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# VERDMONT

## The next 50 years



As historic house museums and cultural sites worldwide feel the pressure to update and reassess their roles in their communities, the Bermuda National Trust is looking at where Bermuda and our museums fit in. How will this small island community treat its cultural sites in the years to come and what role do these sites need to play? A group of local stakeholders and overseas museum professionals and consultants recently met to discuss the potential of Verdmont and future development on the eve of its 50th anniversary as a Museum. Through open and honest collaboration, the group developed various ideas in the hopes of establishing a successful site for the next 50 years to come.

**Why change?** For many years, Verdmont has experienced rising costs and declining visitation. The low visitation (approximately 2,000 visitors a year) strongly suggests the house is not being put to optimum use. The 50th anniversary is an opportune time to take a fresh look at how the property is used

## SPECIAL ISSUE

### *Verdmont at 50*

and the history that is presented for the benefit of the public.

**The stakeholders** The Trust called together a group of local stakeholders to participate in a brainstorming session alongside experienced museum professionals from the US National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Bermudian group consisted of: **Charlotte Andrews**, PhD candidate, Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge, UK; **Diana Chudleigh**, researcher and author of the Trust books *Bermuda's Architectural Heritage: Smith's Parish* and *Hamilton Parish*; **Louise Tannock**, Cultural Affairs Coordinator, Department of Community & Cultural Affairs; **Joy Wilson-Tucker**, president, Bermudian Heritage Museum; **Hugh Davidson**, past president & Museum Committee Chairman of the Trust;

**Lance Furbert II**, local historian, director of Windreach Recreational Village and past member of the Trust Council; **William Holmes**, Trust President; **Wayne Jackson**, Trust past president; **Laura Lyons**, BNT Curator / Collections Manager; **Derek Morris**, Trust Executive Director; **Nicola O'Leary**, Trust Education Director.

This group came together to share views on the status of Bermuda's heritage sector and the roles that a historic site such as Verdmont will play in the future, while keeping in mind the current trends, needs, interests and aspirations of Bermuda.

**Race relations** The group expressed a general desire to unite the community through an open and honest presentation of the black experience in Bermuda—something which Verdmont has never truly tackled, even though it is believed the kitchen cottage was also a slave house. There is a need to tell the whole story about Bermuda's history and to tell the whole truth—Verdmont

*Continued on page 4*

# Celebrating Verdmont: 50 years as a museum

Verdmont celebrates its half century as a museum on November 21 this year, having been officially opened on that date in 1957 by Governor, Lieutenant-General Sir John Woodall. It was then owned and run by the Bermuda Historical Monuments Trust, forerunner of the Bermuda National Trust.

Although it has been a museum for 50 years, Verdmont dates back to the beginning of the 18th century and has for the past 300 years been lived in and worked upon by Bermudians.

## Whose money built Verdmont?

The money to buy the land and build the house is said to have come from the proceeds of a highly successful pirate expedition led by Rhode Islander Captain Thomas Tew. The story of the *Amity* is told by Dr. Henry Campbell Wilkinson in *Bermuda in the Old Empire*. Captain Tew arrived in Bermuda in 1691 and purchased a share in the Bermuda sloop *Amity*. In an incredible voyage, he sailed the Atlantic, around the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean, then around the Horn of Africa to the Straits of Bab el Mandeb at the entrance to the Red Sea. There, the sloop lay in wait for a convoy of six Arabian ships. Captain Tew had obtained a commission "to cruise against the king's enemies", according to Wilkinson, but this venture smacked more of piracy than privateering.

The *Amity* carried eight guns and a crew of 45, each of whom worked for a share in the proceeds. The tallest ship of the Arabian convoy was said to be heavily armed and carried 300 soldiers but Captain Tew boldly ran his ship alongside and boarded. According to Wilkinson, "The (Arabian) ship was carried without loss to the pirates. The booty was so immense that, notwithstanding waste, it yielded £3,000 a man. There was also a store of powder. Tew wished to attack the other ships in turn, but the crew objected, for they now desired nothing as much as a frolic ashore. The *Amity* was accordingly headed for Madagascar."

Henry Fyfield, first husband of Elizabeth Dickinson, and her father

Colonel Anthony White (died *circa* 1709) were among the Bermudian shareholders in the *Amity*. Dr. Wilkinson wrote: [the Bermudian shareholders received] "some Spanish bullion...together with broken gold and gold dust and...a substantial sum in Lyon dollars and Arabian gold." He added: "Arabian gold showed its face on the Island for a while notwithstanding the efforts of its first recipients to be discreet... Indeed, every effort was made to hush up the whole matter as far as it could be in so small, intimate, and inquisitive a community." After the death of her first husband, Elizabeth married John Dickinson and subsequently Verdmont was built for the newlyweds.

