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Hospitality Jamaica

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2016

Bright year ahead

Unearthing Jewish graves

JTB ramps up PR

Bringing back our

Beaches

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TEF upgrades Burwood Beach

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

GOVERNMENT HAS made good on its promise to upgrade and redevelop public beaches for use by Jamaicans who have watched the coastline they enjoyed as children taken over by resort development.

Twenty-eight million dollars and a year after a refurbishing exercise commenced at Trelawny's Burwood Beach, the facility has been handed over to the citizens of the parish, allowing Jamaicans free access to the complex.

Burwood is one of 16 beaches islandwide identified under the Beaches Programme funded by the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF). Some \$250 million has been committed by the fund.

The programme has the capacity to accommodate 30 beaches islandwide.

At a ribbon-cutting ceremony on the

beach, Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill said the aim was to ensure there was a programme that protects the opportunity of Jamaicans to truly enjoy their country.

Admitting that a number of the country's beaches were being utilised as a result of the influx of resort developments, the tourism minister said two years ago he announced the programme in Parliament.

BEACH SEARCH

"What I indicated then, was that we were going across the length and breadth of Jamaica, looking for the best beaches that are available".

Some of these beaches are owned by public agencies, such as the Urban Development Corporation and various parish councils.

"Others are privately held, but the fact is, wherever we can identify beaches that we feel are beaches that would be best kept in

the public interest, we are going to acquire those beaches, put the proper infrastructure into them to ensure that they all have First-World, first-class amenities, for Jamaicans and visitors alike."

He said access to these beaches will remain free and open to the public.

Arguing that Jamaica wants investments, but not only hotels on the beaches, the tourism and entertainment minister spoke of other areas poised to take off, including housing, retirement villages, villas and apartments.

"Not all of those villas and apartments can be built on the coastline – so you have to protect beaches like this to ensure that you have those investments as well. Because once those investors know that they can build a villa on a beautiful hillside with a beautiful view and they can drive down and visit the beach whenever they want, it makes it all come together."

McNeill is encouraged by the fact that

Jamaicans living in the diaspora, who return home to invest will have built their houses on the hill and still enjoy the island beaches.

The reopening of Burwood has been welcomed by the many locals who were there enjoying the facility last Thursday (January 7).

"This is my beach. This is where I come to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life, because it is extremely quiet and the area is beautiful," Lorna Graham, told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

Graham said she has watched the beaches along the coastline used in tourism development, which has that as one of its negative impacts.

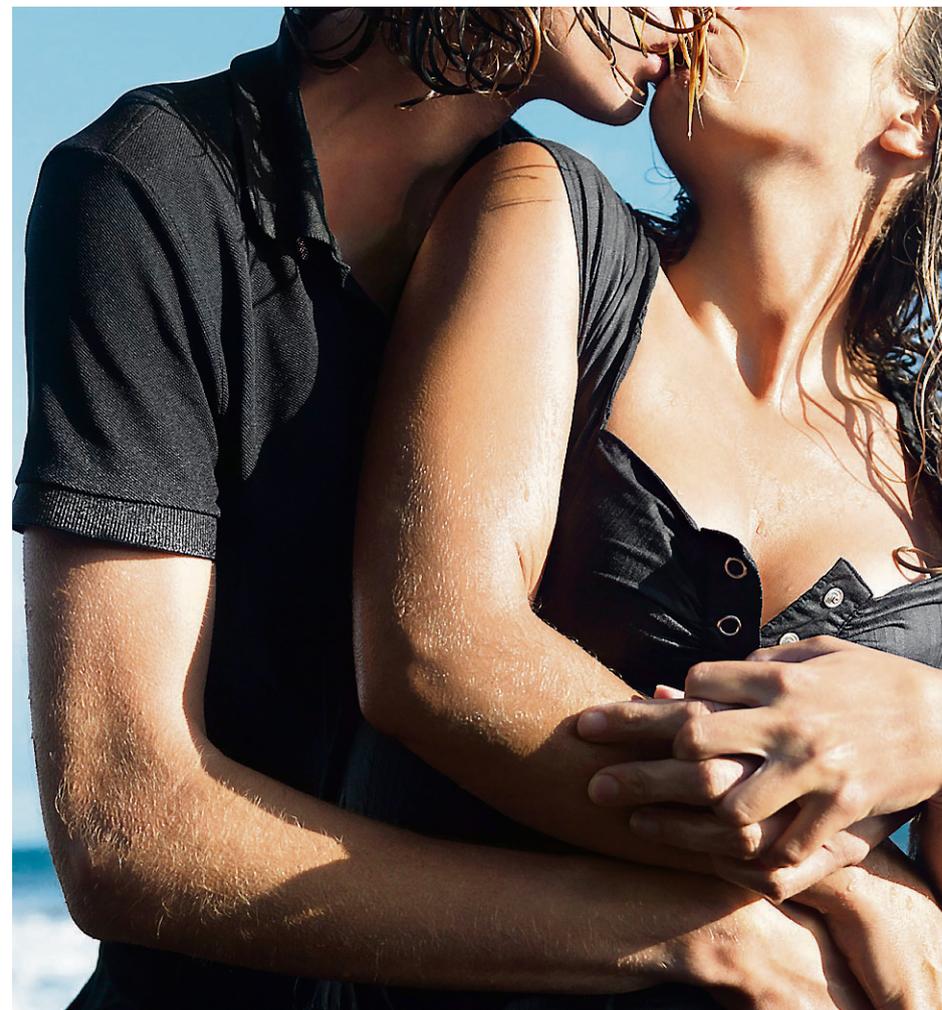
"We no longer have access to many of our beaches and that's very negative," she added, "I am, however, heartened by the beach programme and excited to see the work that was carried out."

She said Burwood looked brand new.

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Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill (fourth left) cuts the ribbon officially declaring the Burwood Beach in Trelawny open last Thursday. He is assisted by Mayor of Falmouth Garth Wilkinson (fourth right); Member of Parliament Patrick Atkinson (second right); Marissa Dalrymple, member of parliament (third left), and other officials.



CTO declares 2016 The Year of Romance in the Caribbean

WITH THE start of the New Year comes the launch of a new initiative by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) – 2016 The Year of Romance in the Caribbean – which celebrates everything romantic about the region. Through the campaign, CTO and its member countries and hotels will highlight the Caribbean as the leading choice for a romance vacation for consumers and travel planners selling the region.

