

Historical and Archaeological Society  
The Museum of Antigua and Barbuda

“Knowledge to be of any Value must be Communicated”

HAS Newsletter No. 125      April, May, June 2014



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Antigua is ever changing!  
By Walter Berridge

One of the focuses of the Museum of Antigua is to collect old photographs of Antigua & Barbuda. In so doing, we can capture the past and the present for future generations. If you have old photos, you may wish to share them with the Museum. We appreciate those of you who over the years have made donations to our collections. **Thank you.** Here are some photos which show the chronological development at V.C. Bird International Airport.



Coolidge Airport, Antigua circa 1950's



V.C. Bird International Airport 1982- 2014



V.C. Bird International Airport 2014 – 20xx

# Dr. Reginald Murphy awarded GCM

In our last issue of the newsletter, we reported that Dr. Reginald Murphy was awarded Grand Cross of the Most Precious Order of Princely Heritage (GCH) – for distinguished contribution in Archaeology and preservation of heritage sites by Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda, Dame Louise Lake Tack, presented the award on the 32nd Anniversary of Antigua's Independence on November 1, 2013. We are pleased to present the official photo in this issue.

Dr. Murphy is the President of the Historical and Archaeological Society of Antigua and Barbuda.



Dr. Reginald A. Murphy awarded Grand Cross of the Most Precious Order of Princely Heritage (GCH)

Government House, St. John's, Antigua – 1<sup>st</sup> November 2013  
From left to right- Peter Murphy, Linda Bardoe, Sir Eustace Francis, Dame Louise Lake-Tack (Governor General of Antigua & Barbuda), Dr. Reginald A. Murphy- GCH, Niki Murphy

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The 54th (West Norfolk) Regiment of Foot  
By Paula Callam

Up on Shirley Heights in the cemetery by the Lookout there is a white monument commemorating the men of the 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot. This monument was erected in June 1851. The Regiment was also called the “West Norfolk”, since I come from Norfolk this intrigued me and I decided to find out more about the Regiment. The **54th Regiment of Foot** was an infantry regiment of the British Army. Originally formed in 1755 as the 56th Regiment of Foot it was renumbered as the 54th when the 50th Regiment and 51st Regiment were disbanded. It was renamed as **54th (the West Norfolk) Regiment of Foot** on 31 August 1782. As part of the Childers Reforms it was united with the 39th (Dorsetshire) Regiment of Foot, to form The Dorsetshire Regiment in 1881.<sup>1</sup> From the Records of the Regiment it was almost immediately sent out to America where it took part in several actions during the American War of Independence. It returned to England in 1791. It served for a couple of years in Europe before in June 1795 being sent to West Indies to quell revolt in St. Vincent. During its service in St Vincent the regiment “suffered great losses through sickness amounting to the whole strength of officers and men three times over”. (strength is approx. 750 all ranks) The depleted regiment returned to England at the end of 1796.

Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815)

The Regiment then spent a couple of years in Ireland followed by five years in various locations around the Mediterranean before returning to England in 1805.

In Spring of 1807 it was sent to Jamaica where they took part in the capture of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Initially in October 1807 it mustered as 2 Field Officers, 4 Captains, 18 Subalterns, 6 Staff, 33 Sergeants, 15 Drummers and 518 Rank and File by 1812 this was reduced to 1 Field

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Officers, 2 Captains, 9 Subalterns, 1 Staff, 9 Sergeants, 6 Drummers and 49 Rank and File, mainly by sickness. The Regiment appears to have left Jamaica in 1813.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile in 1813 troops raised in England were sent to Netherlands where they were part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade that protected the rear of Wellington’s forces at Waterloo. In 1816 the Regiment returned to England.

1819 the Regiment was sent to South Africa. From there it was sent to India in 1820 where they took part in various actions including attacks in Burma. It remained in India till 1840

1842 the Regiment was sent to Ireland where they recruited a number of detachments. They went from there to the Mediterranean in 1846 and the West Indies in December of 1848.

In 1846, still under command of Colonel Mildmay Fane, the 54th embarked at Cork, for Gibraltar. A Depot of four companies, under Brevet Colonel J. Clark, K.H., was left at Fermoy, and subsequently moved to Kinsale and Exeter.

The service companies remained at Gibraltar till January 1847, when they moved to Malta. Here they lay till December 1848, and then proceeded to the West Indies; head-quarters occupying Antigua, with detachments at Barbadoes, Dominica, St. Lucia and St. Kitts.<sup>2</sup>

While based in the Caribbean the detachment in St. Lucia assisted in quelling a revolt of negroes. There was no injuries among the Regiment however they did open fire on a couple of occasions on rioters armed with cutlasses.

