staff to the fullest extent, whilst we strive to maintain the artifacts in reasonable condition. But the survey has revealed our deficiencies and the embarrassing number of hidden spiders, insect 'frass' and dust, has become our immediate concern. As a result the maintenance crew's schedule has been reorganised to target storage areas more regularly - the use of dust masks is on the rise. In fact one bemused museum visitor wondered aloud which planet he was on when faced with a bemasked staff member!

A special training workshop was held last October for all museum staff, from the secretaries to the shop staff, from the gardeners to the guards. All and sundry benefitted from Conservator Connie Stromberg's gentle but firm advice including "Never hold an object by its handle. That is usually its weakest point!".

The recent introduction of the recording thermohygrographs in our galleries has been another technological step up which the Getty Grant has allowed us to make. Each one of these small instruments records in minute detail, the everchanging climate influencing the life span of our collections. The minutiae of temperature and relative humidity are recorded week by week, by equipment which reacts to moisture in the atmosphere in much the same way as a lie detector to a fib.

Let's just say that we all breathed a sigh of relief when the rains were behind us. Our poor furniture just can't take it after 150 years! (And the security staff seen to enjoy giving the curators a weekly heart attack from the reports).

The best part of the whole exercise was the sense of empowerment and change as another OAS funded project allows us to follow up immediately on some of the recommendations. Shelves have been cleared, objects reorganized, new storage equipment for both the furniture and the natural history collections is on its way. All of the staff now feel a renewed

commitment to the process of preventive conservation, and priorities will be set to meet certain targets over the next five years.

As we move into another century, with most of our precious objects still in existence, we are reminded of the importance of interpreting the centuries of human experience embodied in the bricks and mortar that surround us. Our consciousness of the importance of this task will help us to persevere anew, strengthened in purpose by the confidence you all, our members and friends place in us.



This is how we lift. Staff members get tips on handling objects from Conservator Connie Stromberg.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Over 5000 children were given guided museum tours during 1994. This figure, down from the previous year, reflects the economic difficulty that the school groups had in paying for essential transport.

The last term was a challenging one for Docent Co-ordinator Daisy Frost. Since September, she organised training, seminars, coordinated docents and scheduled school tours.

Not content with a busy term of school and public tours, the docents also took on a fundraising project, with the object of helping the Museum acquire 100 chairs for its public events. (Readers who have suffered through an evening on the old metal chairs will appreciate their efforts).

To this end, the docents organised a Bring and Buy Mini Fair at the end of November. They were deeply disappointed by a poor turnout after all their hard work. However, several generous donations by friends and members enabled them to purchase the remaining 28 chairs, bringing the Museum's quota to 100. They will present the chairs to the museum at a special ceremony on January 31st.

Would any readers care to join this lively, interesting group of volunteers? Training for new docents begins early February. If you are adaptable, people-oriented, and interested in Barbadian history and culture, this could be a challenging and fulfilling commitment for you.

Docents need to be able to give a regular (weekly) session throughout school terms. (There is no docent programme during holidays.)

Interested? Phone Education Curator Wendy Donawa at 427-0207 or 436-1956.

LECTURE

'Origin of Barbados as an island and the question whether it is rising or sinking today.'

by Robert Speed, Professor of Geology, Northwestern University Illinois, U.S.A.

February 15, at 7.30 p.m.

This lecture will discuss how Barbados has formed in the last million years by plate tectonics and how Barbados differs greatly from the volcanic islands of the Antilles, and the coral atoll of the Bahamas.

Some new findings are that Barbados probably once extended much farther east than the present east coast and that parts of the island are currently rising rapidly whereas others are probably sinking. The interplay of tectonics and glacial-age control of sea level in determining Barbados' shoreline height will be described. Everyone should turn out for this fascinating lecture.

LIBRARY NEWS

Unfortunately, on the 28th October, the Librarian, Mrs. Betty Shannon fell as she was approaching her car in the car park at the front of the Museum. The rough surface has finally claimed its victim. Betty broke her left arm and left leg when she fell and has not been able to work since the fall. After lengthy surgical operations both arm and leg are now out of their casts and she is receiving therapy to resuscitate them. We miss her bright spirit around the Museum!

Mrs. Paulette Gooding, a professional Librarian who has recently returned

from London, has agreed to act for two months until Betty recovers fully.

The Library reopened on January 3rd and continues to receive a continuous flow of requests from overseas for genealogical searches and historical research. The sustained interest in these areas of our work now requires a more systematic approach through information resource packaging for known repeated enquiries. This would relieve the Librarian's and researcher's limited time at the museum to develop and exploit the rich resources of the Library, and bring in much needed revenue through appropriate marketing.

