

Historical and Archaeological Society

The Museum of Antigua and Barbuda

“Knowledge to be of any Value must be Communicated”



HAS Newsletter No. 126

July, August, September 2014

In this Issue...

The Antigua Perspective: Multimedia
Presentation by Richard & Gloria
Dingwall
By Agnes Meeker
Pages 1-2

World War I: Lest We Forget
By Walter Berridge
Page 3

Coal Kiln or Coal Kill
By Agnes Meeker
Page 4

Of Lepers, Lunatics, & the History of
Rat Island
By Susan Lowes
Pages 5-8

James Arthur Harley: Antigua's First
Anthropologist?
By Pamela Roberts
Page 9

Museum notices, upcoming events,
and announcements
Page 9

The Antigua Perspective

A multimedia presentation which was held on 3rd April 2014

By Agnes Meeker

Richard and Gloria Dingwall gave a very interesting and well put-together PowerPoint on the geology and early history of Antigua at the Museum on Saturday May 3rd. Richard is a Geologist and has gone “beyond the beach” on his visits to Antigua over the past seven years, which resulted in this presentation. It was well attended with some interesting insights and discussion afterwards. We here in Antigua are indeed blessed when visitors to our shores, experts in their own field, take the time to share their findings with us. We are also fortunate to live on a very interesting island that is jam-packed with a 300-year-old history that the Museum compiles and documents.



Richard Dingwall was born in Cornwall, England, and educated in the United Kingdom at the University of Wales (BSc) and University College London (PhD). Following university, he worked for several oil companies in both Australasia and the UK, where he also worked for the British Geological Survey.

In 1980, Richard and his family immigrated to Canada, residing in Calgary, Alberta, where he has worked on projects in the Canadian frontiers, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, the Arctic Islands, and the Beaufort Sea –Mackenzie Delta. He is currently responsible for managing the Canadian projects in which Mosbacher Operating Ltd is involved.

Richard and his wife, Gloria, first visited Antigua in 2007. Both fell in love with the island and its people and have returned many times since.

Despite Antigua's 365 beaches, Richard apparently can't sit still for too long, which led him to start researching the geology of the island. However, he got sidetracked with aspects of Antigua's history and archaeology, with the result that his talk was a mix of his interests and the research he has undertaken in Antigua.

Although he has written over 25 geological papers, Richard has yet to complete his book on the geology of Antigua, Barbuda and Redonda. In the meantime his completed books include:

- *The Sacking of Antigua 1666-67*
- *Falmouth and Great George Fort, Monks Hill*
- *Mamora Bay*
- *The Last Campaign 1762* (based on an historical event in Newfoundland, Canada)

Board of Directors

Walter Berridge
Chairman

Reg Murphy
President

Agnes Meeker
Secretary

Janice Augustin
Len Moody-Stuart
Seku Luke
Susan Lowes
Members

Dame Louise Lake-Tack
Honourable Member

Museum Staff

Michele Henry
Curator

Debbie Joseph
Gift Shop Attendant

Myra Dyer
Library Researcher

Lavon Lawrence
Data Base Clerk
Library Researcher

Carissa Daniel
Heritage Interpretation
Museum Assistant

Jason Dyer
Museum Maintenance
Mrs. Allen
Museum Maintenance

World War 1 - LEST WE FORGET

By Walter Berridge

2014 commemorates the 100th anniversary of the start of **World War 1**. We therefore thought it timely to remind everyone of this sad but significant event in world history.



World War I (WWI or WW1), also known as the First World War, was a global war centred in Europe that began on 28 July 1914 and lasted until 11 November 1918. From the time of its occurrence until the approach of World War II, it was called simply the World War or the Great War, and thereafter the First World War or World War I. In America, it was initially called the European War. More than 9 million combatants were killed, a casualty rate exacerbated by the belligerents' technological and industrial sophistication, and tactical stalemate. It was the 5th-deadliest conflict in history, paving the way for major political changes, including revolutions in many of the nations involved.

Date: 28 July 1914 – 11 November 1918

Location: Europe, Africa, the Middle East, the Pacific islands, China and off the coasts of South & North America

Result: Allied victory

- End of the German, Russian-Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires
- Formation of new countries in Europe and the Middle East
- Transfer of German colonies and regions of the former Ottoman Empire to other powers
- Establishment of The League of Nations



Casualties and Losses

Allied Forces

Military dead:
5,525,000

Military wounded:
12,831,500

Military missing:
4,121,000

Total KIA, WIA or MIA :
22,477,500

Enemy Forces

Military dead:
4,386,000

Military wounded
8,388,000

Military missing:
3,629,000

16,403,000



Local Forces, St. John's, Antigua – 1918

Coal Kiln or, as we say, Coal Kill

By Agnes Meeker



A local Coal Kill, Antigua, W.I.