Verdmont, where she lived with daughter Elizabeth and her husband Perient Spofferth and their two children, Dickinson and Elizabeth. The date of Elizabeth Dickinson's death is not known, but she outlived her daughter and Verdmont passed to her granddaughter Elizabeth Spofferth, who married first Robert Brown and then, in September 1755, Thomas Smith.

## Thomas Smith

As the husband of Elizabeth, Thomas Smith (died 1781) became the next owner of Verdmont. He was a widower with four daughters from a previous marriage, Elizabeth, Mary, Honora and Catherine, and was Collector of Customs.

vived to adulthood. Samuel Trott died prematurely and Sarah spent 47 years as a widow at Verdmont, although her son, Captain John Henry Trott, took over the estate in 1831 upon his marriage.

## Captain John Henry Trott

Captain John Henry Trott (1805–1892) was Provost Marshal General. He and his wife Harriet left the house after their daughter Catherine died of typhoid on August 31, 1858. Verdmont and its land were first rented and then sold to planter Rupert Hugh Spencer.

## Rupert Hugh Spencer

Rupert Hugh Spencer (1820–1868) was a bachelor and lived in



John Cox



Henry Wilkinson



Hereward Watlington



Lillian Fox

## The owners of Verdmont

The house has been lived in by an interesting cast of characters and has passed through a well documented, and largely female, chain of ownership. Verdmont descended through the heirs of its builder John Dickinson for 166 years until it was sold in 1860 to bachelor farmer Rupert Hugh Spencer. It remained in the hands of his heirs for almost a century until it was acquired in 1951 by the Bermuda Historical Monuments Trust.

## John & Elizabeth Dickinson

Verdmont was probably built for John and Elizabeth Dickinson some time after their marriage in 1693. John Dickinson (died 1714) was a merchant, ship owner and Speaker of the House of Assembly from 1707 to 1710. They had two daughters: Elizabeth (died 1733) and Mary (died 1789). Elizabeth Dickinson spent a long widowhood at

There were no children from the marriage of Thomas and Elizabeth Smith and after her death in 1789 she left Verdmont to her stepdaughter Mary, who was known as Polly, and her husband John Green.

## John Green

John Green (died 1802) is thought to have come to Bermuda from Philadelphia in the mid-1760s. He was a portrait painter and was appointed Judge of the Vice-Admiralty in 1786. His wife Polly died within six months of her husband's death and left Verdmont to her nephew, Samuel Henry Trott, son of her sister Elizabeth.

## Samuel Henry Trott

Samuel Henry Trott (died 1817) was a magistrate and Member of the Colonial Parliament. He and his wife Sarah produced a number of children, the first to be born at Verdmont for some years. Five sur-

Verdmont with his widowed elder brother John William Spencer and his brother's two daughters, Ella Eliza and Emma Elizabeth, who inherited the property jointly upon the death of their uncle. The two could not agree how to divide their inheritance and resorted to arbitration. Ella received the land south of South Shore Road, plus her father's house, while Emma, who had married Stafford Nairn Joell, was awarded Verdmont and the land north of South Shore Road.

## Stafford Nairn Joell

Stafford Nairn Joell (1846–1914) farmed the land around Verdmont. The Joells had five children but left the bulk of their property, including Verdmont, to their two unmarried daughters, Lillian and Irene Joell. The two sisters lived together for some time until Irene in 1930 gave her half of the property to Lillian.



Lillian Joell (left) and her family outside Verdmont. She was the last person to live in the historic house

### Lillian Wood Joell

Lillian Joell (1875–1953) was the last person to live at Verdmont. She cooked on a kerosene stove in the dining room, pumped water by hand from the outside tank and used oil lamps and candles. She walked to Hamilton every day, where she worked for 45 years for a law firm.

In 1951 she sold the house and about 28 acres to her nephew Alan Paul Joell (1910–1960) and moved to Westmeath. He sold the house and 2.2 acres to the Bermuda Historical Monuments Trust.

### The Bermuda Historical Monuments Trust

The Bermuda Historical Monuments Trust (BHMT) was a conservation organisation from 1937 to 1969 and acquired and restored a number of important historical houses, nature reserves and records. It was led initially by Dr. Henry Campbell Wilkinson and consisted of a committee of seven. It received a small government grant.

