






# THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE CIRCULAR




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# The West India Committee Circular



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## Leading articles

### **Gun crime in the Caribbean**

The illegal importation of guns into the Caribbean is becoming a major issue, with gun crime on the rise in several countries across the region. The issue was raised at Caricom in February and in early March, following a wave of gun-related deaths in the town of Vieux Fort, St. Lucia; Prime Minister Philip Pierre called for assistance from the Regional Security System (RSS).

The RSS was first created in 1982 with a memorandum of understanding between Barbados, Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, due to a need for a collective response to security threats. It acquired Juridical status in 1996 through a treaty and also has responsibilities through the wider CARICOM membership.

It is capable of despatching troops in response to threats as required, having worked alongside the USA to restore democracy to Grenada after upheaval in 1983, but provides training, intelligence, advice and technical and administrative support to member states.

Its security forces comprise both military and police personnel who remain under the command of their respective Heads.

At a meeting of the RSS Council of Ministers on 22<sup>nd</sup> March in Grenada, the Council's chair, Grenadian Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell, referred to the situation as a "*scourge*". Gun-related incidents are on the rise across the Caribbean. The Council's executive director, Commodore Errington Shurland, proposed a wide-ranging response.

In addition to introducing the necessary infrastructure to secure borders and prevent the illegal guns entering Caribbean countries, he similarly called for social development programmes to help troubled young people and introduce positive messaging. He also called for programmes to tackle corruption, saying that he believed corruption was the only way in which these guns could enter Caribbean countries. The Commodore also said the RSS would help to assist Member States in identifying crime and security problems through the regional crime observatory.

Most of the illegal weapons are believed to be sourced from the USA, and Caribbean governments have called upon the American Government to do more to prevent their export, with Bahamian prime minister Philip Davis meeting US Vice-President Kamala Harris on January and discussing the matter, amongst other issues.

The trade of illegal weapons has been a problem for several years, particularly the trade between Florida and Haiti, but the last two years has seen higher powered weapons make their way to the troubled republic and contributed to the dangerous security situation in the country.

In the Bahamas, 98% of illegal firearms recovered in 2020 came from the US. In Haiti the figure was 87% and in the Dominican Republic 73%. American territories in the Caribbean are not immune, with only 13% of the guns sold in Puerto Rico being done so legally. Guns are used in 70% of murders committed in the Caribbean.

The problem of illegal guns from the USA is not limited to the Caribbean, but also widespread throughout the rest of Latin America. Mexico launched a bid last year to sue gun manufacturers in the USA for US\$10 billion, arguing that the gun manufacturers' marketing and distribution practices are facilitating the trafficking of arms in the country and fuelling powerful drug cartels.

The case was dismissed by a judge, but Mexico is appealing that decision, with many Caribbean nations now supporting them. The Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have filed a "friend of the court" brief in the First U.S. Court of Appeals in Boston, to support the Mexican case.

The USA has provided aid for border and port security through its Caribbean Basin Security Initiative; however, for the current financial year (July 2022 to June 2023), US lawmakers cut 11.8% of the Initiative's budget.

### **Notes of Interest**

Police in the United States of America have arrested four more people in relation to the assassination of Haitian President Jovenal Moise, who was shot at his home in Port-au-Prince. This brings the total number of suspects held by the American authorities to eleven. Amongst the four recently arrested is Antonio Intriago, a Venezuelan-American who

owns CTU Security, a Florida-based security firm, who is alleged to have hired a group of Columbian former soldiers. Accordingly, he has been charged with conspiracy to kill or kidnap a person outside of the United States. A member of Mr Intriago's firm, Arcangel Pretel Ortiz, has also been arrested, as has financier Walter Veintemilla and Frederick Bergmann Jr., who are accused with funding the plot and smuggling ballistics vests respectively.

Whilst the American investigation into the assassination continues, the investigation in Haiti itself seems to have largely stalled. One judge has been dismissed from the Haitian investigation, whilst three more have resigned due to security concerns. Haiti has arrested more than forty suspects, who remain in custody.