“With over 30 destinations to choose from, the Caribbean region provides the perfect backdrop for a romantic getaway highlighted by pristine beaches, secluded accommodations, an abundance of land and water activities, top-notch spa services and personalised attention that meets the needs of the most discerning traveller,” said Hugh Riley, secretary general of CTO. “The Year of Romance in the Caribbean will spotlight the romantic features of our region beyond



Jamaica Inn is a favourite with couples who want to make the ultimate statement with their wedding destination. This is an ideal spot for a reception.

the traditional times of year, such as Valentine’s Day. A romantic theme is easily embraced by all of our member destinations 365 days a year,” Riley noted.

Throughout the year, CTO, in cooperation with its private sector partner, the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association; will assist member countries with an assortment of

ideas which can be implemented around the theme of romance to appeal to consumers, travel agents and tour operators. Innovative ideas will be developed around:

- First-time or second-time marriages and the renewal of vows
- The most romantic locations to pop the question or to say ‘I do’
- Inviting celebrity couples to get married in the Caribbean
- Revisits by couples who were married or honeymooned in the Caribbean
- Couples celebrating milestone anniversaries
- Gift registries of romantic vacations in the Caribbean

“We anticipate that in addition to the ideas we provide our members, the countries and hotels will develop their own plan of action for promoting romance in their individual destinations,” said Riley adding: “The theme is inclusive of our partners, both public- and private-sector. Caribbean hotels, travel agents and

tour operators are urged to create their own romantic ideas or adopt ones being embraced by the destinations. We envision airline partners getting involved with their own ‘love is in the air’ offers and recognising bridal parties onboard who are heading to a destination wedding in the Caribbean. We think video bloggers, too, will get involved in featuring the winners of the most romantic ideas.”

CTO envisions 2016 The Year of Romance in the Caribbean as a catalyst for sellers and promoters of weddings and honeymoons, bridal publications and websites, as well as wedding planners and service providers at the destination end.

2016 The Year of Romance in the Caribbean will be promoted through social media and traditional media channels and will create opportunities for travellers and vacation planners to share their experiences and ideas of a romantic Caribbean vacation throughout 2016.

Tourism minister promises to fix Accompong roads

Paul H. Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

EVERY YEAR at the January 6 celebrations in Accompong Town, St Elizabeth, the poor condition of the road leading to the historic mountaintop village is a much-discussed topic.

Invariably, commitments by public officials to fix the road are made.

The road is long, winding and narrow, and runs along precipices at parts, which some people find very scary. At many points, two vehicles cannot pass each other with ease. In addition, it is bumpy and replete with potholes.

Yet, residents travel on it daily, and visitors risk it every January 6. The discussion about the condition of the road and a commitment to fix it continued on January 7 at the 278th commemoration of the signing of the treaty of peace and friendship between the Trelawny Town Maroons and the English.

In addressing the gathering, which included government and Opposition members, and the United States Ambassador to Jamaica Luis G. Moreno, Tourism and Entertainment Minister Dr Wykeham McNeill said to Colonel Ferron Williams, leader of the Accompong Maroons, “And Colonel, the one commitment I can give you is that when I come and visit you again next year, you will not be marooned, as you say you are ... , and we will make sure that something is done.”

Dr McNeill expressed an intention by Government to “spend money to improve roads going into attractions, and said Accompong “is definitely a major attraction in Jamaica and needs attention”. He said he had already discussed the matter with the “mayor” and “Minister Azan from National Works Agency”.

In talking about the significance of the story of Accompong and the annual celebrations, Dr McNeill said, “Each year, the festival has proven to not only be an excellent showing of our rich historical and cultural offerings, but also a unique experience for locals and tourists alike Though traditional beaches and sightseeing tourism has been a boon to Jamaica’s economy, community tourism, like



Colonel Ferron Williams (right), leader of the Accompong Town Maroons, presents a certificate to Clarendon Member of Parliament Mike Henry for his “valuable contribution in upholding the cultures, traditions and heritage of the Accompong Maroons” at the January 6 celebrations in Accompong Town, St Elizabeth.



Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill speaking at the January 6 celebrations in Accompong Town, St Elizabeth.



Former senior director of culture in the Ministry of Youth and Culture, Sydney Bartley, dancing up a storm with a member of the Hatfield Cultural Group from Westmoreland at the January 6 celebrations at Accompong Town, St Elizabeth.

the offering here at Accompong, allows us to show our visitors another aspect of Jamaican life.”

Also addressing the huge turnout was Dr Janice Lindsay, principal director of culture and creative industries policy division in the Ministry of Youth and Culture, who represented youth and culture minister Lisa Hanna.

Dr Lindsay said, *inter alia*, “It is as a result of the selfless efforts, bravery and resilience of many Maroon men and women that the Accompong celebration is among the most sought-after cultural experiences on our national calendar. The Maroon heritage is a living example of why it is important to safeguard our intangible assets.”



The Hatfield Cultural Group from Westmoreland performs at the January 6 celebrations in Accompong Town, St Elizabeth.

2016 – a bright year ahead

David Jessop



THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

WILL 2016 be the year when Caribbean tourism takes its place as the industry best suited to turn around the region's economic fortunes?

All the indications are that this year will be an outstanding one for the industry, seeing it building on the strong growth it recorded in 2014.

Although the 2015 year-end figures are unlikely to be available for a couple of months yet, the preliminary data from Caribbean destinations that publish statistics monthly like Barbados and Jamaica indicate a very strong winter season. Anecdotally as well, forward bookings are good, and the indications are that this year will see significant year-round growth in the number of long-stay and cruise visitors, as well as significantly higher year-round levels of occupancy and improved yield for hoteliers.

What is clear is that increased airlift, new feeder markets, lower fares where carriers have passed on the recent dramatic falls in fuel prices, the continuing economic recovery in North America and Europe, and the return of consumer confidence, are resulting in a greater number of visitors who are spending more.

Recent forecasts by industry analysts suggest that the growth in overall arrivals in 2016 will average 2.9 per cent or more. But what will be particularly interesting to see is how this breaks down across the region. Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Barbados, and Aruba, have all, since November 2015, been reporting high levels of hotel occupancy and footfall at their airports and seaports, while some nations like Grenada have noted significant increases in cruise arrivals, with ships to their port operating at 95 per cent occupancy.