In 1951 the BHMT bought Verdmont for £8,000; however, the purchase was only possible because two of its members, Dr. Wilkinson and Hereward Trott Watlington, loaned the money—and the BHMT minutes do not reveal whether this was ever fully repaid. A sub-committee of Wilkinson, Watlington and architect Wilfred Onions was formed to restore Verdmont and

turn it into a museum.

The house had fallen into disrepair. Funds were limited and work proceeded slowly as the BHMT was busy acquiring and restoring other properties and the repairs to Verdmont turned out to be more than first anticipated. One of their first acts to make the house presentable was to have the roof white-washed in late 1952; Stanley Burgess, the well known marathon runner of Flatts, completed this task. Many of the contractors lived in the surrounding areas. Lionel Darrell, also from Flatts, was engaged to repair the roof. Skilled carpenter Lawson Lambert of Devonshire, together with a helper, worked on the flooring, windows, door frames and interior shutters. In 1955, American architect Bryden B. Hyde suggested the porch on the south front of the house be replaced with a cedar balcony designed by Wil Onions.

Meanwhile, furnishing for the museum was collected. Watlington had acquired the portraits painted by John Green which now hang at Verdmont and other important pieces of Bermudian furniture were acquired, along with five rugs bought at auction in 1956. The former detached kitchen to the rear, or northwest, of the main house was turned into a cottage for the first curator, Lillian Fox, with plans drawn by Wil Onions.

## Join the Friends of Verdmont

FIRST BROUGHT together in 1996, the Friends of Verdmont is a group of Trust members, who have a keen interest in the on-going presentation of Verdmont.

This group of volunteers has varied interests; some prepare the house for special occasions with flower arrangements; others are conservators who focus on specialist cleaning and maintenance of the many treasures within the house. The Friends assist with Trust events and help as docents when there are large tours.

The Friends also raise funds by organising entertainment events such as “Candlelit Evenings” and our afternoon “Tea Talks.”

New members are always welcome, so if you have a talent which you think would benefit the group or you are interested in history, collecting antiques and historical homes, please consider joining their ranks and keeping the good work going. To find out more, please contact Laura Lyons at 236-6483 or [laura@bnt.bm](mailto:laura@bnt.bm).

### The Bermuda National Trust

The Bermuda National Trust has continued to run Verdmont as a museum since its opening in 1957. The Trust was incorporated in December 1969, taking over the assets of the BHMT. Its aim was to preserve buildings, land, artefacts and places of beauty or historical interest and to promote their appreciation. Verdmont’s curators include Betty Wainwright, John Cox and Dorothea Simons, while today Pansy Pitcher welcomes visitors to the historic house.

Little more than essential repairs and maintenance have been done to the house by the Trust and the house remains practically unchanged since it was originally built. Verdmont retains an undisturbed

vista amid the frenzied atmosphere we all experience daily. It has become an important cultural site for both our built heritage and our personal understanding of Bermuda’s history.

This year, we would like to invite our membership to help celebrate this important museum. If you have not visited Verdmont in a long time, we encourage you to do so; it is a wonderful place to spend an afternoon. Join us for any or all of the following Saturday events: Museum Chat on Verdmont by Diana Chudleigh and Richard Lowry (October 20); Celebrating Verdmont, a community folklife event (November 17); and live performances and demonstrations each Saturday throughout November.

# Verdmont enslaved

On first entry to Verdmont, one sees portraits on the walls representing the wealthy white owners of the house and exquisite furniture belonging to the very elite. What is not so obvious at first glance is the role of slaves in the house's history: it is believed black Bermudians were instrumental in both building the house and crafting the beautiful furniture within. The names of the skilled craftsmen who built Verdmont are not known, but it is likely it was built by slave labour. Enslaved black Bermudians, being skilled labourers, were influential in the evolution of Bermuda's unique architecture. The house and grounds were certainly maintained by slaves right up to the time of emancipation and we know many of their names.

John Dickinson, the builder of the house, possessed six slaves at the time of his death, four men and two women who lodged in the "outroom and buttery". All were listed in his 1714 inventory with a monetary value that no doubt reflected their skill or age. Robin and Peter were the most highly valued at £35 each, Prince was valued at £30, Sambo at £20, Ruth at £20 and Beck at £25. In addition there was also Bess, who is mentioned in John Dickinson's will, and who cared for his maiden sister Alice Dickinson.