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A three-day meeting of Caricom began on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February in the Bahamas. In addition to leaders from across the 15-member strong block, Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada and Brian Nichols, a US Assistant Secretary of State attended. One of the key issues that was dealt with at the meeting was the situation in Haiti. The increasing poverty and deteriorating security situation in the country are having an effect on the wider Caribbean. Many Haitians have fled the country and small islands throughout the region are struggling with hundreds of migrants

Prime Minister Philip Davis of the Bahamas, hosting the meeting, commented before the session began that Caribbean governments "*do not have the resources to deal with the Haiti problem ourselves, and we do need outside help. And we are looking to the north, Canada and the United States, to come to the fold to help.*" The Haitian government made a request in October for foreign troops to be deployed in

the country to help restore order, which the UN Security Council has not acted upon, although countries have sent military equipment and other resources to Haiti.

Other topics discussed in the meeting included food security and climate change.

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Timothy NJ Antoine, Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, has questioned if King Charles III will feature on the Eastern Caribbean Dollar following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. The decision will be made by the Bank's Monetary Council, composed of the Finance Ministers of the member states. The Reserve Bank of Australia has announced that the King will not feature on the A\$5 banknote, although the Royal Australian Mint has announced his Majesty will feature on coins.

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The Women's T20 Cricket World Cup was held in South Africa. Both England and the West Indies were in Group 2 and met on 11<sup>th</sup> February in Paarl, where England triumphed by 7 wickets. The West Indies' second meeting, against India on 15<sup>th</sup> February in Cape Town was also a defeat, with India winning by 6 wickets. The West Indians triumphed over Ireland in Cape Town on 17<sup>th</sup> February, winning by 6 wickets, and also triumphed over Pakistan by 3 runs on 19<sup>th</sup> February in Paarl. The West Indies finished 6<sup>th</sup> overall, with the trophy going to Australia.

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Hundreds of West African nationals, many fleeing Civil War in Cameroon, have reached Antigua, where the Government is attempting to ensure that they can stay legally. Many were due to be repatriated via a charter flight, but the Antiguan Government has changed its policy, with many of the refugees claiming they would either be killed or imprisoned if they were to be returned. Most of these refugees arrived via charter flights from Nigeria between November

2022 and January this year, arriving initially as tourists. Over 600 currently remain in the country.

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In late January and early February, the Dutch Royal family, namely King Willem-Alexander, Queen Maxima and Princess Catharina-Amalia, toured the Dutch Caribbean Islands, visiting Bonaire, Aruba, Curacao, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius and Saba.

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Descendants of the Trevelyan family, who owned six plantations and over 1000 slaves, have opted to pay £100,000 in reparations to Grenada. Laura Trevelyan, a BBC journalist, commented on Twitter that "*The Trevelyan family is apologising to the people of Grenada for the role our ancestors played in enslavement on the island, and engaging in reparations.*" The money will be used to establish a community fund for economic development in the country. Laura Trevelyan has since left her job at the BBC to continue to campaign for reparations.

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Popular British Sitcom *Fawlty Towers* has been announced to receive a remake. John Cleese, 83, who starred as Basil Fawlty, the proprietor of a small hotel in Torquay, has said that the new version will likely be set in a hotel in the Caribbean. Cleese will once again play Fawlty, whilst a new character, Fawlty's daughter, will be played by Cleese's own daughter, Camilla, who is writing the show with her father.

\*\*\*

The Dominican Republic continues to build its border wall with Haiti to prevent illegal migration. The wall will run along nearly half of the 380-kilometer (236-mile) border. However, many homes have been demolished in order to build the wall, and although compensation is available for those whose homes have been demolished, there are complaints that the money is insufficient to purchase replacements.

## The West India Committee Report

The West India Committee has embarked on a new project, generously funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Through the Fund's new Diversifying Collections programme, the project seeks to increase interaction between the Committee's collection and the general public through a variety of initiatives.

