

# Bowls and Burials – an Update from Grand Bay, Carriacou, West Indies: May–June 2011

Quetta Kaye,\* Scott M. Fitzpatrick,† Mary Hill Harris\*\* and Michiel Kappers††

---

## Introduction

From May 23 to June 23 2011 Kaye, Fitzpatrick and Kappers directed a team comprising four staff members from England, The Netherlands and the U.S., together with 27 students from various American universities and UCL's Institute of Archaeology, to conduct the sixth season of archaeological investigation at the coastal site of Grand Bay, Carriacou (fig. 1). Our major goal this year was to finalise the excavation of three previously opened 5×5 metre trenches (nos 592, 415 and 446) (fig. 2) (see summaries in Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2009a, 2009b; Kaye *et al.* 2009), while training students in fieldwork techniques and continuing our community outreach work by encouraging site visits, giving talks to schools, organising an exhibition of small finds for a public open day and conducting a series of television, radio, and newspaper interviews in order to raise public awareness and encourage interest in the archaeological heritage of the island. The Carriacou Historical Society (CHS) also requested us to prepare a report on the possible impact of a proposed "Free Port" coastal development on archaeological sites along the southeastern part of the island. The brief results of the 2011 project are presented in the following.

## Research Background

Carriacou, along with Petite Martinique and Grenada and numerous smaller islands, comprises the nation of Grenada. Until our survey in 2003, when we identified over a dozen locations with evidence of prehistoric settlement, minimal archaeological research had been carried out. Since 2004 the project has excavated at the two sites considered to be the most endangered - Grand Bay and nearby Sabazan.

## Archaeological Investigations

Having established a grid system across the Grand Bay site in previous years, we were able to open trenches 592, 415 and 446 using mattocks and trowels to reach the tarpaulins which had been laid to cover the levels reached during our last investigation in 2008.

Excavation in the two southerly 5×5m trenches (nos. 415 and 446) focused on an extensive midden deposit. Our methodology here, as in the past, was to delineate 1m<sup>2</sup> units, each of which was labelled with a unique computer-generated barcode number. After clearing the surface backfill, excavation proceeded in 10cm levels using hand trowels. The fill from four 1m<sup>2</sup> units (nos. 7, 9, 17 and 19) was taken to be wet sieved in the sea through 6mm mesh to enable further zooarchaeological and palaeobotanical analysis. A .50×.50m column sample from each of these four 1m<sup>2</sup> units was further sieved through 1.6mm mesh to recover even smaller site constituents.

