

BARBADOS MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No. 53 - 1995

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.

PATRON

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Dame R. Nita Barrow
GCMG, DA
Governor-General of Barbados

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Ms. Alissandra Cummins

BARBADOS MUSEUM BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMME

Over the last three years the Museum has been developing its Biodiversity Programme. Under the direction of Curator of Natural History, Philippa King, the Programme will assist in the longterm conservation of the island's biological diversity. The Museum will be responsible for the development of a permanent, scientifically organised repository for specimens of the island's flora and fauna. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has accepted our proposal and will be providing US\$15,000 to assist in establishing the Biodiversity Programme.

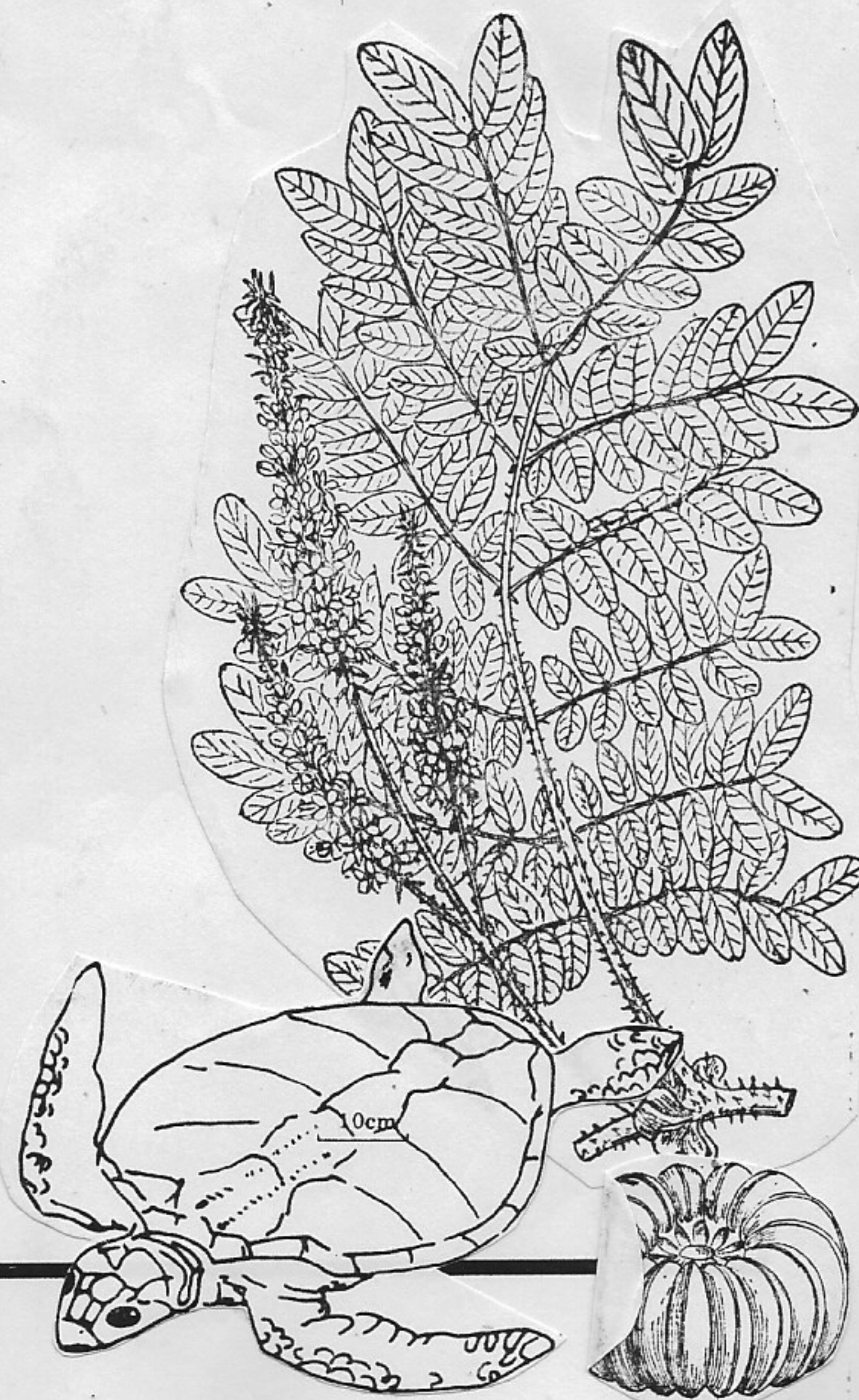
As the collection grows over many years, scientists will be able to monitor how the biota of the island is changing. In keeping with strategies employed throughout the world, the museum's specimens will become a valuable resource for decisions related to land use planning, development and the conservation of species and sites.

