



THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE CIRCULAR

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

SUMMER 2024

PUBLISHED EVERY QUARTER



The West India Committee Circular



Table of Contents

Leading articles - 1

Notes of Interest - 3

The West India Committee report - 6

Caribbean Cookery - 7

100 Years Ago - 7

From the Library - 8

Leading articles

Caribbean Sargassum

Since 2011, massive blooms of Sargassum seaweed have appeared in the Caribbean during the Spring and Summer months, with dire negative consequences, and there are no signs of the situation abating.

Large amounts of the decomposing seaweed, which now also washes up in large quantities on the West African Coast, have, over the years, resulted in the closure of resorts, causing coastal residents to have headaches, nausea and respiratory problems due to the gases emitted as it decomposes, giving off a rotten egg smell as it does so. It also has ecological effects, disrupting turtle nesting sites, reefs and mangroves, and killing fish. Even buildings and electronics are affected, with the gases released corroding metal.

In April 2023, people in Guadeloupe were advised to leave certain areas due to toxic levels of the gases produced by the seaweed. Shortly afterwards, an electricity plant at Punta Catalina in the Dominican Republic suffered from a

blocked intake pipe due to the seaweed, forcing one unit to shut down. Diver Elias Poling later died by drowning whilst trying to fix the intake. Similarly in July and August, Jamaican fishermen found themselves fighting their way through Sargassum, which also reduced their catch. In some cases, the seaweed prevented passage through certain areas entirely.

Sargassum resulted in water shortages in the British Virgin Islands and has negatively impacted the tourist industry in many locations, with Sargassum occupying beaches and preventing tourist industries, such as jet-ski rentals. It is believed that in 2022, the members of CARICOM collectively lost \$102 million due to Sargassum. This figure is exclusive of the costs of cleaning beaches of the seaweed, which is estimated to be \$210 million, and of the losses incurred in non-CARICOM affiliated countries and territories.

The problem is not easily solved. Criticism has been levelled at many Caribbean governments for failing to react to high levels of Sargassum until the problem is already severe, rather than seeking to prevent build up, or for focusing on the effect on the tourism industry, rather than fishing or local communities. Nor has a region-wide strategy been developed. Attempts at an international strategy have been made, most notably at a conference in Guadeloupe in 2019 which resulted in the Sarg'Coop project, which sought to create forums and tools to help manage Sargassum.

However, still no regional strategy or monitoring centre has emerged. \$66 million set aside by the French Government to help its Caribbean territories has had an effect, but not enough to protect residents. The Caribbean British Overseas Territories have been in negotiations with the UK Government for a specific fund to

allow them to tackle the Sargassum issue. The Sargassum issue was raised at COP28 in Dubai, where Gustave dit Duflo raised the dangers of Sargassum to Caribbean Bio-diversity. France proposed a programme to address the issue, based around four pillars.

These include the creation of an international coalition to better understand the cause and effects of the problem; addressing the sargassum issue in international forums like COP; acting within the framework of the Cartagena Convention (a legal agreement made in 1983 for the protection of the Caribbean Sea's environment); and working with the EU to support the continuation of the regional Sarg'Coop project.

Whilst Sargassum has always washed up on the shores of the Caribbean, from the mid-Atlantic Sargasso Sea, providing marine habitats and helping to build beaches, the large quantities now seen originate from a new system in the South Atlantic, known as the Great Atlantic Sargassum Belt. Able to be seen from space, the belt is often over 5,000 miles in length. The reasons for the increased Sargasso blooms are many, with scientists blaming nutrients and fertilizers washed into the sea from rivers as the world's population has expanded and agriculture has increased, as well as warming waters in the Atlantic due to climate change.

Hurricane Beryl

Hurricane Beryl, an unprecedented early season, category five Hurricane has torn through the Caribbean, leaving devastation in its wake and killing at least 12 people as it went across the region. This included, three people in Grenada, three in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, three in northern Venezuela and three in Jamaica. Many more are still missing as of the time of writing.

The storm has destroyed up to 90% of homes on Mayreau and Union Island, part of the Grenadines, and caused severe damage on other islands in the group.