There are also signs of significant investor confidence in the future of tourism to the region with, in the



“ It will also be the year in which disruptive technologies from big data, taxi hailing apps, electric cars, and new forms of social media begin to raise questions in consumers' minds about the way the industry operates in the region. ”

last months, agreements being reached in the Dominican Republic, Antigua, Dominica, Barbados, Cayman, Cuba and elsewhere for the construction of major new up-scale resort properties. This suggests that in the coming years, branded hotel chains, the number of quality properties, and an increase in the overall number of new rooms will enable the region to continue to

market itself as a top end aspirational destination.

That said, 2016 is unlikely to be problem free. Expect sargassum seaweed to again build up on some of the region's best beaches as the year goes on; arguments to continue over the completion the unfinished US\$2.5-billion Chinese-financed mega resort Baha Mar in the Bahamas with its probable full

reopening delayed until the start of the 2016-17 winter season; serious questions being asked about some of the intermediaries now selling Caribbean citizenship in return for hotel and related investments in some Eastern Caribbean nations; and tourism security to become a major global issue.

It will also be the year in which

disruptive technologies from big data, taxi hailing apps, electric cars, and new forms of social media begin to raise questions in consumers' minds about the way the industry operates in the region.

CUBA – THE NEW MARKET

But perhaps the single most challenging development, particularly for the countries of the Western Caribbean, will be the introduction of scheduled air services enabling individual travel to Cuba from the US.

Just before Christmas, Havana and Washington agreed to allow up to 110 scheduled flights per day, including 20 to Havana and 10 to each of Cuba's nine other international airports. These are likely to be operated out of New York, Miami, Tampa, Atlanta, and some West Coast points by major carriers including American Airlines, Jet Blue, United-Continental, and Delta, who have already been in informal discussions with the Cuban authorities, and in some cases have been flying charters into Havana to gain operating experience there.

The agreement is expected to result in fierce competition, particularly in respect of the Miami-Havana route and a sharp fall in the price of airfares to Havana. Although the US visitors will not be 'tourists', few people have any doubt that most will also be involved in tourism-like activities, especially as they venture further from Havana.

The country most likely to suffer from this in the short term is The Bahamas, and while it, like other western Caribbean destinations, is considering promoting two centre holidays with Cuba, the greater likelihood in 2016 is that many US citizens who take just one annual break outside the country may choose only Cuba.

That said, the year ahead for the whole Caribbean tourism industry looks to be one of the most promising for many years, and with it the key contribution the industry now making to regional economic growth.



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FRONTERA

SIMPLY DELICIOUS WINES



FOR ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE AND TASTY MOMENTS

Seniors in the Kingston Craft Market

Arlene McKenzie
Contributor

BUILT IN the early 1970s, the Kingston Craft Market stands as a reminder of the then bustling tourism centre of Jamaica's capital. The market houses the entrepreneurial pursuits of people who are not only impassioned by this industry, but also by the love of meeting and serving visitors to our shores.

I entered the market pregnant with anticipation of stories and the rich history reposed within a group of senior craft traders who operate stores in the market.

I've penned anecdotal accounts of these women and their years of service to the tourism industry, and the love of a sector that has faded from its former glory.

In the 123-store market at the corner of Harbour and Pechon streets, there are only two male operators and a host of females with craft products varied and aplenty. The market itself sits seaside on a derelict, but oddly picturesque pier. President of the Craft Market Association, Marie Oswald, welcomes me and gives me an overview of the market's operations and a hint of the rich legacy. A second-generation operator, Oswald and her team are very positive about craft trading at this location and she quickly introduces me to my interviewees.



Corinne Brown (photographed before her store) is a senior citizen with an optimistic outlook for her business in the Kingston Craft Market.

CORINNE BROWN

Corinne Brown is a veteran trader who relocated with the market from its King Street location. She recalls her first time selling craft.

"The markets were busy with scores of visitors coming off the boats in Kingston. A jumping calypso band created the ambiance for a grand day of commerce; the discipline of the people working in the market and the diversity of the indigenous Jamaican craft was something

else." Brown would be engaged in decorative craft in her after-school hours assisting her aunt, who worked in the market. Her nostalgia is one of the main reasons for sticking around in the business.

In her 47 years of working in the industry, she emphasises retailing authentic Jamaican products and believes that Jamaica's tourism product, specifically craft, are still sustainable. Brown anticipates the revival of Kingston's cruise ship arrivals and a spurring on of local interest in the craft.



Ruby Dawkins, a retired teacher, enjoys her time in the market and hopes to see more busy days than slow ones, especially for the benefit of her younger counterparts who are often discouraged by the economic challenges facing them in the market.

RUBY DAWKINS

Ruby Dawkins has a cumulative 30 years' involvement with the Kingston Craft Market, including years spent in her family's store. A retired teacher, she is keen to point out that she enjoys her days in the store she inherited.

Her exuberance about life and the industry of which she is a part are unquestionable. She hopes to

see the market enjoying more busy days and says this would sweeten the experience of the youthful traders who have a different mindset from herself and her peers with more experience in the business. For her, the experience in the market is therapeutic, keeping her mind and body active with both her store and the executive activities of the market.

ICILDA BRIGHTON

Icilda Brighton has, over the last 40 years, grown with the market, also moving from the King Street location, and eventually operating her store at Harbour Street. Her engaging stories include people from far-flung places with different persuasions coming into the market meeting and greeting the traders. The image of the Myrtle Bank Hotel during her time at Kings Street, where she describes dressing "nicely to attend work, the music in the gardens with the fountain bubbling away ... vintage taxis carrying our patrons to and from the market and Martin's Tours – a well-known operator providing service to the visitors as well". She, too, is hopeful for the "rejuvenation of craft and this historic piece of Jamaica's tourism".



Icilda Brighton reminisces on the tourism legacy of which she was once a part – memories of Myrtle Bank Hotel, days at the King Street location of the Craft Market, and calypso bands in the early days at the Harbour Street location.



Winnifred Jones' story is quite animated with a few stars thrown into the mix. She sold Rockefeller a craft piece when he visited and has been in the company of royalty as well.



Velma Parker longs to see the community spirit within the market restored and steady and healthy commercial activity to keep everyone buoyant.

WINNIFRED JONES

A star-struck Winnifred Jones spoke about her encounters with Princess Margaret and John D. Rockefeller, two of her famous customers. Rockefeller purchased a piece of *lignum vitae* carving, and when the princess visited the market, she created quite a stir.

Jones pointed out that the band and the Treasure Chest Lounge were features of the market she hopes will be restored.

"This market must encourage customers to come by, creating an experience involving more than just the exchange of goods and services."