A comprehensive database will also be an integral part of the facility. In addition to administrative information, and descriptive information on the specimens, the database will feature data relating to capture and habitat. The data structures being used are based on the system developed by the Canadian Heritage Information Network. The data will therefore be internationally exchangeable.

In addition, it is proposed that a portion of the Barbados Herbarium now held at the University of the West Indies will be returned to the Barbados Museum

(its original home) permitting the growth and development of the two collections.

The Programme is expected to assist in the conservation of the island's biodiversity while promoting economic development. In the past few years there has been a growing call for the undertaking of environmental impact assessments at substantial development sites. The Barbados Museum aims to provide a facility capable of accepting specimens collected during environmental assessment surveys. Such specimens, lodged at the Museum as 'voucher specimens' will be kept as material evidence of a site's original biota. Such specimens are important in settling disputes with regard to subsequent changes at a development site.



CULTURAL DEVASTATION

A little over a month after the staff of the Barbados Museum had completed their annual disaster preparedness exercise, the terrible destruction of Sunbury Plantation House and Museum during the night of July 24th, and the closure of the Museum in Montserrat due to volcanic dust, brought home to us all how very vulnerable our cultural heritage is in relation to disaster.

The Melvilles have long been close and dear friends of the Museum and to culture in general. Their efforts to assist in the preservation of Barbadian culture have spanned the range from enthusiastic acquisition of antiques, to dedicated research on various aspects of Barbadian History, and beyond. Their property had become one of the premier heritage sites on the island, and indeed in the Caribbean. Its destruction has left a huge gap in the heritage tourism market, and in the hearts of many. We are also still counting the loss to Barbadians of the proud heritage of furniture-making which many of our premier craftsmen continued.

Equally devastating were the reports of the destruction wrought by flooding in Weston St. James. While there was extensive damage done to many businesses in the area, for many Barbadians it was the elimination of family and community heritage and memories which was a shock to the whole island. We have to wonder why it is that we only realize how the destruction of our personal artifacts deprives whole countries of invaluable resources, which may allow us to reconstruct the human story more accurately for the benefit of future generations.

Beyond the suffering of victims of both the African and Jewish holocausts, an even deeper wound was inflicted. The deliberate separation of people from

their familiar environment and personal possessions, led to irreducible turmoil and anguish but in the long term, these actions also gave way to the degeneration of self-respect and the devastation of cultural identity. The fact that these events were largely the product of human intervention does not lessen the comparison with equal destruction wrought by nature.

