



# THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE CIRCULAR

THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE. ESTAB: CIRCA A.D. 1735

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Border from our historic circulars

# The West India Committee Circular



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## Leading articles

### **The death of Her Majesty the Queen**

On 8<sup>th</sup> September Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II passed away at the age of 96. The leaders of the Caribbean paid tribute to the Queen's leadership during her 70-year reign. Jamaica's Governor General Sir Patrick Linton Allen said, *"We admire Her Majesty for the strong sense of duty and lifelong devotion to the service of others. She is widely acknowledged for her exemplary leadership, dignity, humility, and generosity. These qualities have characterised her reign even into the modern times and have impacted the Commonwealth immensely."*

President of Surinam and Chairman of CARICOM Chandrikapersad Santokhi stated, *"During her 70-year reign, Her Majesty's commitment to service and devotion to duty was a sterling example to all. She was the one constant in a world of never-ending change."*

*"Queen Elizabeth II will be remembered for her love of and dedication to the Commonwealth, of which she was a passionate supporter and leader."*

Her Majesty was Queen of 9 Caribbean Countries, which had become independent over the course of her reign, in addition to the 5 British Overseas Territories in the Caribbean. Her Majesty visited the Caribbean on 7 different occasions, beginning with her visit to Jamaica in 1953 following her coronation and ending with a final visit in 2009 to Trinidad and Tobago.

Her 1966 visit, one of her most comprehensive, visiting Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia, Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, British Guiana, Dominica, Antigua and the Turks and Caicos islands, was recorded in a documentary film, produced by the then Colonial Office.

Her passion for the Commonwealth, including the member nations of the Caribbean that make up over a quarter of the total voting members, was one of the defining features of her reign, which also saw many Caribbean nations become independent countries, especially after the failure of the West Indies Federation in the early 1960s.

Major David Rankin-Hunt, President of the West India Committee, in his capacity as Norfolk Herald Extraordinary, took part in many of the events surrounding the Queen's death, including the proclamation of His Majesty King Charles III on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, the late Queen's funeral in Westminster Abbey and the following procession through London from the Abbey to Wellington Arch. Prime Ministers and Governor-Generals from across the Caribbean and Commonwealth attended the funeral.

As had been the case before the late Queen's death, several Caribbean nations, who retained the British Monarch as Head of State following

their independence, are now reconsidering becoming Republics, with Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda promising a future referendum on the matter.

Jamaica has been considering such a move for some time, and the Bahamas are also considering a referendum on the Monarchy's future. Foreign Minister Denzil Douglas of St. Kitts and Nevis said that, whilst there is no immediate plan to become a Republic, it nevertheless may be time to begin a national conversation on the subject.

### **Sargassum influx in the Caribbean**

Record large quantities of seaweed appear to have been affecting many Caribbean islands in recent months. More than 24 million tons of sargassum blanketed the Atlantic in June, up from 18.8 million tons in May, landing on coasts along the eastern Caribbean.

The reason for the huge amount of seaweed is currently unconfirmed, but the United Nations' Caribbean Environment Program believes that possible factors include rising water temperatures as a result of climate change and nitrogen-laden fertilisers and sewage waste entering the sea, thus encouraging the growth of algae blooms.

Large amounts of seaweed have plagued the Caribbean for the past decade, which scientists believe may have resulted from a lack of nutrients and a change in wind strength and direction.

The vast amounts of seaweed are a potentially lethal threat to wildlife, as the decaying seaweed alters water temperatures and the sea's pH balance. This has resulted in the demise of considerable numbers of fish, as well as affecting Turtles, who get entangled in seaweed

at sea or are prevented from laying their eggs in sand; in addition there has been a decline in seagrass, coral reefs and sponge populations.

It also is a threat to humans, as the decaying seaweed released Hydrogen Sulphide, which can affect people suffering from respiratory problems. The seaweed is also detrimental to the Caribbean's ever important tourist trade. Significant amounts of brown algae near the French territory of St. Martin forced officials to suspend ferry services and cancel kayaking and snorkelling tours near an uninhabited island which is popular with tourists.

The situation also has forced the closure of resorts on St. Vincent and the Grenadines' Union Island. The carpet of seaweed is also affecting the fishing industry, not only through reduced catches, but also with the seaweed becoming entangled with and damaging both fishing equipment and boat engines.

