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Border from our historic circulars

The West India

Committee Circular



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Leading articles

The US Presidential election

With the American Presidential Election now concluded, subject to legal challenges, it remains unclear how the election will affect relations with the Caribbean, as US foreign policy in the region is usually not a talking point in such contests. Both candidates in the election, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, did not outline much policy relating to the Caribbean but it will be interesting to see in the aftermath how American relations with Cuba continue to develop. Barack Obama opened up relations with Cuba after several decades of restrictions, a decision that was highly criticised by his successor President Trump, who has reversed several of Obama's reforms. Joe Biden, formerly Vice-President to President Obama, has stated that he seeks to reverse Trump's Cuban policies. He has called for a new Cuba policy, but has thus far provided limited details, such as Cubans working in the USA being able to send more money to their families in Cuba.

The United States is home to a large West Indian Community, with Florida, home to the largest such population, believed to have 974,000 of Caribbean Ancestry, not including Cuba, which is considered a Hispanic community in the USA. The Candidates' different approaches to Cuba

undoubtedly caused a stir amongst the Cuban American community, many of whom left Cuba to escape the Castro regime; they are largely keen to maintain restrictions on the Cuban government in the hope of forcing reform and are believed to support Donald Trump and the Republican party in general. The younger generation of Cuban Americans, especially those born and raised in the USA, are believed to lean towards supporting the Democratic party, but nationwide 58% of registered Cuban American voters are said to support the Republican Party, compared with 38% who support the Democratic Party.

A little over half of Cuban American voters were believed to approve of Donald Trump's performance as President. Whilst both campaigns made great strides to connect with that community, with the Biden campaign particularly hoping to woo younger voters and otherwise lure voters away from the Republican ticket, It appears that Donald Trump won the vast majority of the Cuban vote, reaching over 55% in Florida. Biden outlined policies aimed towards the Haitian American Community, promising an end to deportations and greater oversight of money sent to Haiti. Although he achieved a surprising number of votes from them in the 2016 election, Donald Trump is believed to have lost ground with the Haitian Community over the course of his Presidency, due to uncomplimentary remarks about Haiti, his attempts to remove Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for immigrants, the closure of the Haitian family reunification programme and deportations.

It is not only the Cuban American Community that may have had an effect on the election, but also the Jamaican American community, given the background of one of the candidates. Democratic Vice-Presidential Candidate Kamala Harris was the first Vice-Presidential candidate of Jamaican heritage, being the daughter of an immigrant Jamaican father and an immigrant Indian mother, which may have encouraged people of the Jamaican American Community to support her and Joe Biden at the ballot box. The Jamaican American Community tends to lean heavily towards supporting the Democratic Party in elections in any case.

The announcement of Harris as Joe Biden's running mate was enthusiastically welcomed by

the American West Indian community, be those Jamaican Americans, Haitian Americans or others, and some commentators believe her Jamaican heritage may have encouraged members of the Community who had never voted before to do so. It was also welcomed across the Caribbean itself. Given the sizable West Indian Community, the Caribbean may have had a significant influence on the outcome of the election, with the supporters of Trump in Florida contributing to the close nature of the race.

Barbados and the Queen

Barbados has resolved to remove Queen Elizabeth II as their Head of State by November 2021 at the latest. Barbadian Governor-general Dame Sandra Mason announced the decision on 15th September at the State Opening of the Barbadian Parliament, in a speech written by Prime Minister Mia Mottley, saying that Barbados wished to “leave (its) colonial past behind”. Barbados became an independent nation in 1966 and a commission that reviewed the Barbadian constitution in 1998 recommended republican status. A previous commission in the 1970s had determined there was not enough public support for such a move. In 2015, the then Prime Minister, Freundel Stuart, said that the country would likely move to become a Republic in the near future, although no more occurred at the time. The ruling Barbados Labour Party currently holds a majority of two-thirds in both houses of the Barbadian Parliament, enough to pass a constitutional amendment. It is not currently known if the Barbadian government will hold a referendum on the issue.