I learnt in my sojourn that this market is a community of women supporting one another and that there is more to buying Jamaican than we as citizens of this rock seem to understand ... its not just a 'policy' for growing and strengthening an economy – it is also a fuel for the hope of Jamaicans who invest energy

and heart into making things that will keep our culture and heritage alive. Support our craft markets today.

VELMA PARKER

Velma Parker spent eight or nine years working in the King Street location and has spent approximately 27 years investing in her business. Parker is a woman unperturbed by the challenges of a slowing economy and its rippling effect on Jamaican business. She is anchored in her resolve to keep on trying her best. Her dream for the market is to see it regain some of its communal spirit, after which she is certain things will improve economically.

"Times have made the atmosphere in the market a little colder – absent of the Jamaican warmth and hospitality that we must rekindle and sell as part of our business."

Contributed by the Community Awareness Department, TPDCo.

JTB ramps up PR, marketing machinery

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) is tasked with marketing Destination Jamaica and is always engaging in marketing and promotional activities that keep the island top of mind among travellers. Never had the JTB done 30 media trips in three months. However, in the lead up to the 2015/2016 winter season, this was the plan for the marketing agency on island.

“Media interest in Jamaica is at an all-time high,” said Paul Pennicook, director of tourism. “Especially out of Europe, we are getting requests from established and emerging markets for journalists who want to experience our brand of tourism.”

The JTB hosted numerous

JAMAICA

TOURIST BOARD

media trips and familiarisation tours with representatives from established, as well as new and emerging markets. These tours provide first-hand experiences as the media representatives are able to interact with the tourism product by sampling the island’s hospitality, including our diverse accommodation, exciting attractions and inspiring locations.

The journalists were keen on experiencing the island’s offerings in lifestyle and wellness, cuisine,

soft adventure, sport, fashion and wedding and honeymoon, among others. The media representatives came from the Caribbean, North America, the United Kingdom, Europe to include Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Ireland and Italy.

Out of Germany, **Deutschland Sucht den (DSDS)**, one of the top reality shows in the German-speaking market, providing four hours of visibility during prime time. Also from Germany Die Giessens, another reality television programme gathered footage of the tourism product to be aired in prime time television. A partnership between Air Canada and Italy resulted in a media trip that featured Jamaica across multiple

media, in print, audio and social media.

OTHER FEATURES

Out of Japan, **Leon Magazine** described as ‘a creative collaboration celebrating the tasty things in life,’ featured luxury travel to Jamaica. Cliff Adventure turned the spotlight on daredevil activities that are offered in Jamaica. Their focus included cliff diving and caving. Other media were from North America, the United Kingdom, and for the first time JTB hosted a TV crew from Estonia.

The promotions will extend long beyond the current winter tourist season, keeping Destination Jamaica visible. Over the next five

to six months, Jamaica will appear in at least 45 publications or programmes as well as on social media platforms. The media trips were facilitated through collaboration with public and private sector partners.

That travellers continue to come to the island in increasing numbers is a testament to the quality of our tourism product. This accomplishment is no small feat, and is attributed to many variables working in synchronicity. The JTB’s execution of a robust public relations and marketing campaign is key element of the mix that has contributed to the continued success of Destination Jamaica.

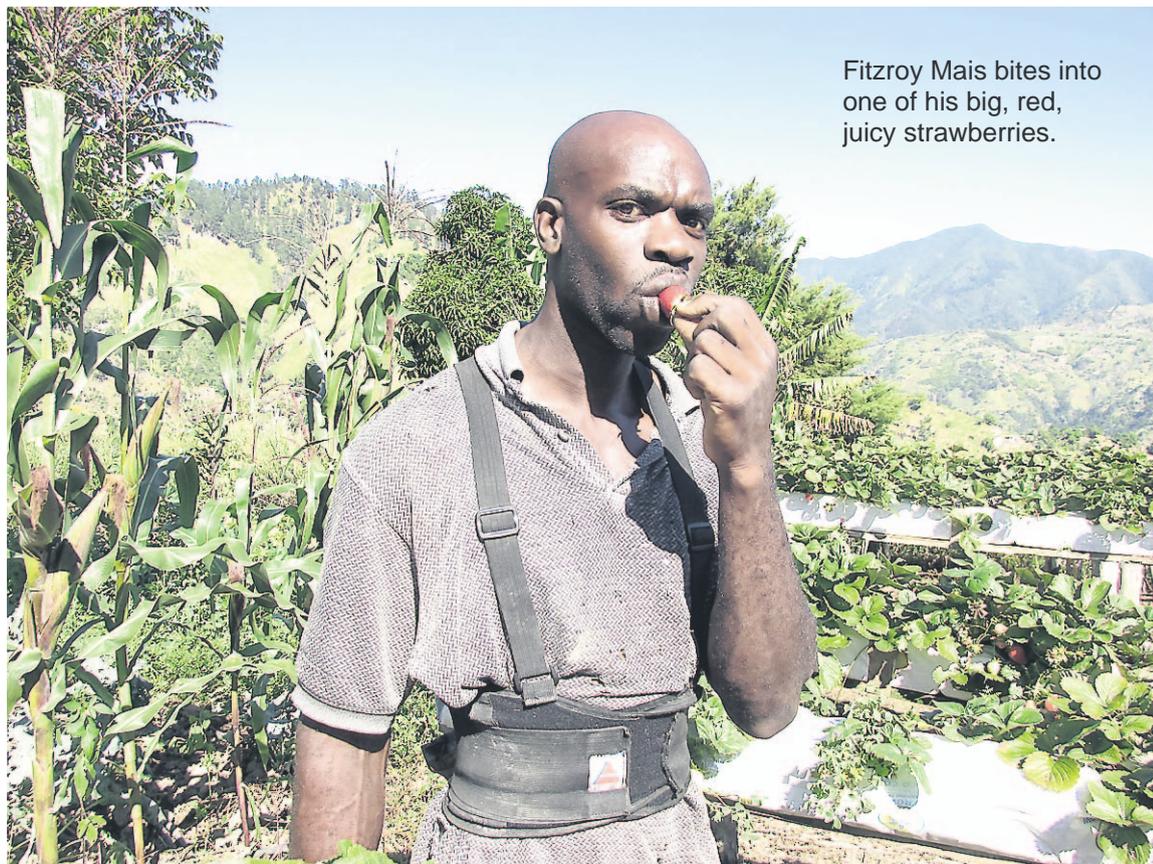


BON VOYAGE, AMBASSADOR PICKERSGILL: Ambassador Fay Pickersgill makes a courtesy call on Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook as she prepares to take up duties in China. As Jamaica’s ambassador to China, part of her duties will include continuing discussions on increasing Chinese visitors to Jamaica. Her tour of duty begins later this month.