In 1850 the Regiment, still in the West Indies, suffered severely from yellow fever. At Antigua the epidemic was specially fatal, nearly one-third of the strength at head-quarters being carried off. The following

officers died, the two last of the fever, Captain John Brett Chalk, Ensign George Kinahan and Surgeon Charles Dawson.<sup>2</sup>

Captain John Brett Chalk died at sea on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1850 of liver failure.<sup>3</sup>

Surgeon Charles Dawson who died on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1849 is buried in the cemetery on Shirley Heights and there was a tombstone placed by his wife, Jane Marian Dawson inscribed "Sacred to the memory of Charles Dawson M.D Surgeon of H.M. 54th Regiment who died the 14th of November 1849 aged 35 years"<sup>4</sup> Charles Dawson and Jane Marian Taylor were married on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 1848<sup>6</sup>

Ensign George Kinahan is mentioned on the monument along with 50 others. He is the only officer, there are 2 Corporals and 29 Privates and 19 others whose rank I have not yet identified.<sup>5</sup>

John Brett Chalk appears as a Lieutenant on a Regimental muster taken in Madras on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1835, and as a Captain in the muster taken in Ireland on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1845.<sup>2</sup> Neither Ensign George Kinahan or Surgeon Charles Dawson appear on the 1845 muster so they presumably joined the regiment after that date.

In July 1851 the Regiment left the Caribbean and went to Canada where they served for 3 years before returning to England.

Of interest to those of us living in Antigua, in 1856 Sir Edward Codrington G.C.B became Colonel, he transferred to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Foot in 1860.

The Regiment was sent to India in 1857 after the Indian Mutiny, (it does not appear that Sir Edward Codrington accompanied them). The Regiment returned to England in 1866

In 1868 it was sent to Ireland to keep the peace. In 1871 it was sent from Ireland to India and was still in India when the restructure of the Army in 1881 reconstituted them as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Dorsetshire Regiment.

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Sources:

1

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/54th\\_%28West\\_Norfolk%29\\_Regiment\\_of\\_Foot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/54th_%28West_Norfolk%29_Regiment_of_Foot)

<sup>2</sup> Records of the 54<sup>th</sup> West Norfolk Regiment; Great Britain Adjutant – General's Office.

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[www.bibliobazaar.com](http://www.bibliobazaar.com)

<sup>3</sup> Last Will & Testament of John Brett Chalk, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey

<sup>4</sup> Burial Inscriptions at Shirley Heights supplied by the Antigua & Barbuda Museum in St. John's

<sup>5</sup> Muster Books of the 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey

<sup>6</sup> Register of Officers Marriages, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey



### The 1843 earthquake in Antigua

*From:* Historical earthquake effects from: José Grases G. 1990 Terremotos Destruyores del Caribe 1502-1990” Una contribución al Decenio Internacional para la Reducción de los Desastres Naturales, Caracas, Agosto de 1990. UNESCO – RELACIS

**Antigua** – “Some buildings collapsed and an unknown number of people were killed. The governor at the time put the damage at £2,000 sterling”.



## The Barbadian

Wednesday, February 15, 1843

The anxiously expected steamer with the second January mails from England arrived the evening before last. Any political news which the English papers may have brought sank into perfect insignificance, the public feeling being wholly absorbed in the melancholy intelligence which the Packet brought us from the sister colonies to the northward. We had too much reason to fear from the nature of the shock of earthquake felt here on Wednesday, the 8th, that our neighbours had experienced it in far greater severity; and too truly have our apprehensions been realised. The accounts received through the Antigua "Register", and by private letter from that most unfortunate island, are deeply distressing, and calculated to call forth in this mercifully protected island, the most sincere sympathy with our afflicted fellow colonist, and the profoundest gratitude and thankfulness to the God of Mercy for our providential escape from the horrid effects of the late tremendous convulsion of the earth.

