5-1993

Nanny Town Excavations: Rewriting Jamaica's History?

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Nanny Town excavations: Rewriting Jamaica’s history?
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Since January 1991, the site of Nanny Town has seen a series of reconnaissance and surveys and two seasons of major excavations, sponsored mainly by the University of the West Indies, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, USA, the Jamaica Natural Heritage Trust, Jamaica Defence Force, Archaeological Society of Jamaica, and the Chief and Council of Moore Town Maroons. Participants included graduate and undergraduate volunteers from various Universities in Canada, USA, and the Caribbean. Maroons from Moore Town, Windsor and Cooper’s Hill, Portland, as well as staff and members of the University of the West Indies.

Objectives
The main objectives of the study of maroon communities are: to obtain archaeological data that can be used for the interpretation of the socio-cultural patterns of the behaviour of the Maroons; to determine the factors that contribute to the location and character of Maroon settlements; and to obtain material for dating and providing a chronological framework for the origins and development of maroon heritage in Jamaica. The overall objective is to identify the character and mechanism of the functional adaptation of Maroon societies in Jamaica over time.

Excavation
The site of Nanny Town is strategically located within the loop of the Stony River which marks its southern and eastern boundaries (see Figure 1, page 6). Blocking off the Stony River and standing steeply against its northern bank is the Abraham Hill. To the north and west of the site is Nanny Hill from which the Nanny Falls splashes down on to the level open grounds from which the spring flows onto the south-eastern bend of the Stony River marking the boundary on that side of the site. Figure 1 indicates areas excavated so far and the nature of the site as mapped during the excavations in 1991 and 1992. The rectangular stone structure believed to be a military fortification built during the British-Maroon wars still remains the main feature at the site. A large block of stone is located nearby with engraved a message that the site was taken and controlled for a brief period by a Captain Brook. It appears to have been tampered with by more recent visitors to the site. Another feature is a more recent stone slab, measuring 27cm by 35cm with the engraving "Bermuda Regiment 1971".

Figure 1 indicates areas excavated so far and Level 3 in a few areas, particularly in the eastern sections of the site where much of the material that appears to predate the maroon period of settlement was derived.

Finds
Provisional field inventory of finds indicates that approximately three thousand artifacts were recovered. More than 50% of this total consisted of fragments of green glass bottle, followed by 10% and 15% of local ceramics and metal objects respectively. An interesting feature of the finds is their variety. Analysis and drawing of the finds has already started and should be available soon.

Cultural Phases
Nanny Town is recognised as having seen three cultural phases of occupation, the first which appears to pre-date Maroon presence in the area, with its mixture of local ceramics, stone artifacts as well as shell material.

Continued on page 6
BARBECUE

Another fund-raising barbecue was held on the lawn of the Senior Common Room, UWI, on December 5th 1992, and realised a much-needed surplus of approximately $2,000 through ticket and bar sales. The attendance was around 100, down on last year’s 25th Anniversary barbecue, but more tickets were sold.

Doreen Prendergast and Winston McCullum acted as Masters of Ceremony, and supervised the allocation and distribution of the many spot prizes, donated by generous sponsors. Prizes included three weekends-for-two at the Boscobel Beach Hotel, Sans Souci Hotel and Spa, and Asra Country Inn. The music, which was provided by Mr Gonzalez, of the Jamaica Bauxite Institute, helped to wash down the splendid fare of barbecued chicken, rice and peas, and salad.

All the members of Council were involved in organising the barbecue, and other members volunteered their help too. However, the Society is particularly indebted to a number of individuals for their unrelenting efforts; Larry Neufville, this year as last year, co-ordinated the event; Balfour Spence and Angela Taylor again spent many hours over the hot fire, cooking their deliciously-seasoned chicken; Janet Hyde, Claudia James and Donna and Day-Dawn Simon prepared additional food and fruit punch; Perez Cross organised the drinks bar; and David Miller was on duty at the entrance throughout the event. Sharon Lennon helped co-ordinate the holiday sponsors.