Thomas Smith's 1782 inventory

lists four men, three women, five boys and two girls as slaves. The most highly valued was Joe at £90. Mell, valued at £75, was listed as being at sea. It was not unusual at this time for a slave to be away from home serving on board ship. The remaining two men were Daniel and Bacchus. The women were Rachel, Sue and Marian, the boys included Nat, Sam, Davy, Jim and Tom and the girls were Tish and Sall.

The possessions of John Green were listed in a short inventory of 1803. He owned three slaves: Brutus and Prince, each valued at £40 and a

*Those enslaved at Verdmont are currently an unacknowledged presence. However, we would like to properly tell their experience*

girl, Philis, valued at £25. There were very likely more slaves in the household but there is no record of his wife's possessions.

There were eight slaves regis-

tered to Sarah Musson Trott, widow of Samuel Henry Trott, in the 1821 Slave Register. All except 40-year-old Tom, who was described as a sailor, were listed as labourers. There were four men: Dick, David, Prince and Peter, two women: Beck and Lattice and one 14-year-old girl, Nancy.

The Register for John Henry Trott in 1833 contained a total of six slaves, many being of the same name as in his mother Sarah Trott's listing. Tom was a mason, Dick and Prince were labourers. Nancy and the two children, Emma, aged 13, and Geoffrey, aged five, were listed as domestic servants.

Those enslaved at Verdmont are currently an unacknowledged presence. We cannot show you what they looked like, share their day-to-day thoughts or say what the important dates were in their lives (weddings, births and deaths); however, we can remember their experience which was universal to slavery island-wide and world-wide in most respects. And we would like to properly tell that experience at Verdmont in the future. If you would like to be involved in helping the Bermuda National Trust research and expand the stories linked to the entire Verdmont history, please contact Laura Lyons at Waterville (236-6483 or [laura@bnt.bm](mailto:laura@bnt.bm)).

## Mapping out the next 50 years

### Continues

should be a place where our shared histories are told.

**Tourism / business** Ideas about what Bermuda's tourism market look like in the future and what our visitors might be interested in were discussed, as well as the role of international business and the associated effects on our community. However much these factors may affect Bermuda as a whole, the group felt historic sites should address the needs of island residents first—and, in doing so, create a product that the local population needs and visitors will want.

**Arts, culture, education and philanthropy** As everyone knows, there is a lot of competition in Bermuda for funding and the aim of the Trust is to make Verdmont more sustainable. The challenge is to persuade people of the interconnection

of the Trust's roles in protecting open space, preserving Bermuda's heritage and educating the public about both.

**Connecting Verdmont to Bermuda and Bermuda to the world** Verdmont is a site about Bermuda for all Bermudians. It has been part of, and a witness to, Bermuda's story for 300 years and should openly reflect that history as there is no better place to tell the story.

At this remarkable historic site, one can present "The Bermuda Story" told through the lives, furnishings, buildings, land and vista of Verdmont. It would be a story of how African, European and Caribbean people built a community on this tiny island in the middle of the Atlantic and how their successors have continued to build and sustain this community for 400 years. It would be a story of the blending of cultures with

the natural resources of the island. This would be a story of all Bermudians for all Bermudians. It responds to an aspiration expressed by many, that blacks and whites live with mutual understanding, mutual respect, and in cooperation as they continue the work of building and sustaining the community. The primary audience for this interpretation would be local residents.

Our vision is for Verdmont to be central in the community as a place to learn about Bermuda's past and to appreciate Bermuda's culture as it is today. This transformation will not take place overnight; however, the Trust has made Verdmont a priority for Bermuda's upcoming anniversary in 2009.

The Trust cannot do it alone. If anyone has information about Verdmont or would like to assist with research on any relevant topics, please contact Laura Lyons at 236-6483, ext. 217 or [laura@bnt.bm](mailto:laura@bnt.bm).

## PHOTO ROUND-UP

# What a



Having fun at our popular Noches de la Havana



A colourful turnout at Noches de la Havana



More than 40 youngsters thoroughly enjoy

# n event-ful year!

Noches de la Havana



Havana summer party

Our events and programmes were once again the highlights of the year, none more special than the Palm Sunday Walk, when thousands turned out to explore new Trust properties including Warwick Pond South (the Powell Woodlands), Higgs Nature Reserve, Elm Lodge and Tivoli.

