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WEDNESDAY, JULY 11, 2018



Puerto Seco

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PUERTO SECO

the gem of St Ann



PHOTOS BY JANET SILVERA

Beach, or swimming pool? You have options at Puerto Seco Beach.

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

BUTLER-SERVICED CABANAS offering the option of full service dining along the beachfront, complemented by a special Beach Vibes menu and a 100 per cent transformation, is what the new Puerto Seco Beach in Discovery Bay, St Ann, lays claim to.

In sync with its name, operators of Jamaica's newest attraction, Guardsman Hospitality Group, are allowing locals and visitors alike to rediscover the area made famous by Christopher Columbus, who said "Man's eyes have seen the fairest isle", when he stumbled upon the jewel of St Ann.

"We are less than 10 acres in total, and so far, we have developed approximately six acres of it," Guardsman Hospitality's general manager, Laura Heron, told **Hospitality Jamaica** during a visit to the

property recently.

The new Puerto Seco offers an experience that everyone can enjoy. On entering the property, you are greeted by a beautiful thousand foot-long white-sand beach, and there is an option of a 150 foot-long freshwater swimming pool.

"We have put in over 50 bathroom cubicles to accommodate a large number of persons coming on property, for groups, large groups and otherwise, with state-of-the-art facilities in the bathrooms, changing rooms, outdoor showers - all of it being environmentally friendly because we want to conserve on water, as everyone knows our chairman, Kenny Benjamin, is very much into the environment," Heron stated.

The beach is home to nine cabanas, a large, full-service restaurant, and Wibit, which made its way all the way from Germany



Locals and foreigners are flocking to the new, Puerto Seco Beach.



Malachi Turner the new Puerto Seco facility.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Hungry for some tasty burger?



Butler-serviced cabanas line one section of the beach.

to Jamaica.

“We have our customer-service reps meeting, greeting along the beachfront, offering food and beverage, and we have a special menu called our Beach Vibes, which is strictly for the beach area,” explained Heron.

Served in a cute little basket, the Beach Vibes menu is made up of foods that can be served easily along the beach, such as jerk chicken paninis and wraps and the signature Puerto Seco Burger.

Plans are in place to add an additional eight cabanas because of the demand for them mere months after the opening of the facility.

Restaurant/Entertainment

The very large, full-service restaurant, outside of the service on the beach, allows visitors the option of a more comprehensive menu, which includes a selection of Jamaican cuisine.

“Starting this month (July), we are going to be opening the restaurant at night after the beach is closed,” said Heron, adding that the restaurant will be open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights only to accommodate guests who wish to stay beyond the closing hours of the beach.

In addition, there will be live entertainment throughout the day “because we have a very, very creative entertainment schedule that we offer from Monday through Sunday with a team of young entertainment coordinators that we’ve been training”, revealed Heron.

The talented group of youngsters has been getting some training from Ashe, contortionists, vocalists, dancers and performers.

“We don’t have an in-house band yet, but we are looking in that direction. But we have an in-house disc jockey that plays music throughout the day,” noted Heron.

Wibit out Germany

One-of-a-kind in the Caribbean, Puerto Seco is the first to offer a Wibit, which is out of Germany. Probably the premier waterpark system in the region, it is about a quarter of an acre large and can accommodate up to 200 persons at a time.

“Even though we are not putting that many on there, we want to make sure that persons remain safe on it. At any given time, we have four to five lifeguards on the unit to ensure that people are safe. It is a challenge course. That’s what it is – a floating challenge course,” said Heron.

Additionally, this month, all watersport activities will be up and running, with a full-service five star diving facility, a glass-bottom boat, snorkelling, paddleboards, and kayaks.

“All water activities, even fishing, for those active people who want to go out on the ocean and enjoy it, we are offering all of those things,” boasted Heron.

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PUERTO

CONTINUED FROM 3

The transformation

Puerto Seco has made a 100 per cent turnaround from the days when it was a ramshackle.

Reminiscing on when she first visited the property two years ago, Heron said initially, Guardsman Hospitality was looking at offering to develop the property.

“There were some structures on it, albeit they were very deteriorated, and in fact, when we did our engineering inspection on the buildings, we were told to just level them because that was really not in our original scope, but we recognised that we could not keep them there because the integrity of the buildings were in question.”

Additionally, the property had a serious sewage-treatment problem, and so, a large part of the investment has been the installation of a state-of-the-art septic treatment system.

“We have put that in not only to serve the purpose of our sewage, but also, it is an environmental thing where we actually recycle the water from the treatment for irrigation and also for the flushing of our toilets. So

everything here was carefully thought-out.”

Design

Puerto Seco is very Spanish in design. “It was said this was where Columbus first landed in Jamaica, so we kind of went back to that because it has some amount of prominence with the Spanish coming here and that sort of thing. So we decided to play up on that aspect of it and make sure that the architecture went along those lines. So the design of the roof has a clay type configuration even though they are metal roofs.”

Scattered around the property are replicas of the *Niña*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria* ships.

The *Pinta* is placed in an area where a beautiful children’s playground area with water features is to be built.

“We are putting in a shooting waterfall for the kids, as well as a mini zoo for the children. So for all of those families who say they don’t have anything to do with their children, this is going to be the place for them to come, and all of that is going to be included in your entry, so it is worth it to come here,” urges Heron.

Puerto Seco has the capacity to accommodate up to 3,000 persons.

Environmentally friendly with every



Guests getting ready to check out the new Puerto Seco Beach.

move they make, Guardsman Hospitality has replanted some 1,500 trees on the property since starting the project and are still planting.

“We are going to have an organised jungle in the back there even though we are on the beachfront,” Heron said.

Although the project was initially

projected to cost J\$260 million, Guardsman Hospitality has ended up spending about \$560 million.

Rory Baugh, formerly of Sandals Resorts and Prospect Plantation, is general manager of the fabulous facility.