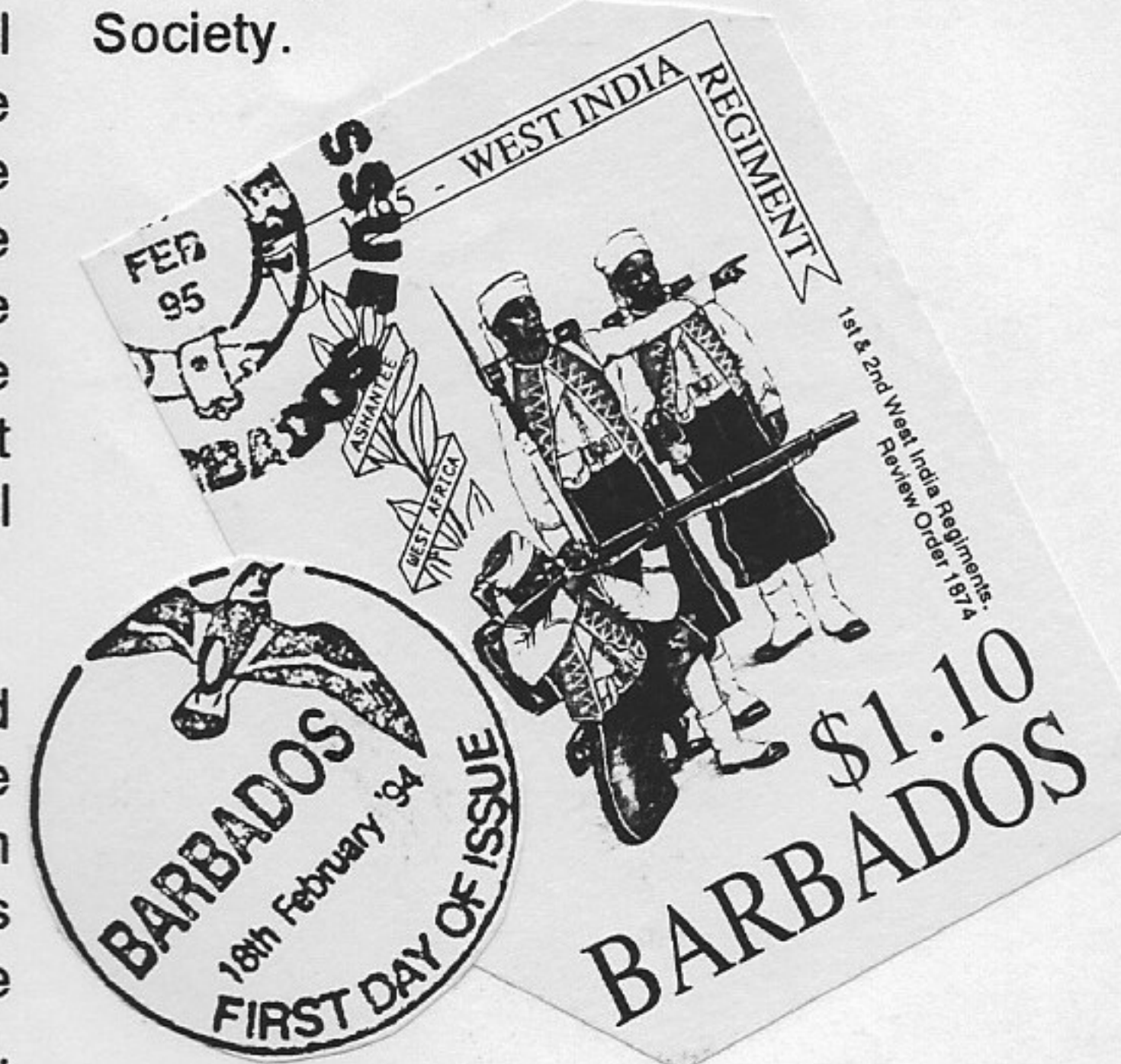
In recent weeks the museum has had to institute emergency closure procedures no less than three times, in preparation to defend the collections against storm conditions - each time the staff has responded magnificently. At the same time we have been conscious of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Luis and, along with colleagues from St. Croix, Cayman Islands and Nevis, we have anxiously awaited word from museum workers in Antigua, Anguilla and St. Maarten as to how we may assist in their reconstruction efforts. The specialized field of museology has still not formally been recognised in many instances, at the national or regional levels. Attempts to utilize formal relief agency networks have received a rather lacklustre response. Now more than ever we realise we have only ourselves to depend on.

PHILATELIC SOCIETY CELEBRATES 100TH ANNIVERSARY

To commemorate this important occasion, an exhibition of stamps including some historic and rare Barbadian specimens, is being held for two weeks beginning September 24th in our Temporary Gallery.