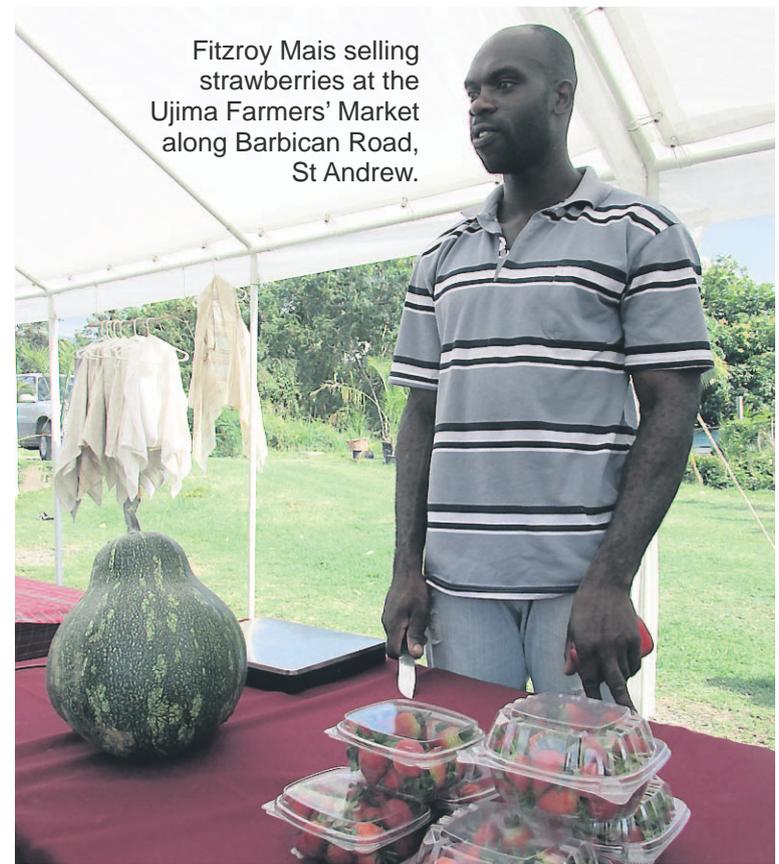
Winners of JTB’s essay and poster competitions



In commemoration of its 60th anniversary, the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) held poster and essay competitions under the theme, How Has the JTB contributed to the Development of Jamaica Over the Last 60 Years? Apart from showcasing their creativity, the competition also unearthed the students’ thoughts and impressions about the JTB. From left: Thalia Morris, first place, essay competition; Ferncourt High School; Dantia Welcome, third place, poster competition, Corinaldi Avenue Primary School; Omarion Reid, second place, poster competition, Port Antonio Primary School; Tre-Sean Manderson, first place, poster competition, Corinaldi Avenue Primary School; and Aaliyah Beckford, third place, essay competition, Edwin Allen High School. Missing is Shante Shand, second place, essay competition, Champion College.



Fitzroy Mais bites into one of his big, red, juicy strawberries.



Fitzroy Mais selling strawberries at the Ujima Farmers' Market along Barbican Road, St Andrew.

A-Mais-ing strawberries at Content Gap

Paul H. Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THEY ARE big and juicy, red, shiny and flavourful. Strawberries! And they are grown right here in Jamaica by Fitzroy Mais of Mais Farm, St Andrew.

To get to the farm, you travel along narrow, winding roads in east rural St Andrew to Content Gap, where the air is rarefied and the views are therapeutic. It's a gap in which there is much contentment.

Across the valley, from the slope where Mais' strawberries are grown, there are fantastic views of some of the Blue Mountain ranges, set against clear blues skies from which fluffy, white clouds descend to shroud the ranges.

Below the ranges, there is an expansive slope on which many communities are located. Man-made structures dot the sprawling hillsides. It's a million-dollar view that perhaps helps Mais get his mind off the drudgery of farming.

The certified mechanic has been farming, he said, for four years now. And he seems to have a made good decision, and has no regrets. He cultivates a variety of crops, including spinach, tomato, coffee, peach, soursop, cho cho, native corn, cabbage, cauliflower, carrot, onions, scallions, ginger, jackfruit, sweet pepper, etc, to which the climate of



The strawberries grown by Richard Mais at Content Gap, St Andrew, are big, juicy and flavourful.

area has been good.

Seeing the fresh produce in their natural environment makes them even more enticing. But it is the

strawberries in their grandeur and colourfulness that seem to be creating most of the excitement on the slope. The temperature and the



A section of Fitzroy Mais' strawberry cultivation at Content Gap, St Andrew.

elevation are ideal for their yield and quality, and they have not disappointed.

The strawberry section on the farm is terraced with the vines growing from mounted Evergrow bags. The largest crop, Mais said, is two years old, and planting is done mainly in the spring. Their cultivation is not labour-intensive, but they must be treated delicately and protected from insect pests.

What is amazing about the yield and quality of the strawberries is

that they are not nourished by manmade chemicals, as Mais farm is a clean-food farm, and he intends to get organic farming certification soon.

A trip to the farm is an enriching experience at many levels. Think breathtaking views, think succulent strawberries, which can be purchased straight from the vines and eaten on the spot. They are quite popular at the bi-weekly Ujima Farmers' Market at Barbican Road in St Andrew.

Unearthing Jewish graves



Could the remains of a pirate be lying in this 17th-Century tomb at Hunts Bay, Kingston?

AS I mentioned in an article sometime ago, I don't understand why I, who find death and anything connected to it very sad and depressing, am so fascinated with tombs, the abode of the dead. It just doesn't make sense.

For me, death is so sure, so final. It's a transition into eternity, leaving loved ones behind to reflect, to mourn and to suffer. So anything that reminds me of the finality of death, including funerals, I try to avoid. Tombs are a reminder of that finality, so why this fascination with them?

The only explanation that I can

come up with is that it is the social historian in me. We social historians love to explore and discover. We want to know who was living in a particular place, and what their social customs were, who they were related to, their lineage, why they were buried where they were, etc. Marked tombs reveal much, but unmarked ones create mystique.

But, apart from the esoteric, there is also an interest in the aesthetics. The style and the design of tombs and tombstones can say much about the occupants lying in eternal repose. From piles of stones to monumental structures, tombs do reveal much about the status

and worth of the dead. And some people have actually preoccupied themselves with the study of tombs. Am I subconsciously becoming one of such tomb scholars?