From way back before BBQ'ing was popular, people in the Caribbean used to cook with charcoal in coal pots. It was our very own way to BBQ. With an abundance of cassia as the wood, our charcoal gave a lovely flavor to the food. A coal pot could be made of iron, or made from clay from the Seaview Farm area. Today even with the modern convenience of electricity and gas, the coal pot is still used at outdoor functions and home BBQ's.

Above is a picture of a Coal Kiln, smoldering beneath the dirt, slowly burning the wood and turning it into coal. A pit (or in this case two or three pits) is dug in the ground and lengths of cut wood laid within. The fire is lit and the dirt gently put on top, with pipes inserted to provide vents. After 4-5 days the pits are opened, the smoldering fire is put out, and the coals left to cool. The charcoal is then bagged for sale at approximately \$80 to \$100 a bag. In the old days you could take your old kerosene can to be filled and it was not uncommon to see people walking along road balancing a can on their heads.

There are many sites on the internet regarding how to make charcoal and describing its uses,

but I could not find any on the process as we know it in the Caribbean. In fact, in North America several sites sold a metal drum with instructions as to how to make your own charcoal in the driveway of a suburban home!

Historically, production of wood charcoal in districts where there is an abundance of wood dates back to a very ancient period, and generally consists of piling billets of wood on their ends so as to form a conical pile, with openings being left at the bottom to admit air and a central shaft to serve as a flue. The whole pile was covered with turf or moistened clay. The firing begins at the bottom of the flue and gradually spreads out and up. The success of the operation depends upon the rate of the combustion.

Under average conditions, 100 parts of wood yield about 60 parts by volume, or 25 parts by weight, of charcoal. Small-scale production often yields only about 50% but large-scale was more efficient, yielding about 90%. This was the case as early as the seventeenth century. The operation is so delicate that it was generally left to colliers (professional charcoal burners).

Charcoal may be activated to increase its effectiveness as a filter because it readily absorbs a wide range of organic compounds dissolved or suspended in gases and liquids. Charcoal filters are used to remove impurities and used to absorb odors and toxins. In certain industrial processes, such as the purification of sucrose from cane sugar, impurities cause an undesirable color that can be removed with activated charcoal. Medically, charcoal is used to absorb poisons and to reduce discomfort due to excessive gas in the digestive tract. Charcoal is also recommended as part of the mix when potting up orchids.

A copy of a letter dated 14th April 1945 from Holberton Hospital to Mr. Gomes at Montpelier shows that the former Holberton Hospital relied on the supply of local coals.

Of Lepers, Lunatics and the History of Rat Island

By Dr. Susan Lowes

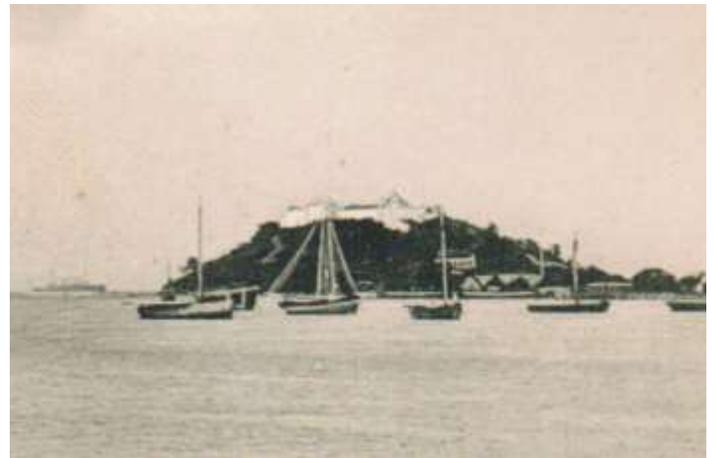
In the 19th century, the British Colonial government had as one of its responsibilities the well being and care of those inhabitants of its colonies who had been diagnosed as lepers and those they considered to be lunatics. At that time little was known about the causes of leprosy and it was thought to be both highly contagious and hereditary. Although lunacy was viewed more benignly, it was nevertheless considered that both lepers and lunatics should be isolated from the general population.

This became an issue after Emancipation in 1834. Impoverished lepers lived with others in the Poor House until 1837, when the government decided to move them into their own building in the lower part of town. Lunatics were moved to a new building on Rat Island that officially opened in June 1838. It was described by Mrs. Llanaghan, who was in Antigua at the time, as being for those inmates “as have shewn symptoms of aberration of mind.” It had six three-person rooms for males and six more for females, with an enclosed yard that was used for provision plots.

