

## ACHENYYO IDACHABA WINS

### THE CARTIER WOMEN'S INITIATIVE AWARD 2014 !



Readers of "The Nigerian Field" will remember Achenyo's account of her MitiMeth project which appeared in Volume 78. In her own words:

*We are conscious about preserving our environment and inspired to transform renewable resources into beneficial use. Everyone who buys a MitiMeth product plays a vital role creating job opportunities and in keeping our waterways and land in prime condition for current and future generations.*

Achenyo explained her social enterprise' premise: "Stubborn aquatic weeds choke up many of Nigeria's waterways and as such hamper traditional fishing activities and curtailing access to water bodies. MitiMeth is all about extracting value from an environmental problem. We are helping people in our society to stand up and walk by creating job opportunities through innovative hand woven home accessory products. Our eco-transformed MitiMeth product line is handwoven from aquatic weeds and non-timber forest resources. Yes, we are transforming this aquatic menace [the water hyacinth] into many useful by products thereby clearing our waterways and in the process mitigating methane (hence the name MitiMeth) emissions, a potent greenhouse gas, typically generated from the decomposed aquatic weed."

MitiMeth products include multipurpose baskets, lampshades, vases, ottomans, mirrors, window shades and coasters, and are designed for those who have a taste for unique, locally made handicrafts.

Stanislas de Quercize, CEO of Cartier in his award speech, paid tribute to the innovative and ingenious nature of the MitiMeth project and predicted that it would catch on far beyond Achenyo's native Nigeria because it had "winning model" written all over it. This award brings Achenyo US\$20,000 of funding and a support package which includes one year of coaching.

Congratulations, Ache! The Nigerian Field Society is proud of you and so is your alma mater, I.S.I. ( International School, Ibadan).

Pat Oyelola culled from *New African Woman*, Issue 28.



## OBITUARIES

### **Robert E. Sharland (1917-2013)**

Robert (Bob) Sharland was born in Bournemouth on 17 December 1917. He was enlisted in the Royal Artillery on anti-aircraft guns in the south of England in 1939. In 1943, he transferred to the Indian Army, where he was promoted to captain and awarded the Burma Star.

He qualified as an accountant after leaving India in 1946, and started work in Nigeria in 1950 with the United Africa Company. He got married in 1952, but his wife, Amy, died from malaria the following year. He then moved to Kano, working for the Nigerian Oil Mills. From his marriage to Jane in 1956, came two children, Peter and Philippa.

Bob's main interest was birds, an enthusiasm leading to the formation in 1964 (with John Elgood) of the Nigerian Ornithologists' Society (NOS), which developed into the West African Ornithologists Society (WAOS) and its French counterpart, the Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest Africain. Bob was the treasurer and secretary/membership secretary of these societies for over 40 years, from 1967-2009. He contributed regularly to the *Bulletin of the NOS* (later called *Malimbus*) and published over 85 papers, notes, etc. He was also the co-author of a checklist of the birds of Nigeria, and a paper on Palaearctic migrants in *The Ibis*.

His interests extended to other wildlife (butterflies, flowers) and he was a life member of the Nigerian Field Society (NFS), serving the society in several capacities. In 1955, he was elected the chairman of the Kano branch of the NFS, and was its secretary throughout the 1960s, and again in the late 1970s. He also gave talks to the Kano branch, often on the local Kano birds. In 1970, he gave a talk on birds of Fernando Po and Rio Muni. He was most hospitable to those visiting Kano, and travelled to other areas of Nigeria, always ready to share his knowledge of wildlife with others. Many people, including several past and present members of the UK branch committee have reason to be grateful for his assistance when they were in Nigeria.

Following divorce in 1983 and retirement in 1984, Bob returned to the UK, but continued to visit Nigeria, sometimes for the Nigerian Conservation Foundation, identifying areas for preservation. He often attended meetings of the UK branch of the NFS, and organised one in July 1994 to the New Forest (he lived nearby in Fordingbridge). He also took numerous birdwatching/flower viewing holidays with friends, visiting over eighty countries between 1984 and 2008. His last trip was walking in the Caucasus when he was 90. In 2010, Bob moved to Bayford House, Newbury (near his son), where he remained cheerful and of sound mind. A few days after a visit from



his children and grandchildren, he passed away peacefully in his sleep, on 28 June 2013 at the age of 95.