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Beachgoers enjoying every minute of the Wibit.



It's summer, and the kids are out at Puerto Seco. They are checking out the restaurants first.

T&T and Bahamas win top culinary honours

TRINIDAD AND Tobago is the Caribbean National Culinary Team of the Year.

The team won top honours in the finale of the 2018 Taste of the Caribbean culinary competition at the Hyatt Regency in Miami recently, after also winning the Bartender, Best Non-Alcoholic Drink and Beef categories.

Trinidadians in the winners' row included Shana Rajahram, who won the Caribbean Bartender Competition, and Tricia Gregoire, who captured the certified Angus Beef-sponsored Beef Competition. The Best Non Alcoholic Drink award also went to T&T.

A dozen teams participated in the highly anticipated Taste of the Caribbean culinary competition in Miami from June 22 to 26.

Hosted by the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bonaire, Cayman Islands, Curaçao, Jamaica, St Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos selected their best chefs and mixologists for this year's event.

Jamall Small from The Bahamas was crowned Caribbean Chef of the Year, while teammate Hazen Rolle was named Caribbean Junior Chef of the Year. Rolle also received the Hans Schenk Commemorative

Award for the Most Innovative Dish Utilising Indigenous Ingredients.

Vadivel Raju from Turks and Caicos won the Caribbean Pastry Chef competition; Radiance Modeste of the British Virgin Islands topped the Seafood competition, while Rodney Corbin of Barbados won the Cemoi-sponsored Chocolate category.

Best Rum Drink went to Bonaire; St Lucia topped the Vodka Drink category, and Best Mystery Bar Drink, sponsored by Angostura, went to Curaçao.

A combined team representing chefs from some of the Caribbean destinations that were impacted by last September's hurricanes also competed. The team, which included members from Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands, won the Tony Mack Spirit of the Competition award.

"CHTA applauds this year's Taste of the Caribbean participants, their national hotel and tourism associations, team managers and sponsors for another incredible demonstration of passion, purpose and performance," said Frank Comito, director general and CEO of CHTA. "These participants are the future of tourism and the teamwork and camaraderie on display augurs well for a united Caribbean."



A victorious Bahamas contingent at this year's Taste of the Caribbean.



Trinidad & Tobago's winning team celebrates with CHTA and Taste of the Caribbean representatives.

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When tourism taxes become excessive

David Jessop

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

AS THE reach and range of taxation has expanded, hoteliers in particular have become uneasy about the impact that increasing levels of taxation may have on their competitiveness and that of the country they are located in.

Most accept that government's ability to raise revenue is important, not just to ensure that tourism infrastructure, destination marketing and incentives are in place, but to provide the education, social services and all else that a state is expected to provide. The consequence is that although hoteliers regularly complain and investors seek the longest possible tax holidays, for the most part, the industry begrudgingly accepts that they and their guests must contribute to the national economy.

However, there are signs of a debate emerging in some parts of the region and externally as to whether a point is being reached where the widening mix of visible and invisible taxes a visitor must pay may be starting to make some Caribbean destinations and stay-over tourism locations of questionable value for money.

Up to now, governments in the region have taken the view that there is little downside to taxing foreigners seeking a dream vacation. The view is that the high end of the market is not affected by new taxes and levies, while vacations at mid-level price points are not being influenced much



David Jessop

because the Caribbean remains a desirable destination.

However, in recent weeks, the issue has become more widely discussed because of a range of tourism-related taxes introduced by Barbados' new government to help address the parlous economic situation it has inherited.

The measures introduced, in what was already a high-cost destination, have created uncertainty among hoteliers, tour operators and the international media as to whether they will deter or displace visitors to elsewhere in the region.

From October 1, there will be a per-person US\$70 airline travel and tourism development fee for departures to extra-regional destinations and a US\$35 fee for travel within the Caribbean. In addition, there is a new hotel-room tax of US\$2.50 per night for B class properties and apartments, a US\$5.50



per night charge for A class properties, and a US\$10 nightly tax for stays at luxury resorts. A 10 per cent tax has been introduced on shared accommodation such as Airbnb, and other taxes, including a product development levy on direct tourism services, are likely to hit tourists indirectly.

Because these are in addition to existing airport and other charges, this means that the cumulative impact on a family of four, when sales and other taxes and the charges levied by airlines and source destinations are included, threatens to add significantly to the basic cost of a Barbados vacation.

Already, Ernst & Young, the management accountants, have

cautioned that the new tourism taxes could reduce Barbados' competitiveness as a tourist destination, dampening travel as price-sensitive tourists select cheaper destinations.

Travel Weekly, the trade publication, has described new room tax as a "a sure-fire way to annoy customers". Its editor, Lucy Huxley, commented recently that "rushing through taxes that hit customers who have the choice to vote with their feet in the future could well end up not delivering the results it is hoping for".

Others have pointed out that the burden falls only on land-based tourism, so far leaving the notoriously awkward cruise ship companies untouched and their passengers

paying a head tax of just US\$6.

What Barbados' economic misfortune and its new visitor taxes suggest is the need for a broader debate about the impact of tourism taxes on pricing and the point at which revenue-raising measures become counterproductive.

The danger is that in Barbados and elsewhere in the region, a moment may come when rising levels of tourism taxes means that middle-market visitors stay for shorter periods; turn to cruising; seek alternative warm-water destinations offering better service, cuisine, comfort, and value for money; or worse: simply say that the Caribbean has become too expensive.

Courtleigh Hotel and Suites awarded AAA's Best of Housekeeping Award

THE COURTLEIGH Hotel and Suites was recognized by the hospitality experts at the American Automobile Association (AAA) with the AAA Inspector's Best of Housekeeping 2018 Award.

The hotel will receive a 'Best of' badge and a diamond rating and will be promoted on the AAA website and digital travel information products. The award, which is judged based on inspection results, highlights the hotel as one of the best lodgings internationally and celebrates its impeccable housekeeping practices.

