

Historical and Archaeological Society

The Museum of Antigua and Barbuda

“Knowledge to be of any Value must be Communicated”



HAS Newsletter NO. 119

October, November, December 2012

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Cultural Heritage Development

What's Happening

By Dr. Reg Murphy

Where ever I go in Antigua, I am asked this same question...”What’s happening with cultural heritage on Antigua”? In comparison with the past, cultural heritage or more specifically the built cultural heritage is on everyone’s mind. For the first time in generations, people are genuinely concerned. This is due to a number of reasons. One of these is the increasing number of gaps in the city as the older wooden buildings are demolished and the lots left empty. Gone are some truly remarkable structures that had elements of architecture unique to our city and along with the missing buildings are the people. The old city core of St. John’s is no longer a residential community. People once lived upstairs their place of business and a car was an optional luxury item. Today everyone has a car, businesses have expanded and many relocated outside the city where parking is easier and traffic jams minimal.



The time is now right for a redevelopment of St. John’s in light of the demands of modern business and changing economic activities. But in the rush to develop we must ensure that we retain some of the structures with the unique architectural elements that once defined our capital.

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Cultural Heritage Development What's Happening (Cont.)

While change is inevitable and necessary, it is important to set aside a few areas with the potential for continued heritage tourism development along the line of Redcliff Quay. Many cities around the world have done precisely this; preserving "old quarters" or "historical districts" and these areas have become major attractions and even upscale venues for a variety of businesses, including boutiques, restaurants, art galleries and offices. Barbados has recently followed this pattern and has successfully received World Heritage Site designation for the Garrison and Old Bridgetown.



So in our quest to change the face of our Nation, we must ensure that we place the right value on our decisions for change. All too often we hear the excuse about space for taxis and parking. If we are to place automobiles and convenience in parking over quality of life and heritage then we have a problem in our planning for there will never be enough space for parking. St. John's is one of the few planned cities in our region. The "well planned" city was laid out in the late 17th century and it worked well for centuries after. So as our planners develop and change our city and property owners remove the old historical period structures we at the museum must continue to monitor, document and collect architectural elements that will be useful for restoration work on the surviving structures.

On the good news, Clarence House in historic English Harbour is about to be restored. The Clarence House Trust will lead the program for the restoration with the goal of creating a true architectural gem of which Antigua and Barbuda can be proud. In addition, Betty's Hope has successfully obtained a grant to stabilize the windmill and to effect repairs to the structure. More information of both these projects will be presented in the next issue of this newsletter.

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A Brief History of Piggotts Village

By Barry Simon

Presented at the 2012 Piggotts Reunion on 21 July 2012

Piggotts was not situated here by accident, it was by design. In the late 1850's early 1860's a school was erected on this site to provide education to the poor from the surrounding sugar estates of Carlisle, Fitches Creek, Weirs, Gunthorpes, Paynters and Cassada Gardens. It was centrally located to provide easy access to all students.

On the 14th June 1861, the building was consecrated by the Bishop for divine worship and burial service but not for Holy Communion. The area was then referred to as St. Mark's Village. All that remains of the original structure is the foundation, which is on the southern side of this building.



The modern St. Mark's Church replaced the historic structure of which only the foundation remains.

Round about 1864, a gentleman by the name of Richard Albert Loudon Piggott who came from Newgate St. in St. John's, moved to this area. After he got married, he and his wife had nine children (all boys). With having so many young boys, the area eventually became know as "Piggotts Village".

The lower section of the area as you enter the village using the Old Parham Road, was owned by a gentleman by the name of Dr. Keen Osborne, who had a farm and the area was referred to as OSBORNES farm, or Osborne's Village. After the Second World War, many people moved off the surrounding estates, to live in this area while others went to Potters and Barnes Hill.



The foundation is all that remains of the historic St. Mark's Village.

There was a bit of rivalry between the different parts of the village especially when it came to the sport of cricket, so to select a cricket team to represent the village, what they did was to play Piggotts vs Osborne Farm on a Friday afternoon and the best eleven players from both area were chosen to represent the village. There was a little gap between both area, and in the late 1950's the government constructed affordable houses in that area which is now called Happy Hill, then a project of houses again in the 1970's, thus joining all parts of the village together.

During the 1970's, the sugar estates were closed and the estate lands were sold for private dwellings thus seeing the largest expansion of the area. As time went by, the name Osborne was hardly used making it almost redundant, so today when the name Piggotts is used, it is meant to refer to the whole village.

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Do spend sometime to get to know the area while you are here, you may discover some very interesting things about this place called Piggotts Village.



Some short walls still exist from the original St. Mark's Church and school.

Fun Fact!



Did you know that the theme for the first Independence Day Celebration in 1981 was "A Nation to Build, a Country to Mold"?

Underwater Sculpture Park off the Coast of Grenada seeks to restore Coral Reefs

By Samantha A. Rebovich

Jason deCaires Taylor is an English sculptor who has a unique approach to preserving the environment. Taylor has created an underwater sculpture park off the coast of Grenada in the hopes that it will lure tourists and divers away from deteriorating natural coral reefs and to his underwater sculptures. In the meantime, his sculpture will also serve as refuge places for marine life and eventually develop into reefs, though with an artificial start.