Organised by members of the Philatelic Society, the exhibition aims to achieve two primary goals. Firstly, to acquaint the public about the history of stamps and the enjoyment to be derived from serious stamp collecting. Secondly it is intended to stimulate interest within the community and

encourage new membership into the Society.



The incorporation of colour enlargements of some specimens, as well as bold text panels did much to provide a meaningful interpretation and lively display.

TOP JEWELLER TO HOLD FIRST EXHIBITION IN BARBADOS

Barbadian Disa Allsopp already has a reputation as one of the island's best professional jewellery designers.

In context, this term is applied to those persons who have been trained and qualified to international standards in the techniques and design of jewellery-making and silversmithing, and who create most or all of their own designs.

A proposal has been received from Ms. Allsopp to mount her first ever exhibition at the Museum. While discussions have not yet concluded, Disa has hinted that she is exploring three themes to depict in her work - local flora and fauna, sugar cane, and new adaptations of objects in the Museum's own African collection. She plans to combine materials such as precious metals and gemstones, as well as coral stone and mahogany.

The exhibition is scheduled for December.

THE JUNIOR CURATOR PROGRAMME

The Junior Curator Programme has continued to be challenging. Experienced Junior Curators returning to the Museum were Malisa Porter, a young dedicated teacher, Erica Hewitt and Melanie Springer. Erica has a special assignment - an inventory of part of the Museum's collection of historical glass plate negatives while Melanie conducted special seminars on the use of the video camera and attempted a special museum promotion. The Audio Visual Aids Department, ETV and CBC generously assisted the Junior Curators in this effort.

Added to their many duties, these well-trained Junior Curators assisted in the training of four (4) new volunteers. Lisa Howell and James Marshall are both first year 6th formers of the Combermere School. Besides doing tours, James assisted the Museum in the cataloguing process, by doing an inventory of original documents from the Library.

Shy Keisha Applewaithe joined us from the St. Leonards Girls School. She also completed a special assignment which involved mounting and filing numerous transparencies and negatives which were in our photographic reserve. Keisha will be pursuing business studies in the future.

Gospel singer Sheldon Hope came to us through the Summer Work Programme of the Coleridge and Parry School. He will be going on to Community College.

This very energetic group of young people gave tours to one thousand, six hundred and twenty three (1623) visitors, both local and foreign. Between tours, they produced 10 copies of the Docent Manual and maintained stocks of French, Spanish and English guides. The German guide was completely revised - thanks

to Melanie.

Painstaking effort was made to sort and catalogue more of the Aileen Hamilton collection.

The Junior Curators were also involved in useful learning experiences. Seminars were held which upgraded their knowledge of the Museum's exhibits as well as its behind-the-scenes functioning. This cheerful group found a tour to Tyrol Cot interesting and exciting and really appreciated the demonstration of screen-printing. They also made two visits to Heywoods to assist young archaeologists in a salvage dig. It was exciting to unearth an Amerindian skeleton and sherds of pottery from one of the oldest known Amerindian settlements in Barbados.

They also did a seminar on the role of the museum in preserving biological diversity, and had hands-on experience in collecting and preserving butterflies and other insects.

LIBRARY NEWS

Research queries reaching the library continue to be varied. Some of the recent subjects include the following: Women; dance; costume; Speightstown jetty and the Speightstown Schooner; music; hair styles; Barbadian architecture; history of Cavans Lane; the Rawle Institute. A grateful reader found recipes for Barbadian sweets from the old days.

Professor Rashford requested information on the Baobab tree, and Prof. Milani Leonelle requested information on the wreck of the Atocha, as well as on Barbadian insects. Library Volunteer, Mr. Patrick Roach continues to assist us in responding to an increasing number of queries.

Mr. Kevin C. Belmonte was very grateful to find valuable information on William Wilberforce in the pamphlet "Wilberforce House Hall: Its History

and Collections of William Wilberforce," by Thomas Shepherd. Apparently a rare find, the pamphlet included a bookplate of Wilberforce's which shows his family crest. The pamphlet was originally donated to the Library by Mr. Eustace Shilstone, for whom the library was named. Mr. Belmonte has promised that the Museum will be given recognition in his thesis to be published next year in Scotland.