Some of these scholars study tombs for academic research, and some do so for personal and ancestral reasons. Tombs are sacred reminders of their ancestry, links to their past. They give them an idea of who their ancestors were and help in the preservation of their memories.

The preservation of memories is one of the things that Jerry Klinger does with his life. He is the president of the Jewish American Society for

Historic Preservation. The study of Jewish cemeteries and their preservation are some of his pre-occupations.

He was in the island recently and I travelled with him and Ainsley Henriques, of the United Congregation of Israelites at 32 Duke Street, Kingston, to three Jewish cemeteries, one in Kingston and two in Spanish Town.

The first set of Jews to arrive in Jamaica came in 1530. They were the Sephardics from Spain and Portugal who had fled the persecution of the Spanish Inquisition. Many more, including the Ashkenazi from England and eastern Europe,

were to follow. Spanish Town, then called St Jago de la Vega, Port Royal and Kingston were the areas, in which they first settled, in that particular order.

Over time, they constructed synagogues, and created cemeteries in many locations. The first cemetery, established around the mid-1600s, was located at what is now known as Hunts Bay. It was the final resting place for the Port Royal Jews, who transported their dead by boat across the harbour to Kingston.

When we went to the spot at Hunts Bay, on Wednesday, December 30, 2015, many of the tombs were visible. But years ago, they were

not. The tombs were hidden by grass, bushes and trees. Having learnt of the spot, Henriques went to discover, and found the tombs and the stories they have to tell. Through Henriques' initiative, the vegetation was removed and the tombs of various sizes, states of preservation and designs were once again exposed to sunlight.

Needless to say, my level of fascination was sky high. I was all over the place trying to figure out this and that, looking for the headstones with the earliest dates. There were many dated in the 1660s and 1670s. Many of the flat, tablet-like headstones, made of slate and marble, were removed, stolen perhaps, leaving only brick bases.

What really piqued my interest more than the others were the tombs with the skull and crossbones and pirate symbols inscribed on them. I prodded Henriques to say that these were pirates' graves, but he wouldn't budge, saying the symbols were regular Jewish symbols representing death.

But I am not totally sold on that. I want a romantic element to the story, because pirates were around in the 1660s in Port Royal. I am convinced that some of them are resting at Hunts Bay. And the piece of bone that we saw could very well be a part of their remains.

WHITE CHURCH STREET

Before Hunts Bay, we had travelled to Spanish Town, St Catherine, to the White Church Street area, which was a Jewish burial area founded in the 1790s, according to Henriques. A very popular supermarket is said to have been constructed on one burial site. There are still some tombs near the primary school, I heard, but I was really amazed by what I saw across from the primary school.

There was a huge pile of debris along the road. The material was removed from a burial site, near an informal settlement. The tombs were all buried, except for one headstone, up until very recently. There were more covered tombs at another section through which a footpath ran. A gutter of stagnant water separated the two sections.

When people saw us inspecting the area, they stood and sat, staring at us. They seemed so undetached from what was in their front yard, so to speak. Those tombs are not telling their ancestral narratives, but they are in fact telling stories of what was going on in that area over 220 years ago. Are they interested?

There was not much to learn from the other Spanish Town cemetery, which is also overgrown. But the total experience has only deepened my interest in tombs. I wish I could find some belonging to my African ancestors.



Jerry Klinger (left), president of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, points out something on a tombstone in an old Jewish Cemetery at White Church Street, Spanish Town, St Catherine, to Ainsley Henriques, of The United Congregation of Israelites at 32 Duke Street, Kingston.



How old is this piece of human bone seen in the old Jewish cemetery at Hunts Bay, St Andrew?



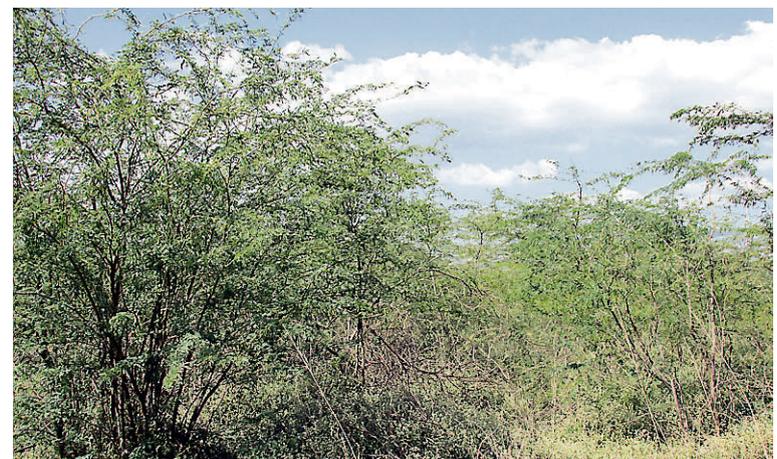
A section of the old Jewish cemetery at Hunts Bay, Kingston.



These graves in the old Jewish cemetery at White Church Street, Spanish Town, St Catherine, were recently uncovered after being buried for years near an informal settlement.



A section of an old Jewish cemetery at White Church Street, Spanish Town, St Catherine, where some tombs are themselves buried.



Ainsley Henriques of The United Congregation of Israelites at 32 Duke Street, Kingston said when he found the graves at the old Jewish cemetery at Hunts Bay, Kingston they were hidden by vegetation such as that shown in this photo.

Sandals Royal Caribbean certified Platinum Status by EarthCheck

IN A significant milestone, Sandals Royal Caribbean has achieved certified Platinum Status through EarthCheck, the world's leading environmental management and professional services group for the travel and tourism industry.

In order to qualify for the Platinum certification, the resort had to be certified for more than 10 consecutive years for successfully meeting criteria, including the maintaining of an effective energy-conservation programme, proper water and waste-management procedures, and actively promoting environmental sustainability.

This achievement makes Sandals Royal Caribbean the eighth resort in the Sandals Resorts International (SRI) portfolio to be Platinum-certified by EarthCheck. These resorts are following closely in the footsteps of sister property, Sandals Negril, which is the first resort in the world to achieve EarthCheck's highest accolade; Master Status certification, signalling more than 15 years of continuous certification).

From its very beginning, SRI has mandated that every resort within its portfolio maintains a meticulous environment-protection programme. In 2011, the company combined all its efforts into one programme; Sandals Earthguard.