The Permanent Secretary of the Vincentian Agricultural Ministry, Nerissa, Gittens-McMillan, warned of potential food shortages in her nation, with half of the country's plantain and banana crops destroyed by the storm. Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell of Grenada described scenes in his nation as being "*Armageddon-like*", and that "*In half an hour, Carriacou (where the storm made landfall) was flattened.*" Rivers flooded in Venezuela and over 8,000 homes were damaged.

The South of Jamaica was also badly affected by the storm, being hammered by winds of up to 130mph, the hurricane having been downgraded to a category 4. Southern Jamaica also saw storm surges of up to 9 feet. This led to severe damage in St. Elizabeth parish, and Jamaica officials claimed at one point 60% of the country was without electricity. Other nations, such as the Cayman Islands, although escaping major devastation, still had to contend with high winds and high levels of rain.

Prime Minister Mitchell of Grenada was hoping to trigger his country's catastrophic risk insurance policy, whilst Vincentian Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves has expressed concern about being able to access grants for rebuilding. The United Nations has allocated over \$54 million USD in relief to those Caribbean islands affected by the storm. The Commonwealth and CARICOM have also pledged to aid rebuilding efforts.

Relief efforts are also being sent from other countries, including Great Britain which is dispatching *HMS Trent* to deliver aid. King

Charles issued a statement saying *“My family and I have been profoundly saddened to learn of the dreadful destruction caused by Hurricane Beryl across the Caribbean. Above all, we send our heartfelt condolences to the friends and families of those who have so cruelly lost their lives.*

I have seen the extraordinary spirit of resilience and solidarity that people across the Caribbean have shown in response to such destruction – a spirit which has been called upon too often – and so I also send my particular gratitude to the emergency services and volunteers who are supporting the rescue and recovery efforts.

At this most difficult of times, please know that our most special thoughts and prayers are with all those whose lives, livelihoods and property have been so utterly devastated.”

The storm made landfall in central America near Tulum in Mexico, as a category 2 hurricane, which left tens of thousands without power, although fortunately there have been no recorded deaths. Eventually, after passing over waters again in the Bay of Mexico, it made landfall in Texas as a category 1 hurricane, with high winds and rainfall in Houston and other major cities. Texas has also seen storm surges between 4 and 7 feet. Louisiana has also been affected, with eight people killed across the two states. 3 million people were without power in Texas.

The remnants of the storm have also caused issues across the USA, with power outages in several states due to the high winds, and many areas have also seen flash floods as far north as Vermont and southern Canada, whilst tornadoes have been forming in Louisiana, Indiana and even New York State. It has been noted by meteorologists that, in addition to

forming very early in the hurricane season, Beryl also formed remarkably quickly, indeed the fastest on record; it upgraded rapidly from a tropical storm to a category four hurricane in the space of two days. Scientists have said that the remarkable power of the storm for the time of year was due to unseasonably warm waters in the Caribbean.

Last year was the hottest on record for our planet’s oceans, with sea surface temperature records being broken daily for 12 months in a row until March this year. The high temperatures mean that the main body of the Hurricane Season runs the risk of producing several severely powerful storms. The rising temperature of the seas in recent years means that some scientists have called for a new category 6 classification to be added, for storms of winds over 192mph.

Notes of Interest

Jamaica has announced that it will recognise Palestine as a separate state. Kamina Johnson Smith, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, said *“Jamaica continues to advocate for a two-state solution as the only viable option to resolve the longstanding conflict, guarantee the security of Israel and uphold the dignity and rights of Palestinians. By recognizing the State of Palestine, Jamaica strengthens its advocacy towards a peaceful solution,”*

Dr. Hyginus Leon has resigned as President of the Caribbean Development Bank after being placed on administrative leave in the first quarter of this year. The reasons for Dr. Leon’s administrative leave and departure remain unclear, with the Bank only confirming in February that an internal administrative process was taking place. Dr. Leon was elected in January 2021 for a five-year term, having previously worked for the International

Monetary Fund for over 20 years. His lawyers have issued statements stating that he felt he had not been treated fairly by the Bank and that the situation had breached several of the Bank's policies.