Our Library Volunteers have been in a donating mood lately; Mrs Beryl Birch, donated a paper trimmer, and Maris Corbin and Harriett Burks presented us with alphabetical files. We thank them all for their continuing support.

We also wish to thank Mr. James Gardiner for his gift of a used 3M 6110 Photocopier to the Shilstone Memorial Library. This gift is much appreciated as it saves time for personnel who previously transported materials between the Office and the Library in order to fulfil our visitors' requests for photocopies. Our President, Dr. Trevor Carmichael was instrumental in the transaction.

A research library such as ours often calls upon us to pause briefly to reflect that in an age often awed by quantity, quality has its own quiet reward. It seems fitting to thank volunteers for the competence and courtesy with which they have maintained the standards of the Library.

We are again asking members to contribute books, and magazines to be sold at our Craft Festival on Saturday, 2 December, 1995.

Our Librarian, Betty Shannon will be going on holiday and the Library will be closed from 30 October to 20 November 1995. All Library users are asked to arrange their research needs accordingly.

Museum Colleague Assists With Information Management

We were very fortunate during July and August to have the services of American art history scholar Christie Biscoe, an assistant to the Registrar at the University of Southern California's University Art Museum. There, her job entails all those tasks related to accessioning and collections management procedure, as well as documentation and handling of the Museum's Fine Art Collections.

As Christie wanted to undertake some research on the island on contemporary Afro-Caribbean art towards her doctoral studies, she felt that it would also be appropriate during the trip to offer her curatorial skills in whatever areas we might need assistance.

For approximately five weeks she was able to work and complete a basic inventory and database of the prints, paintings and sculptures in the Museum's holdings.

She also conducted two lively seminars for the Junior Curators on 'African Art' and 'Registration Methods for Museum Objects'.

As a result of this productive collaboration, Christie has indicated her willingness to work with us again, and we look forward to seeing her next summer.

CRAFT FESTIVAL 95 ON GO-AHEAD

Things are gearing up at this time towards ensuring that the 1995 Barbados Museum Fine Craft Festival is as successful as in previous years.

The Festival aims at being Barbados' principal showcase of currently available craftwork. Participation is by invitation thus ensuring a high standard

of quality design and craftsmanship.

Stay tuned around November to the local media for features and promotion about the event.

The Craft Festival will be held on Saturday, 2nd December.



Government House
Barbados

MESSAGE BY

**Her Excellency
Dame R. Nita Barrow, GCMG, DA
Governor-General**

on the

**60TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE OF
THE JOURNAL OF THE BMHS
1994/95**

History is an inseparable part of everyday living!

I count it a singular honour, as Patron of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, to be associated in this way with the publication of the Sixtieth Anniversary Issue of the Journal of the Society, 1994-95.

I am happy that the Society has seen fit to use the opportunity of this anniversary to focus on developments in Barbados over that same period of time.

We recognise all too well that there have been many changes and indeed, new developments over those years. For example, this journal reviews the changes relating to education, technological advances and living standards, among other things.

It is important to capture these for the benefit of generations present and future. Therefore, it is useful to place the Museum in the context of national development.

FUNDRAISING

As part of our campaign to generate much needed funds for the support and maintenance of Museum programming and collections, the Museum is developing plans to host the Neal and Massy Trinidad All Star Steel Orchestra at a special fundraising performance during December. We are vigorously pursuing a number of major sponsors to ensure that the Museum is not burdened by any of the associated expenses.

The All Stars were the first to introduce classical music on the road played to the rhythm of calypso, highlighting the capability of the steel pan to go beyond the previously self-imposed musical bounds of calypso. Originally started in 1935 as the "Hell Yard Boys", the All Stars have since developed into a full-scale orchestra achieving international renown.

Barbadian audiences last greeted these international performers with approbation in 1993. Their return performance this year promises to be even more exciting. Their 'Classical Jewels #9' programme will be reprised at the Sir Garfield Sobers Gymnasium Complex, presenting a superb blend of classical, jazz, soul and calypso music to satisfy the most exacting tastes.