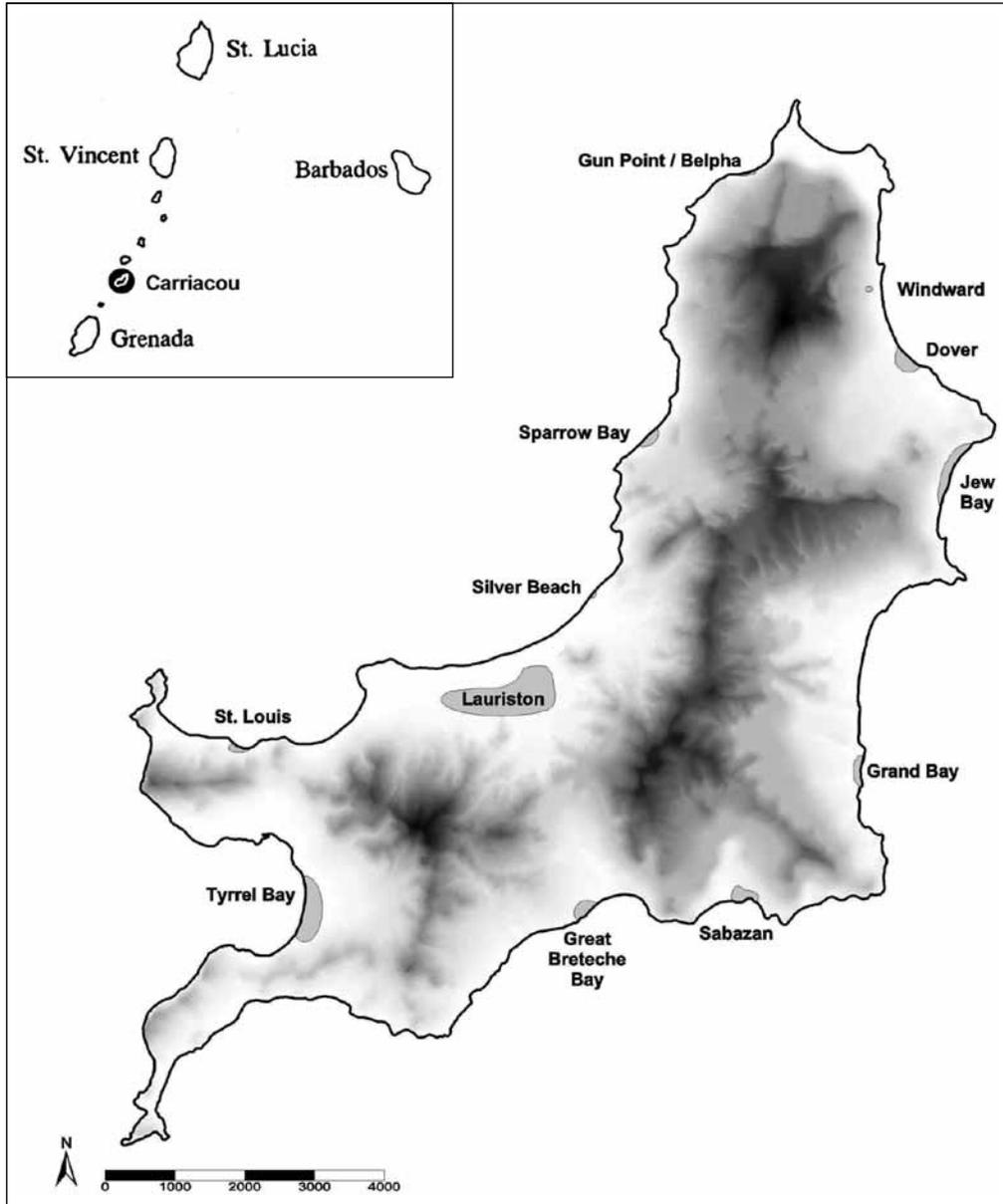
---

\* Secretary, International Association for Caribbean Archaeology

\*\* North Carolina State University

† University of Cambridge Anthropology and Archaeology Museum

†† QLC, Ltd., Amsterdam, The Netherlands

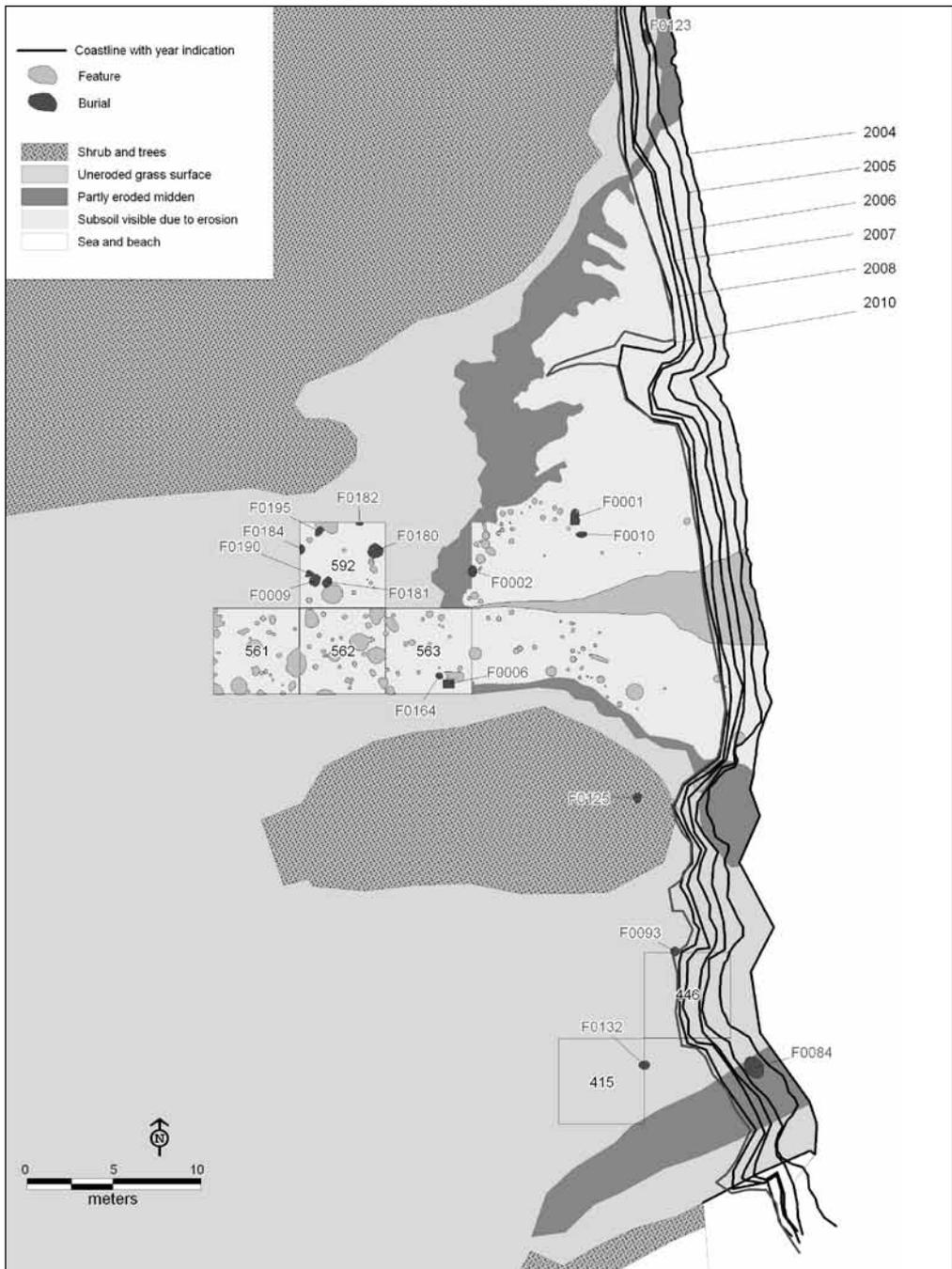


**Fig 1:** Map of Carriacou with site locations.

Material from the excavation was taken to our laboratory at the Carriacou Museum, where it was washed, dried, categorised, weighed and entered into the ArcheoLINK from QLC data system developed by Kappers and Willem Schnitger ([www.archeolink.eu](http://www.archeolink.eu)). Small or 'special' finds were separately catalogued and bagged, to be drawn and photographed.

## Results

This season's project at Grand Bay produced some interesting and unexpected results. Measurements taken with the Total Station showed that erosion at Grand Bay, which had an average loss of nearly one metre a year since our first work at the site in 2003, had actually diminished since 2010 when



**Fig 2:** Map of Grand Bay showing burials, excavated trenches (hatched) and coastal erosion along the profile.

the newly elected government outlawed the mining of sand.

Seven human burials were exposed within Trench 592 at Grand Bay (fig. 3). Three of the

burials were in close proximity to each other, though the poor preservation and fragmentation of the remains, along with inclement weather, made it extremely difficult to exca-