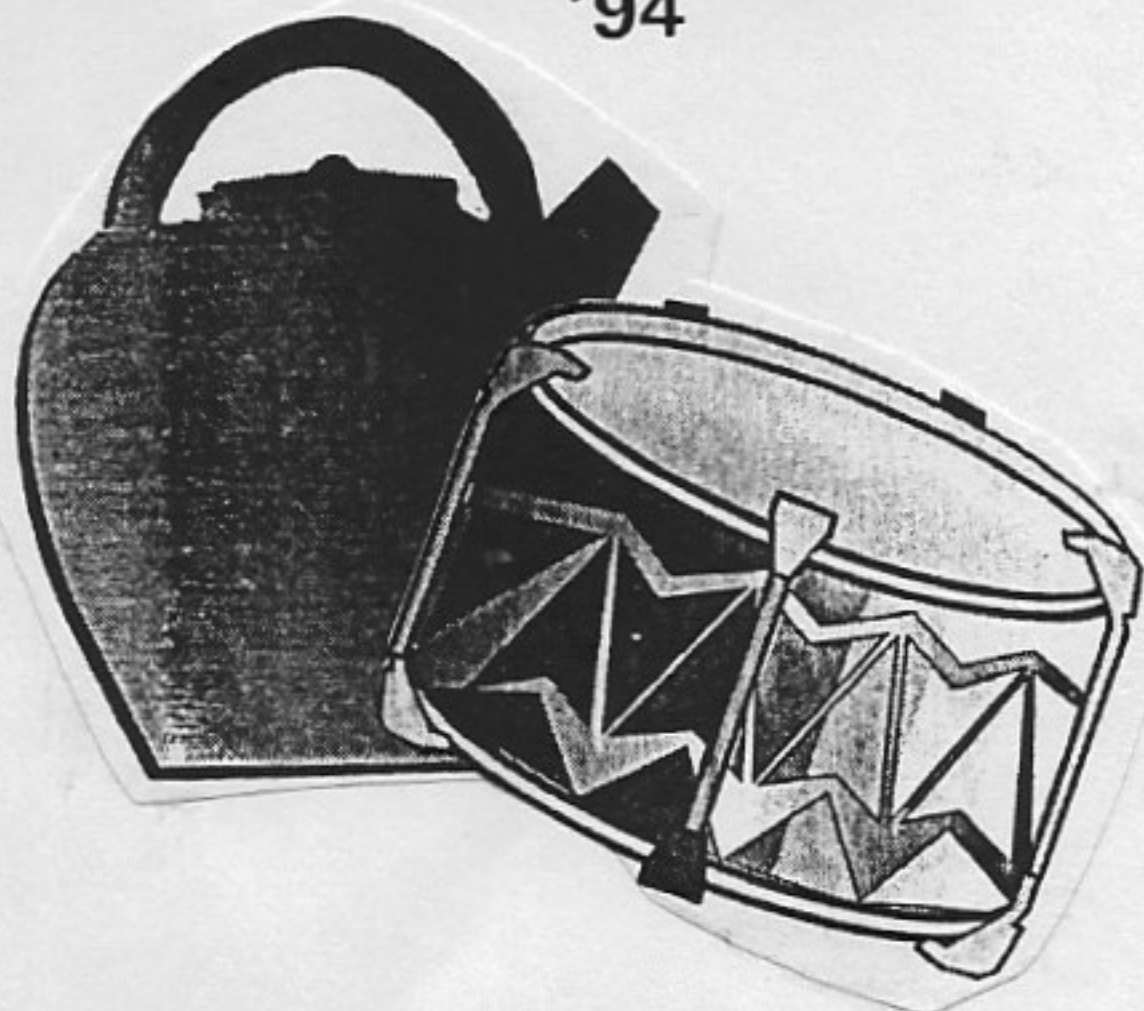
A MUSEUM ABC

The Museum will make this year's Hometown Festival by mounting an exhibit in the new Hometown Public Centre. A special museum space has been allocated in the handsome new building, where visitors will enjoy "A Museum ABC". This is a smaller and somewhat simpler version of the family exhibit installed at the Museum last year, "M is for Museum".

When time and funding permit, it is hoped we can develop this display area into a folk museum richly detailed with the personal experiences of Barbadians. Meanwhile it will be open from 10 am - 5pm throughout the Festival and during the following month.

ABC

BARBADOS MUSEUM FESTIVALS '94



THE FINE CRAFT FESTIVAL

Saturday December 4th - a bright and breezy day and the 5th annual Fine Craft Festival began with a bang at 12 noon. From that hour until 6:00 pm the grounds of the museum were filled with movement, music and laughter from the 1200-odd people who participated and attended what has now become the island's largest craft exposition and fair.