MEMBERSHIP

The Barbados Museum is pleased to welcome the following new members to our Society.

Annual

Mr. Peter Ashan
Mrs. Gerterlyn Brathwaite-Dozier
Miss. Jessica Harris
Ms. Sandra Hooper
Ms. Nicole May
Mrs. Angela Suki Newton-Taylor
Mr. David MacDonald Thompson

Joint Annual

Mr. & Mrs. Jay Johnson

Student

Miss. Elizabeth Emtage

Junior

Miss. Amanda Crebbin

Miss. Danielle Crebbin

**HEYWOODS SALVAGE
OPERATION**

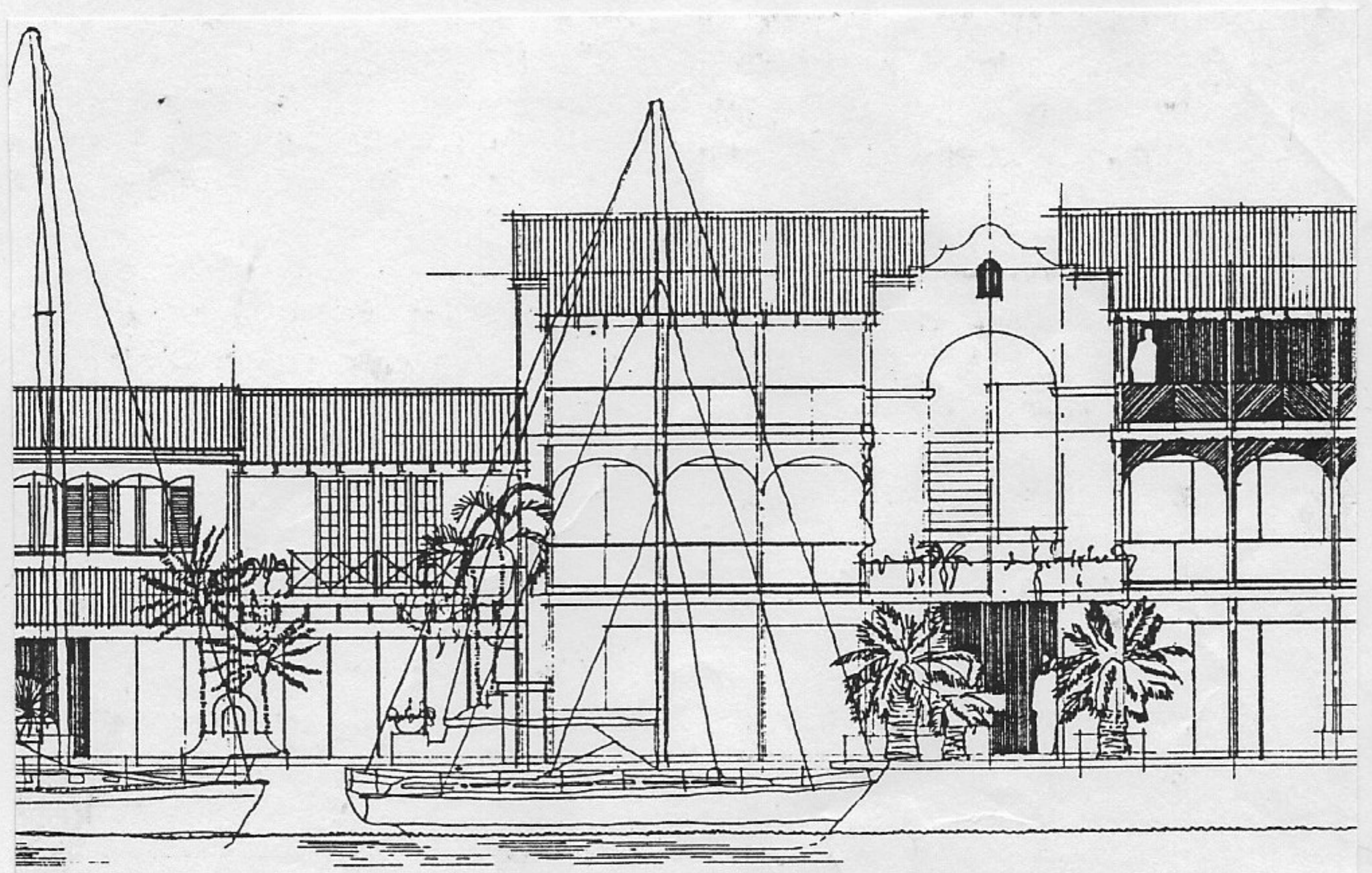
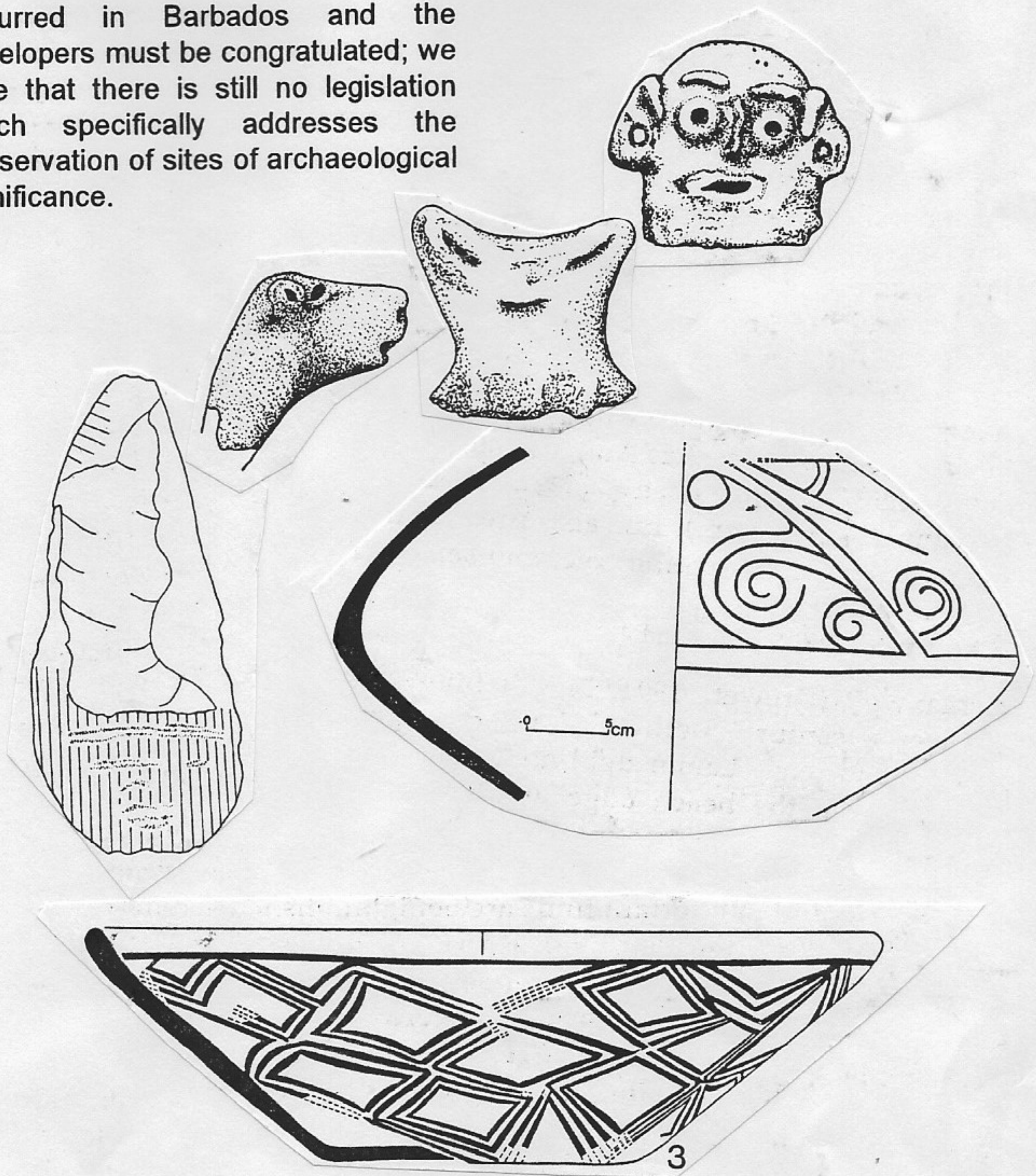
Amerindian artifacts have been found at Heywoods, St. Peter for many years, and the site has long been regarded as a significant settlement site. Dr. Peter Drewett and his archaeology team from the University College London were able to confirm this during excavations undertaken over the last few years.