Since 2006 his work has featured in numerous art and environmental publications and in 2008 he was awarded membership to The Art and Science Collaborations Inc. In a recent article with Environmental Graffiti, when questioned as to why he uses human figures for his artificial reefs, he is quoted as stating "I am trying to portray how human intervention or interaction with nature can be positive and sustainable, an icon of how we can live in a symbiotic relationship with nature. Finally I believe we have to address some of the crucial problems occurring in our oceans at this moment in time and by using human forms I can connect with a wider audience". His choice of environment in which to exhibit his work is unique. Water causes the sculptures to have their appearance altered because in water three-dimensional motion is enhanced, while objects appear closer, 25% larger and light refracts at different rates with the differing depth of the water. Thus Taylor believes the viewing potential is amplified by multiplying the number of angles to view the figures therefore augmenting the overall experience of discovering of his work amongst a vast ocean. In an interview with Diver Magazine he commented that "Buoyancy and weightlessness enable a detached physical experience that's perceptual and personal.

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As time passes and the works change, they reshape and redefine the underwater landscape in unpredictable ways". In the last five years, Taylor has gained worldwide acknowledgement for assimilating his art with the conservation of Marine life in developing underwater artificial coral reef installations. The aim behind these artificial living creations is to discharge tourists away from the natural coral reef that are already suffering effects from marine pollution, global warming and overfishing and therefore providing the opportunity for rehabilitation.

To encourage coral inhabitation he uses a mix of marine grade cement, sand and micro-silica to produce a pH neutral concrete which is reinforced with fibreglass rebar. Additionally some sculptures contain other materials such as ceramic tiles and glass making them from 95% of inert materials. All the sculptures are based on living people who are life casted. Over time the sculptures phenotypical qualities alter as they slowly evolve from rock to living artificial reefs. They forfeit their human-like form to the underwater environ and eventually fulfill their intended purpose of becoming a welcome addition to a deprived ecosystem.



Coral encrusted underwater sculpture pieces by Jason deCaires Taylor.

Taylor's most famous exhibition, *Vicissitudes*, depicts a circle of figures, all linked through holding hands. These are life-size casts taken from a group of children of diverse ethnic background. Recently, the rumour has been perpetuated that *Vicissitudes* is an homage to the captive Africans who died on slave ships during the Middle Passage. According to the artist, though, the "sculpture

proposes growth, chance, and natural transformation. It shows how time and environment impact on and shape the physical body. Children by nature are adaptive to their surroundings. Their use within the work highlights the importance of creating a sustainable and well-managed environment, a space for future generations."



Vicissitudes depicts children holding hands in a circle.

Jason deCaires Taylor's work ultimately presents a very unique and innovative way to help preserve marine resources in the Caribbean while creating a stunning attraction for locals and tourists alike. In the face of global climate change, innovative ideas like these are needed in order to secure a sustainable future for humanity.



The Artist, Jason deCaires Taylor at work on an underwater sculpture.

Diet, Lead, and Health in 18th-century Antigua

By Dr. Tamara Varney

Excavations of the Royal Naval Hospital Cemetery in English Harbour gives evidence of lead poisoning among sailors in the British Navy in the 18th century.. In total 31 individuals were recovered from excavations that took place over four years and great insights into the past lives of these individuals has been interpreted from these excavations.



Lead dice, such as these, were uncovered in excavations at Shirley Heights suggesting that sailors and soldiers used lead commonly in their daily lives which might have caused unsafe lead levels internally.

First, the cemetery was unsegregated meaning individuals of European and African descent were buried in the cemetery and there were no separate areas for each group. Second, the cemetery included both adults and children. Since the cemetery was associated specifically with a Royal Navy Hospital, it can be inferred that the children were those of British sailors or, perhaps more likely, were the children of enslaved laborers owned by the Navy. In one instance, a male was buried with an infant on his chest suggesting that both father and child succumbed to illness and were interred together.

In addition to the interesting social perspectives that can be gleaned from the burials in the Naval Cemetery, aspects of past human life can also be interpreted from the human remains. Using stable isotope analysis, we are able to test for Carbon and Nitrogen levels in the bones and these can give insights into past diets.

Carbon levels are linked to the types of staple foods people eat. For instance, people who eat a lot of staple grains such as wheat, barley, and rye would have a different isotopic signature on their bones than individuals who relied more on root crops such as cassava, eddoes, and yams.

Nitrogen levels also differ based on the sources of protein individuals eat. Diets reliant on saltfish for protein would demonstrate a very different isotopic signature than those who relied on land mammals such as sheep or chicken.



Musketballs commonly used by sailors and soldiers alike were made out of lead in the 18th and 19th centuries and handling them could have caused lead absorption.

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Interestingly, there was much overlap between the individuals of European and African ancestry from the Naval Cemetery in terms of their sources of protein. While those of African ancestry had a much wider spectrum, suggesting they ate a wider variety of protein sources including fish, goat, sheep, and chicken, those of European ancestry had a much smaller spectrum, suggesting they were more reliant on land mammals.