The housekeeping supervisor, Rosealee Stewart, in response to the recognition, stated, "It is an honour to receive this award. My team is very dedicated to providing the best environment for our guests, so I'm happy their hard work has paid off."

The Courtleigh Hotel and Suites Housekeeping Department has 24 staff members committed to providing

high standards of excellence in cleanliness and maintenance. Housekeeper Jennifer White, excited about the new badge of honour, noted that as housekeepers, they have a true passion for the hospitality business and care about the comfort of each guest.

Based on AAA's inspector survey, the majority of its members said the 'Best of' award criteria is valuable when choosing a hotel. The hotel has also won other awards recently, such as the RJRGLEANER Communications Group **Hospitality Jamaica** Best European Plant Hotel Award for 2017 and earlier this year, the Resort Area Champion award for Kingston at The Tourism Service Excellence Awards.

The Courtleigh Hotel and Suites is also nominated as Jamaica's Leading Business Hotel for this year's World Travel Awards, which will be staged later this year in Montego Bay.



The housekeeping team at Courtleigh Hotel and Suites.

high tide



low tide

Relax responsibly!





From left: Andres Gomis, Angel Soria, Cecilia Bercovich, Alberto Chaves, and Josexta Silguero in performance.

ROSE HALL UNITES JAMAICA & SPAIN *in musical heaven*

THE ELEGANT lawns of the Rose Hall Great House blossomed with melodic music from Spanish strings and sounds from the Sigma Project, hailing from Spain. The event, held recently, captivated Jamaicans and Spaniards alike, who sat in a festive atmosphere of Embassy of Spain's 'West Winds' – a musical experience based on *West Side Story*.

The 18th-century plantation great house, with exquisite architecture that celebrates the diverse heritage and culture of Jamaica, was the platform on which Ambassador of Spain to Jamaica H.E. Josep Maria Bosch extend his gratitude and hope for continued cultural exchange between Spain and Jamaica.

"Jamaica and Spain have a long history and we are very happy that Spanish culture is part of this beautiful blend that is the Jamaican culture, so beautifully described as 'Out Of Many, One People.'

This view came to fruition as members of the western Jamaica hospitality industry (home to a number of Spanish-owned businesses and hotels) exchanged lively discussions during the cocktail hour.

The culturally balanced menu included crispy tortilla with jerked pork belly and guacamole; this nuance along with the décor and the musical stylings of Charmaine Limonious set the stage for what promised to be a spectacular evening.

Mayor of Montego Bay, Homer Davis opened the evening's proceedings by positing that "the St James Municipal Corporation welcomes and fully supports these activities that promote good family values, unity and that expose talents".

Through *West Winds*, members of the audience had the wonderful experience of listening to SIGMA Project's personal

homage to the 100th anniversary of the birth of multitalented - pianist, conductor, composer and brilliant pedagogue Leonard Bernstein.

Angel Soria Diaz of the SIGMA Project was excited to lead the celebration.

"Jamaica is not only a natural paradise, but also cultural paradise that surrounds you with its Caribbean rhythms as much as with the innate talent of its people. It has more in common with Spain that it would seem: passion for music, is something that is characteristic of both countries."

The programme began with the Jamaican premiere of a transcription for saxophone quartet of Philip Glass's *String Quartet No. 5*. SIGMA Project's rendition of this piece was energetic and rich in nature. The audience was captivated by their spirited movement and how effortlessly they held the stage. The performance was an experience for the senses.

After performing Glass' *Movement I-V*, violinist Cecilia Bercovich joined SIGMA Project in honouring Bernstein with their flawless performance. *West Side Story* is one of the most memorable musicals and greatest love story of all times. The score by Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim is widely regarded as one of the best-ever written. At the end of their performance, the audience demanded an encore, which led to an interactive end to a lovely night with the crowd shouting, "Mambo."

The Embassy of Spain, in collaboration with The Spanish - Jamaican Foundation (SJF), Spanish engineering company TSK, Rose Hall Developments, Grand Palladium, Melia Braco Village, Secrets, Iberostar Hotels & Resorts, Island Car Rental and LASCO iCool hosted the event.



Montego Bay Mayor Homer Davis (right) welcomes His Excellency Josep Maria Bosch, ambassador of Spain to Jamaica, to his 'backyard', the Rose Hall Great House recently. The historic landmark served up a picturesque setting for the 'West Winds' concert.



Michele Rollins, chairman of Rose Hall Development LTD, welcomes His Excellency Josep Maria Bosch, Ambassador of Spain to Jamaica, to the historic landmark on Saturday, June 23. The Embassy of Spain presented 'West Winds', a musical experience in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of composer Leonard Bernstein, on the rear lawns.



River Raft Limited's Johnny Gourzong (left) and Headline Entertainment's Jerome Hamilton



Angel Soria (centre) and Alberto Chaves (right) of Spanish Saxophone Quartet, SIGMA Project, enjoy cocktails and conversation with prominent local businessman Tony Hart ahead of the recent Embassy of Spain-sponsored performance 'West Winds' recently at the Rose Hall Great House.



Denise Dear and her husband Winston Dear (right) alongside Robert Russell.



Karen Neita (left) and Sandra Kennedy.



The bar was a popular spot for guests at Rose Hall Unites.



Hostesses at the Rose Hall Great House were a welcoming scene for persons attending Rose Hall Unites.

WITH THE summer season here, Jamaica is ready to welcome travellers with daily airlift from primary and secondary markets throughout the United States, says the island's Director of Tourism, Donovan White.

For the period May through December of this year, Jamaica secured a total of 1,629,637 scheduled airline seats from various US gateways to Kingston's Norman Manley International Airport (KIN) and Montego Bay's Sangster International Airport (MBJ).

"Last year, airlift amounted to a total of 1,494,124 air seats, helping Jamaica's tourism sector earn in excess \$3 billion in revenue," noted White.