The announcement has been criticised by some, with Tom Tugendhat MP, chairman of the British Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee, stating that it was the result of Chinese pressure on the Barbadian Government, although he did not go into specifics. The Chinese Belt and Road initiative, a project to invest in locations in the hopes of establishing a new Silk Road, has come under criticism by Western observers in recent years, who argue it is a method of spreading Chinese influence to attain its foreign policy aims. Many islands in the Caribbean have benefitted from the project, with China investing in agricultural projects in Barbados (which joined the initiative in 2019), as well as donating computing technology to the island.

Some analysts have pointed to other issues, believing that the Republican movement in Barbados has been developing over several decades. Other motivating factors may include the Windrush affair in Britain itself, where migrants, who have lived in the UK for decades, have been wrongfully detained, denied access to certain services and, in some cases, been wrongfully deported. Former Barbadian High Commissioner to the UK, Guy Hewitt, has also claimed that the decision of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex to separate themselves from the Royal Family, and the subsequent criticism by the Duke of the UK’s record on race, has also served as a factor. Support for a Republic is not universal, with some Barbadians feeling loyalty to the British Crown, whilst others fear that the move may result in political instability, which may also have economic ramifications.

It is yet to be seen if this decision will result in other countries in the Caribbean re-evaluating their relationships with the British Royal Family. Buckingham Palace has said that the Barbadian intention to remove the Queen as their head of state was “*a matter for the government and people of Barbados*”, a sentiment echoed by the British Government. A move to a Republic would mark the end of over 400 years of a British monarch as the Barbadian Head of State, since the island was settled in 1627 in the reign of King Charles I. It would be the first country to remove the British monarch as Head of State since 1992.

Lessons from Pioneers:

The Caribbean is headed for an uncertain horizon, but that’s never stopped it before. `

By Philip Cluff

Forming a community in an adoptive country is an achievement, especially with the odds stacked against education, housing, and employment. Sadly, there is a sacrifice of diversity, whereby we apply the umbrella term ‘Caribbean’ to a multiplicity of uniquely different cultures. The Caribbean, thousands of miles of the Atlantic as it comprises, is not a singularity, not even a federation. It is, de facto, a loose amalgam of smallish islands, but de jure its culture pervades so much further into the southern United States and deep into the makeup of Latin America. To quantify the Caribbean as having a population smaller than Scotland in

the 6 million bracket is insolent to the breadth of Caribbean influence. That is not to deride Scottish culture, which was effectually exported to the wider world through Imperial Presbyterian conversions. Rather, the Caribbean's influence took on a different trajectory, as we remark poignantly today in migrations like the Windrush Generation to find urban work in modernized, mostly Anglophone, countries. As I am pleased to report as someone with mixed heritage, Caribbean's are the most likely to marry outside of their ethnic grouping. That connection inevitably complicates the picture when we try to assign rigid sociological justifications to historical questions about the Caribbean's relationship with its former colonizers. This affects the meaning of what it is to be Caribbean, since in this more diverse but newfound setting a Jamaican is largely presumed to have total congruity with a Trinidadian, whereas a Trinidadian would stick out clearly in Kingston. Obviously certain collectivism's like the West Indies Cricket team abnegate that to some extent but not for the reality of over 6 million people.

Windrush isn't remarkable as an advent of blackness in British society. Imperialism had meant that black Africans and Asians had frequented Britain for nearly five hundred years especially in the ports. Rather, it was the first undertaking and admission on the reliance of migrant labour that incited a sensation of theft and therefore misplaced racial prejudice. Some believed that this was a fine price to pay for rebuilding after the Blitz, on the grounds that 'assimilation' would be unavoidable for new coming settlers. Some of course, headed by Enoch Powell, saw an ugly set of irreconcilable differences not just racially but in terms of the availability of work between races. We are reminded these days that the 'Rivers of Blood' Speech was taken out of context and did not have the express intention of inciting violence against blacks, but whether or not the effect was desired it was engineered. 1960's Segregation policies and reactions in Southern Africa put further strains around Britain's competence in solving such issues. The need for legislation like the Race Relations Act and bodies like the Commission for Racial Equality underscores that there is still much work to be done. These institutions are better off having been than being. Caribbean's in the UK are heralded for their creative output, but as the BLM situation in the US has shown it's not

enough to have talent but to play a part in managing that talent; we need more Caribbean agency "in the boardroom" to put it crudely. Players can be an operative word; The Premier League is currently at an awkward juncture as it acknowledges the glaring lack of black players graduating to management positions but also the discourse around different kinds of talent. Black players are derisively said to have 'flair' and be more 'skilful' while white players who occupy the same roles in more or less the same style are commended for being more 'cerebral' and having 'vision', something Raheem Sterling in particular has rightly called out this year.