The Barbadian Government has halted plans to buy the 617 acre estate in Barbados belonging to British MP Richard Drax. The Drax Hall plantation was worked by slave labour for the growing of sugar in the past. The Government had planned to buy the estate for its market value, whilst simultaneously seeking reparations from the Drax Family, but this led to outrage in some circles of Barbadian society, with many feeling that the estate should be given to the Barbadian people as reparations.

Despite high demand for and a high selling price of cocoa, production of cocoa in Jamaica has declined in recent years, despite Jamaican cocoa being recognised by the International Cocoa Organisation for its fine and flavoured cocoa. In the five years between 2018 and 2023, Jamaican cocoa production dropped from over 1,000 tonnes to less than 300 tonnes per annum.

The fall has been attributed to crop disease, ageing plants and the inability of farmers to secure loans for restoration work. The President of the Jamaica Agricultural Society, Mr. Lenworth Fulton, has called for a comprehensive replanting programme and improved disease control measures.

A trade mission of fifteen companies, led by the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, has visited the Bahamas in the hopes of improving trade links. Currently the annual trade between the two nations is worth \$20 million.

The Principality of Monaco and the Bahamas

formally established diplomatic relations on 17th April, with the signing of a joint communiqué by the two nations' representatives to the United Nations. The Bahamas is the 158th state with which Monaco has established diplomatic relations.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has introduced amendments to legislation designed to deal with firearms related offences. These include stiffer penalties for those who breach the terms of their firearms licence, including jail terms of up to six months, or fines of up to EC\$20, 000.

Possession of a 'ghost gun', one lacking an identifying serial number, could result in a prison sentence of up to 25 years, as could trafficking illegal weapons or possession of another prohibited weapon. Meanwhile possession of a firearm with the intent to cause an offence could result in a jail sentence of up to 35 years. Possession of an imitation weapon, which are used in some crimes, is also now punishable by up to 30 years in prison.

A substance called Porous Alpha, developed by Tottori University and Tottori Resource Recycling in Japan, has been tested in Grenada in the hopes that it can assist farmers against climate change by allowing them to use less water. The pilot study has indicated that the substance, made from ground up waste glass, calcium carbonate and other ingredients heated to 750°C, is better at retaining water and nutrients when mixed with soil than soil alone, meaning higher crop yields.

American tourist Ryan Watson is facing a potential mandatory minimum sentence of 12 years in prison in the Turks and Caicos Islands after four rounds of hunting ammunition were found in his carry-on bag by airport security. Tourists who breached Turks & Caicos'

prohibition of guns and ammunition have, in the past, been able to pay a fine, but a court order in February this year directed that even tourists in the process of leaving the British Overseas Territory were liable to be sent to prison. Since November 2022, there have been eight prosecutions of American tourists relating to firearms and ammunition. The American Government has been protesting strongly on Mr Watson's behalf.

In late April, Antigua hosted the inaugural Wadadli festival, a three day celebration of Rastafarian culture and traditions, and the island's medicinal cannabis industry. The event was organised by the Antigua and Barbuda Medical Cannabis Authority.

Nevis's geothermal project, in development for over a decade, is seeking investment from UAE firm K & K group. St. Kitts and Nevis Prime Minister Dr. Terrance Drew recently met with the firm to propose a partnership. A delegation from the Saudi Fund for Development visited St. Kitts and Nevis earlier this year to meet with key Stakeholders.

St. Kitts and Nevis Police Commissioner James Sutton has recommended that the Government hold a gun amnesty. Rates of violent crime have increased recently, with 11 murders being recorded this year, which mostly involve the use of illegal firearms.

After hearing a case brought by a gay man, Dominica's High Court has overturned the nation's ban on consensual same-sex relationships. In the ruling, the court found that it breached citizens' rights to liberty, freedom of expression and protection of personal privacy.

At the invitation of St. Lucian deputy Prime Minister Ernest Hilaire, a delegation of

fourteen Taiwanese investors visited St. Lucia, one of Taiwan's three Caribbean diplomatic allies, to learn more about what the island has to offer. During the five day visit, Invest St. Lucia, the Government Agency responsible for promoting business and investment activities in the country, introduced the investors to opportunities in industries such as tourism and global business outsourcing.