In August, we said goodbye to Trust patrons Governor Sir John and Lady Vereker, who were always tremendously supportive of our work. A farewell cocktail party was held at Waterville and the Verekers were presented with an original painting of Vermont by former Trust Director Steve Conway. We wish the Verekers well and are pleased to hear that they will not be strangers to Bermuda.

More than 300 guests enjoyed the Latin-themed Noches de la Havana summer party at Heron's Nest property, which raised \$95,000.

Our annual meeting was held in June, when Trust awards were presented to: Barritts and KPMG (General awards); Saltus Year 9, Elliot Primary, Sandys Secondary Middle School, Somerset Primary, Adventureland Nursery, Michael Mello and Matthew Witkowski (Education); Tony and Barbara Smith,



Farewell

Governor Sir John and Lady Judy Vereker admire their parting gift from the Trust

Stephen Caton, Kent Bean and Stephen West (Architecture); Heather Chilvers, Works & Engineering and Isabelle Ramsay-Blackstone (Preservation) and Susan Harvey, Save the Gardens, BEST, Lisa Whitehead, David Chapman, Sheree Richardson, David Wingate and Jim Butterfield (Environment). Congratulations to all our winners and thanks for doing your part to protect and preserve Bermuda's precious heritage.



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Volunteering

Volunteers sow seeds at Higgs Nature Reserve



BNT Awards

Environment: The Save the Gardens committee receives its award



Summer camp

ed the Trust's Treasure Seekers History Camp in St. George's



Environment: Sheree Richardson and David Chapman



Education: Adventureland Nursery

# Learning more by archaeology

Standing proudly in Smith's Parish, Verdmont is one of Bermuda's most significant historic treasures. Much research has been compiled on the house and an unbroken line of ownership of the land it stands on can be constructed from Governor William Sayle in 1633 to the present. Architectural historians from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation have examined the structure and preliminary surveys have been made of its interior paints and finishes.

Despite its extensive documentation, the house still retains many secrets. From deeds, wills, assessments, manuscripts, letters, maps and previous studies, the genealogy of the owners of Verdmont is fairly well known, as are some details of their interests. However, very little is recorded about the enslaved members of the household: their roles and contribution to the household and community; and their social, familial and personal details. It is through archaeology that we can learn more about these people and gain a better understanding of the island's heritage.

The Trust's Archaeology Committee has been carrying out digs at Trust properties all over Bermuda, from Springfield to Tucker House. Working with professional archaeologists and local volunteers, they carefully identify likely sites, carry out the digs and then clean and catalogue the artefacts recovered at their laboratory in St George's. For the last few years they have been concentrating on Verdmont, using written records to help guide them to productive areas.

One such record, a 1714 inventory in the will of John Dickinson, refers to a "cabinn" as well as an "outroom and buttery" where six of his seven slaves lived. We know their names—Robin, Peter, Prince, Sambo, Ruth and Beck—but we do not know where this building was. However, test pits excavated in 2006 suggest they might have been situated along the property's eastern boundary and that this area deserved closer inspection.

This year, as part of Verdmont Museum's Golden Anniversary, the Trust—with a generous grant from the Bank of Bermuda Foundation—excavated to look for these structures along the eastern boundary. Organised by the Archaeology Committee and run by Brent Fortenberry with Travis Parno, both Historic Archaeology postgraduate students

from the University of Bristol, the excavations were staffed by Bermudian archaeology students and local volunteers. Work began at the beginning of June and ran for five weeks. In addition to the boundary, they were interested in the formal north lawn, but before digging and damaging the lawn, the Committee asked Alan Rance from Bermuda Waterworks to carry out a survey with ground-penetrating radar. This survey did not reveal any further evidence, so the lawn was spared excavation and efforts were directed to the remaining privy.

The 2006 dig had revealed both

tion. Based on the large quantity of domesticated and butchered animal bones found in this context and a fenced area suggested by associated post holes, an interpretation as an animal enclosure seemed likely. However, an animal enclosure was not recorded in the detailed Dickinson inventory and the question remains why an animal enclosure would be located so close to the house in a 50-plus acre property?

While this structure does not match any existing contemporary buttery, we are speculating this might be the "cabinn" or the "outroom" listed by Dickinson. This

the Dickinson era, which we had not known about before.