Powered by EarthCheck, the Sandals Earthguard programme is designed to reduce the company's environmental footprint and increase the benefits to host communities as a result of sustainable tourism.

"As one of the Caribbean's leading tourism partners with a team of over 13,000 across seven islands,

and as a top foreign exchange earner within the region, SRI is regarded as a leader within the hospitality industry and, therefore, we consider it part of our responsibility to protect the region's natural resources on which we rely heavily," said Mark Pike, programmes manager for Business Processes and Administration at SRI.

General manager for Sandals Royal Caribbean, Gerald Christ, couldn't agree more.

"At Sandals Royal Caribbean, we are blessed to have a team of individuals who are dedicated to environmental protection. Achieving this latest milestone through EarthCheck is proof that our efforts have not gone unnoticed, and

hopefully, will be an example for others within the industry to follow," he said. "It is a badge of honour that we'll wear proudly as we strive to do even more to uphold our environmental responsibility, which is one of the very pillars on which our company was founded."

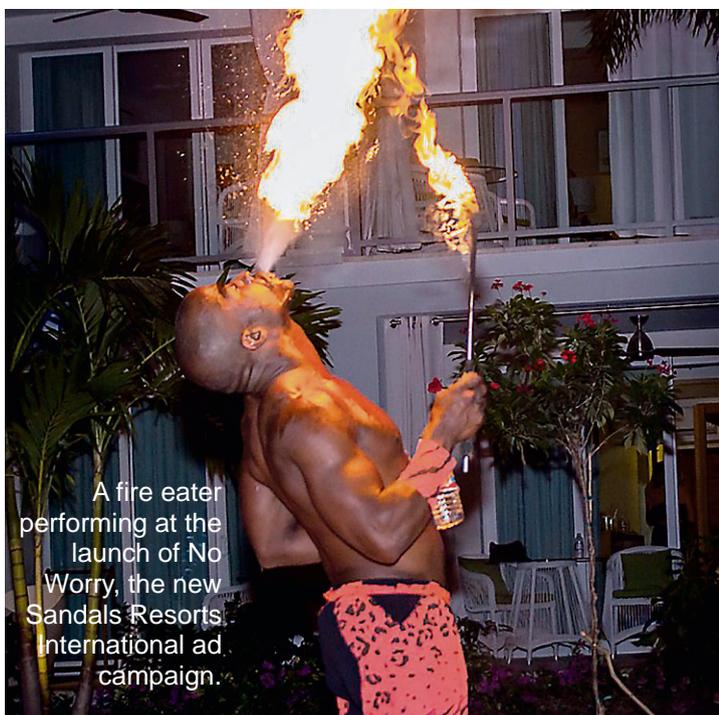
PROTECTING THE SECTOR

Tourism is a \$1.4 trillion industry which directly affects the destinations it operates within. The very environmental values and cultural assets that attract visitors to destinations need to be protected and responsibly managed. The tourism industry and its operators are key to creating this change.

Stewart Moore, CEO of EarthCheck, said that Sandals Royal Caribbean and SRI as a company has taken a significant leadership position in sustainability.

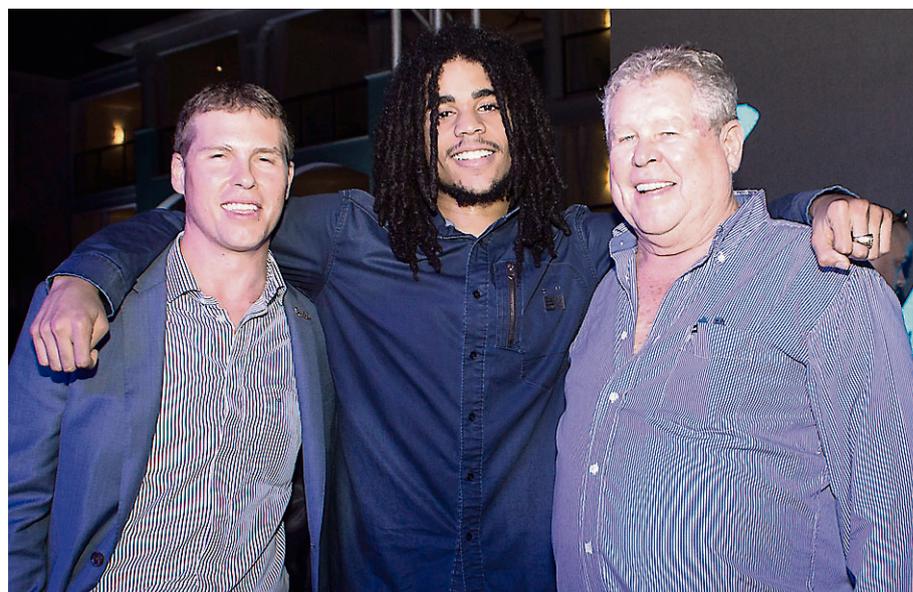
Moore said, "I would like to congratulate the entire team at Sandals Royal Caribbean on their achievement. SRI, which they represent, is a valued member of a global group of tourism operators who dare to make a difference."

By working with EarthCheck, SRI has joined other global industry leaders who are taking meaningful steps towards resolving some of the very real issues that face the planet.



A fire eater performing at the launch of No Worry, the new Sandals Resorts International ad campaign.

Sandals + Marley = No Worry



Grandson of Bob Marley, Skip Marley (centre), is flanked by Sandals Resorts International's chairman, Gordon 'Butch' Stewart (right) and Sandals CEO Adam Stewart after Marley's performance at the unveiling of the Sandals No Worry global advertising campaign at Sandals Montego Bay on Friday, January 8.



The new Meliá Braco Village.



Attorney General Patrick Atkinson (left) and Minister of Local Government Noel Arscott at the opening of the Meliá Braco Village.

Meliá Braco opening a tremendous achievement for Jamaica – *McNeill*

AT THE recent opening of Meliá Braco Village Resort in Trelawny, Tourism and Entertainment Minister Dr Wykeham McNeill noted that Meliá Braco represented the third hotel – new or rehabilitated – being opened in time for the current 2015/16 Winter Tourism Season, and “is a tremendous achievement for Jamaica”.

In his address, McNeill stated that the Meliá Braco Village opening was taking place at a time when the country was enjoying significant growth in the tourism sector.

“Arrivals are up in both cruise and stopovers; we’re expecting a good winter; the early indications for the summer are positive; demand for investment has driven a number of new projects.”