Perhaps lacking in constitutional codification, Britain has been the best placing for a cosmopolis, but it could not singularly and decisively strive to be one, and the pursuit of economic opportunities in the UK never quite connoted the same excitement as the American Dream. Of course, as we know that dream was built on the toil of slavery, and the forebears of many (but certainly not all) Caribbean's suffered some of the worst injustices in transit alone, assuming they had not been murdered resisting capture and overlooking their literal sale into slavery. Rebellion was treated beyond mere execution with unspeakable tortures; they were designed to break spirits and shock even descendants. Well now we have dismissed slavery as being 'wrong' despite not having fully stamped it out. Prior it had been a misfortune that some were born into. It was, in a sense, Protestant Humanism that provided a saving grace but only in a purely academic and hardly commendable sense. To the Catholic Church it was a given that a west African slave meant no more than a farm animal, while Protestant Utopianism gave credence to the idea of man's ingenuity in concert with nature, the so-called nobility of savagery. This was a disagreement with the means, not the end. If Protestants did not effect the end of slavery much sooner it's only because they deemed it irresponsible to remove the blacks from their newly allotted purpose, as if a Tiger born in a zoo might starve in confusion if returned to the wild. It was, in other words, promoted as preferable to anarchy and of course slavery is prevalent in the bible without explicit denunciation. It's hard to believe people actually thought it might be crueller to set slaves free and therefore deprive them of structure. Abolition was a process, impeded by the Lords, The French Revolution,

and the Haitian Revolt. When, in 1807, Britain banned one of its most lucrative revenue streams it only did so begrudgingly. But the slave trade was not a fixture of national recrimination on the scale of segregation, owing largely to the small number of immediate benefactors. It is no mystery who the slave traders were. They were renowned, few, and vastly wealthy.

There remained the issue of emancipating existing slaves even then. This was less a preventative issue than a bureaucratic *sousiance* of seizing property in the pre-Marxian era, which viewed in that light is painfully tactless. In essence the key difference between the 1750's and 1950's is that Caribbean's did not have to remain slaves in order to get a foothold, thanks largely to the fact that a civil society meant a larger birth than death rate. Slavery in the southern United States could and did only take it's horribly anchored tinge because of the plantation system which allowed for slaves to raise families, boost the birth rate, and continue the cycle of misery. 1950's Caribbean migration peaked near the end of the decade, and because the contingent was young, many are still alive today, albeit at retirement age. That's another factor that the entailment of labour migration doesn't resolve, what happens when the labour stops? As we saw from the Windrush backlash last year, not nearly enough. After such a long time and with tourist market inflation, returning to the Caribbean might not necessarily be appealing after so much time. The Caribbean population of the UK has more than doubled in the interim, peaking in the early 1970's. Because of these shifts, it's hard or at least incongruent to postulate that Caribbean history is in fact a history of the Caribbean, rather than a history of movement, change and development, maritime and adaptable.

In that sense the move to Britain by so many was a fleeting pursuit, and thus the migration in that part of the world takes on an institutional tinge. Migration is not just a post-colonial force; Caribbean societies were dexterous in their movement pre-emancipation. Regrettably the biggest source of movement was slavery itself but there were also the phenomena of escapement, and the convergence on independent Haiti. Through the economic looking glass, plurality of opportunity in the post-emancipation era brought opportunities for population growth, correlated

with a decline in sugar production.

