



# THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE CIRCULAR

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# The West India Committee Circular



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## Leading articles

### **Unrest in Cuba**

Beginning in July, there have been large public protests in Cuba against the island's ruling Communist government, the largest such protests in decades. The protests began in the city of San Antonio de los Baños and have spread throughout the country. The leaders of the protesters who have adopted 'Patria y Vida' ('Fatherland and life', a rap and reggaeton song whose title is a play on the Cuban Revolutionary slogan Fatherland or Death), as their anthem, have called for freedom and for an end to communism and dictatorship.

Whilst several of the protesters' complaints have been made for years, the situation during the pandemic has undoubtedly contributed to their frustrations, with the Cuban economy being hard hit, especially by the decline in the tourist trade. This has resulted in shortages of basic goods such as food and medicines, as well as electrical blackouts and growing inflation. Matters have been made worse by economic reforms of the Cuban government, which have resulted in a spike in prices, despite an increase in wages. Lines at state-owned shops to purchase these basic goods have run to

several hours wait. The general handling of the pandemic by the Cuban government has also led some to protest.

Many protesters have been arrested by the police, and video evidence has also revealed that many of the former have been beaten by the security services or pepper-sprayed. Some reports also indicated that they have used guns against the protesters and some protesters are known to have died during the unrest.

The growing use of social media in Cuba has allowed people to share their dissatisfaction with the government and has contributed to the organisation of these protests. The Cuban government has taken steps since the protests started to curb the availability of social media websites through internet shutdowns, accusing them of being used to create CIA-devised "*destabilisation strategies*" by "*enemies of the revolution*".

The Cuban government and President Miguel Díaz-Canel have blamed the U.S.A. for the unrest, saying that the protests are the result of the US government agitating for change and the continuing US embargo on the island. He has also accused the protesters of being 'mercenaries' in the employ of the USA and called for counter protests to take to the street. Members of his government have also accused the protests of being instigated and financed by the USA. Photographs also show that the protesters have overturned police cars and looted some government-owned shops.

Some counter-protests indeed took place, but photographic evidence has also emerged of some of these pro-government protesters being transported away in military vehicles after their protests, indicating that at least some of these counter-protests are government-organised

and the attendees likely members of the military. The Cuban government has attempted to placate some of the protestors' concerns by temporarily lifting the tax on food and medicine imports as well as that on other goods, but this has had little to no effect on the protestors' demands.

The family members of several of those arrested claim that their loved ones have been subject to summary trials and imprisonment without access to a lawyer. It is believed some 800 people are still being detained, including several that are under-age. The Cuban Government insists that all those sentenced have been tried fairly and with regard for due process.

In the USA, many criticized President Biden's slow response to the Cuban protests and many Cuban-Americans have held their own demonstrations in support of the protests in Cuba. President Biden and the US government have called for restraint on the part of the Cuban government and for them to listen to the Cuban people. In a statement, President Biden said that the American government "*stands firmly with the people of Cuba as they assert their universal rights*". The Biden administration has also placed sanctions on Cuban officials who they believe have committed human rights abuses during the protests.

### **The Haitian Situation**

At 01:00 am on 7<sup>th</sup> July, Haitian President Jovenel Moïse was shot dead at his private residence on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, the Republic's capital. His injuries were severe, having sustained 12 gunshot wounds, in both his forehead and torso. Beyond the gun wounds, both his ankle and arm were broken, and his left eye gouged out. The President's wife, Martine Moïse, was also injured in the incident and was flown to the American state of Florida for medical treatment. She has since

returned to Haiti.

Haitian police have reported that the attack was carried out by a group of 26 Colombians and two Haitian Americans. The attackers seem to have claimed that they were members of the USA's Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) during the assault. Although they fled after the assault, the majority of the men have now been captured, although three were killed in a shootout with police and five still evade capture.

The two Haitian Americans claim that they were unaware of the plot to kill the President and had been hired to act as translators for the Spanish speaking Columbians in Creole and French speaking Haiti. Many of the Columbians are former soldiers and President Iván Duque of Columbia had claimed that many of them were unaware of the plot, being told that they were to act as bodyguards, although some were aware of the plan.

On 11<sup>th</sup> July, the Haitian police announced they had arrested Dr. Christian Emmanuel Sanon, a Haitian national who usually resides in Florida, who they allege had hired most of the attackers. He had apparently met and talked with some of the attackers and was discovered to be in possession of a DEA cap, weapons and ammunition when he was arrested.