"This year, we anticipate even more earnings given the large number of direct flights from various US gateways. This will meet the growing demand of travel to Jamaica, significantly benefiting both travellers and our tourism partners."



Jamaica ready to welcome summer travellers with daily airlift from major US gateways

Following is a synopsis of summer airlift and charter services from May to December 2018:

NORTHEAST

New York (JFK)

- Caribbean Airlines, Daily to MBJ and KIN, through December 31
- Delta Air Lines, Daily to MBJ, through December 31
- JetBlue Airways, Daily to MBJ, through December 31
- JetBlue Airways, Daily to KIN, through December 10

New Jersey (EWR)

- United Airlines, Daily to MBJ, through August 20

Philadelphia (PHL)

- American Airlines, Daily to MBJ, through December 31

Washington DC (IAD)

- United Airlines, Saturdays to MBJ, through August 20

Baltimore (BWI)

- Southwest Airlines, Daily to MBJ, through December 31
- Spirit Airlines, Daily to MBJ, through December 31

Boston (BOS)

- JetBlue Airways, Saturdays to MBJ, through December 29
- Delta Air Lines, Saturdays to MBJ, through August 25

SOUTHEAST

Miami (MIA)

- American Airlines, Daily to MBJ

and KIN, through December 31

Fort Lauderdale (FLL)

- Caribbean Airlines, Daily to MBJ and KIN, through December 31
- JetBlue Airways, Daily to MBJ and KIN, through December 31
- Spirit Airlines, Daily to MBJ and KIN, through September 10
- Southwest Airlines, Daily to MBJ, through December 31

Orlando (MCO)

- JetBlue Airways, Daily to MBJ, through October 27
- Southwest Airlines, Daily to MBJ, through August 6

Atlanta (ATL)

- Delta Air Lines, Daily to MBJ, through December 31
- Delta Air Lines, Daily to KIN, through September 1

Charlotte (CLT)

- American Airlines, Daily to MBJ, through December 31

MIDWEST

Chicago O'Hare (ORD)

- American Airlines, Saturdays to MBJ, through August 18
- United Airlines, Saturday to MBJ, through August 20

Chicago Midway (MDW)

- Southwest Airlines, Daily to MBJ, through August 6

Detroit (DTW)

- Delta Air Lines, Saturdays to MBJ, through August 25

WEST

Dallas (DFW)

- American Airlines, Daily to MBJ, through August 20

Houston (IAH)

- United Airlines, Daily to MBJ, June 7 - August 20

- Southwest Airlines, Daily to MBJ, through August 6

Los Angeles (LAX)

- American Airlines, Friday to Monday to MBJ, through August 17

Vacation Express Charter Services to Montego Bay

- Atlanta (ATL), Thursdays, May 24 - August 9

- Cleveland (CLE), Saturdays, May 26 - June 30

- Dallas (DFW), Mondays, July 9 - August 6
- Nashville (BNA), Mondays, May 28 - July 2

- Pittsburgh (PIT), Saturdays, July 7 - August 4

Vacation Express and Apple Vacations Charter to Montego Bay

- Cincinnati (CVG), Sundays, May 27 - August 5

Apple Vacations and Funjet Vacations Charter to Montego Bay

- St Louis (STL), Saturdays, May - December
- St Louis (STL), Wednesdays, June 6 - August 1



Director of Tourism Donovan White (left) has the rapt attention of Senator Don Wehby, CD, Group CEO of GraceKennedy Limited; Kayla Green, 2018 GraceKennedy Jamaican Birthright intern; His Excellency Asif Ahmad, CMG, British High Commissioner to Jamaica; Anastacia Davis, 2018 GraceKennedy Jamaican Birthright intern; Caroline Mahfood, executive director of GraceKennedy Foundation, (back row) Joshua Tulloch and Kean Nembhard, 2018 GraceKennedy Jamaican Birthright interns. The launch was held ahead of the five-week-long internship programme, which aims to expose the students to a diversified Jamaican experience through cultural activities and professional experiences at a GraceKennedy operations in Jamaica.



Director of Tourism Donovan White engages attendees at the 2018 GraceKennedy Jamaican Birthright Programme press launch. The launch was held for four interns, second- and third-generation Jamaicans from the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada. White congratulated GraceKennedy for the vision and foresight that gave birth to this very meaningful programme, which is pivotal to sustaining the vibrant culture, history, and values of the island among generations of diaspora communities around the world. He encouraged the interns that as members of the diaspora, they can partner with Jamaica through the five strategic networks, which can build the capacity for the supply side of tourism and reduce the leakage of tourism earnings. The Jamaica Tourist Board is a partner of the GraceKennedy Jamaican Birthright Programme.

TEF rewards Holland High with \$2.5m in computer equipment

THE IMPORTANCE of safeguarding the environment was underscored by Executive Director of the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) Dr Carey Wallace at the official opening of a computer room furnished with 27 laptops and other computer equipment valued at \$2.5 million at the Holland High School on Tuesday, July 3, 2018. The computer room has also been outfitted with a projector and screen with surround sound.

Dr Wallace challenged the high-school students, who collectively earned the reward by placing first in the recent TEF-sponsored Sustainable Destination Alliance of the Americas recycling competition in the Falmouth area, to become ambassadors for recycling.

“You students have a responsibility that is bigger than yourselves because you are trying to change a pattern of behaviour that’s been habitual over generations, and here you are now, the enlightened ones, needing to influence your



Executive Director of the Tourism Enhancement Fund Dr Carey Wallace (right) tries out one of the 27 laptops in the \$2.5-million computer room awarded to the Holland High School for winning the recent TEF-sponsored Sustainable Destination Alliance of the Americas recycling competition in the Falmouth area. With him and a classroom of students are (from left) Principal of Holland High, Pauline Reid, and student Shannia Spencer.

own parents, your own community to change their habits and start practising the new habit,” he told

a gathering of students and invited guests.