But the economic opportunities of those emancipated and increasingly numerous peoples would inevitably pursue the benefice of education. Nevertheless, it never reached a universal standard at primary level and hardly garnered mass participation at university standard. That post-emancipation generation was, however, a key contributor to the early 20th century development of the Central American economies. And why shouldn't they be, having been treated with such hostility in Britain after the end of the First World War? Surely that was a sign of things to come, and a witting one, for academics have long since refuted the idea that most post-war Caribbean migrants did not know what they were in for. It was a brave choice, rather than an ignorant gravitation to a new promised land. The sheer force of American growth meant that even segregated societies in the south stood to earn more money than those who travelled to Britain. That's telling even for someone without a formal education. But it is most telling, perhaps, that the youngest registered Windrush migrant recalled being belittled not just by other students but even more so by teachers. What do I hope to bring to your attention with that observation? That the Caribbean is still more than we give it credit for? That it's useless to try and define something that has had to become so adaptable to stay intact? No, I just want you to understand that from the fortresses of West Africa to the football stadiums of England, I would maintain that the Caribbean, if it can be singularly defined for argument's sake, has done more than any other demographic collective to fight for positive change than any other grouping relative to its size. The fight is very much ongoing but after all these obstacles nothing much else seems intimidating.

Notes of Interest

In September, the Jamaica Labour Party was re-elected in a landslide victory, securing 49 out of 63 seats in the Jamaican House of Representatives. It was, however, marked by one of the lowest turnouts in an election, with only 37% of the electorate actually voting. This low turnout has been attributed to voter apathy and frustration, as well as the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. The latter resulted in temperature checks and facemasks being required at polling stations, as well as sanitising hands and social distancing.

An agreement has been made between Guyana and Suriname concerning the building of a bridge across the Corentyne river that runs along the border of the two Central American nations. The agreement is expected to be signed when the Guyanese president visits Suriname for the latter's Independence Day celebrations

Popular holiday firm TUI is resuming its flights to the Caribbean in November. Its destinations, Cuba, St. Lucia and Antigua, currently remain on the government's list of countries that do not require returning visitors to quarantine when they arrive back in the UK. However, the islands themselves maintain their own restrictions; St. Lucia and Antigua both require that visitors are tested for the virus on arrival, and provide a negative result, whilst Cuba also limits the regions to which visitors can fly.

The reputation of many Caribbean islands as tax havens continues. However, recent developments include the British Virgin Islands' government committing to introducing a public register of beneficial ownership for companies incorporated in the British Overseas Territory. The list published on 7th October by the EU of non-co-operative jurisdictions for tax purposes on added Anguilla for non-compliance, as well as Barbados for partial compliance, whereas the Cayman Islands were removed after reforming its framework in Collective Investment Firms in September. Other nations and territories in the region that remain on the list include Trinidad & Tobago, the US Virgin Islands and Panama. St. Lucia has committed to tax reform, but was hindered in doing so due to delays in the OECD Forum on Harmful Tax Practices and must do so by the end of the year. CARICOM has issued a statement accusing the EU of acting against its member states that have been placed on the Blacklist in an *“ongoing unilateral, arbitrary and non-transparent manner”*

Hotels reopened in in the British Overseas Territory of Anguilla on 1st November, the next step in reopening the island's vital tourist industry. There has been recent controversy, with Mr. Barry Sternlicht, CEO of the Starwood Capital Group which owns the Four Seasons Resort, commenting in a radio interview that, due to the large amount of money that the island has

received from the UK government in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma and the budgetary support during the current pandemic, it had made Anguillians disinclined to reopen the tourism industry. Premier Webster has rebutted these claims strongly in a public letter to Mr Sternlicht, requesting that he both correct his remarks and apologise to the Anguillian people.

In preparation for their General Election in December, the Turks & Caicos Islands are considering measures to allow people suffering from Covid-19 to vote, including advance voting for Covid sufferers. It is proposed that such voters must notify the Ministry of Health before leaving isolation, travel by a private vehicle, maintain social distancing of six feet at the polling station and then return to their place of quarantine immediately afterwards. Polling stations will then be deep-cleaned after the advanced voting.

This year has seen a number of notably powerful storms pass through the Caribbean. Storm Delta was the 25th named storm of the year, developing over a month earlier than the previous record holder for the 25th named storm of the year. Storm Delta later developed into a Hurricane. September was the first month to have seen three named storms formed on the same day since 1893. 2020 is the second year in recorded history, the first being 2005, in which weather forecasters have run out of approved names and have resorted to utilising Greek letters to identify storms. As of the time of writing, there has been no major damage from these storms in the region.

A park in Paris has been inaugurated in memory of Solitude, a slave woman from the French territory of Guadeloupe, who fought for liberation on the island. She was hanged on 29th November 1802. It is planned to erect a statue of Solitude on the site, which will be the first statue of a Black woman in Paris.