Whilst Caribbean Governments have made several efforts to remove the seaweed, many simply lack the funding and infrastructure to remove such quantities.

### **Notes of Interest**

On Tuesday 5th July, Antigua & Barbuda's High Court ruled that the nation's ban on same-sex acts, enshrined in the Sexual Offences Act 1995, was illegal by virtue of violating people's right to liberty, freedom of expression and protection of personal privacy. The case was brought by a private individual in sync with Women Against Rape and the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE). The two groups hope that the ruling will have an effect on other Caribbean nations which have similar laws still in place. Before the ruling, same-sex acts were punishable by a jail sentence of up to 15 years.

\*\*\*

Vincentian Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves led a delegation to Taiwan between 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> August to show solidarity with the Taiwanese in the face of increased Chinese focus and interference on the island, which it regards as a renegade province. Of St. Vincent and the Grenadines relationship with China, Prime Minister Gonsalves commented, *“We are not the ones who have set pre-conditions on our relationships; they have insisted that if we [wish to form] diplomatic relations with them, we must drop all relations with Taiwan. We can’t abandon our friends. We do not accept that any country can set pre-conditions to us as a basis for our relations with them.”*

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On August 5, a huge fire broke out at the Matanzas fuel tank base, when lightning struck one of the eight tanks in the park. The fire spread to four tanks, causing strong explosions and a column of toxic black smoke that reached 60 miles away to the island’s capital, Havana.

The Cuban government decreed two days of official mourning; there were sixteen victims from the fire, with some of the bodies unable to be recovered. In the aftermath of the devastating fire, Cuba has received Humanitarian Aid from a variety of nations, including Nicaragua and Bolivia, with more on the way.

\*\*\*

The Jamaican school system has seen hundreds of teachers leaving the island for new opportunities abroad. 167 teachers left between July and August, with over 400 teachers heading to the USA since the beginning of the year. Education Minister Fayval Williams commented that, although the numbers may on first reading cause alarm, there was little cause for concern, with 962 teachers having recently completed their qualifications and being ready to enter the Jamaican School system.

\*\*\*

High inflation continues to affect the Caribbean in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the effects of the War in Ukraine. A survey by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has discovered that Caribbean nations are paying the most for food and non-alcoholic beverages, housing and transportation, ranging between 14 and 29 percent in increases. The ECLAC survey also reported that, *“The pass-through of upward pressure on international commodity prices to domestic prices is amplified, in particular, by the composition of the reference basket of goods and services of the countries of the region. In concrete terms, basic and essential items in the reference basket – food (24 percent), housing (19 percent) and transportation (14 percent) – make up, on average, 57 percent of its total,”*

\*\*\*

Progress continues on the Dominican Republic’s efforts to build a 164-kilometre-long wall on their border with Haiti in a bid to reduce illegal immigration. Seven companies were invited to bid on the second phase of the project on 20<sup>th</sup> August.

\*\*\*

The British Virgin Island’s Government continues with its efforts to reform after Sir Gary Hinckenbottom’s report earlier this year. The British Government said it would not impose direct rule, despite Sir Gary’s recommendations, with the removal of Andrew Fahie as Premier (after his arrest in the USA on charges relating to drug trafficking and money laundering), the creation of a new BVI Government of National Unity, and the ordering of several criminal investigations by the Governor as factors in its decision.

However, the UK government also submitted an Order in Council (The Virgin Islands Constitution (Interim Amendment) Order

2022) to the Privy Council that would allow it to implement direct rule if it deemed that sufficient progress has not been made.

\*\*\*

The Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry on 14<sup>th</sup> September announced the end of government subsidies for fuel, which led to nationwide fuel price increases, causing widespread protests throughout Haiti. Prime Minister Henry said that the end of such subsidies was necessary to fund social programmes throughout the country. At least three Haitian police officers were killed in the capital by the Ti-Makak gang during the protests.

\*\*\*

On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September, Cuban voters went to the voting booths for a referendum on the adoption of a new Family Code, to replace legislation that had been in place in 1975. The wording of the new code redefines marriage as being between two people rather than a man and a woman, opening the door to the possibility of gay marriage in the communist nation, as well as gay adoption.