The living quarters were enlarged in the following year in order to build a separate ward for male patients, adding ten apartments capable of accommodating four persons each. There was also a house for the superintendent, a chapel, and a 7,000-gallon iron water tank imported from England. Well before this—in the 1600s—Rat Island was a fort that was known as The Citadel, used to house regiments of soldiers, until a new barracks was built at the top of St. John’s; it later became the prison.

In the mid-to-late 1800s, there was considerable controversy over whether leprosy really was

contagious. In 1863, the Colonial Office approved the recommendations of the Royal College of Physicians of London that it was not and recommended that any laws affecting the personal liberty of lepers be repealed and that confinement should cease. At that point, both of the medical doctors in Antigua who were familiar with leprosy were also convinced that it was not contagious and that the lepers would be best served if they were moved near to the Poor House. However, the public was not convinced and public outcry at this idea was so loud that the idea was abandoned.



Rat Island, c. 1905, from Jose Anjo postcard

The lepers were instead sent to join the lunatics on Rat Island, but given a small wooden building that was separated from the lunatic asylum by a brick wall. At the time of an investigative visit for a report to the Colonial Office in 1873, there were 21 inmates. The writer noted that the present attendants had only been there for a few months, and that it had been very difficult to get anyone to accept the job. In 1888, a branch lunatic asylum was completed at The Ridge, relieving Rat Island of crowding and also allowing room for inmates from other Leeward Islands. The Ridge, for “quieter” inmates, was described as a hill near English Harbour “some 330 feet in height.”

With confirmation that leprosy was spread by a bacterium in 1873, treatment by isolation again

became the solution of choice. In that year the British Consul in Jamaica expressed the common view in the West Indies when he wrote the Colonial Office recommending that “lepers in the West Indies should be confined ... and guarded by severe quarantine laws: that all marriages should be forbidden among lepers, and that as much as can be managed the sexes should be separated ... and that all Negro lepers should without exception be sent to these isolated hospitals or Lazarettos, there to live.”



Leper Housing, Rat Island. Photo courtesy Agnes Meeker

In 1889 report noted that although there was currently no law requiring the segregation of lepers, one was currently under consideration. Dr. John Freeland, in a letter in the *Lazeretto* that was republished in the *Antigua Observer* in 1890, advocated a number of restrictions, including forbidding lepers to leave Rat Island, while the *Antigua Standard* published a petition for compulsory segregation.

Over the next few years, there was a constant flow of missives from the governor to the Colonial Office regarding the state of the facilities at Rat Island, which were called “deplorable,” and reiterating a local concern about the lepers wandering into town, with editorials in the *Antigua Times* also protesting this wandering. This panic was the backdrop for the role that leprosy played in Frieda Cassin’s novel *With Silent Tread*, presumed to have been written in 1890. In Antigua, the need for isolation seemed to be confirmed by the fact that

while there were 20 lepers in the asylum in 1875, 28 in 1888, and 31 in 1890, with 53 lepers in the colony as a whole.

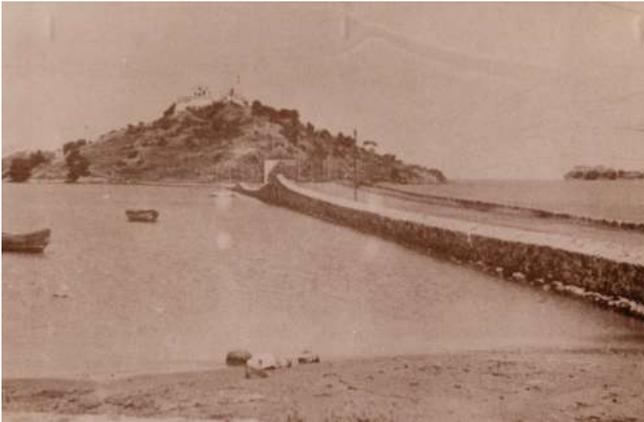
Certificates of cause of death were compulsory beginning in 1856 so there are records of deaths from leprosy, but they are probably underestimates since doctors often attributed death to other causes. However, the records show that deaths attributed to leprosy peaked between 1887 and 1926, falling dramatically after that. The greatest percentage of leprosy deaths were at a fairly young age for males, mostly between 15 and 34, but older for females, between 35 and 64.