After a decade of work to become ratified, the Cayman Islands sent a squad to the Touch Rugby World Cup for the first time. This was Held in Nottingham, England between the 15th and 21st of July. Two teams, were sent, a total of some 32 players, including a husband and wife duo, Jason and Tiana Sinclair, who have previous played for the USA's National Team, as well as mother and son Lisa and Tommy Kehoe.

The Cayman Islands team for the Mixed Open Division (For ages 15-34) entered Group B, playing against teams like New Zealand and South Africa, two of the best teams in the world, informally named the Touchblacks and the Touchboks in honour of their more famous Rugby Union counterparts. The over 30s team, entered Pool A, with England, Wales and Australia.

Former Caymanian premier McKeeva Bush has been on trial for an alleged incident of rape that took place between 1999 and 2003. Mr Bush was charged in June 2023 and has strenuously denied the allegations, taking recently to the witness stand. Mr. Bush claims that the case brought against him is political in nature, with his opponents trying to force him from office, as he was Speaker of the Caymanian assembly at the time he was originally arrested and charged; furthermore, the complainant is someone who has a vendetta against him for policies

he has pursued in government. He also has attacked the case against him as lacking key corroborating evidence. Mr. Bush does have a previous criminal conviction for assault, something which has been pointed out by the prosecution.

The West India Committee Report

The West India Committee was pleased to host, in conjunction with Alderman Alastair King of the City of London, a reception at the Old Bailey to celebrate the Caribbean Contribution to the City, both past and present, on 3rd June. The event was well attended by representatives from the City of London, the Caribbean diasporas and the various Caribbean High Commissions to the UK. Speeches were given by Mr. King, Mr. Martin Forde KC, Kwasi Kwarteng and Mrs Blondel Cluff, CEO of the West India Committee. Many visitors also took the opportunity to engage with the West India Committee's current programme of genealogical sessions, to help them discover their Caribbean ancestry.

Mr. David Wells visited the South West Herts branch of the University of the 3rd Age (U3A) on 8th July to deliver a lecture on the history



of the Garinagu people and the ladle of Joseph Chatoyer in the Committee Collection. This well received lecture, was attended by over 100 people, with additional U3A members who were not able to join in person, viewing over Zoom. This lecture was part of our current heritage project, made possible by the generous support of the Heritage Lottery Fund.

As part of our current heritage project, the West India Committee has been able to purchase a digitization machine thanks to a generous grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This will allow the Committee to continue the digitization of its UNESCO inscribed collection in a much more economical manner. Work has already started digitizing some of the collection of Pamphlets and the West India Committee's historic circulars, which will be available in the online archive in due course.

As the public are unable to physically access the collection at this time, researchers wanting to access the collection are encouraged to get in touch with us via email or by the website, and we will endeavour to digitize the work they wish to view as quickly as possible.

On 20th July, The West India Committee visited St. Vincent and the Grenadines community group SV2G in High Wycombe, to conduct a genealogy session. Mrs Cluff spoke to the group via video link on West Indian Heritage, before Mr. Wells explained some of the details he had discovered about the members of SV2G who had elected to participate in the workshop, as well explaining some of the resources available for those looking to learn about their family history. The Committee also presented a 3D printed copy of the bowl of Chatoyer's Ladle to the group. Both the Committee and SV2G are hoping to run another session later in the year.

Caribbean Cookery

Jamaican Pineapple Cake

This edition, we present a Jamaican Pineapple cake. The pineapple is indigenous to South America and it is believed that the Caribs introduced it into the West Indies. During his second voyage, Columbus found the fruit on Guadeloupe and named it pina de indes (pine of the Indians).

It would be, for many centuries, a status symbol in both Europe and North America, with many hosts displaying it on tables to impress their guests and being represented in stone as an architectural feature adorning the top of gateposts and towers, or even featuring in carved furniture. The Pineapple remains an important crop in many Caribbean islands, and features in the coat of arms of many Caribbean countries.



Ingredients

4 eggs
300g Plain flour
3 tbsp cornflour
80g desiccated coconut
250ml coconut milk
1 can pineapple chunks or crushed pineapple
1tsp baking powder

200g sugar
2 tbsp rum
100g melted butter

Method

Set the oven to preheat to 180° C. and then grease a 25cm. cake tin. Drain the tin of pineapples into a bowl to keep for later and chop into small pieces if using pineapple chunks. If using crushed pineapple, just drain the tin and keep the juice.