Each year the number of craftspeople vying for a stall grows steadily, as new participants come into the market place with fresh ideas and creativity. This is reflected in the variety, range, packaging and presentation of the craft items on display.

The Lower Courtyard and stage were outfitted to accommodate the 50 or so stallholders who had been invited this year. From feedback, it seems that they were relatively satisfied with being positioned in this central area leaving the Upper Courtyard as the refreshments and entertainment area.

To keep things lively, there was an impressive session of steelpan music by Pan Revolution (formerly of Lotto). Between breaks, background music was also provided. We were very pleased to have the Zion Apostolic Spiritual Baptist Church mount their very

popular "Cou Cou Village". They provided us with a range of delicious Bajan food and drinks.

With gross sales revenues nearing \$30,000.00, we could say that the festival was a financial success. Yet it could not have achieved what it did without an enormous amount of background work and most importantly, sponsorship. Sponsorship allowed us to execute a much higher profiled marketing thrust than had previously been achieved, so that tickets, flyers, a full-colour poster and a dazzling banner were the result.

And while our net income was not as high as last year since the Craft Festival supported the newly borne Folk Festival which opened on the following day, we were generally pleased with the results and success of both events.

THE FINE FOLK FESTIVAL

"Colour, Culture and Class converged to make the Barbados Folk Festival '94 an evening that will last for some time in the hearts of those who attended....." [Review by John Sealy - The Nation Newspaper, December 11th 1994].

That was just one of the many great reviews that the first ever Fine Folk Festival garnered when the curtains fell at 9.35 p.m on Sunday 4th December 1994.

The Museum last year as part of its community outreach programme decided to create a forum for Barbados' folk performers as we have done for the craft people of our nation. This effort was met with tremendous appreciation and support by the folk performers of Barbados and was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience which attended.

The performers who took part were Ruck a Tuck International, Pinelands

Creative Workshop, St. John's Folk Chorale, Mr. Richard Layne, Ellerslie Folk Chorale, Allegro Singers, Hilton Choir, Barbados Landship, and Sing Out Barbados. There was a very dramatic grand finale when all these groups surrounded the audience and serenaded them!

The Museum Festivals were well supported by the corporate community of Barbados and what was particularly heartening is that they did so at very short notice. We would like to thank all sponsors of the festivals especially Rachel Pringle Breweries Ltd, producers of Tiltman Beer who were our major sponsor.

Rachel Pringle Breweries Ltd.
Producers of Tiltman Lager Beer
Major Sponsor

A.S. Bryden & Sons (B'dos) Ltd.
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Shell Antilles and Guianas Ltd.
C'bean Broadcasting Corporation
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and special thanks for supporting
the Festivals to
Mr. Mikey Armstrong
Managing Director, CCS

THANK YOU

PEOPLE

During the last quarter of the year members may have been unaware of a few changes to our team. Administrator Douglas Martindale has left us after 6½ hectic years of trying to steer our stormy financial boat into calmer waters. We wish him the best of luck as we try to find someone brave enough to risk the challenge of museum work.

The determinedly cheerful Merna Bryan replaces Janice Greaves as the junior cleaning technician. Merna's good-natured greetings and calm matter-of-fact manner has already made her a valued member of staff.

Another new face at the Museum is nightwatchman Grantley Yarde who replaces Carl Carter. Mr. Yarde brings to the Museum many years experience as an island constable and has quickly familiarized himself with the museum buildings and security systems. Welcome Merna and Grantley.

FIRST ONE-MAN SHOW FOR GOLD MEDAL WINNER

Ras Ishi, the Barbadian who captured a gold medal at the 1st Caribbean and Central American Biennial of paintings in Santo Domingo mounts an exhibition of paintings during April at the museum's gallery.

It will be his first one-man show, and more importantly, the first occasion in five years that the public will have the opportunity to see a comprehensive body of his work in the island.

Up to press-time the artist had not conceived of a title for the show, however he is quite clear on its content, and the strong feelings he

will be sharing through his art. "... the show reflects a process of self-analysis and my relationships with Barbadian society..... It is a personal statement on my view on this society. I feel that the artist's emotional integrity is at stake - the society views artists as being less worthy of professional respect than say, accountants or lawyers are given".

Some of the pieces have only appeared in shows overseas while others have been produced for this exhibit. The pieces are smaller than he has previously produced because the artist feels that he wants the wider Barbadian public to be given the opportunity to acquire these pieces.

The exhibit runs from April 8th - 30th, 1995.