Reminding them that it was their

country and their future that were being protected, he underscored that “it is in your interest to make sure you are ambassadors for that change, so I charge you to think beyond just the school, the competition and in your own communities and try to influence the people around you”.

OVER 4,000 PARTICIPANTS

Over 4,000 students from five schools participated in the Falmouth leg of the competition, with the tagline, ‘Go Green and Win Big’, aimed at engaging children and broadening the reach of solid-waste management in Falmouth. Although not using plastic bottles on its campus, led by their Tourism Action Club coordinator, Aishea Lawrence Reid, Holland High collected more than 50 per cent of the total of 247 bags of plastic bottles weighing 1,694 pounds in and around their community over four weekends.

Dr Wallace, who said he was impressed by the cleanliness and ambiance of the school and the

show of hospitality by students and staff, assured them that “Falmouth, and Trelawny overall, is going to be the model for Jamaica”.

With Falmouth having emerged as a resort town, he said much attention was being given to uplifting its infrastructure, but money was not all, and it was up to the people to make it happen.

Chairman of the Holland High School Board Fr Carl F. Clarke lauded the positive image built by the school with its accomplishments in such a short time, noting that the institution entered the competition to do good for the community and that winning was in keeping with its hallmark of excellence.

Trelawny Custos the Hon Paul Muschett also commended the Ministry of Tourism for running the recycling programme and had high praises for Holland High on winning.

Support for the competition was also received from Recycle Jamaica, the Organization of American States, the Trelawny Municipal Corporation, the National Solid Waste Management Authority, and the Trelawny Chamber of Commerce.

With its partners, the TEF also sponsored recycling competitions in Negril and Treasure Beach, and participating schools in all three areas collected a total of over 275,400 plastic bottles.

Sandals project with Manchester farmers snips potato imports

Janet Silvera
Senior Gleaner Writer

THE Sandals Resorts International (SRI) potato seeds initiative with farmers in Manchester has helped growers produce more than an estimated 700,000lbs of Irish potatoes for the current crop.

Ansel Golaub of A.L. Golaub and Sons, who has been a middle man purchasing fresh produce from farmers all over Jamaica and supplying all Sandals and Beaches Resorts properties in Jamaica for the last 30 years, says the potato project has helped Sandals move to its current level of 99 per cent food purchases and 100 per cent self-sufficiency in Irish potatoes.

He predicts that if the programme is continued and expanded, the Sandals-sponsored \$25-million initiative could see Jamaica sourcing all Irish potatoes required in the



Ansel Golaub

country from local farmers instead of importing the commodity.

The businessman notes that potato farmers involved in the project are looking forward to accessing more seed potatoes to keep the partnership going and achieving full food security in that commodity.

“Through this programme, Sandals is assisting not only doing a big



Jordan Samuda, group director, Procurement Division.

thing for farmers, but also for the entire Jamaica,” Mr Golaub said while speaking at the Jamaica leg of the four-nation Sandals Overdrive Caribbean Tour 2018 held at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in St James on June 25.

The number of farmers and their families positively impacted by San-

dals through its potato project and its purchase of foods from local growers has been put by Mr Golaub at more than 2,000.

The businessman told about 1,000 SRI staff assembled for the event that the purchases on behalf of Sandals represent the only means of income generation for many farmers and their families in the various parishes across Jamaica. These farmers, he said, depend on his purchases, which in turn are bought by Sandals.

Chairman of SRI Gordon ‘Butch’ Stewart and the senior vice-president for sales at Unique Vacations, the Miami-based representatives of Sandals and Beaches Resorts, Gary Sadler, led the Sandals management and staff at the event, which featured informative presentations showcasing the best of the hotel chain. The one-night show moved on to Barbados, Grenada, and St Lucia, where Sandals also has properties.

Responding to queries from **The Gleaner** while on the second leg of the Overdrive tour in Barbados recently, Jordan Samuda, group procurement director at Sandals, explained that in this particular

pilot project, the organisation purchased 1,300 bags, capable of planting 40-50 acres.

These, he said, can be stored for up to one year.

“The initial outlay of funds is a win-win investment, with payback of the initial sum from the farmers to Sandals set to commence in instalments after the first reaping, 10-15 weeks from planting. The farmers will, in the meantime, be the sole providers of Irish potatoes to the entire Sandals group, which comprises 11 resorts in Jamaica, further reducing the resort company’s import bill and creating direct-added revenue/market for our local farming community and ultimately a boost to the local economy,” he noted.

Samuda says the main aim is for Sandals to receive 100 per cent Jamaican-grown Irish potato, with no further reason to import – a long-term, sustainable programme.

Currently, 90 per cent of the 5.4 million pounds of produce consumed by Sandals Resorts in Jamaica is purchased from local farmers.

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Shell, shells and more shells



Paul H. Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

“SHE SELLS seashells on the seashore” is a timeless alliteration for which no one can tell who the “she” in the line is. Could she be responsible for the disappearance of the shells from Sunset Beach, also known as Dead-End Beach and Buccaneer Beach, in Montego Bay?

It was from there that I went to see the progress that Dr Errol Miller was making with his 100-room, limestone-walled museum at Hanbury Heights in Kendal, Manchester.

To get there, I went through four parishes – St James, Westmoreland, St Elizabeth, and Manchester. I have never travelled that route before in all my journeys, and I do not know when I will ever do it again, despite the quaint villages and hamlets that I saw.

I could not keep my eyes in the vehicle, for there were preserved old houses, weathered churches, ancient cemeteries, dilapidated buildings, rolling landscapes, mountains rising majestically, and rivers running under bridges.

However, the S-curves, hairpin bends, and narrow roads took away some of my joy. From side to side I was moving until it was no longer funny. If I were younger, I would have got out and walked, perhaps seeking more features to gawk at.