The other answer that had eluded researchers was why the privy was located so far from the main house (more than 30 metres). Once the old, rotten seats were removed and the surface was cleared of modern rubbish, this became readily apparent: The privy had been built on a natural cave or sinkhole feature, which provided a ready-made cesspit. Core samples taken from the sandy bottom revealed a depth of over one metre while the diameter of the top of the cave feature was some five metres. Because of the large area and depth as well as the sandy context, a considerable amount of time will be required to excavate the privy safely and so it was decided to return at a later date. Privies are usually rich sources of archaeological information and even the surface finds yielded an intact Pioneer Dairy milk bottle. Returning to excavate the Verdmont privy is a priority for the Archaeology Committee.

Some 15 cubic feet of artefacts was recovered from the 2007 Verdmont dig. Work is currently being undertaken to formally identify the artefacts and interpret their significance. Generally the finds dated from the 18th and early 19th centuries, which is what we would expect to find from a house built around 1710.

What is significant, however, is the wide range and number of very early artefacts, from clay pipes to large coarse-ware storage jars. Many of these are rare finds in Bermuda, which accords with the importance of the site. Furthermore, the huge number of animal bones recovered can tell us not only about the diet of early Bermudians but may help us to understand the complex social patterns surrounding those who lived and worked at Verdmont.

All post-excavation work was completed at the Archaeology Lab at Reeve Court in St. George's to ensure all artefacts recovered remained in Bermuda. These finds will be made accessible to the public through planned exhibits at Verdmont in 2008.

As with all BNT excavations, an Open Day was held at the end of the dig July 7, with about 100 people attending. Tours of the site, house and excavations were given by the archaeologists and the Friends of Verdmont.



Above, archaeology Chairman Richard Lowry shows some of the artefacts. Right: archaeologist Brent Fortenberry at work. Below: Tinglazed ceramic shell, possibly an ornamental bowl handle



a post hole and a rock cut wall along the eastern boundary of the property, which are indicative of some type of man-made structure. This year both trenches were re-opened and expanded and eight additional trenches were excavated. A second post hole was discovered six yards from the first and the rock cut wall was revealed to be a significant rectangular chamber with clear evidence of early 18th-century occupa-

tion. The question can be answered only through further archaeological investigation and there are still large areas of this eastern boundary which remain to be investigated. There is little doubt this was an area where the slaves of the property worked and lived—the physical evidence of habitual existence has been brought to life through the excavation. We now have a clear perspective of life on this side of the property during

*Verdmont at 50*

# Seeing the structure

Verdmont was built at the very beginning of the 18th century, although the exact date is not known. The land was purchased in 1694 when John and Elizabeth Dickinson were newly married and the house was certainly completed by the time of John's death in 1714. It is a two-storey rectangular house which is symmetrical in intent—although not precisely in execution—and built in a style that would be known later as Georgian. The front door on the south side is several inches out of its true centre while the back door is way out to allow for the cedar staircase. There are four rooms on the ground and upper floors and four chimneys. All of the chimneys have double flues so each of the eight rooms has a fireplace. These sturdy projecting chimneys are unmistakably Bermudian in character and are joined on their outer surface by a wall enclosing closets.

The house is two rooms deep, which must have taxed the roof builders of its day, as traditionally Bermuda's early homes were only one room deep; however, the precise form of the original roof is not known, as it has been heavily restored. The present two-tiered roof, which provides additional height and light to the attic, is of unusual design for Bermuda. An octagonal cupola is believed to have been built on the roof. This may have been original to the house because the three-storey stairs seem to lead grandly up to the top floor. The framework for this octagonal structure can still be seen among the 20th-century roof timbers in the garret. The cupola is said to have been hit by successive storms and Verdmont's roof is believed to have been repaired following a hurricane in 1926 and then redone in 1954 following its purchase by the Bermuda Historical Monuments Trust.



Glazed doors—a later addition—lead into one of the double parlours

The service buildings are at the back, or north side, of the house. Today the detached kitchen and storeroom on the northwest and a two-seat privy on the northeast are all that remain. However, John Dickinson's 1714 inventory attached to his will reveals there were more. Listed are an "out store room and kitchen," presumably the present Verdmont Cottage, but there was also an "outroom and buttery" which provided "servants lodgings" and a "cabbin" in which wood was stored. An "outlett and 3 cellars—North Side" was listed but this was probably a warehouse on the waterfront in Flatts.

## Changes at Verdmont

The original footprint of Verdmont has survived intact into the 21st century, but not without some changes, mainly internal and aesthetic, made by successive owners over the last three centuries.