The President's head of security, Jean Laguel Civil, has also been arrested, an act which his lawyer claims is politically motivated. Haitian police currently believe there is still a 'mastermind' which they have yet to locate and many more questions remain unanswered. Martine Moïse has said she suspects that Haitian oligarchs, who did not agree with her husband's programme of government and reforms, are responsible for organising the killing.

Some have questioned the official report of events, with members of the Haitian opposition claiming that the President's own security had turned on him. Questions remain as to what the President's security was doing during the incident, with Martine Moïse saying they were nowhere to be seen in the immediate aftermath of the President's death, with Mrs Moïse going so far to accuse them of abandoning their posts or even letting the attackers in.

There are also reports that investigators had been prohibited from immediately examining the crime scene and the scene of the later shootout with the alleged attackers, and that investigators have been threatened anonymously and have been forced to go into hiding. Some observers question if Haiti's criminal justice system is up to the task of investigating the crime, pointing to several past high-profile killings which have never been resolved. The Haitian government has requested help from the American FBI, who have begun investigating the assassination.

In power since 2017, President Moïse had faced allegations of corruption as well as widespread protests earlier this year. A new Prime Minister, Ariel Henry, has taken office, having been asked to take the role by the President a few days before his death, and has called for unity. He has promised to form a temporary government until elections take place later this year.

President Moïse's funeral took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, but was interrupted by the sound of gunfire, which led to several foreign delegates leaving due to security concerns. Protestors also clashed with police outside the funeral and tear gas was employed. The protestors demanded justice for the murdered President and accused Haitian Police Chief Léon Charles of being complicit in the killing by failing to protect Moïse.

The difficult situation in Haiti has been made considerably worse by the earthquake that struck the country on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August. Measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale, the epicentre was in the southwestern peninsula about 7.5 miles from the town of Saint-Louis du Sud and the tremors were felt as far away as Jamaica and Cuba. The earthquake has resulted in significant damage in the South West, with several thousand houses reported to have collapsed, as well as severe damage to vital infrastructures such as hospitals.

Rescuers worked to retrieve people from the rubble, although these efforts were hampered by landslides in some of the worst-struck areas. Over 2,000 people have died, over 12,000 have been injured and over 200 are still missing. Haiti is particularly prone to earthquakes as the island of Hispaniola sits on two fault lines on which the North American and the Caribbean tectonic plates meet and has suffered from numerous devastating quakes throughout its history.

During Haiti's last major earthquake in 2010, 200,000 people died and significant damage was caused to the country's infrastructure and economy, from which the country has yet to fully recover, with several thousand still living in provisional housing. Hurricane Matthew in 2016 also caused further damage. This most recent disaster can only set the recovery, which has been affected by political turmoil, corruption and a flawed international aid system, back further. Aid has been sent to the country by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, Caribbean nations, Britain, the USA and the EU.

Local armed gangs blocked deliveries of aid in some areas, blocking the trucks carrying the supplies. The UN Office for the Coordination

of Humanitarian Affairs was able to negotiate access in some areas, and helicopters have been used to deliver supplies in others.

Tropical Storm Grace deposited some 10 inches of rain on the country on the Monday and Tuesday following the earthquake, further hampering relief efforts. Many Haitians stayed out in the rain, choosing to remain outside buildings they had abandoned due to fear of aftershocks from the quakes that could have caused further structural damage.

### **The Caribbean at the Olympics**

Cuba brought home a good crop of medals, the most of any Caribbean nation, putting them at 14<sup>th</sup> in the overall Medals table. Their first award went to Rafael Alba, who won Bronze in Taekwondo. Luis Orta and Mijain López took home Golds in the Men's Greco-Roman Wrestling (60kg and 130kg respectively), López's fourth Gold medal in the same individual event, whilst Idalys Ortiz (Women's +78kg Judo), Juan Miguel Echevarria (Men's long jump) and Leuris Pupo (Men's 25m rapid fire pistol) all secured Silver medals.

Echevarria was joined on the long jump podium by fellow Cuban Maykel Massó who took the Bronze. Bronze was also awarded to Yaime Pérez in the Women's discus throw and Reineris Salas in the Men's freestyle wrestling (97kg category). Fernando Jorge and Serguey Torres secured Gold for the Men's canoe doubles (1000 metres).