The Cuban government attempted to include same-sex marriage in their 2019 constitution but was forced to back down in the face of strong criticism from both Catholic and Protestant churches, which also urged people to vote against this new Code. Other changes include the legalisation of surrogacy, provided that it is not done for profit. The law also legally recognises multiple fathers and mothers in addition to biological fathers and mothers. It is the first time that Cubans have been given the vote on confirming a piece of legislation, which automatically takes effect after receiving 67% of votes in favour, with a turnout of 75%.

\*\*\*

The first major hurricane of the 2022 season, Fiona, has made its way through the eastern Caribbean. Guadeloupe, the first island where

Hurricane Fiona made landfall, has experienced near-record rainfall and one death, when the deceased's house was washed away by floods. Puerto Rico experienced a power outage across the entire territory on 18<sup>th</sup> September, with heavy rains and winds causing significant damage across the island, leading US President Joe Biden to declare a national emergency.

Fiona also made landfall in Dominica, the first major hurricane to do so in 18 years, destroying over 8000 homes and killing at least two people. It also left over a million Dominicans without running water and hundreds of thousands without electricity. The eye of the storm passed over Grand Turks, with moderate damage across the entire Turks and Caicos Islands, but fortunately no reported deaths. At its peak, Fiona was classed as a category four hurricane.

\*\*\*

The Speaker of the Caymanian Parliament, McKeeva Bush, failed to step down by 5pm on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September, passing a deadline set by Caymanian Premier Wayne Panton for him to do so. Mr. Bush had been accused of inappropriate behaviour at a government cocktail reception. It is believed that Mr. Bush's delay, as he has previously indicated that he will step down, is due in part to the effects of Hurricane Ian which passed by Grand Cayman that weekend.

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

The West India Committee has decided to return an artefact in its collection to its home island. The drinking vessel of Chatoyer was donated to the West India Committee by one of its senior members, Mr. MacGregor-Frame, over 100 years ago and was kept by the Museum of London for safekeeping for a number of years before being returned to the Committee. In recent months, the West India Committee has welcomed, not only Her Excellency, the Governor-General of St. Vincentian and

the Grenadines, and His Excellency the Vincentian High Commissioner to the UK but also representatives from Vincentian diaspora community groups from around the UK and a delegation of Garinagu from North, Central and South America, to view and discuss the artefact.



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The West Indian Soldier has finished its time at the Staffordshire Regiment Museum and will now be on display at Cardiff Castle Museum in October and November this year.

## Caribbean Cookery

### **Jamaican Gizzada**

This popular coconut tart is said to have Portuguese origins, arriving with Jews expelled from Portugal in the 1530s.

#### **Ingredients**

##### **Pastry**

258g/2 cups All Purpose Flour

113g/1/2 cup Unsalted Butter

1/2 teaspoon Salt

78ml/1/3 cup Ice Cold Water



#### **Filling**

118ml/1/2 cup Water

256g/2 cups Brown Sugar

1 Tablespoon grated Ginger

2 teaspoon Mixed Spice

2 Tablespoon Vanilla Extract

1/2 teaspoon Salt

288g/2 1/4 cups Freshly Grated Coconut  
(Dessicated Coconut can be used if fresh coconut is unavailable)

2 Tablespoons of Unsalted Butter

#### **Method**

##### **Pastry**

Sift the flour and salt together into a large bowl and whisk together. Cut the butter into small pieces into the mixture and mix them together until they resemble crumbs. Then slowly add the water until they form a dough. Wrap the dough in clingfilm and leave to chill in the fridge for half an hour.

##### **Filling**

Sauté the diced onion in cooking oil until it is soft and then add the minced garlic. Stir in the minced beef and add the curry powder, turmeric, salt and pepper. Cook until the beef is brown, stirring constantly. Then add the beef broth, Worcester sauce, tabasco sauce and breadcrumbs and allow to simmer until liquid is absorbed. Then remove the mixture from the heat and allow to cool.

## **Gizzada**

First set the oven to preheat to 180C/350F. Place the cooled dough on a floured surface and cut it into 8 pieces. Using a rolling pin, roll out each piece to approximately 1/4 inch thickness and then use a 4 1/2 to 5 inch cutter to shape the pieces into circles. Pinch the edge of the dough to create a casing like a cup and prick the base with a fork. Place the pastries on a baking sheet and prebake in the oven for 8-10 minutes. Remove them from the oven and fill each one with the filling. Bake them in the oven for 15-20 minutes until light brown on top and around the edges. Allow to cool completely before serving.