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In late February, the Committee welcomed a delegation from Goodenough College in London. The students and staff from the college received a talk from Committee CEO Mrs Blondel Cluff on the history of the Committee and the effect that it has had on both Britain and the Caribbean over the centuries, before Director of Research and Heritage David Wells, introduced them to some of the Library and Archive's most interesting items.



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The Committee will likely be leaving its rooms in Whitehall Court after five years, seeking out accommodation that better meets the requirements of the charity in the post-pandemic era. The Charity's association with Whitehall Court goes back much further than the last five years, as the 'Palace of Apartments' was once home to the West India Club, which the Committee was involved in running. The Committee's current rooms were once the club's dining room.



## Caribbean Cookery

### **Callaloo**

Callaloo is a traditional soup served all over the Caribbean, with most places having a variation on the theme. The key ingredient is a form of leaf vegetable that varies from island to island, but in some places they use water spinach, which also tends to be the most popular option when it is prepared outside of the Caribbean as well. The dish has distinctly Caribbean origins, and shows the African roots of the slaves that first created it with the use of ingredients such as okra.

### **Ingredients**

Packet of baby spinach or washed bunch of Callaloo

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 medium diced yellow onion

2 teaspoons minced garlic

1 red pepper- deseeded and chopped  
 1 piece cooked salt pork or beef, cut into cubes  
 3 sprigs fresh thyme or 2 teaspoons dried thyme  
 2 - 3 tablespoons water  
 1 tin coconut milk  
 1 tin chopped tomatoes  
 1 teaspoon chopped chilli ( or 1 chopped scotch bonnet pepper)  
 Salt and pepper, to taste



### **Method**

Fry the onion, garlic and red pepper in olive oil until soft. Add fresh or dried thyme, chilli (or scotch bonnet) coconut milk and chopped tomatoes. If the mixture is too thick, add some water to dilute it. Simmer for 15 mins and then add the Baby spinach (or callaloo) and continue to simmer until it is tender. Add salt and pepper to taste and add the cooked salt beef. Serve in soup bowls. Grated cheese can be used as a garnish.

### **100 Years ago**

The West India Committee and anyone else involved in business and trade with the West Indies in Britain were preparing for the British Empire Exhibition, which was to feature delegations and stalls from across the empire to demonstrate their goods.

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A General Election was to be held in Barbados.

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Late February and early March saw a sharp rise in the price of sugar. The rise was attributed to a reduction in the estimate for the size of the Cuban sugar crop.

The Circular noted that since the First World War, Britain had almost exclusively relied on Cuba to supply its sugar, and urged the British Government to develop the sugar industry throughout the Empire, as it had already started doing with European Sugar Beet at home.

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A report determined that 48.4% of the population of Trinidad and Tobago worked in Agriculture. In Grenada the figure was 53.4%, in St. Lucia 51.1% and Jamaica 66.1%. In Britain, the figure was 8.8%, which was reckoned to be the lowest proportion in the world.

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A British West Indies Resident of the Panama Canal Zone removed his hat when the Panamanian and American National Anthems were played, but put it back on again for God Save the King. For this act of disrespect, the man was arrested by the local authorities and sentenced to sixty days imprisonment.

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The West Indian Club raised money to support a tour of Britain by the West Indian Cricket Team, the third time such a tour had been held, the first two being in 1900 and 1906. It was estimated that the expense would be some £2,500, of which the West Indies and British Guiana were providing £800. Donations were raised from private individuals, and sporting bodies like the Yorkshire Cricket Club.

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A report on the trade between Canada and Jamaica in 1922 was released and it was found that the trade agreement signed in 1920 between Canada and the West Indies had had some substantial benefits. It was believed that Canada had become Jamaica's main market for

coffee, and exports for cacao were six times what they had been in 1920. The banana market was also estimated to have grown, but as the bananas were transhipped via the USA, it was difficult to provide accurate figures. Canada took 75% of Jamaican sugar exports in 1922, compared with 45% in 1920.