Cuban athletes distinguished themselves yet again in boxing, with Roniel Iglesias winning Gold in the Men's Welterweight boxing, beating Team GB's Pat McCormack, whilst fellow Briton Ben Whittaker lost out on Gold in the light heavyweight Category to Cuban Arlen López. Golds also went to Julio César La

Cruz in the Men's Heavyweight and Andy Cruz in the Men's Lightweight. Lázaro Álvarez took the Bronze in the Men's Featherweight. Cuba thus retains its position as the second most successful nation of all time in Boxing at the Summer Olympics, with 37 Gold medals to its name, behind the USA's 50 and ahead of Great Britain's 18.

Zacarias Bonnat secured a Silver medal for the Dominican Republic in the Men's 81kg weightlifting, whilst Crismery Santana took Bronze in the Women's 87kg category of the same sport. Silver in the Mixed 4x400 metres relay went to the Dominican Republic's Lidio Andrés Feliz, Marileidy Paulino, Anabel Medina, Luguelín Santos and Alexander Ogando.

Anguillian Zarnel 'Swift' Hughes, competing for the UK in the Men's 100m sprint final, was disqualified due to a false start, with the Gold Medal eventually going to Lamont Jacobs of Italy. Yohan Blake and Oblique Seville did not progress past the semi-finals, meaning that there was no Jamaican representative in the race for the first time in two decades. Blake withdrew from the remainder of the games because of issues with his right leg.

For Jamaica, the second Caribbean nation in the Medals tables in 21<sup>st</sup> place, there was considerable success as ever in athletics, despite Usain Bolt's retirement. In the Women's 100m final, all three medals went to Jamaicans Elaine Thompson-Herah, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and Shericka Jackson, the second time that Jamaica has had a clean sweep in the Women's 100m. Jackson missed out on qualifying for the 200m final, when a miscalculation saw her jog across the finish line, allowing her to be overtaken and finish in 4<sup>th</sup> place.

Thompson-Herah also took the Gold in the Women's 200m, becoming the first female athlete to defend her position as champion in both the 100m and 200m, whilst Fraser-Pryce just missed out on the Bronze. Megan Tapper of Jamaica secured a Bronze in the Women's 100m hurdles, with the Gold going to Jasmine Camacho-Quinn of Puerto-Rico, for the American territory's first medal of the competition and their second Olympic Gold ever.

Fellow Jamaican hurdlers, Hansle Parchment and Ronald Levy, took Gold and Bronze respectively in the Men's 110m. Jamaica secured two medals in the Women's 4x400 metres relay, with Gold going to the team of Remona Burchell, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Shericka Jackson, Natasha Morrison, Elaine Thompson-Herah and Briana Williams, whilst Junelle Bromfield, Shericka Jackson, Roneisha McGregor, Janieve Russell and Stacey-Ann Williams secured the Bronze.

Steven Gardiner gave the Bahamas their first medal of the Games, coming in first in the Men's 400m final, whilst the Bronze and the first medal for Grenada went to Kirani James in

the same event. However, the Bahamas' Men's 4x400m relay team did not finish in the final, due to an injury in Anthonique Strachan's right leg. Shaunae Miller-Uibo gave the Bahamas a second Gold medal with her victory in the Women's 400m.

### Notes of Interest

The British Government has signed agreements to provide Covid vaccines to various Caribbean countries including Belize, Guyana, Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Antigua and Barbuda. UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said of the arrangement with Antigua and Barbuda, *"The UK is sending 12,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine to Antigua and Barbuda as part of the first batch of the 100 million doses we've pledged, to get the poorest parts of the world vaccinated as a matter of urgency."*

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Covid-infection rates have spiralled in the French territories of Guadeloupe and Martinique. With the risk of the local hospitals becoming overwhelmed, Olivier Véran, the French Health Minister, has appealed for medics and doctors from mainland France to aid the two territories. Vaccination rates remain low in Guadeloupe and Martinique, with 21%

Country	Final Ranking	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Cuba	14 <sup>th</sup>	7	3	5
Jamaica	21 <sup>st</sup>	4	1	4
Bahamas	42 <sup>nd</sup>	2	0	0
Puerto Rico	63 <sup>rd</sup>	1	0	0
Grenada	86 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	1

of people having received a first dose, compared with 66% in mainland France.

\*\*\*

The Commission of Inquiry in the British Virgin Islands continues to investigate. Headed by Sir Gary Hickinbottom, the sole commissioner, the Commission was established on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to look into whether corruption, abuse of office or other serious dishonesty may have taken place amongst public, elected and statutory officials in recent years; and to make appropriate recommendations as to governance and the operation of the law enforcement and justice systems in the BVI.