The hall and parlour on the waterfront side of the house were

converted into a fashionable double parlour with the addition of wider glazed double doors which provided a larger space for entertaining. The panelled folding interior window shutters are also probably a later addition. The southwest bedchamber was converted to an upstairs parlour with a carved and painted mantel imported from England. Most of the fireplaces, except those in the dining room and the northwest chamber, were reduced in size and their cedar mantels replaced or reworked to fit the new openings. Some of the ceilings were plastered, dentil moulding was installed in the hall and the walls were wallpapered.

## Land

Verdmont originally stood on land which stretched to more than 93 acres from the South to the North Shore. The size of the estate dwindled as it was divided between heirs and in the mid- and late-20th century, most of it was sold off as building lots.

## News briefs

### Staff changes

Executive Director **Derek Morris** resigned in October. Trust stalwart **Margie Lloyd** fills in as Acting Director until a replacement is found.

We welcome **Kelly Way**, who joined in September as Development Officer and will be working to heighten the Trust's profile and assist in fundraising.

**Cyril Dowling** retires after 31 years at the Trust as a master mason and painter. We wish Cyril a happy and active retirement.

**Valerie Sherwood** has decided to return to the Civil Service after three years as the Trust's Property Manager. Val has been dedicated and detailed in her efforts to keep our property holdings in shape.

### Go green for Christmas

Looking for an eco-friendly gift? The Trust has two excellent suggestions: How about giving a **membership** to the Bermuda National Trust—the best eco-bargain in town! Just \$25 (single) or \$40 (family). Or try a **CFR (Carbon Footprint Reduction Certificate)**. The Trust sells various "carbon offset" credits to offset everyday actions that consume energy and produce carbon-dioxide emissions. Call 236-6483: ask for Mansae (memberships) or Kelly Way (CFR).

### Environment updates

Trust responses to the Southlands Development and Dockyard cruise ship terminal proposals can be found on our website, [www.bnt.bm](http://www.bnt.bm).

## You can tell your chest by its feet!

### Collection Corner

By Hugh Davidson

IF I WERE asked which item of furniture I considered to be the most typical of Bermuda, it would be the chest on frame with its unique individual dove tailing. The Bermuda chest has been produced here from the earliest times; it is usually constructed of native cedar wood although it can also be rarely seen of heavy imported

mahogany. I believe our chest evolved from a Spanish form, which would have been found on the islands to our south, and was adapted to comply with Bermudian requirements and taste. Chests on stands were used to store valuables and textiles vulnerable to insects, from which the cedar wood protected them.

The Bermuda cedar chest is found in a variety of sizes with a variety of bases; first raised on stubby "ball" or

"onion" feet and later on elaborate frames with decorative aproning and leg styles. Good examples of the Bermuda chest can be found in most public collections; at Verdmont Museum you will find an interesting range of styles. Stop by and clarify for yourself what we mean by "candlestick legs"; "onion" and "marching" feet; and cabriole legs with "Spanish," "pad," "drake" or "ball and claw" feet.



Bermuda National Trust  
PO Box HM 61  
Hamilton HM AX  
Tel. 441-236-6483  
palmetto@bnt.bm  
www.bnt.bm

## Trustnews

OCTOBER 2007

Editor: Laura Lyons

### Contributors to this issue:

Gerry Brashier, Diana Chudleigh,  
Hugh Davidson, Richard Lowry,  
Laura Lyons



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# Calendar

\* = **Verdmont event**

## OCTOBER

### \* **Saturday, October 20**

#### **Museum Chat on Verdmont**

With Diana Chudleigh & Richard Lowry. Learn about the history of Verdmont, its people and archaeology. 11 a.m., *Verdmont, Collector's Hill, Smith's*. Light refreshments. \$20 per person; \$15 for BNT members.

### **October 25 & 26**

#### **Haunted Playground at Fort Hamilton**

Volcanic Productions' annual children's Halloween event; proceeds to benefit the Bermuda National Trust. Volunteers needed. Contact Matthew Strong at 799-7413 or matthew@volcanic.bm. 5:30–9 p.m., *Fort Hamilton, Pembroke*. Admission charge.

## NOVEMBER

### \* **Saturdays in November (3, 10, 17, 24)**

#### **Historical re-enactments & artisan demonstrations at Verdmont**

Enjoy a re-enactment of daily life in the late 1700s and demonstrations

on the traditional arts of embroidery, spinning and quilting.

11 a.m.–3 p.m. at *Verdmont, Collector's Hill, Smith's*. Admission: \$5 adults; \$2 children.