The Antigua Weekly Register of the 9th instant, which the Rev. Mr. Clarke has kindly lent us, enables us to lay before our readers such particulars as the Editor was enabled to publish at the spur of the moment. And we are indebted to a kind old friend for a letter from his son, a clergyman in Antigua, the greater part of which we now present to our readers:

We have been favoured by a kind friend of ours with a letter from his son, a clergyman in Antigua, from which we extract the following afflicting passages

descriptive of the late awful calamity:-

Antigua, February 11, 1843

On Wednesday morning, the 8th, between the hours of ten and eleven, we experienced one of the severest shocks (perhaps with the exception of Hayti) that has

ever been felt in the western world. I had just time to drag my wife and little Charlotte out of the house to prevent our being buried in the ruins. Jenny escaped out of the drawing-room door, Willy was fortunately in the yard, and my poor wife and self had the

agony of knowing that our youngest child and the nurse were still in the building; fortunately they were in the wooden part; and here we are all, God be praised, unhurt. It lasted upwards of two minutes, in which time the work of destruction was incalculable,

to Antigua positive ruin. Every Church, with the exception of one old wooden one, levelled or ruined, my own dear little one among the member; and, what is still more distressing, most of the mills and boiling houses either thrown down or so severely rent as to require almost re-building before they can be used. I do not believe that there are at this moment more than a dozen wind mills in the island effective; and this, melancholy to relate, at the commencement of one of the finest crops Antigua has had for many years. The greater part of the crop must perish for want of machinery to take it off; if persons even had the means, the mechanics necessary could not be obtained to re-erect them. I have lost all my little property, the accumulation of years, as my furniture was almost all destroyed or injured, and am now left almost houseless and destitute, with a wife and four children, and on the eve of her confinement with another. The only shelter we have is a bedroom and dressing room which being of wood and the old part of the house remains, although the foundation on which they stand has been so shattered that it is very unsafe. My personal loss amounts to about £300 sterling. "I do not, however murmur, although almost in a state of destruction as to shelter and the means of supplying my family with the common necessaries

of life for the present year, but feel grateful to a merciful Providence in having saved our lives. We are but the clay, and shall we cry out against the potter! No. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good to him! I think frequently on the lot of poor Thompson, the English Consul at Hayti, and am abundantly thankful. Wife, children and home all engulfed in the earth! Why, we may ask, was not our lot like his? Why, but because the Lord is long suffering and merciful, and even in the midst of these his awful judgments, remembers mercy! "Every building at the Rectory is either thrown down or rendered useless, and no prospect of their being rebuilt immediately, as my unfortunate flock are in the same deplorable condition. I must endeavour by God's blessing, and the kind assistance of my family, to patch up the remnant that is left, so as to make it habitable and to await for future years for its rebuilding. At one time, I expected that the mountain in rear of the house would have tumbled over and buried us, as a large avalanche of stone and earth came tumbling over; the sea also rose considerably and as we are on low alluvial soil, I expected momentarily when it would have rushed up to the base of the mountain and overwhelmed us. But God was merciful to us and spared us. The town, I am told, presents one scene of destruction, the poor unfortunate merchants, many of whom were burnt out about a year and half ago, and were just recovering from their losses, and rebuilding their stores, are again ruined. My poor friend Athill in the pride of human wisdom, thought that he would provide for future casualties, and erected a fire proof store all of arches at the expense of £1,000 sterling, and, in one moment it was a heap of ruins, proving to him, poor fellow, the immutable truth "That except the Lord build the house the labour is but lost."

"I am sure that after the occurrences of Wednesday "the wise man need not glory in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength" for the utter nothingness and insignificancy of the creature must have been self evident to every eye-witness of the awful visitation. The dock yard, which was the boast of Antigua, has been so cracked and the pier so sunk,

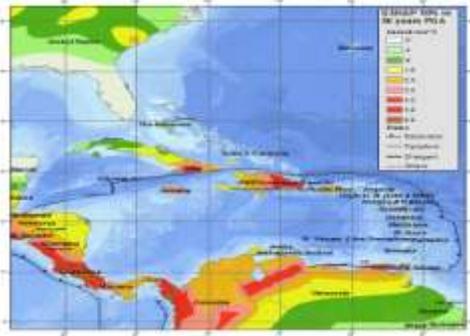
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as to be rendered almost useless, the estimated expense of repair is upwards of £50,000 sterling. The Garrison shared a similar fate, as the barracks are in such a state as to be uninhabitable. The troops are under canvass - in fact almost all our houses present the appearance of an umbrella, the roofs standing, but the houses gutted.

The Governor, who has been residing out here, has been forced to abandon Dow's Hill, after having lost the greater part of his furniture: fortunately for him the Government

House in St. John's is a wooden building and is safe. We are dreading to hear from the other islands, as volumes of smoke were seen to issue from Montserrat, where there is a Souffriere. The Paymaster of the 81st tells me that after the earthquake he saw a column of smoke ascending up in the direction of Dominica.