The Commission was originally expected to report on 19<sup>th</sup> July, but has been extended for a further six months after a request by Sir Gary. After a period in the UK to prepare for upcoming hearings, the Commission will return to the BVI in late August to complete the hearings.

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In the general election in St. Lucia on 26<sup>th</sup> July, the Saint Lucia Labour Party secured 13 of the 17 Seats available in the St. Lucian Parliament with 49.89% of the popular vote. This is the SLP's largest margin of victory since 1997, and their leader, Philip Pierre, will be Prime Minister after a single term in opposition. The United Workers Party, the incumbent party in government, secured only two seats, down from 11 at the previous general election. The final two seats were secured by independent candidates, both former members of the UWP.

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The crew of the US Coastguard Cutter *Joseph Tezanos* seized almost \$15 million worth of cocaine from smugglers in mid-July after intercepting a vessel near Mona Island, Puerto Rico. 502 packages were retrieved and two men taken into custody.

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In the last week of July, 40 recruits of the Turks & Caicos Regiment, a Reserve Regiment of the British Army raised at the beginning of last year, began two weeks training with members of the British Household Cavalry. On 28<sup>th</sup> July the recruits, training at Long Bay, captured 15 illegal migrants who were discovered hiding in the bushes nearby the recruits' camp.

The recruits originally thought that this was a training scenario, as part of their role will be to assist the police on illegal immigration operations, as well as to render assistance in the event of natural disasters. Governor Nigel Dakin commented that this action was, *"a marvellous example of the utility of this regiment and it hasn't finished its basic training yet"*, whilst commanding officer Ennis Grant said that he was *"very proud that our men were able to do this. The men really stood up to the challenge, they executed themselves well."*

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The Cayman Islands held their inaugural Gay Pride rally on 31<sup>st</sup> July. Although the Caymanian Government had permitted up to 1,000 attendees, the Cayman LGBTQ Foundation limited numbers to 600. The Foundation also prohibited the elaborate costumes normally associated with this type of event, as well as the consumption of alcohol and public displays of affection.

Government restrictions required that all attendees were vaccinated and that social distancing was observed, with no one in the parade allowed to physically interact with non-registered participants, at the risk of a \$10,000 KYD fine and two years jail sentence. The Parade was led by Governor Martyn Roper, Premier Wayne Panton and Opposition representative Barbara Conolly, after attendees had their vaccination cards checked at the starting point on Grand Cayman's Seven Mile

Beach.

Some who had registered did not attend due to the ban on public displays of affection. The Cayman Ministers' Association, representing religious ministers in the British Overseas Territory urged people to "turn to God". The Ministers' Association has been a vocal critic of the attempts to introduce same-sex marriage in the Cayman Islands. Despite opposition from the Ministers' Association and others, there was no protest against the march.

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On 28<sup>th</sup> July, the World Bank approved \$21.9 million USD for a new geothermal energy exploration project in St. Lucia. It is hoped this new project may lead to St. Lucia becoming less dependent on other expensive forms of energy, which, in turn, will boost economic growth. The project is also supported by the British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, the Canada-World Bank Clean Energy and Forests Climate Facility, the Clean Technology Fund and the International Development Association.

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The Anguillian government held a public consultation at which it revealed to the British Overseas Territory's inhabitants the island's financial situation. \$50 million ECD are believed to be owed to the Inland Revenue Department in unpaid taxes and medical bills at the Queen Alexandra Hospital. The ensuing budgetary shortfall has resulted in the passage of a new tax on Goods and Services, despite peaceful protests in the House Assembly from the Concerned Citizens of Anguilla.

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Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, was struck in the head by a rock and left bleeding during a protest against mandatory vaccinations for healthcare workers on 5<sup>th</sup> August. The Prime Minister was kept in hospital overnight for observation and flown to

Barbados for an MRI scan.

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Sir Lester Bird, the second Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, passed away on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> August at the age of 83. First nominated to the Senate in 1971 and then elected to the House of Representatives in 1976, he followed in his father's (Sir Vere Bird) footsteps to become Prime Minister in 1994, serving until 2004. Following his term as Prime Minister, he continued as a member of the House of Representatives.