The Museum has been aware that because of the prime location of this site, it was only a matter of time before some major development would be proposed. We received an invitation from Port St. Charles Development Ltd. earlier this year to conduct further archaeological investigations since the company had submitted plans for the development of a marina and associated residences to the Town and Country Planning Department.

After consultation with that department we concluded that the development permission would most likely be granted. We therefore undertook an archaeological salvage operation in the area identified as Phase I of the development.

In collaboration with Dr. Drewett, our Curator of Natural History, Philippa King negotiated with the developers and was able to secure the necessary funding for the operation. We believe that this is the first time that a cooperative effort of this nature has

occurred in Barbados and the developers must be congratulated; we note that there is still no legislation which specifically addresses the conservation of sites of archaeological significance.



UPCOMING EVENTS

24 Sept - 14 Oct	Philatelic Society 100th Anniversary Stamp Exhibition	Exhibition Gallery
2 Oct	Museum Closed	Bank Holiday
30 Oct - 20 Nov	Library Closed	
30 Nov	Museum Closed	Bank Holiday
2 Dec 12 - 6 p.m.	Museum Craft Fair	Museum Courtyards
16 Dec	Guataka Concert	Museum Courtyard
25 Dec	Museum Closed	Christmas Day
26 Dec	Museum Closed	Bank Holiday

Getting to know

THE BARBADOS MUSEUM

The Barbados Museum and Historical Society is housed in the former military prison of St. Ann's Garrison; the oldest part of the buildings was constructed in about 1820. Visitors will find an extensive and varied collection, appealing to a wide range of interests.

Our **EXHIBITION GALLERIES** hold displays on:

✧ Natural History ✧ Amerindian Culture ✧ Barbadian History ✧ African and European Decorative Arts ✧ Antique Maps and Prints.

Visitors are invited to browse in the **MUSEUM SHOP** for unusual Caribbeana to suit every budget. You will find a varied selection of West Indian books, reproductions of maps, prints and other Museum specimens, as well as a splendid array of Barbadian craft and jewellery.

Our **CAFÉ** is located in the delightful setting of the upper courtyard amongst enormous sandbox trees. The Café offers lunches, teas or a quick snack.

The Museum **RESEARCH LIBRARY** holds materials dating back to the 17th century. A researcher's delight, the library collection includes books, maps, photographs, genealogical records and archival documents.

HOURS

We are open every day except public holidays.

✧ **GALLERIES AND SHOP:**

Monday to Saturday	9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday	2 p.m. - 6 p.m.

✧ **OFFICES:**

Monday to Friday	8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
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✧ **LIBRARY:**

Monday to Friday	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
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ADMISSION

Adults	Bds. \$ 10.00
Children	Bds. \$ 5.00
Family	Bds. \$ 15.00 (Sundays Only)

TOURS AND GROUP RATES

We offer special rates for groups and a special educational programme for schools. Please call 427-0201 or 436-1956 for information.

FACILITIES FOR DISABLED VISITORS

We particularly welcome disabled visitors. Specially installed ramps make our facilities accessible to persons in wheelchairs. We offer special tours to persons with hearing and vision disabilities. Please call to book.

Barbados Museum and Historical Society
St. Ann's Garrison, St. Michael, Barbados, W.I.
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