Differences in the staple crops Europeans and Africans in the Navy ate were also clear with people of African descent relying more on locally produced tropical staples while those of European descent ate more staple grains such as wheat, rye, and barley. Interestingly, the children who were interred in the Navy cemetery had diets more similar to the adults of African descent suggesting that the children were those of enslaved laborers or perhaps were being given care by an enslaved laborer who fed the children a diet based on their own.

In addition to all the information we can learn from human bones about past diets, we are also participating in cutting edge research on lead levels in human bones. Using a synchrotron, we are now able to determine whether unsafe levels of lead may have contributed to the death of members of the British Navy in Antigua.

While this research is ongoing and the current results are preliminary, so far the lead research suggests that some of the individuals interred in the Naval Hospital Cemetery may have suffered from lead poisoning. It is not surprising that lead poisoning would be problematic in Antigua because lead pipes were commonly used in water catchments, lead was used to line cisterns in Antigua, and lead was also widely used in the distillation of rum and the production of sugar. In some cases, the individuals from the Naval Hospital Cemetery had up to ten times the safe level of lead in their bones!



Lead was used in making gutters and in lining pipes and water catchments in Antigua. It was also used in the processing of sugar cane. Thus, everything people drank in Antigua in the 18th century, including water and rum, was probably tainted with unsafe levels of lead. Above a historic lead gutter from England. At least two lead gutters dating to the time of Queen Victoria have been found in the vicinity of English Harbour.

Save the Date!



**Our Annual Christmas Party is
Friday, December 14th!**

Muse News

By Michele Henry

Mr. E T Henry Curator of the Museum Passes

In 1986 Mr. Edward T Henry became curator of the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda where he worked tirelessly to collect and archive the twin islands' rich history. Through the development of a more interactive museum and his publication of countless entertaining stories he was able to encourage Antiguan and Barbudans to be proud of their history. Together with the late Desmond Nicholson he also formed an historical movement now known as the Historical and Archaeological Society (HAS).



Mr. Henry also explored and recorded the then unspoiled coast and inland of the island. It was a raw introduction to Antigua's natural environment, which would lead him to help create the island's first organization to preserve Antigua and Barbuda ecological existence. The group would be known as the Environmental Awareness Group (EAG).

Edward T Henry served Antigua in many different capacities through his judicial service, environmental work, artistic expression and conservation and preservation of the country's cultural history.

As he departed his life on Friday 7 September 2012, his most treasured parts of body remained in tact, his brain and his left hand as he indicated he was prepared to make his next journey.

Repairing Our Heritage

Components which have failed, or no longer perform their necessary protective or structural function, require repair. The Courthouse building is over 250 years old, and has seen its share of earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, insect infestation and carrying capacity.

Leaking ceilings, broken or rotted floorboards require immediate repair, and as such this was the task that was undertaken by the Society. We all knew that "*what lies beneath, comes with no surprise*", as the workmen unearthed problems from the getgo.

What was estimated at \$10,800.00 (State Insurance) (soon escalated) for the repairs to the ceilings, floors and additional areas of the research Library, soon escalated to an additional \$5,000.00, which the Society contributed.

The dorm windows on the roof had to be replaced, the sudden rains and winds caused a slab of concrete from facade, to fall into the gutter on the roof. Workmen had to crawl up on the roof to break up the slab. This also came with a price.

After all the surprises, we now have a research centre which is very comfortable and spacious, no more sugar cake (termite droppings) on the books and in the hair of the staff.

Kudos to the museum staff who worked tirelessly to bring the research department back to order. They moved over 100 artifact drawers from the downstairs office to the research area and re-designed the space.

Though the electrical works still need to be completed, Lavonne and Myra continue to have smiles on their faces. The Board thanks you for your dedication.



Part of damaged roof before repairs

Damaged areas on roof being repaired

The Historical & Archaeological Society Newsletter is published at the Museum quarterly in January, April, July, and October. HAS encourages contribution of material relevant to the Society from the membership or other interested individuals

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Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER

November 1st- Independence Day!

November 17th Book launch/ Multimedia presentation “*An Antiguan Trading Company – The History of Geo.W. Bennett, Bryson & Co. Ltd*”. By Mary Gleadall at 7:00pm in the upstairs Gallery. Admission Free. Complimentary wine – Soft donation at the door

November 22nd- HAS AGM – 6:00pm Upstairs Gallery. Members are reminded to be financial to vote. Call the HAS office for membership information. 462-1469

DECEMBER

December 14th- Get out your Santa hats ready for our Annual Christmas Party! Bring drinks or finger foods or hotdogs, or hamburgers to put on the Christmas grill. Something for everyone. Face painting for the kids.



Join HAS! Discover & Preserve Antigua & Barbuda’s Heritage

TO BECOME OR REMAIN A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY, FILL IN & SNIP OFF. Mail to P.O. Box 2103, St. John's Antigua.

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