In 2014 he was made a Knight of the National Order of the Hero. Prime Minister Gaston Browne issued a statement saying, "*Sir Lester was a great son of the soil who contributed significantly to the socio-economic development of our nation. May his soul rest in peace and rise in glory*". In his youth Sir Lester was a keen sportsman, playing Cricket for the West Indies, and won Bronze at the 1959 Pan-American games in the Long Jump. He is survived by his eight children.

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In Cricket, England will play the West Indies, the current champions, in their opening game of the men's T20 World Cup on 23<sup>rd</sup> October. This will be a repeat of the 2016 T20 World Cup Final, where the West Indies won by four wickets with 161/6 against England's 155/9. Also in England's Group are South Africa and Australia. The tournament, being held in Oman and the United Arab Emirates, runs from 17<sup>th</sup> October to 14<sup>th</sup> November.

### **The West India Committee Report**

Mr. David Wells, the Committee's Director of Research and Heritage, will be giving a talk at the National Army Museum at midday on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September on the role played by the West India Regiments in the Napoleonic Wars between 1807 and 1815. For those unable to



attend in person, the event will also be streamed [online](#).

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The West India Committee has released its latest [e-lecture](#), on the French Revolutionary Wars in the Caribbean between 1793-1802.

### **Caribbean Cookery**

This quarter we make Jamaican Banana Bread. Although Banana Bread first emerged in 1930s America, it has become widespread all over the world, with the distinction of being the recipe most searched online.

This recipe is a twist on the traditional version, which already uses many classic Caribbean ingredients, distinguished by the light spices used.



### **Ingredients**

180g plain Flour  
40g melted butter  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
120g sugar  
3 ripe bananas  
1 beaten egg  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
A pinch of salt

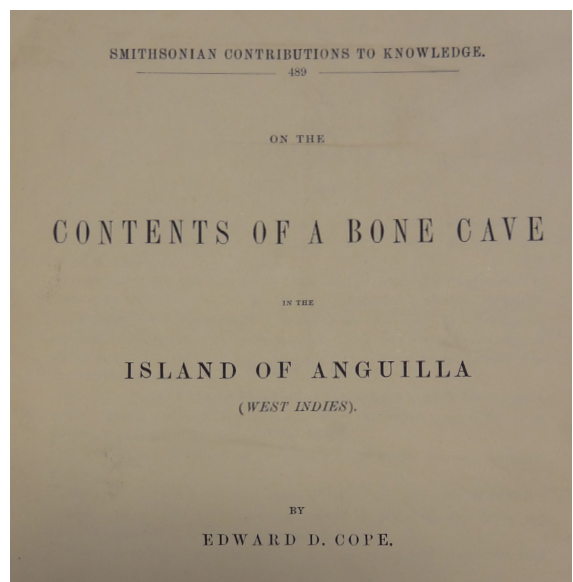
### **Instructions**

First preheat oven to 175C. Mash the ripe bananas in a mixing bowl and add the melted butter. Whisk in all the other ingredients to form a fairly stiff batter. Pour the batter into a 10cm x 20cm prepared loaf tin. Bake for 50 minutes to 1 hour. Test by inserting a toothpick. If it comes out clean, the loaf is done. Then allow the loaf to cool on a rack and cut when cold.