The West India Committee Report

The West India Committee has been working with the Royal Mint to produce educational material that has been released this October as part of the Diversity Built Britain initiative. This includes fact files on Black British History from Roman Britain until the present day; these form part of an [education pack](#) that has been sent to

17,000 primary schools in England and Wales, together with a new commemorative 50 pence piece celebrating diversity in Britain. The West India Committee has also contributed short biographies of 100 figures from Black British History, covering contributions in politics, the arts, sport, literature and the law. These can be viewed on an [interactive map](#) on the Royal Mint's website. This initial phase is part of a four-year project on diversity.

As part of the West India Committee's latest heritage project, we have reorganised our online presence. Whilst we have previously produced a new website for each of our heritage projects, we have now consolidated them into one website. [West Indian History, Heritage and Culture](#), which contains the information on our heritage projects both past and present, as well as a wealth of information and downloadable educational material. We are also digitising aspects of the Committee's library and archive, which can be viewed in the Gallery and Archive sections of the website.

A new lecture has been released on the West India Committee's YouTube Channel on [the War of Jenkin's Ear](#) as part of the West Indian Soldier heritage project. Upcoming lectures will cover the Caribbean theatre of the Seven Years War and the role of the West India Regiments in the Ashanti Wars in West Africa during the nineteenth century.

The West India Committee has been allocated funds from the UK Government's Culture Recovery Fund. This funding is part of the UK Government's £1.57 billion support package to safeguard cultural and heritage organisations across the UK over the next six months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The award of funding was made by the National Lottery Heritage Fund which will also administer the funds, with the first payment expected in late October. We would like to thank the UK Government, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport for their support.

The charity is grateful for the support of our funders: the Lund Trust, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the National Lottery Community Fund and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thank you very much for your support

throughout 2020.

100 years ago

The West India Committee's Endowment Contribution Fund continued to gather steam, with many private individuals donating, as well as a £500 donation from the Government of Barbados and £2,000 from the Government of Jamaica. By September 16th, it had exceeded the target amount of £20,000. It was hoped that even more could be raised due to the great increase in rents in the City of London.

In September 1920, the Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII, toured the Caribbean to a rapturous welcome everywhere he went. In turn, he visited Trinidad, British Guiana, St. Lucia, Dominica, Montserrat and Antigua on HMS Renown and HMS Calcutta. A planned visit to Jamaica was abandoned. Following his visit to Antigua, the Prince sailed for a visit to Bermuda, before finally sailing back to Britain, arriving in Portsmouth on 11th October. The West India Committee passed a resolution thanking him for his visit.

The West India Committee continued to campaign for the creation of a Tropical Agricultural College and passed a motion expressing the hope that the West Indian Colonies would continue to support the project, now that it had been decided that the College would be established in Trinidad, as the establishment would be beneficial to all.

By the end of October, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia and the Leeward Islands had agreed to participate in the scheme, whilst Bermuda had made the offer of an annual contribution.

The Bahamian House of Assembly ratified the Canada-West Indies trade agreement, the first West Indian colony to do so. It was quickly followed by British Honduras and Jamaica. All three had not been involved in a previous trade agreement.

The Governor of Jamaica claimed that the ratification of the agreement opened the door to the discussed idea of a West Indies Federation.

In response to a letter sent to all members of the West India Committee, many businesses and private individuals donated money to support the London School of Tropical Medicine, raising over £14,000 for the School's move from Albert Dock to Endsleigh Gardens in the heart of London so that it could have larger accommodation and could be close to other medical research institutions.

Caribbean Cooking

Pigeon Peas and Rice



This simple dish is another staple across the Caribbean, with several variations. It is also the national dish of the British Overseas Territory of Anguilla, on which this version is based. Pigeon Peas, also known as Gungo peas in Jamaica, can be quite difficult to buy in most grocers and supermarkets in Europe, but are available from specialist retailers. This difficulty means that whilst in Anguilla the dish is usually known as 'peas and rice', amongst the UK diaspora it is usually 'rice and peas'. This dish can be eaten by itself, particularly when making a variation that involves extra meat, or as an accompaniment to another dish.