**Fig 3:** Trench 592, excavating human remains. Photo by Scott Fitzpatrick.



**Fig 4:** Burial F0180 surrounded by four bowls. Photo by Scott Fitzpatrick.

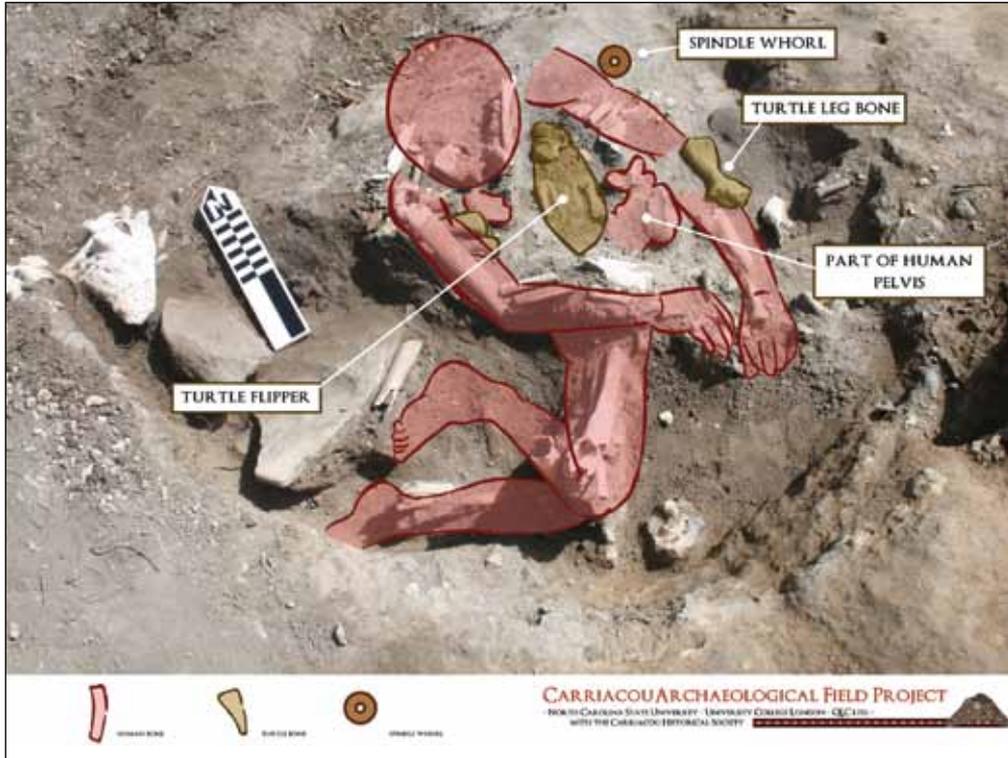
vate and ascertain their exact position and association. Among these human remains was the section of a mandible complete with teeth of a younger child (probably less than 10-12) who was most certainly buried next to an adjoining adult. Two other burials were exposed in the north and west walls of the trench and one was encountered in the bottom of the section of another feature. All three were left in place. The seventh burial (no. F0180) was excavated towards the eastern edge of Trench 592 across squares 15 and 20. The latter burial was in a flexed position lying on its left side with four ceramic vessels (one complete and three nearly so) clearly placed with the body during interment. This find of ceramics more than doubles the number of fully or nearly complete vessels found at Grand Bay during our excavations (Figs. 4, 5, 6, 7).

Further north at Grand Bay, a partially salvaged skeleton (no. F0177) which had been discovered eroding from the profile by Fitzpatrick and Kappers in 2010 during a short visit, was seen to have been further exposed. Detailed excavation of the remains showed the body to have been placed in a crouched position on its back above a hearth feature and was associated with turtle remains both within and below the body. A single ceramic spindle whorl was also found underneath (fig. 8).

About 2km north of Grand Bay, another Amerindian site known as Point Bay extends along the coast for approximately 130m. A local fisherman made us aware of two, and possibly more burials, which were exposed by erosion near the coast and excavated by our team. While one of the burials was mostly eroded away, another in close proximity was relatively intact. The individual (no. F001) was surrounded on the eastern margin by several large, purposefully placed stones. Further excavation revealed that the skeleton was placed sitting in a crouched position with a flat stone placed on the lap and another held in the arms of the individual (fig. 9).