Joyce Lowe (with acknowledgements to the WAOS)

### **Tribute to a Staunch Member of the Society:**

#### **Late Professor Rufus Oladokun Adegboye, The *Onpetu* of Gbongan**

I fondly called him the *Onpetu*, the traditional title given to him by his people of Gbongan in 1981, though he was more popularly known as *The Baale* – precisely *Baale* of the University of Ibadan. My fondness towards him grew from a long time association, going back to 1964, when he returned from overseas to become, literally, a towering figure in the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Science, then located in the site now largely occupied by the Postgraduate School, the Department of Anatomy and others. Our association intensified as we interacted academically in the faculty, socially in the Staff Club of the University of Ibadan, and professionally in the field of natural resources management.

Previous tributes have extensively dwelt on the *Onpetu*'s family, academic, social, cultural and community presentations. Much less has been said about his professional commitment and devotion to nature and natural resources management, through which he exhibited an uncommon degree of faithfulness to a cause. I do not remember when the *Onpetu* joined the Nigerian Field Society, but for decades he was a regular participant at the society's events. Most striking is the fact that from 1993, until his death on 5 April 2013, that is, for twenty years, and over the tenure of three editors (Dr. Joyce Lowe, Dr. Pat Oyelola and Ako Amadi), the *Onpetu* served as the chairman of the editorial committee of the society's flagship journal, *The Nigerian Field*. The editorial committee meets regularly to consider journal matters. Attendance at the editorial committee meetings is rarely full but, during his time, the *Onpetu* never missed a meeting. Rather, he was not only punctual to the meetings, but was almost always the first to arrive for the meetings. He remained faithful in his duty to the society and maintained this practice even when, in his last days, his sight was failing.

He also exhibited his faithfulness to the cause of natural resources management through his contribution to the activities of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme in Nigeria. From 1978, until the programme's activities declined by 2001, a period of 23 years, he served faithfully on the MAB national committee, and steadfastly as the coordinator of Theme 4 of the MAB Programme, through which he provided the critical socio-economic backing to a programme that was designed essentially to press the



natural and social sciences to the improvement of human relationship with the biosphere. Of the five themes of the MAB programme in which Nigeria participated, Theme 4 on the *Impact of Human Activities on the Dynamics of Arid and Semi-Arid Zone Ecosystems*, with particular attention to the effects of irrigation, was the only one that was based on the generation of socio-economic data. The others on rain forest, savanna, wetlands and conservation, focussed primarily on biophysical issues and only relied on support from Theme 4 operators, coordinated by the Onpetu, to complement biophysical data with socio-economic findings, to truly achieve the MAB objective of integrating natural and social science information in the study of nature. The last major effort of the Onpetu in this regard was his mobilization of experts, during 1995 – 1997, to deploy RRA, market surveys and other social science data gathering procedures, to enrich the MAB programme on Biosphere Reserves for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development in Anglophone Africa (BRAAF), centred on Omo Biosphere Reserve in Ogun State.

The two concrete examples above illustrate an attribute that was far more general in the Onpetu's presentation. He was not only liberal and convivial in friendships and collaborations, but also very dependable. These attributes endeared him to many who had contact with him, in and outside Nigeria. He was particularly well-known in the African Academy of Sciences, of which he was a fellow, and on several occasions, outside Nigeria, his acquaintances, mostly from the African Academy of Sciences, would enquire after him and request to have their greetings relayed to him.

With his failing sight, the Onpetu developed an acute sense of hearing, such that a word was sufficient for him to identify the speaker. I will miss having this re-confirmed to me, especially each time I went to the last but one pew in the nave of the Chapel of the Resurrection, where he sat, to say hello to him after service.

The Nigerian Field Society and most groups that associated with him sorely miss the Onpetu of Gbongan, Professor Rufus Oladokun Adegboye, and his devotion and uncommon faithfulness to duty. The society prays for the peaceful repose of his soul.

David Okali

5 February 2015