### **From the Library**

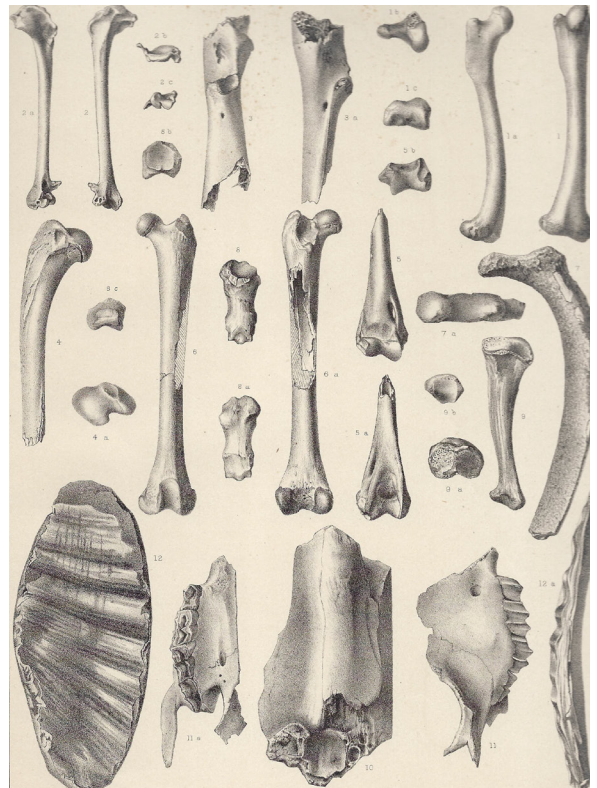
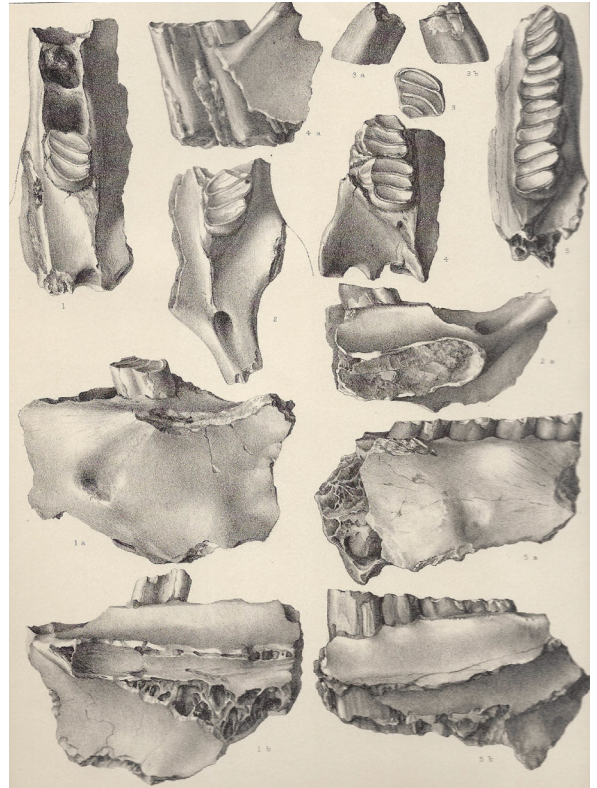
#### **On the Contents of a Bone Cave in the Island of Anguilla**

This quarter we look at *On the Contents of a Bone Cave in the Island of Anguilla*, a report written by American palaeontologist Dr. Edward Drinker Cope published by the Smithsonian in 1883, although the first examinations began in 1868 and the report written approximately ten years before it was published. Bones from many different creatures were found in the unnamed cave, including reptiles, birds and mammals, the latter including the Blunt-toothed Giant Hutia, which lived on Anguilla and neighbouring islands some 125,000 years ago, when lower sea levels meant that they were a unified land mass.



This report was the first instance in which this creature was identified and Cope assigned its Latin name to it, *Amblyrhiza Inundata*, *Amblyrhiza* approximately translating to blunt root and *Inundata* reflecting the belief that the small island of Anguilla could not have supported such large fauna; some larger landmass must thus have been flooded by rising waters. Two other species of *Amblyrhiza* were named by Cope in the report, *Amblyrhiza Latidens* and *Amblyrhiza Quadrans*, but later palaeontologists believe they may all in fact be one species of *Amblyrhiza Inundata*, the sole member of the genus *Amblyrhiza*.

Cope's analysis and description of the bones are supported by five plates of images. In all *Contents of a Bone Cave* is an interesting insight in the fauna of the Caribbean's distant past and a must for students of Palaeontology.



# THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE

The West India Committee is a UK registered charity that works to improve the welfare of the people of the Caribbean and the societies in which they live and work, both domestically and globally. Please complete this form by hand and post it to The West India Committee, Suite 53, 4 Whitehall Court, Westminster, London, SW1A 2EL.

Title	<input type="text"/>	Forename	<input type="text"/>	Surname	<input type="text"/>	
Address	<input type="text"/>				Postcode	<input type="text"/>
*Email address	<input type="text"/>					
*Telephone number	<input type="text"/>					

Please only give us your telephone number/e-mail address if you are happy for us to contact you this way with updates about how your gifts are helping and how you can donate and help in other ways.

I enclose a cheque made payable to 'The West India Committee' of £



**Gift Aid allows us to claim back 25p of tax for every £1 you give**

I am a UK taxpayer and I would like The West India Committee to reclaim the tax on all qualifying donations I have made, as well as any future donations, until I notify them otherwise (please tick).

I understand that if I pay less income / capital gains tax than the amount of gift aid claimed on all my donations in the tax year in which they are received, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please remember to let us know of any changes to your tax status including changes to your name or address or if you need to cancel this agreement