### \* **Saturday, November 17**

#### **Celebrating Verdmont: Folklife Event & Concert**

Celebration of Verdmont's 50th Anniversary as a museum. An afternoon of cultural traditions, re-enactments, conversations, games, artisan demonstrations, tours of the house and an evening open-air concert. 1–9 p.m.–early evening at *Verdmont, Collector's Hill, Smith's*. Free event; donations appreciated. Parking at *Elliot Primary School, Hermitage Road*.

## DECEMBER

### \* **Christmas at Verdmont**

Our beautiful home will be elegantly decorated for Christmas and is available for cocktail receptions, Christmas lunches and formal dinners. Contact Sam Stevens at sam@bnt.bm for information and bookings.

### **Friday, December 7 Annual Christmas Walkabout, St. George's**

One of our most popular annual events. Members, friends and visitors

are invited to stroll through this historic town. Alive with the sights and sounds of Christmas, many of the historic buildings and properties, beautifully decorated for the season, are open to the public. Enjoy musical entertainment, historic readings, Christmas goodies and much more. Festivities begin at 6:30 p.m. Free event; donations welcome.

### **2008 JANUARY–FEBRUARY Annual Raffle**

Keep a look out for raffle tickets to arrive in the mail. Volunteers are needed to sell tickets at various locations: contact Sam Stevens at 236-6483 or sam@bnt.bm if you would like to help.

### **Saturday, February 9 Plant & Bake Sale**

A diverse assortment of unusual native and exotic plants and homemade baked goods and preserves. 8:30 a.m.–noon. *Waterville, Paget*.

### **Tuesday, February 12 Annual Children's Nature Walk**

Come and explore Spittal Pond, one of Bermuda's most spectacular open spaces providing a diversity of habitats and an amazing variety of birds. Children (ages 5+) and parents will be taken along the route by the Trust's enthusiastic guides, stopping at points of interest to learn about the plants and wildlife of the ponds and forest from some of the island's leading environmental experts. 10 a.m.–noon. Free event. Refreshments available at the finish.

### **February 22–25**

#### **Calcutta Tennis Tournament**

Entry forms available at Coral Beach, Pomander Gate and Waterville closer to the date. There is a \$100 fee for participating in one event or \$150 for two; includes free lunches each day. *Coral Beach & Tennis Club, Paget*.

### **February 24–29**

#### **Jumble Sale & Auction Preview**

This major fundraiser returns to the Botanical Gardens. The Jumble Sale and Auction Preview take place on Thursday and Friday. An array of books, jewellery and linens are just some of the wonderful treasures on offer at bargain prices. Thurs 8 a.m.–6 p.m., Fri 8 a.m.–1 p.m. *Jack King Building, Botanical Gardens, Paget*.

## MARCH

### **Saturday, March 1 Auction & Raffle Draw**

Auction items include silver, porcelain, antique maps and furniture. 10 a.m. until completion. *Jack King Building, Botanical Gardens, Paget*.

### **Sunday, March 16 Palm Sunday Walk**

Our popular springtime tradition regularly attracts more than 2,000 walkers. Please help raise money for our Open Space Fund; have friends and family sponsor you for completing the walk. Pledge forms available online at [www.bnt.bm](http://www.bnt.bm) or at Waterville, Pomander Road, Paget. 2008 route to be determined. Participation is free.

## Trust Treasure

### **19th-Century Bermuda Wedding Dress, Verdmont, Smith's**

A beautiful addition to the Bermuda National Trust's Collections, this wedding dress is thought to have been made in Bermuda in the 1850s. The fabric is 80-count Irish linen decorated with variety of stitch techniques including broderie anglaise, reticello, French hand sewing and Irish crochet. When it was discovered in the 'Linens & Things' section at the Bermuda National Trust Jumble Sale two years ago, our Trust Treasure was truly a diamond in the rough: dirty, torn and crumpled in a brown paper bag. The dress was brought back to life through careful hand repair by Mrs. Sally Criswell, an American stitch expert and teacher, who spent more than 200 hours restoring it to its original condition. During that time, she used the dress in demonstrations all over the US, and gave a wonderful talk about the dress and its travels when she returned it to the Trust. We would love to know who donated the dress at the jumble sale—if you have any leads, please contact Laura Lyons, Museum Collections Manager.

The dress is one of the many beautiful cultural items on display at Verdmont. Please take an opportunity to visit these wonderful collections sometime soon.



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