Male Ward, Leper Colony, Rat Island. Photo courtesy Agnes Meeker

In 1894, as a result of a worrisome death rate at the main Lunatic Asylum on Rat Island, the facilities were rebuilt into a collection of five well-ventilated and “spacious dormitories.” In 1898, the West India Royal Commission recommended that the Lunatic Asylum be moved, leaving only the Leper Asylum there. There followed a number of local proposals for moving the two asylums. One was to move the Leper Asylum to The Ridge and move Holberton Hospital and the Poor House to Rat Island—primarily because the smell was bothering the inhabitants of Government House. But the Legislative Council turned down this idea, arguing that it would cost too much. Beginning in 1895 Antigua’s finances had taken a steep dive due to a poor weather, declining demand for

sugar in Europe, and a consequent drop in sugar production. Since finances were therefore constrained, it was decided instead to install a gatekeeper. This apparently did stop the lepers from crossing the causeway into town so the Colonial Office agreed to let the legislature pass an act to forbid lepers to roam—continuing a tendency, going back to the immediate post-emancipation period, to pass a punitive act if the population was not behaving in ways deemed appropriate by the authorities.



Rat Island, with causeway

In 1902, Governor Strickland inspected Rat Island and was upset by the conditions he saw—but in this case it was not the living conditions but the “promiscuous intercourse” of male and female lepers. Even though he acknowledged that there had only been one birth to date, he ordered that an existing quarantine station across the harbor at Keelings Point (known now as Keeling Point, in Greenbay) be converted into a Female Leper Asylum. This was approved by the Colonial Office, which however noted that it was well known that intercourse among lepers is seldom fruitful.

By 1903, the old Poor House had become the Lunatic Asylum, the Ridge had been closed, and the lepers were still at Rat Island and Keeling’s Point. The Poor House must have proved an unsatisfactory setting for the lunatics because buildings at Skerretts, previously used as a training school, were now converted into a

central lunatic asylum for the entire Leeward Islands colony. In 1905, all the lunatics remaining at Rat Island were moved to Skerretts, which in that year had 124 inmates. The Keeling’s Point outpost may have closed because starting in 1907 and continuing through 1919, only one leper asylum, at Rat Island, is listed in the Colonial Office reports. However, a 1912 Act that restricted lepers to the Leper Home and also restricted their interactions with the local population referred to a Leper Home at Pearn’s, so it is possible that lepers were moved to the much more isolated Pearn’s Point site at around that time.

In early 1942, Dr. Ernest Muir toured the West Indies to review the situation with leprosy, visiting Antigua in late January of that year. He reported about 50 cases of leprosy in Antigua, with 38 patients in the Leper Home. He also noted that the Leper Act had been amended in 1937 making provision for compulsory segregation, and that the leper colony that had originally been located at Rat Island had been moved to the west coast, south-west of St. John’s—in other words, to Pearn’s. In 1958, the U.S. Navy brought electricity to the site. By January 2014, the vestiges of a large set of cisterns were all that remained—although they may well be gone by now, given the large reengineering of the terrain currently underway for a housing development.



Cistern at Pearn’s Point, 2014

Once both asylums were closed, Rat Island underwent a number of changes. At some point the causeway was filled in and widened. Later, the Antigua Distillery was built on the right side below the hill.

Disputes over Staffing at the Lunatic and Leper Asylums

In 1856, a Dominican named Lewis Benjamin was appointed the keeper of the two asylums; his wife Mary F. Benjamin was appointed matron in 1878. Lewis had been a private in the Dominica police force, became a sergeant and then keeper of the gaol until he was appointed to the Lunatic Asylum in Antigua. He served for 18 years at the same salary—despite repeated pleas for an increase and despite the fact that the Keeper of the Prison (a white man with a similar job) did get an increase. Lewis had at least seven children, and Rat Island became the family's main source of work. Two children were signalmen there; two were subkeepers at the Lunatic Asylum; and one was appointed Superintendent of the Lunatic Asylum when it moved to the Ridge.

Lewis was forcibly retired, ostensibly because of age, in 1895. He was then 67 and had been in the Colonial Service for over 40 years and Mary for over 17. Although the Governor had let it be known that he wanted a younger man in the post, it is equally likely that this was an excuse and that what he really wanted was a white man. In fact, two English people had been brought out in 1894, with the male paid almost as much as Lewis and the female paid twice as much as his wife, although they were his subordinates.