By the time I reached the museum, I looked like an and I am still trying to straighten out myself. So it was a challenge to climb those stairs to navigate the three-storey structure that has been in the making for several years now. Official opening is set for 2020.

I had been there twice before to look at Miller’s massive collection of rocks, some precious and rare, and the others, semi-precious. He has a really fascinating collection, perhaps the most extensive owned by a private individual in all of the Caribbean, to



Dr Errol Miller displaying two Whelks conch shells.

the point where he is already getting visitors from overseas.

I knew that there were shells in his vast collection of rocks and other items, including fossil, but it seemed that I had missed the extent of the shell collection, which was what I saw recently.

Though not as striking and resplendent as the rocks, the shells, hundreds of them, are equally as interesting. They are of various shapes, sizes, and types, rooms full of them, some of which I did not get to see. And there is a house, Miller said, across from the museum that is full of shells. Next time I will go see it.

The shells are mainly from the waters of the south coast and have been acquired since 1976. Dr Miller said that he is a collector by nature and seems to have taken collecting to another level – he has items for display in 100 rooms. There are antique and other collectibles, thus making the space a valuable repository for natural and man-made items

The walls of the museum are as beautiful as the artefacts therein. The mosaic of polished, cut limestone rocks of different colours and shades, and acquired from different parts of the island,

summarises the essence of Miller's labour of love.

It is to be noted that the designs are from this retired educator's head, and he has done much of the work himself. Apart from the masons, there is hardly ever any other assistance. Work had started before retirement, and since then, many things have been accomplished.

It is set to be a very fascinating structure with even more fascinating items on a display, a one-of-a-kind entity in all of the Caribbean. Students, marine biologists, geologists, malacologists, geologists, and historians shall find it a useful centre of learning. Education will be a major thrust of the operations.

As I looked at the shells when I was ready to make my departure, I thought of the spirals within them and reflected on the curves that my ageing body would have to endure on the way back to Montego Bay, where I have to search hard to find a shell on a beach. And not one is in Dr Miller's collection.



Univalve shells from Alligator Pond in Manchester.



A section of the façade of Dr Errol Miller's 100-room limestone wall museum at Kendal in Manchester.



A cabinet of ornamental shells.

A cat figurine made of shells.



Spider crab shells.

KEEP SUNSET BEACH CLEAN!

Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

CLEAN, FRESH water, white sands, hundreds of shells, tourists glistening with sun-tan lotions, red double-decker buses, the sight and sounds of airplanes landing and taking off are some of my childhood memories of Sunset Beach, at the end of Kent Avenue in Montego Bay.

It was easily accessible and was free, so locals and visitors flocked to it daily, lay beside each other, and life was just a dream.

Things and times have changed significantly since the 1970s and '80s. The double-decker buses are long gone. The road to the community of White House was stopped in its tracks, hence the name 'Dead-end'. The overseas tourists and the shells have disappeared from the beaches. Soldier and hermit crabs seem to have been buried under the sands of time.

So, what has remained? The two-legged birds still visit. The 'iron birds' are still thundering through the sky and along run-ways. The beach is forever sun-drenched and sparkling. And the water is ever so crystal clear, clean, and fresh.

Every evening, the strip is lined with cars, parked by people who prefer to chill in this enchanting outdoor setting of the various shades of sea blue, the misty headland to the west, the setting sun, and the ebb and flow of the waves.

Yet, this little slice of paradise is under threat of not being some where to go chill and relax.

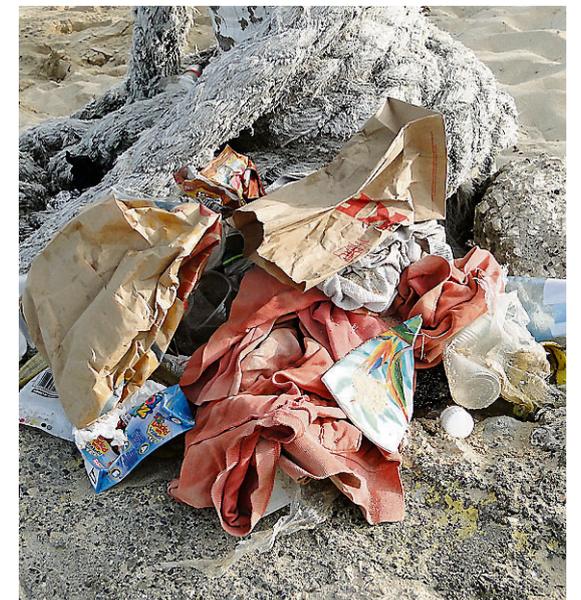
It is a victim of its own popularity.

The creatures of the night, and day, oblivious of the importance of keeping this nature spot clean, simply leave their garbage on the sands. They wine and dined thereon or nearby, and the next day, the wrappers of their pleasures are left strewn all over. The juxtaposition of garbage upon the sands is stark.

From time to time, a man is seen collecting refuse from the sides of the street, but he seems not to be very interested in the state of the beach and leaves it as is. Sunset Beach is a gem in Montego Bay's crown. Who is finally going to make it sparkle some more?