WANTED

The BMHS tries to keep in stock all of the back issues of the Museum's Journal; indeed each year we receive requests from various libraries asking for help in completing their series.

Members and friends can help us to help others by donating unneeded volumes to fill gaps in our stock.

We need help with the following issues:

Vol. 38 No. 1 (1987)

Vol. 38 No. 2 (1988)

Vol. 39 No. 1 (1991)

We are very grateful for your help.

MUSEUM STAFF

ADMINISTRATION

DIRECTOR

Alissandra Cummins

ADMINISTRATOR

SPECIAL EVENTS MANAGER

Christopher Chandler

SHOP MANAGER

Anita King

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Marcia Griffith

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Angela Boyce

CURATORIAL

CURATOR : ART & HISTORY

Lesley Whatley

CURATOR : NATURAL HISTORY

Philippa King

CURATOR : EDUCATION

Wendy Donawa

LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN

Betty Shannon

TECHNICAL & MAINTENANCE

Merna Bryan

Dennis McCollin

Reginald Riley

Shawn Rowe

Pauline Stuart

RECEPTION & SALES

Sylvia Barker

Sylvia Charles-Dolcy

Michelle Durant

Hester St. Rose

SECURITY

Rudolph Beckles

Beresford Nurse

Royston Sargeant

Grantley Yarde

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is a gentle reminder to those Museum members who have not sent in their subscriptions for 1995:

We need your support now!

MUSEUM CAFÉ

Unfortunately the Museum Café is still closed. We offer apologies to those of you who eagerly came by anticipating a relaxing treat.

We will inform you when the Café opens, and we do rely on your support then.

The Hottest Dinner Show in Barbados **TROUBLE IN Paradise** *Kids 1/2 price* COMEDY MURDER MYSTERIES



at

THE BARBADOS MUSEUM

Travel back to Barbados of 1836 as you help
Inspector Clewlesse solve a hilarious
Caribbean Murder Mystery

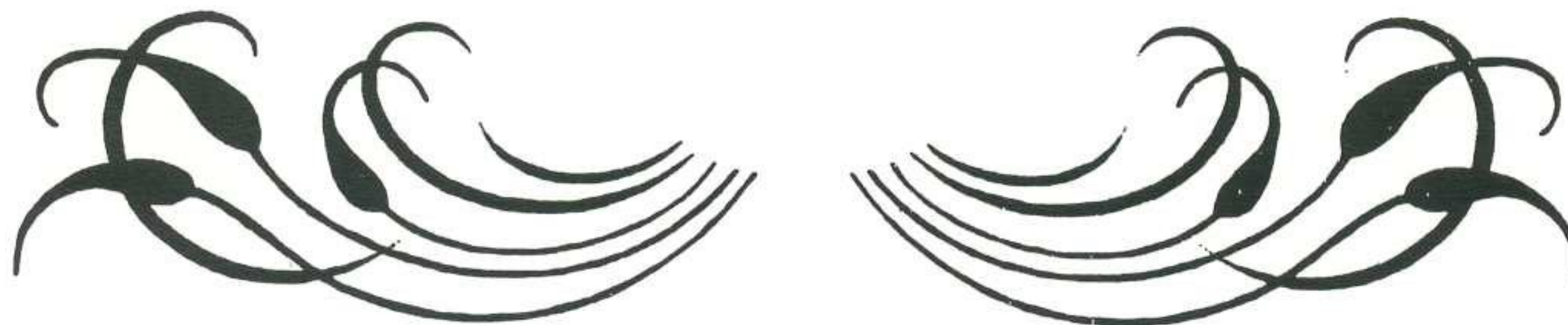
Dinner, Show, Drinks & Transport \$88.00

Show and Drinks only \$44.00

420-3409

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 31st 5:00 p.m.	Reception for Museum Volunteers	Courtyards
February 15th 7:30 p.m.	Lecture: 'Origin of Barbados as an island and the question whether it is rising or sinking' by Prof. Robert Speed.	Temporary Exhibitions Gallery
March 6th 5:00 p.m.	Annual General Meeting	
April 7 - 28th	Exhibition by Ras Ishi	Temporary Exhibitions Gallery
April 14th	Museum Closed (Good Friday)	
April 17th	Museum Closed (Easter Monday)	



The Barbados Museum and Historical Society
St. Ann's Garrison, St. Michael, Barbados, W.I.
Tel: (809) 427-0201 or 436-1956
Fax: (809) 429-5946

Gallery and Shop Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m, Monday to Saturday
2. p.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday
Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., Monday to Friday
Library Hours: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday to Friday
Closed on Public Holidays.