When Lewis and his wife retired, the Governor suggested that they be replaced by these same two Europeans. There were protests in the local newspapers about the treatment of a "black man" and entire elected side voted against the proposed candidates, but their protest was ignored: the Colonial Office response was that there was no

need to take them seriously since the interests of the taxpayer were more "truly and directly" represented by the non-elective side. From the Governor's point of view, a black man in that position was problematic: not only was he convinced that black West Indians could not discipline other black West Indians, but that no white matron or nurse would consent to serve under a nonwhite man. For nonwhites to rise too high in administrative posts also created an awkward social situation, since no nonwhites were invited to social events at Government House, no matter what their position, until the early 1920s, when Sir Eustace Fiennes became governor.

Something similar happened to Albert. In May 1898, he was relieved of his duties because of "intemperate" habits and for stealing from the stores and a former acting superintendent at Rat Island was appointed in his place. Albert too protested, sending a petition to the Colonial Office that argued that he had been harassed by one of the doctors who wanted him to become a total abstainer and that he had not been repeatedly inebriated but was "nervous." In 1898, an anonymous letter writer called "Fair Play" wrote a long letter to the *Antigua Times*, a handwritten version of which was included in a dispatch sent to the Colonial Office, on behalf of Albert, which charged discrimination against a "native" and suggested that this may have been due to either religious or racial prejudice on the part of the Medical Officer. The letter writer suggested that this type of accusation had become common when brought by men who had "immigrated here apparently for the sole purpose of trampling under their feet the natives who groan under weight of heavy taxes to pay their terrible salaries and exorbitant charges." The Colonial Office notes said that they felt he might have a point but refused to interfere, saying this was a matter for the Holberton Board. This was a common tactic, since it allowed the Colonial Office to neatly sidestep the race issue.

James Arthur Harley: Antigua's First Anthropologist?

By Pamela Roberts

[Editor's note: In researching a book entitled *Black Oxford: The Untold Stories of Oxford University's Black Scholars*, independent scholar Pamela Roberts came across the name James Arthur Harley. She tracked down a local historian who had a battered suitcase under his bed that contained documents about Harley's life. Roberts has put together an exhibition on Harley that includes documents, certificates, and photographs from his life that she hopes to bring to Antigua later this year. Here is her brief biography of Harley.]

James Arthur Harley was born in Antigua on 15th May 1873 to Henry James Harley and Eleanor Josephine Lake. One of the documents in the suitcase stated that Harley's father was a landlord involved in sugar who gave him £5,000 for his education but more research is needed into his parents.



Harley attended Howard University in 1902 and obtained a law degree. He then studied at Yale University, class of 1906, and moved on to Jesus College, Oxford, in 1908, to study for a degree in Theology. In 1909, he was one of the first

students to complete the diploma course in Anthropology at the Pitt Rivers Museum with a thesis on Japanese Shintoism.

Harley was ordained into the Diaconate by the Lord Bishop of Peterborough and served as a curator in Shepshed, Leicestershire, and Deal, Kent. Disillusioned with the church, he became a skilled toolmaker during the First World War, produced a weekly news bulletin, and was an independent councillor on the Leicestershire County Council from 1925 until his death in 1943. By all accounts, "Old Harley" was a very popular resident of Shepshed.

Meeting Space Available for Rent

The Museum conference room located upstairs on Long St. is available for rent at a very reasonable price. It can seat approximately 75 persons comfortably and is fully air conditioned.

For more information and to book, please contact the Museum at 462-1469 or 462-4930 during our business hours.

Help identify historic Antiguan photos

They can be viewed at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalarchives/sets/72157630634941210/with/7596548674/>

Please leave comments, tags and add stories on the archives' Flickr page.

New Members

**Got News to Muse – send it to
museum@candw.ag**

Upcoming Events

Re-Prints available at the Museum Store.
Forts of Antigua and Barbuda and English Harbour Year by Year.

Coming Soon historical Publications

PLACE NAMES AND THEIR STORIES
HERITAGE LANDMARKS
MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTIONS

Cables and Fables – October– The history and mystery behind historical houses standing and non standing around St. John’s and the environs

The Untold stories of Oxford University Black Scholars – November

Exhibition and book launch by Pamela Roberts.

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

Tel/Fax: 268-462-1469, 462-4930 E-mail: museum@candw.ag Website: www.antiguamuseum.org

Historical and Archaeology Society

July, August, September 2014 HAS NEWSLETTER, No. 125

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.

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

TELEPHONE: (H)..... (W).....

E-MAIL:.....

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

CIRCLE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY	
Individual	₡ 50 EC/₡ 25US (Mailing included)
Student	₡ 15 EC
Family	₡ 100 EC/₡ 45US (mailing included)
Life	₡ 500 EC/₡ 200US
Business Patron	₡ 500 EC