



bespoke homes jamaica

RECONNECTING YOU WITH YOUR ISLAND

December 2013

Back To Your Heart

Issue 20

More gifting opportunities

Despite remittances accounting for about a seventh of GDP, the Diaspora are often wondering what more they can do to help those in Jamaica keen to progress. Persons keen to learn to fish, not just to eat fish for a day.

Jamaica National BS Foundation has recently set up isupportjamaica.com "to make it easy for people around the world to support organisations and small businesses in Jamaica". We encourage you to follow the group on Facebook and Twitter. And to spread the word. And to see how much you can donate. There are lots of worthy projects still in need of lots more support. Every few dollars can make a big difference.



At Christmas time especially, it is good to recall some of the other new initiatives that are helping improve Jamaica. Members of the Ebenezer United Church and the local business community have recently joined together to repair the Meadsfield to Spur Tree road, running from Newport, south of Mandeville. Their efforts follow forty years of unsuccessful campaigning with the government.

The Feed My Sheep Ministries are busy continuing their two-year feeding of the needy in Tivoli, west Kingston. And the Facebook page "Mad People Corna" aims to raise enough funds to feed 800 homeless persons in Kingston and St Andrew over Christmas. The FB page has 48,000 followers, while the sibling page "Proud Jamaican" has 54,000. Persons at home and in the Diaspora donate via Paypal, Western Union and now via the crowdfunding app, FundRazr.

DO GOOD AN GOOD WILL FOLLOW YUH

The good and the right will always win through

Christmas greetings

We at Bespoke Homes Jamaica wish you and your family a pleasing Christmas and a happy and healthy 2014. As we look forward, we can all reflect on the great achievements of the year just gone. More sprinting success, but much more too, like persons at Simply The Best below. And we reflect on new ways of giving, not just for Christmas. Few if any can match the leadership, courage, wisdom and determination of the sadly departed Nelson Mandela – seen across our press being greeted on the island by Michael Manley in 1991.



Simply The Best

Next in our series on world class Jamaicans, we bring lots. On December 17th Tessanne Chin won America's The Voice 2013, prompting Bolt-like celebrations across the island. Now her semi-final track - Bridge Over Troubled Water - makes her the second Jamaican in a year to enter the Billboard Hot 100. By the 20th, she was at 60, while Sean Paul earlier reached 78.

President Obama's White House recently appointed Claudia Gordon to become Public Engagement Advisor for the Disability Community. Born in Jamaica, Gordon is the first deaf African American female to become an attorney.

A Jamaica-born male has just been named Teacher of the Year, for New Haven Public Schools, Connecticut.

Following the passing of Douglas Manley, PJ Patterson and others praised his contribution to Jamaica's development, including as an MP, minister and eminent sociologist.

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Economy

As often, we see contrasting signals about the economy. Unemployment is continuing to rise, reaching at least 16.3%. High unemployment among school leavers is common across much of the world. But now we are seeing rather higher joblessness among recent university graduates, increasing the risk that they will migrate.

Despite the economic and other difficulties facing us, the new US Consul General to Jamaica, Michael Schimmel, was able recently to say that America's experience in Jamaica is "overwhelmingly positive". Hopefully that will eventually translate into new investment.



One enormous investment project under consideration has stimulated widespread debate, if not outrage, over the last few months. This is the Chinese proposal to build a transshipment hub on the Goat Islands, off Clarendon. The islands are part of the Portland Bight Protected Area, comprising 724 square miles. Formed originally to protect coral, it includes endemic and vulnerable species and wetlands.

The hub would split and distribute cargo from the enormous ships that will be able to use the widened Panama Canal from 2015. Potentially lots of jobs in construction and operation. Debate has raged between environmental groups, the government, the media, individuals & other groups. Echoes perhaps of "Swampy" – the environmental protestor who used to occupy the sites of new roads in England to protect their environments in the early 1990s.

Enterprising Jamaicans

Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago were the only Caricom members to be included in a regional list of 20 countries that provide the best environments for female entrepreneurs – the WEventureScope index. Chile, Peru and Colombia comprised the top three, with Jamaica at 12th and T&T at 18th. The region's women are "among the most entrepreneurial on the globe, but are still greatly underrepresented as owners of SMEs". Across the region, women's access to personal and business finance is relatively poor. All the more need for initiatives like JN's I Support Jamaica.



Meanwhile, Yaneek Page of the television show *The Innovators* has set up an "Innovators Boot Camp" to help persons running small businesses to develop their skills and essential attitudes. The one or two day courses offer a quick understanding of issues normally covered in an MBA.

And now UWI Mona is beginning to see the need for a more significant focus on entrepreneurship. Professor Kahwa, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering, also said that his faculty would be focusing more on developing and implementing its research across the island.