**Figs 5-7:** Bowls 1919, 1918 and 1921. Photos by Quetta Kaye

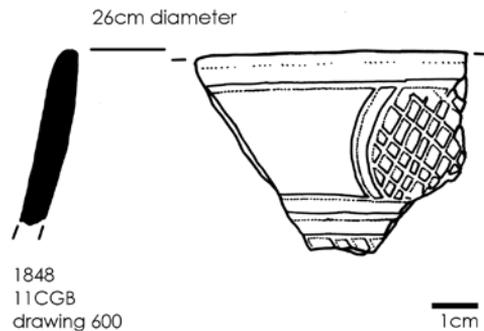


**Fig 8:** Burial F0177 with spindle whorl and turtle bone. Photo by Scott Fitzpatrick, enhanced by John Swogger.



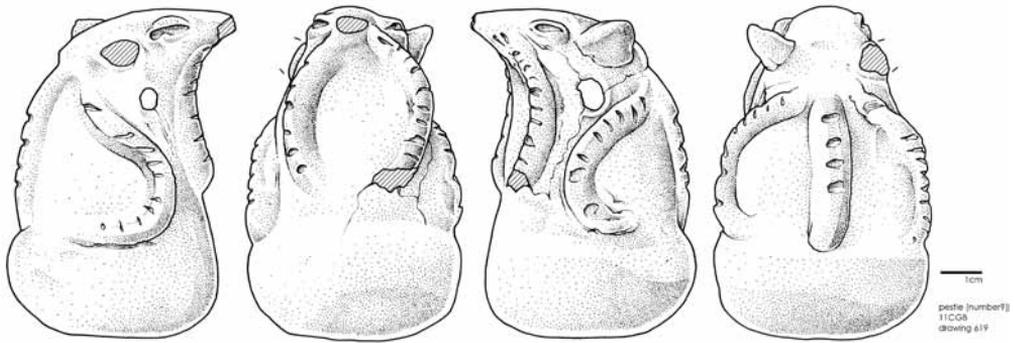
**Fig 9:** Burial F001 Point Bay. Photo by Scott Fitzpatrick.

Over 461kg of ceramics were recovered this year, bringing to a total of 3,055kgs the amount excavated thus far at Grand Bay. Preliminary study of 1,565 of this year's excavated sherds suggests a range of ceramics dated from approximately AD350 to



**Fig 10:** Ceramic ZIC (zone incised cross-hatched) (no. 1848). Drawn by John Swogger.

AD650, corresponding well with our radio-carbon chronology. This year, for the first time, contexts were reached that contained Palo Secan Saladoid pottery, or perhaps even earlier, since the pottery included a small piece of ZIC (Zone Incised Cross Hatched) in the basal layer which is the first example of this type found here in an excavated context.

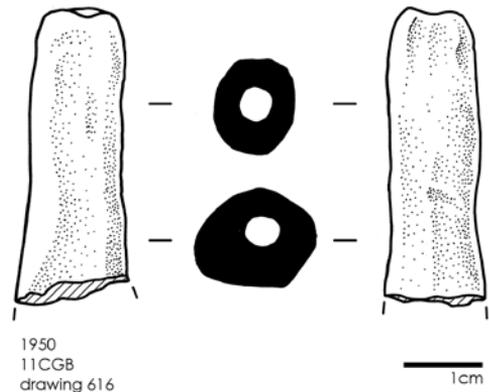


**Fig 11:** Ceramic pestle (no.1878). Drawn by John Swogger

The incised decoration was on the *exterior* surface of a straight-sided bowl of thin, burnished light brown ware (fig. 10).

In the Saladoid contexts (ca. AD350-650), sherds were thin on average (some only 2-3 mm in thickness) with high levels of decoration and forms that included not only classic Saladoid bells, but elaborate shapes such as the wavy-edged vessel found with the burial in Trench 592 and those with fanciful handles. Grooves are finer than those in the upper contexts, and the painted fields they outline are less vividly coloured (though this may be due to conditions of deposition). Classic WOR (White-On-Red) and numerous adornos (decorative rim elements) were also found. In both the early contexts, and others slightly later, there seem to be some unusual forms of decoration, one of which is seemingly unique to Carriacou. One is a very striking combination of bright scarlet and black with black rubbed into grooves in the red areas which has been termed “Carriacou Black Grooved”. This ware is under 5 mm. in thickness. In the lower contexts, WOR seems to have most of its surface covered with white, with the pattern made by the red under-surface.