The tourism minister reminded the audience that a historic 17,500 passengers passed through the Sangster International Airport on December 22 last year. Of that number, 6,000 were on transfer for cruise ships that currently homeport in Jamaica. There were also 98 flights, 20 of which were long haul 300-seat planes out of Germany and the United Kingdom.

He underscored that one of the main reasons behind the government’s focus on the opening of hotels in the country was to create employment for the Jamaican people. He



General manager, Meliá Braco Village, Dimitris Kosvogiannis (centre, pink shirt) and Alvaro Tejed, regional vice-president, pose with the models representing the Georgian theme of the resort.

praised the Jamaican workforce for completing the rehabilitation of the hotel on time and within budget.

While hinting that the Meliá Braco Village would be undergoing expansion, Dr McNeill also reiterated a call he made recently for Jamaicans and Jamaican companies to get involved in investing in tourism.

“I want to see Jamaicans taking

advantage of the opportunities that exist in tourism to make money (and) to make a profit.” He was particularly pleased that the National Insurance Fund, which owns the property, kept it in the hands of Jamaicans and expressed confidence that the management partnership with Meliá Hotels would see significant returns on

investment, adding, “this will accrue to the benefit of the people of Jamaica”.

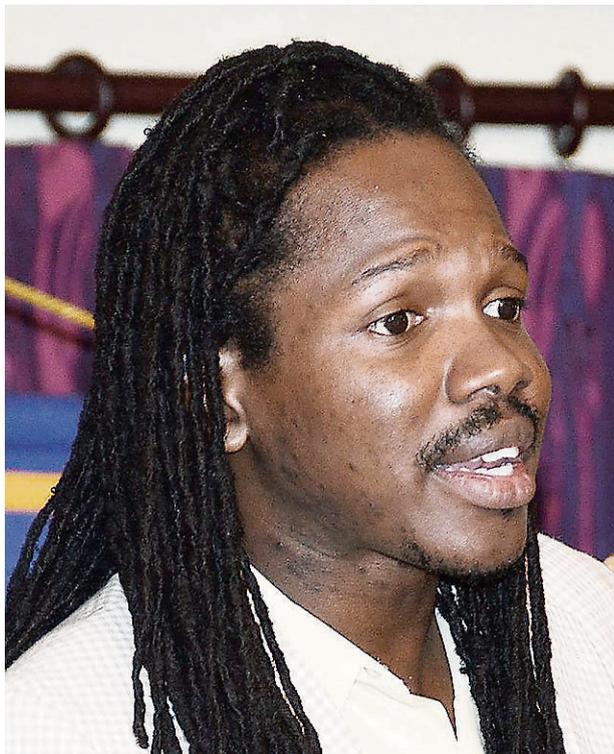
Minister McNeill also issued a call for “more local pension funds, more private sector entities – both big and small – carving out a niche for themselves in the tourism sector because it’s a very profitable industry and one which I think



Synchronised swimming at the opening of Meliá Braco Village Resort last Thursday evening in Trelawny.

they should all be involved in.”

The 232-room Meliá Braco Village has shown strong support for local manufacturers with the purchase of furnishings valued at some US\$500,000. This was facilitated by Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment’s Tourism Linkages Hub. Items included beds, bedding, pillows, pool chairs and craft items.



CRAWFORD

Ministry issues open call for Reggae Month events

THE MINISTRY of Tourism and Entertainment has issued an open call for the submission of new and existing entertainment events to be added to the Reggae Month 2016 calendar.

Events eligible for submission are those that fall between February 1 and 29, 2016. State Minister in the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment Damion Crawford underscored that “the proposed events must be related to reggae or another musical art form typical of Jamaica and being held in the Kingston and St Andrew metropolitan region”.

Reggae Month is an initiative of the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment

aimed at utilising the unique value proposition of reggae music and the cultural significance of February as an attractor to Kingston. Events chosen will be endorsed by the Jamaica Tourist Board, be included in the Reggae Month calendar and receive local and international promotion.

This year will mark the ninth staging of Reggae Month, and will be observed under the theme, ‘Reggae Mekyah’. The theme highlights Kingston’s newly designated status as a Creative City of Music by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Event organisers are being asked to complete two typed copies of the

endorsement forms which are now available on the ministry’s website, www.mot.gov.jm/entertainment. Once completed, the forms should then be submitted to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment’s head office located at 64 Knutsford Boulevard, Kingston 5; First Floor lobby. The forms may also be submitted via email to entertainment@mot.gov.jm. The deadline for submission is January 25, 2016.

Crawford added that “as is customary, we would like to have wide-scale participation in this important venture so I am urging organisers of events which meet the standard we have set to submit their proposals for consideration”.



Jade Mountain in St Lucia.



The colourful Anse Chastanet in St Lucia.

St Lucia’s Anse Chastanet and Jade Mountain awarded TripAdvisor GreenLeaders status

ANSE CHASTANET and Jade Mountain, two of St Lucia’s most picturesque resorts, have been recognised by the TripAdvisor GreenLeaders programme, which helps travellers around the world plan ecologically responsible trips by identifying hotels engaging in environmentally friendly practices.

TripAdvisor GreenLeaders properties have to meet a set of environmental standards developed

for TripAdvisor by a leading environmental consulting firm, with input from expert partners. The more green practices a hotel has in place, the higher its GreenLeader level, which is shown on the property’s listing on the TripAdvisor site. Anse Chastanet and Jade Mountain, which are owned by husband-and-wife team Nick and Karolin Troubetzkoy and offer majestic views of the twin peaks of the Piton mountains, earned

gold and platinum designations, respectively.

Karolin Troubetzkoy, who serves as executive director, said she was honoured by the elevated status: “My husband Nick, who designed and built both resorts, is known for going to extraordinary lengths to conserve the natural environment, and everything we have done reflects his philosophy. Our dedicated teams always go the extra

mile to ensure our resorts protect our environment.”

“TripAdvisor GreenLeaders are leading the hospitality industry in making efforts to improve their environmental footprint,” said Jenny Rushmore, director of responsible travel at TripAdvisor. “We greatly applaud these hotels and B&Bs, and are pleased to share their eco-friendly practices with our online community of more than 260 million trav-

ellers who visit the site each month.”

The TripAdvisor GreenLeaders programme was developed in consultation with the United Nations Environment Programme, the US Green Building Council, ENERGY STAR, and the International Center for Responsible Tourism Canada, among other leading environmental organisations. For more information, visit www.tripadvisor.com/GreenLeaders.