"We had three very slight shocks on Wednesday night, and one on Thursday, which you may judge terribly alarmed the already awe struck inhabitants. My self and family were wandering about in the open air for a considerable time, dreading to go into the tottering dwelling. The weather has been very dry since, fortunately for the houseless inhabitants. Our loss as to property, in the final result, will be considerably greater than that of Barbados in 1831. As your mills were not thrown down you had time to prepare for the ensuing crop. The greater part of ours must perish on the ground. The loss of life has been, thank God, very inconsiderable, altogether I suppose not more than 12, and those chiefly children. McLedeth's mother was killed by the house falling on her. Had it been in the night three fourths of the inhabitants would have been buried in their houses."



Caribbean Seismic Hazard Map  
Copyright – US Geological Service  
World War 1 - LEST WE FORGET

## THE 1918 RIOTS “THEM PLANTERS GOT WELL SHOOK UP” (in honour of W.W.1)

By Susan Lowes

**When Great Britain declared war on Germany in August 1914**, there was a great deal of anxiety in Antigua about the effects the war would have on the island. A number of measures were immediately taken to calm the population. The Colonial Bank was allowed to refuse or delay any large demands for cash, both to stop a panic and to conserve money to pay the laborers. The government held “conversations” with those merchants it felt might take advantage of the situation by raising prices.

It also, on request, assured the Colonial Office of the loyalty of all its subjects specifically meaning the Lebanese, who as citizens of the Ottoman Empire might have been classed as loyal to the enemy; the only exception was a German commercial traveler who was made a prisoner of war and shipped off to Trinidad.

Britain depended upon its colonies to help out in the war effort, and Antiguan rich and poor, in the city and in the countryside, threw themselves vigorously behind the war effort. Across the island, people responded to calls for aid with a variety of fund-raising efforts. The schools held dances, bridge tournaments, and bicycle races.

There were Red Cross committees in many villages, and the women made and the women made bandages and knitted scarves and hats.

### ECONOMIC CONDITIONS DETERIORATE

Although many young men joined up, the island's economy at first seemed little affected. But as the war progressed, people began to experience increasing hardship. Ships carrying badly needed goods were blown un. diverted. or delayed. and the hv-now-

established reliance on outside foodstuffs began to take a toll.

Imported items became more expensive and such basics as flour, matches, kerosene, and cornmeal became increasingly scarce.

No doubt everyone suffered, but some suffered far less than others. Rising sugar prices, a guaranteed market, and several years of good production had brought prosperity to both the planters and the government. Import merchants also suffered less: while there were fewer buyers, prices were higher. The small shopkeepers felt the pinch a bit more, in part because they had to face customers from the laboring classes. In June 1917, for instance, when several small shopkeepers were tried for overpricing, they pled (backed by the newspapers) that they were being put in an impossible situation, squeezed between the wholesaler, who was raising his prices, and the consumer, who was protesting if the shopkeepers raised prices to cover their costs.

Reports of scarcities and rising prices began to appear in the papers early in the war, but the government did not begin to get seriously worried until 1917. In February the newspapers reported that there might be actual starvation if something was not done.

At one point in early 1918 there was no rice, sugar, bread, cornmeal, or kerosene; bakers and other shops were forced to close; the street lights were out. T.H. Best, who was Colonial Secretary and also acting governor throughout most of this period, reported to the Colonial Office that he could see a “physical deterioration” among the laboring population due to poverty and malnutrition.

Sammy Smith, a plantation worker at the time, described the situation considerably more graphically: “During and after the war people nearly eat one another. There seem to be no end to hunger and starvation.”

The planters' response to the situation was to blame the laborers: there was not enough food because they refused to plant food crops. Best tended to agree, and restated a complaint that was a favorite of many Antiguan governors, that this was because of the government's previous and on-going failure to the make the former slaves become self-supporting.

*To be continued in next issue*



Repairs being made to the Top House of the Betty's Hope Mill. Funding Grant from the U.S. Embassy Ambassadors Cultural Grant Programme, Bridgetown Barbados

## *Historical and Archaeology Society*

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### Upcoming Events

End March T.B.A. : Sugar Locomotives Multimedia Show – Upstairs Gallery  
April: “Antigua through the centuries” – Multimedia Show – Upstairs Gallery  
May 3<sup>rd</sup>: “Antigua – A Perspective” . Multimedia Show hosted by R.G.  
Dingwall/Mosbacher Operating Ltd.

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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