Among some of the more interesting material found this year was a small ceramic pestle (no. 1879) (fig. 11) interpreted as possibly taking the shape of an armadillo, and the spout of an inhaling bowl (no. 1950) (fig. 12) which was recovered from one of the lowest layers of trench 446. This spout

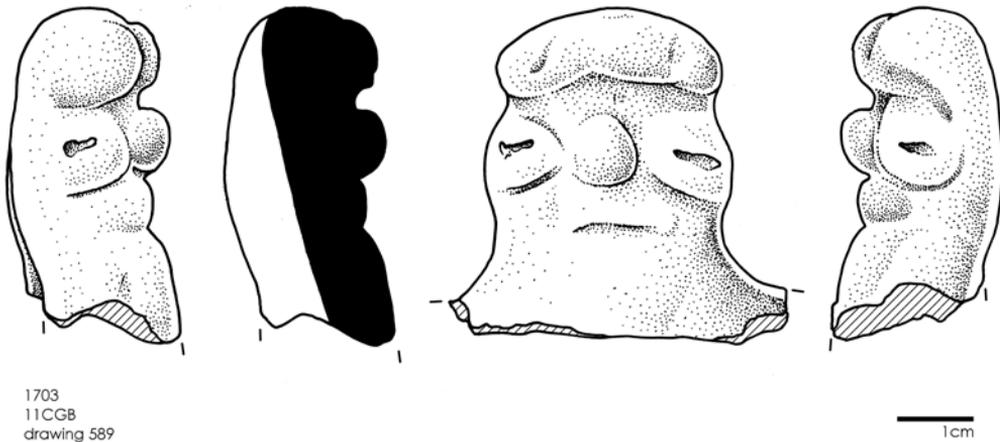


**Fig 12:** Ceramic inhaling bowl spout (no. 1950). Drawn by John Swogger.

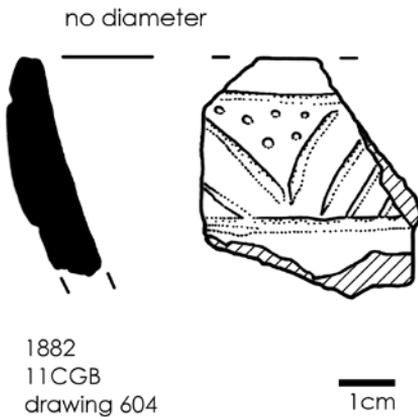
is different in size and shape from the three other examples known from the island, being 3.5cm long and narrow (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2009b).

Other unusual finds included a ceramic face which would not have been out of place in Troumassoid layers, but was found securely in an earlier context, and a square-eyed adorno with a very deep hollow back which was also different in style from others we have found (fig. 13). In addition, there was one sherd with diagonal incised lines forming a triangle within which a series of small holes had been impressed (Fig. 14). This could be described as representative of the controversial Huecoid period.

In total, 20 modelled clay adornos were excavated, 15 shell adzes, six assorted shell and stone beads with some blank, unpierced forms, two spindle whorls, and a conch



**Fig 13:** Ceramic adorno (no 1703). Drawn by John Swogger.



**Fig 14:** Ceramic "Huecoid" (no 1882).  
Drawn by John Swogger.

shell object (no. 1901), similar to examples reported to be atlatl spurs found at Indian Creek, Antigua, by Nicholson (1980), four of which were also reported by Sutty (1990) on Carriacou. As in previous years, substantial amounts of subsistence remains were recovered in the form of molluscs, fish, turtle and small mammal bones, samples of which have been taken to the United States for further analysis in the archaeological laboratory at North Carolina State University.

The project directors and staff spent one day field-walking the south eastern coastal site of Dumfries, where a major Free Port development is under consideration. Our report to the CHS and the Minister for Car-

riacou & Petite Martinique Affairs recommended that the remains observed in the area were worthy of further investigation. Collected samples of pottery and shell tools were deposited with the CHS with selected samples taken for further analysis.