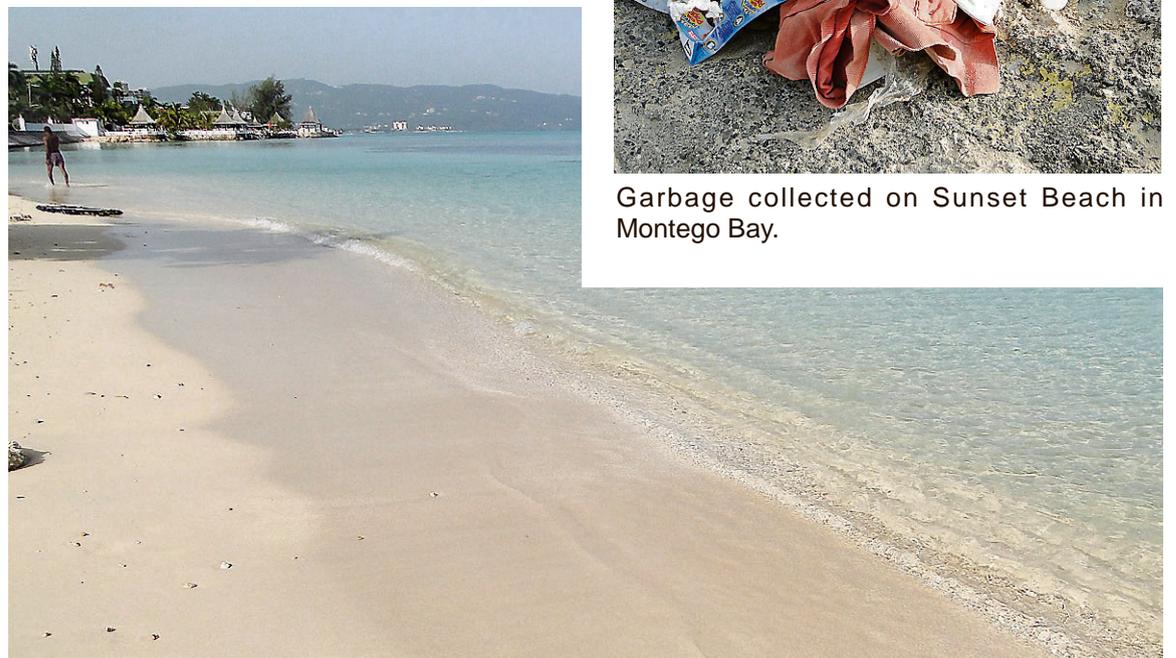
People relaxing on Sunset Beach in Montego Bay recently.



Garbage collected on Sunset Beach in Montego Bay.



Sandcrabs such as this one live in holes on Sunset Beach in Montego Bay.



The crystal-clear waters of Sunset Beach in Montego Bay.



From left: Masqueraders Novelette McKay, Kavim Deer, Marcia Adams and the artist Mazola.



Phillip Ambokele Henry (left) and Dr Bryan McDonald, two Portland artists greeting each other.

Great Huts Resorts hosts 'MASQUERADE'

Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

FOR THE very first time Great Huts Resort, located in Boston, Portland, hosted a masquerade party on Saturday, June 23, in the Great Hall of Africana House, the resort's premium unit.

The keynote speaker, the internationally acclaimed artist, Dr Bryan McFarlane, native of Moore Town in Portland, spoke on how African art influenced the work of famous artists, such as Picasso, in a presentation called 'Reclaiming Ancestral Roots'.

After Professor McFarlane's presentation, patrons moved up to the Mandela Roof for the fun. Some people wore masks that were made during a mask-making workshop earlier in the day.

The dress theme for the evening was undoubtedly African chic, and some people obeyed the memo and came out looking like African royals. There was one African prince among some African princesses who brought the Afro-centric fashion of Aya Wear alive in the night. The owner of Aya Wear, Arlene Passley, was courted in a



From left: The finalists in the best African chic attire, Cheryl Foster, Empress Ibi and Gabrielle Blackwood, the eventual winner.

stunning get-up that complemented her powerful recitation of Maya Angelou's 'Still I Rise'.

Just before the evening ended, chief judge Amber hand-picked three women from the crowd for the finals of the 'Award for Best Afro-Inspired Chic Outfit'. It was a toss-up between artist Cheryl Foster, Paulette 'Empress Ibi' Wright and film-maker Gabriel Blackwood,

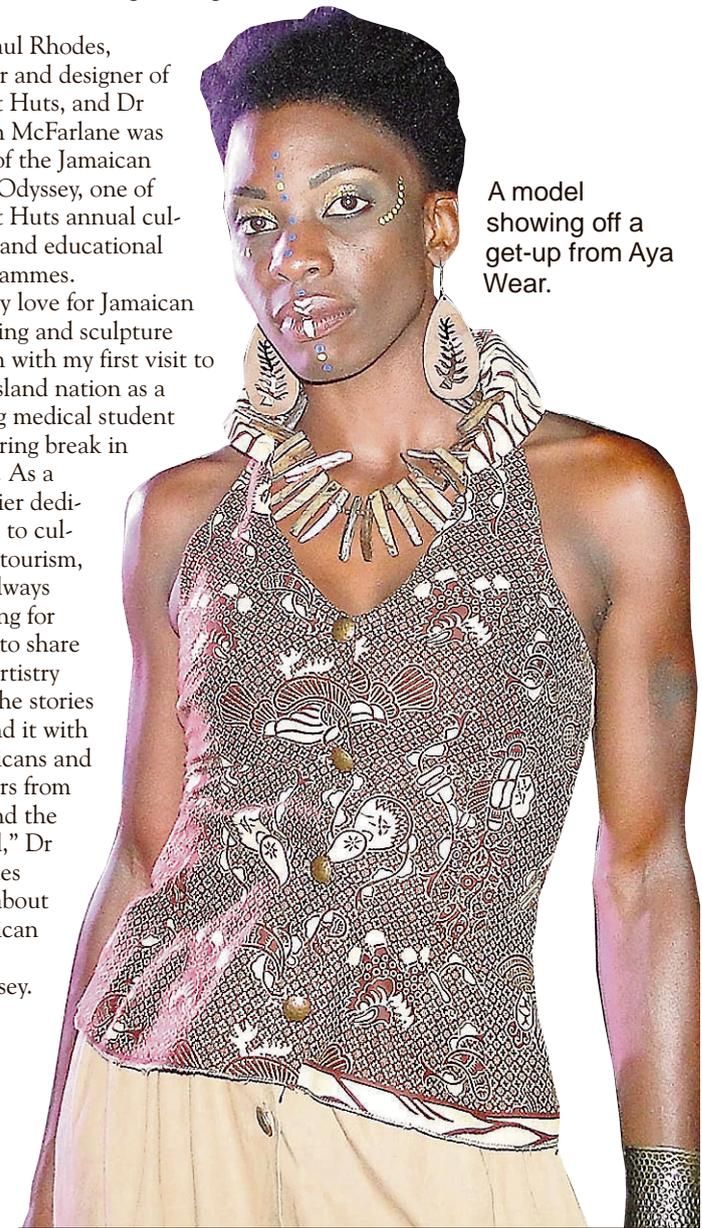
who emerged the winner.