ICT

Microsoft recently launched its second IT academy on the island, at Gordon Town, St Andrew. Teachers gain curriculum support. As well as access to online courses, students can gain a Microsoft Certified Professional certificate. As the head of MS Jamaica said, this: "...says to the companies that are hiring that the student is ready for the working world". The first MS IT academy is at the HEART College in Montego Bay.

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Focus on St Mary

Jamaica's fifth smallest parish, St Mary has a population of around 115,000. The parish town, Port Maria, was Santa Maria in Spanish days.

Fort Haldane was built to protect Port Maria from Spanish attacks. Tacky's rebellion started on Easter Day 1760 when Tacky and other persons killed the guards at Fort Haldane and managed to obtain firearms, gunpowder and provisions that would sustain their rebellion for five months. Hundreds of slaves and Maroons fought during that time but were ultimately defeated by greater firepower and Tacky died in battle.



After the abolition of slavery, Maroons continued their struggle in St Mary. They joined up with Reverend James Phillippo in his quest to establish one of his Free Villages in the parish. Pressure from the Maroons and Phillippo ultimately led the local landowner to sell enough land to enable houses to be built for the local population.

By the early twentieth century one of the largest landowners was Blanche Blackwell, mother of Chris Blackwell. She sold some large plots, notably to Noel Coward and Ian Fleming. Now the Firefly Estate of Coward, which overlooks Port Maria harbour, is a national historic site.

Having been one of the poorest parishes, despite a wide range of crops, St Mary's tourism has increased significantly in the last ten years. The extension of the north coast road helped a lot, as also the development of Boscobel aerodrome in to Ian Fleming International Airport. James Bond Beach featured in the film, "Dr No".

Tourism

While Jamaica lacks foreign investment in many areas, at least tourism continues to attract wise investors. The sixth largest hotel chain in Europe – Melia Hotels of Spain – has just taken over the 226-room Braco Resort in Trelawny. Despite having 40,000 rooms in the region, this is their first English-speaking Caribbean resort. Plans for 500 rooms are afoot. In parallel, a Mexican hotel chain opened its refurbished 140-room hotel in Negril, the Azul Sensatori Jamaica, on 15 December. This is Karisma Hotels and Resorts' first venture outside Mexico. It's a gourmet, all-inclusive hotel, with all restaurants a la carte.

Extra rooms should please tourism minister Wykeham McNeill MP, who has stressed that: "All our airline partners, tour operators are asking for more rooms".



Among countries newly keen on Jamaica is France, which has just overtaken Germany as the largest source of continental European visitors. This followed several documentaries in France about Jamaica. Russian visitors are growing fast, now amounting to half the French total of 9,000, Jan-May 2012.

Crime

A recent study shows that Jamaican criminals are paying a high price for crime. In the first 7 months of 2012, 4,960 years of freedom were taken away, along with fines worth \$53m.

A US study has found that more Jamaicans are now trusting the police & feeling more secure. The public also feel that the soliciting of bribes by the police has decreased. The findings are in the 2012 Americas Barometer Survey.

The marine police seized drugs from 44 vessels during the first seven months of 2012, worth more than \$7.5bn.

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Agriculture

Good news for Black River Luxury Chocolates and other users of the island's cocoa: output has more than doubled for the latest crop year. The Jamaica Cocoa Farmers Association is helping with in-field training for 100 cocoa farmers. The JCFA is also helping to rehabilitate farms.

There is also news of the European Union training 16 young persons in the art of bee farming in the Greater Brown's Town community of St Andrew. As we might expect, bees and honey are rather less prone to praedial larceny.

Housing news

Following efforts to get much more land registered comes news that 70 residents of the Ebony Park housing scheme have now received their land titles.

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BHJ – “Helping You to Get Back to Your Heart in Jamaica”

Here at Bespoke Homes Jamaica we bring only positive news. Let's work for a better Jamaica - a better future for all of us. And if your heart is in Jamaica, we can help you get back to it.

St Catherine, Linstead: J\$11m (c. £65,500)

A 3-bed, 4-bath house of 9,000 sq ft with garage & helper's quarters. Lounge, dining room, walk-in closet..



St Ann, Drax Hall: LAND: J\$6m (c. £35,700)

A flat parcel of land in this well-established scheme.



St Andrew, Kingston 18: J\$9.8m (c. £58,500)

A spacious ground floor 2-bed, 1-bath flat in a small, intimate complex. 1,030 sq ft. King Alarm Security.



St Andrew, Waterloo: J\$17.2m (c. £102,500)

Pre-construction, 2- and 3-bed apartments from 1,000 sq ft. Central location, near embassies. Gated. Underground parking. Pool. Elevator.



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