## **100 Years ago**

In early July, the West India Committee was informed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies that a Model Income Tax Ordinance was being considered for the West Indies. It was expected that the Colonies which had adopted a system of income tax would have to review theirs to bring it into line with the Model.

\*\*\*

It was reported at the WIC Annual General Meeting at the end of May that executive member Sir William Trollope and Honorary Correspondent for Trinidad Edgar Tripp had died. The Committee's financial situation was reported to be good, but it had not secured new premises.

\*\*\*

Sir John Harrelson was requested by the Secretary of State to represent British Guiana at the International Geological Conference held at Brussels from August 10<sup>th</sup> to August 19<sup>th</sup>.

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British Guiana presented Princess Mary with a diamond bracelet on the occasion of her wedding.

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Mr. A.W. Farquarson, the missionary, was

treated to a grand dinner at the Constant Spring Hotel on his return to Jamaica.

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The question of the appointment of a West Indian Trade Commissioner and of opening a trade office in London was raised in the House of Commons by Mr. Ormsby Gore in a debate on the Colonial Office.

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Following a series of misfortunes that befell a ship carrying a large shipment of refined sugar, one of the oldest marine underwriting firms in the USA decided to discontinue underwriting refined sugar.

\*\*\*

Major J.A. Burdon C.M.G., Administrator of St. Kitts-Nevis was the Guest of the West Indian Club on 14<sup>th</sup> July, with Mr. Algernon Aspinall C.M.G. presiding.

\*\*\*

The then recently opened Cockburn Hotel in Grenada closed and thus hotel accommodation was once again limited to the Home Hotel.

\*\*\*

A weekly sheet called The Chronicle began to be published at Grand Turks, the Turks and Caicos Islands having been without a newspaper for many years.

\*\*\*

The Canadian Bank of Commerce opened a branch in San Fernando, Trinidad.

\*\*\*

The recipe for 'Floating Island' featured in the 8<sup>th</sup> August Circular: Beat the whites of five eggs for half an hour with four tablespoons of Guava Jelly. Make a custard of four yolks of the eggs and one pint of milk (not boiled too thick). Put this in a dish and allow the beaten jelly to float on the top.

\*\*\*

Work continued on the restoration of the St. Augustine buildings in Trinidad which were to be the provisional premises of the new Imperial

College of Agriculture, due to open in the October.

\*\*\*

The New Trinidad Lake Asphalt Company established a model village for its workers at La Brea, or Brighton as it was now more often called. It consisted of cottages for married men and their families and barracks for bachelors, all equipped with running water, sewage and electric light, novelties in housing labourers in the tropics. The forest near the settlement had been cut back to further the health of the locality and the village built on the north side of the pitch deposit. The District Medical Officer, Dr. Eric de Verteuil, now acts as the Sanitary Officer to the village.

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*HMS Raleigh*, the Royal Naval Flagship of the North America and West Indies Station, ran aground off the coast of Labrador.

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In September, the West India Committee secured new and larger accommodation at 14, Trinity Square EC3, to the south of the Port of London's building.

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The salary of the Governor of Barbados was reduced by the Barbadian House of Assembly in September, repeating an action that the House took a century previously in 1822.

## From the Library

### Chatoyer's ladle

Arguably the most unique artefact in the West India Committee collection. The item is professed to be the only known relic of Joseph Chatoyer, the national hero of St. Vincent, and a prominent leader of the Garinagu people, also known as the Black Caribs, who fought against the British in two wars in the eighteenth century.

Although little is known about the ladle's history, what is known is that it is linked with the First Carib War which ended in 1773, and may very well have been given by Chatoyer as a gift to the British Army officers who participated in the creation and signing of the peace treaty that concluded the conflict. Research into the ladle's past is still continuing.

The Ladle is composed of a thin coconut bulb, with an oak handle. It is believed that, oak not being native to the Caribbean, the handle would have been added when the drinking vessel was brought to Europe and turned into a ladle, matching a trend in the mid to late eighteenth century where coconuts were turned into exotic punch and toddy ladles in Europe.

The Committee hopes to present the Ladle to the Vincentian people on National Heroes Day next March in St. Vincent.





# 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.

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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  £



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