In addition to our archaeological work, we made a concerted effort to raise the local community awareness of our research. We scheduled a public "Meet the Archaeologists" Open Day on Saturday, 18th June. Students distributed posters throughout the capital, Hillsborough, and radio, newspaper and television announcements were made. 'Special' finds from the excavation were displayed in an upper room of the Museum (fig. 15) and a public power-point presentation was given by Kaye and Fitzpatrick which was well attended. At the conclusion, we presented a spiral bound collection of over 15 published papers deriving from our work in Carriacou to Mr Cosnel McIntosh, President of the CHS, as a facility for future researchers. A similar set of papers was requested by the Minister for Carriacou & Petite Martinique, Senator the Honourable George W. Prime, so that these could be lodged in the Grenada government's records.

We produced a series of illustrated laminated explanatory booklets which were hung



**Fig 15:** Display of 'special' finds at Museum Open Day. Photo by Quetta Kaye.

in the Carriacou Museum and provided new laminated information labels for exhibits. Duplicates of some of these were also given to the Carriacou Tourist Office for display. Talks were given to two local schools, and groups of schoolchildren were also brought to Grand Bay by the head of the Carriacou Tourist Office, after which they visited the museum. We successfully obtained sponsorship from Concept Advertising in Grenada for designs by our illustrator, John Swogger, for a new Open Hours sign, which was fixed to the outside of the Museum, and two directional street signs indicating the route to the Museum from the centre of Hillsborough as visitors arrive to the island. As part of our out-reach programme, Swogger also designed a web page for the CHS in the hope that this would increase visitor numbers to the Museum.

A brief report of the 2011 summer season's work was presented to the 24th Congress of the International Association for Caribbean Archaeology held in Martinique July 25th to 30th to allow fellow Caribbean archaeologists to comment on the unusual nature of Carriacou's bowls and burials.

#### Acknowledgements

Our thanks are extended to the Minister for Carriacou & Petite Martinique for his continued interest in and support for our archaeological work, the President and Board of the Carriacou Historical Society for their assistance with our project and storage of the excavated artefacts and to the students who participated in this season's project, without whom the excavation could not have taken place. Mrs. Harris also gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Cambridge University Foreign Travel Fund.

## References

- Fitzpatrick, S M, Kappers, M, Kaye, Q, Giovas, C, LeFebvre, M, Harris, M H, Burnett, S, Pavia, J A, Marsaglia, K and Feathers, J** 2009a Pre-Columbian Settlements on Carriacou, West Indies. *Journal of Field Archaeology*. 34: 247-266, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/009346909791070880>.
- Fitzpatrick, S M, Kaye Q P, Feathers, J, Pavia, J A and Marsaglia, K A** 2009b. Evidence for inter-island transport of heirlooms: luminescence dating and petrographic analysis of ceramic inhaling bowls from Carriacou, West Indies. *Journal of Archaeological Science*. 36: 596-606, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2008.08.007>.
- Kaye, Q P, Burnett, S, Fitzpatrick, S M, Kappers, M and Swogger, J** 2009 Archaeological Investigations on Carriacou, West Indies, 7th July – 9th August 2008: Fieldwork and Public Archaeology. *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*. 19: 91-99, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/pia.327>.
- Nicholson, D** 1980 The Atlal Spur: a Newly Identified Artifact from the Lesser Antilles. In: Lewenstein, S M (ed.) *Proceedings of the 8th International Congress for the Study of the Pre-Columbian Cultures of the Lesser Antilles*. Arizona State University, 394-496.
- Sutty, L** 1990 A Listing of Amerindian Settlements on the Island of Carriacou in the Southern Grenadines and a Report on the Most Important of These. Grand Bay. In: Pantel Tekakis, A G, Vargas Arenas, I, Sanoja Obediente, M (eds.), *Proceedings of the 11th Congress of the International Association for Caribbean Archaeology 1985*. Puerto Rico, 242-260.