Sift the flour, cornflour and baking powder together into a large bowl and mix in the desiccated coconut. In another large bowl whisk the eggs and sugar together until they are thick and creamy. Then add the melted butter, rum and coconut milk and together. Stir in the flour/ cornflower/baking powder and then mix the chopped or crushed pineapple into the mixture.

Pour the mixture into the cake tin and bake in the oven for 50 minutes, or until a skewer comes out clean. Whilst the cake is still warm, poke some holes into it and spoon over a couple of tablespoons of the pineapple juice mixed with rum. The cake can be iced with buttercream, flavoured with rum and pineapple juice.

100 Years Ago

The King and Queen visited the West Indian and Atlantic Pavilion at the British Empire Exhibition in May.

The Associated West Indian Chambers of Commerce met in London on the 8th, 9th and 10th of July.

A new machine was patented by Mr. T.A. Siddall for the process of écuelling, the extraction of essential oils from citrus fruits. It could process about 60 limes a minute, and would also extract twice as much oils as by hand pressing.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Philip Snowden, stated there was no intention by the Government to reduce or abolish Imperial Preferences, save where there was an intent to reduce or abolish the duties to which they were related.

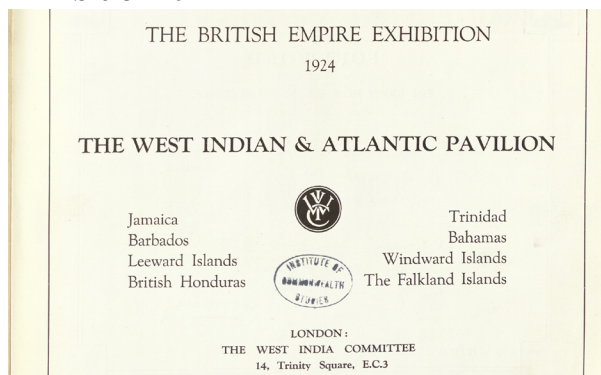
A political crisis was developing in Jamaica over Major Lewis Thomas in his capacity as Director of the Government railway. Several elected members of the Jamaican legislature had pressed for his recall, whilst the Government continued to express their full confidence in him. After fraught discussion on the salary for the position, in which the elected members left the chamber, the Government were left to pass the measures on their own.

The elected members wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, calling not only for the removal of Major Thomas but also Governor Leslie Probyn (who was due to leave Jamaica for early retirement in any case). The elected members also blocked an attempt by the Government to establish a Royal Commission, by refusing to vote for the expenses that would be required to run it.

Long time West India Committee member, Mr. Wallwyn Poyer B. Shepard, died. He had played a big role in the Committee's work against the Sugar Bounties in the late 19th Century and had also contributed significantly to the efforts to secure the Committee's Royal Charter of Incorporation in 1904.

The World Cacao Conference met at the Surveyor's Institute, Great George Street, London, on 25th June to discuss a crisis in world cacao production, whereby there was a significant surplus of the product, although delegates had differing views as to whether this was the result of overproduction or under consumption.

From the Library West Indian & Atlantic Pavilion - British Exhibition 1924



At this time a century ago, the West Indian & Atlantic Pavilion was a big draw at the British Empire Exhibition, held at Wembley on the outskirts of London. It was designed to highlight the many different products of the West Indies, with the exhibits (known as courts) representing each colony featuring their staple produce, such as sponges for the Bahamas and cacao and spices for Grenada. It also featured a Falkland Islands Court, and stands from the Colonial Bank, West India Produce association and various private exhibitors.

Many of the leading figures of the West India Committee at the time were involved in the organisation of the Pavilion. [This volume](#) in the West India Committee collection is a history of the Pavilion, recording the efforts to set it up, the Royal visit to the pavilion, as well as providing a plan and a description of the exhibits that were on display, all illustrated by a series of photographs.



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, c/o The Remembrance Trust, Rooms M22-24, Lord Warden House, Lord Warden Square, Dover, Kent, CT17 9EQ

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	<input type="text"/>	£	<input type="text"/>
--	----------------------	---	----------------------

giftaid it

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