Ingredients

Pigeon/Gungo Peas (6 ounces dried/two ounces fresh/1 can) (170g/57g)

7 ounces/200g rice

1 tablespoon butter

1/4 teaspoon thyme

Hot sauce (to preference)

Lime juice - 1 lime if fresh

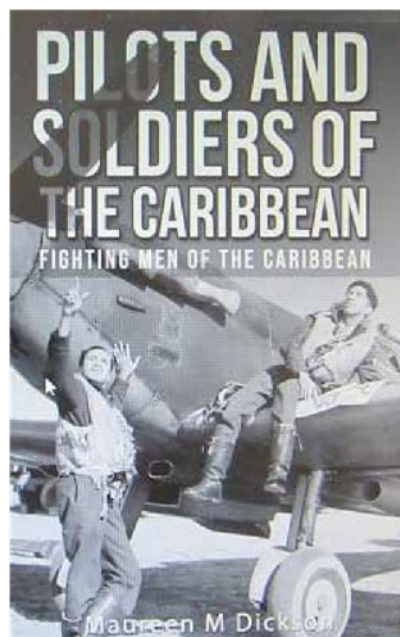
1/4 pound/114g corned/salt beef (optional)

If you are using dried Pigeon Peas, they should be boiled for two hours or left to soak overnight, or follow the alternative cooking instructions provided. After this, drain and rinse the Pigeon Peas. Then place the Peas in fresh water and bring them to the boil. Then add the rice, lime juice, thyme and butter, as well as the hot sauce to individual taste. Reduce the heat and allow to simmer for twenty minutes or until the rice is done and serve. Add salt and pepper to taste.

If you are making the dish with corned or salt beef, boil the meat until cooked before you boil the Peas for a second time, and then add it to the rest of the ingredients.

Book Review

In this issue, we will be reviewing *Pilots and Soldiers of the Caribbean* by Maureen Dickson, a new release from Publishing Push and the author's first book. The author's stated aim is to celebrate the contributions and achievements of Caribbean servicemen and women in the British Armed forces. This is done by providing some background information to the Caribbean contribution to the British war effort in the World Wars, with biographies of both historic individuals, who served during those conflicts, as well West Indians who have served in more recent times.



Largely the book achieves the author's aims; it helps to address one of the issues for anyone studying the history of the Caribbean contribution to the British effort in both World Wars, finding personal stories of the individuals who volunteered to serve. Whilst there have been several interviews for television and the like, it can be very difficult to find such stories in written form and the author has clearly engaged in a lot of primary research, identifying and interviewing individuals so as to record their personal experiences, which traditionally can be very difficult for historians to locate.

For those who study more recent military history,

the biographies of those who served after the Second World War are particularly welcome. She has also taken care with the biographies of historic individuals, although some are beyond the Caribbean focus of her book. However, there are points in the overviews of the World Wars which feel incomplete, even though the scope is deliberately limited, and certain issues could have been more thoroughly researched.

Whilst lacking for those who are looking to learn about the broader Caribbean experience in the World Wars, it nevertheless can serve as a very basic introduction to those topics and is undoubtedly a good and much needed resource for those seeking to learn about the individual experiences of Caribbean service personnel in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The book is available to purchase for £13.99 from <https://pilotsandsoldiersofthecaribbeans.com/>

From the Library

The West India Committee is home to an excellent collection of maps of the Caribbean and individual islands, with some dating from as far back as 1597. In this edition, we will be looking at one of the larger maps, one of Antigua in 1788,

which you can see on the Front Cover of this edition.

Engraved by John Luffman, the map is the result of a survey and is very detailed for the time, reflecting the increasing skill of surveyors and cartographers in the late eighteenth century. It shows the location of churches, windmills and houses and lists not only the distance in miles of certain locations to Antigua's capital of St. John and the overall acreage of each parish, but also various depths around the island's coast as measured in fathoms and the location of offshore rocks and shoals, making it useful to navigators on both land and sea. Down each side of the map are a list of subscribers, whose sponsorship allowed the map to be published by W. Faden in Charing Cross.

Of particular interest is the smaller map at the very top of the map, which is a street plan of St. John, by far the largest town on the island. Not only does it provide an insight into the layout of the town in previous centuries, but is one of the earliest representations of the grid system for which town planning in the Americas is now famous.