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Professor T.G. Mason of the West Indian Agricultural College arrived in London for a leave of absence, prior to travelling to Nigeria to take up his new role as Botanist to the Government

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There was an outbreak of Alastrim, a mild variant of smallpox, in Antigua, with thirteen cases being discovered. They were all believed to have come from a common source, and all those who had contracted the illness were placed in the Quarantine station. Those they had been in contact with were also isolated, and the infected areas were quarantined, whilst a house to house inspection was carried out. A law for compulsory re-vaccination was also passed by the Antiguan legislature.

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Tenders were called for the installation of new telegraph cables between the Turks Islands and

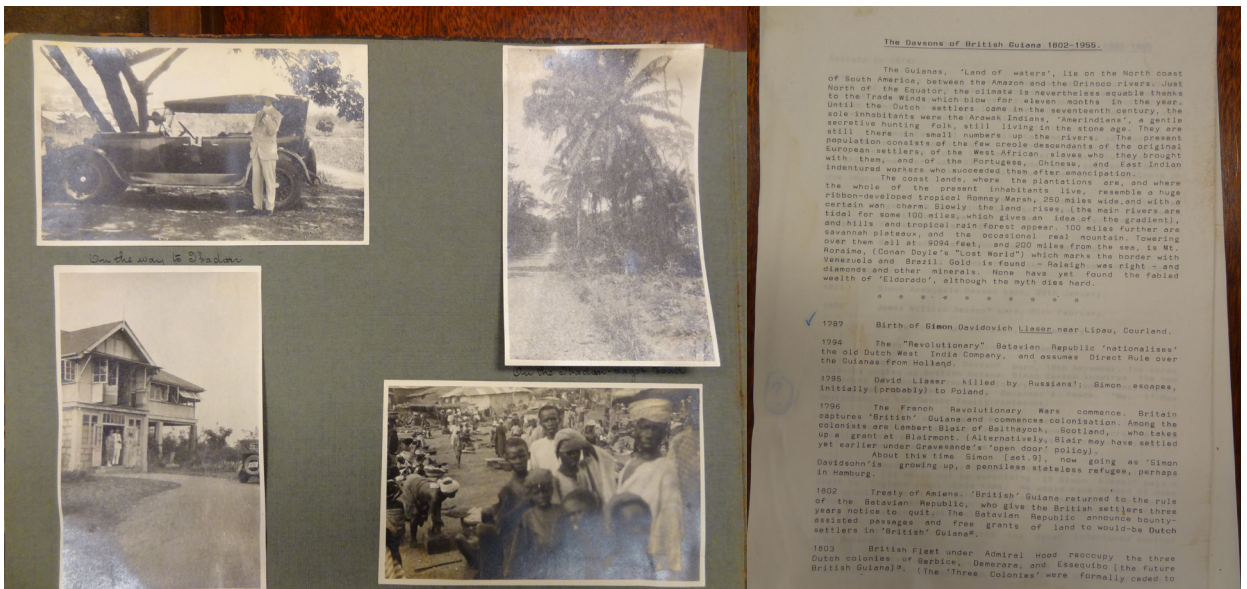
Barbados. Although the suggested route would be the least costly as a survey would not be required, companies were welcome to suggest alternatives.

## From the Library

### **The Davson papers**

A recent addition to the archive has been the Davson papers, donated by Emily Davson and family. The papers are largely materials produced by Sir Edward Davson, a leading member of the West India Committee in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Davson family previously lived in British Guiana and were heavily involved in the sugar industry.

Amongst the donated materials are an account of a visit to West Africa by Sir Edward and his wife Margot, written by Lady Davson herself, with an accompanying photo album, a handwritten rum recipe from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and a collection of newspaper cuttings relating to the family. There are also reports from the Davson family's sugar business, Bookers Sugar, dating from the 1950s and a family history written by Christopher Davson. The West India Committee would like to thank the Davson family once again for their kind donation.



# 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