Entertainment was provided by Richard Derby and the Manchioneal Cultural Group; live drumming from the artist Philip 'Ambokele' Henry, DJ Sheppy, Deondra Riley, while the Extreme Band rocked patrons with a number of energetic numbers, including Afrocentric ones.

The masquerade, co-hosted by

Dr Paul Rhodes, owner and designer of Great Huts, and Dr Bryan McFarlane was part of the Jamaican Arts Odyssey, one of Great Huts annual cultural and educational programmes.

"My love for Jamaican painting and sculpture began with my first visit to this island nation as a young medical student on spring break in 1973. As a hotelier dedicated to cultural tourism, I'm always looking for ways to share this artistry and the stories behind it with Jamaicans and visitors from around the world," Dr Rhodes said about Jamaican Arts Odyssey.



A model showing off a get-up from Aya Wear.

THE PORTS of the US Virgin Islands recently completed its quarterly update with the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association's (FCCA) Operations Committee in Miami, where cruise executives were briefed and provided feedback on port improvements, including the introduction of transportation to the Charlotte Amalie Harbor this year.

The US Virgin Islands team included Commissioner of Tourism Beverly Nicholson-Doty; Commissioner of Public Works Nelson Petty; Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Port Authority, (VIPA) David Mapp; Assistant Executive Director and Director of Engineering Damian Cartwright; and Clifford Graham, CEO of The West Indian Company Limited (WICO).

Commissioner Petty outlined progress on implementing harbour transportation and updated the FCCA group on the Main Street and Veterans Drive projects, while Executive Director Mapp and Assistant Executive Director Cartwright spoke about the proposed dredging of the Charlotte Amalie Harbor, its adjacent channel as well as cruise ship berths at WICO to accommodate larger Oasis Class vessels.

The dredging design for Crown Bay and a new mooring dolphin to accommodate Quantum Class vessels on the north berth were discussed, along with plans for a Christiansted dredge project for St Croix.

Clifford Graham shared with cruise executives a revised concept for proposed new berths in Charlotte Amalie, while Commissioner Nicholson-Doty

Cruise executives buoyed by USVI harbour plans



USVI cruise leaders meeting with Florida Caribbean Cruise Shipping Association executives in Miami.

outlined the department's updated Crisis Communications preparedness plan and the department's new Purpose in Paradise 'voluntourism' programme. The programme was

met with enthusiasm by the executives present, who also complimented the US Virgin Islands team for sharing helpful updates in the aftermath of last September's

storms.

"Having an ongoing dialogue with the FCCA as we upgrade our infrastructure and visitor experience is a key component of our

destination strategy," said Commissioner Nicholson-Doty, who underscored that the safe and free movement of visitors and traffic complements growth plans as cruise sector activity revives in the Territory.

"The FCCA is very happy with the honest and frank discussions," said Carlos Torres de Navarra, chairman of the FCCA Operations Committee and vice-president, Commercial Port Operations of Carnival Cruise Lines. "One of the big things that we've been pushing as an industry, and the territory has agreed that it was important, was this whole issue of water transportation to add another element to what is the beauty of the USVI," he added. "So, we (are) really happy to hear that potentially, we're looking at a fourth-quarter installation start of those operations ... it's just one more thing that's going to make the USVI great."

Following the Ports of the Virgin Islands meeting, the USVI delegation, along with the FCCA members, met with tourism and ports representatives from the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Puerto Rico and St Maarten for talks centred on disaster preparedness and strengthening Eastern Caribbean itineraries.

JHTA heightens calls for the ban of single use plastic and styrofoam containers

THE JAMAICA Hotel & Tourist Association (JHTA), steadfast in its support of the proposed ban on single-use plastic and styrofoam containers, is citing the very serious implications for small islands such as Jamaica.

Arguing that the region's economic development and food security are closely tied to the natural environment, the organisation – made up of a significant number of hoteliers, attraction operators, transportation companies, destination management companies (DMC), and purveyors – says some of the effects of plastic pollution can already be seen.

"Therefore, urgent action is needed to halt the long-term effects on the environment and the food chain. Plastic pollution also has grave implications for tourism and if it continues unchecked, the Jamaican tourism product, as we know, will be seriously undermined by their presence when not disposed of properly."

The JHTA, in its own efforts to encourage its members to carry out business in a manner which safeguards the environment, introduced and presented an Environmental Sustainability Award at their recently held annual awards luncheon.

This award was won by the Jamaica Inn in Ocho Rios. The association has also listed environmental preservation as one of its main priorities for the new administrative year.

Area chapter members will be implementing various projects geared towards achieving this objective as they seek to reduce their carbon footprint, said the association.

Speaking at the recent 57th annual general meeting at the Moon Palace Jamaica in Ocho Rios, JHTA President Omar Robinson stated: "We are pleased with the Government's commitment to provide \$25 million per year

over three years to implement a plastic bottle recycling programme. This action will not only reduce the amount of plastic bottles that are disposed of improperly, but it will encourage good environmental practices among all Jamaicans."

Urging businesses across the island to replace single-use plastic containers with biodegradable or reusable alternatives, Robinson said each individual has a part to play to preserve the environment.

"We encourage them to find more environmentally friendly solutions to plastic cups, straws and styrofoam."