The Society has organised three barbecues in recent years: the first was in June 1991 as last year, co-ordinated by a group of six former graduates, If you have any suggestions please contact the Council; and your help is always appreciated.

HILLSIDE AGRICULTURE FIELD TRIP

Althea Johnson writes: The first field trip for 1993 was a visit to a number of the sub-projects of the Hillside Agriculture Project (H.A.P) on January 23rd. A group of 25 sixth formers from four corporate area high schools and 10 JGS members departed from the Geography Department, UWI, at 8.30am, and joined the Hillside Agriculture Project (H.A.P) team at the Farmers’ Training Centre at Twickenham Park, Spanish Town, shortly afterwards. The day’s activities were led by Marlene Lewis (JGS member and UWI geography graduate), and a team of four colleagues from the Ministry of Agriculture.

The field trip entailed visits to four farms located in north eastern St Catherine. The locations were either experimental farms or rehabilitation projects. The objective of the H.A.P is to preserve the watershed by ensuring that farmers utilize agronomic soil conservation techniques and proper farming (cultural) practices.

The first halt was an unscheduled stop where the group observed the Natural Bridge, ‘the eighth wonder of the world’. This outstanding landform is located along the Riversdale main road. It is a natural bridge of hard limestone rock across a narrow gorge formed by the Rio Doro. Other features of the gorge were created from fluvial action and chemical weathering.

The first scheduled stop was at Harewood, the Pineapple management trial, on Mr Winston Morrison’s farm. The project specialises in the Cheeae and Sugar Loaf varieties of pineapple. The Cowboy and Rippy varieties of Sugar Loaf are common. The project is designed for small farmers with less than 5 acres. There are twelve groups in the project area. The groups are selected by a Farmers Action Committee, using the criteria of land tenure, age, location of the farmer’s plot (must be suitable in terms of project design), and a farmer’s willingness to participate. Under the project the farmer can rehabilitate old plots or establish experimental plots. The pineapples are planted in rows and ridges to keep the soil together, and the rows are intercropped with coconut or short term crops which are planted on the ridges. The chemicals used are biodegradable over a seven day period. Urea is the best fertilizer.

The second stop was at Troja, the Mango variety trial on Mr Edward Buchanan’s farm. To reach this farm the group had to negotiate a barbed wire fence and a downhill walk. The farm consists of a variety of fruit/food trees. The most important economic trees were mangoes (especially the Nelson, Hayden and Tom Atkins varieties), and these were intercropped with banana, citrus and cedar trees.

Such mixed cropping practices are typical of rural small farmers in Jamaica, to ensure steady incomes, and to spread their risks. The

INTERCROPPING

Mixed intercropping
Growing two or more crops simultaneously in the same field. Intercrop competition may be during all or part of crop growth

Row intercropping
Growing two or more crops simultaneously where one or more crops are planted in rows

Strip intercropping
Growing two or more crops simultaneously in different strips, wide enough to permit independent cultivation, but narrow enough for the crops to interact agronomically

Relay intercropping
Growing two or more crops simultaneously during part of the life cycle of each. A second crop is planted after the first crop has reached its reproductive stage of growth, but before it is harvested.

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The third stop was at Pear Tree Grove, a cocoa rehabilitation project on Mr Ferdinand Miller’s farm. Before the H.A.P. project was started, the cocoa on Mr Miller’s farm was planted in a haphazard way; on a one acre plot, a quarter of an acre of cocoa trees yielded about two and a half boxes of cocoa. Jamaica’s national yield is about 5-6 boxes. Under the H.A.P. rehabilitation project, 230 trees were planted in a 20 feet x 20 feet pattern; this one acre of cocoa will yield about 40-60 boxes.

The Cocoa Rehabilitation project aims to encourage the farmers to increase their acreage of cocoa, to plant higher yielding varieties which are disease-resistant, to use fertilizers to increase crop yield, to apply minimum dosage of pesticides to prevent soil contamination, to adopt pruning techniques, and to aim for two harvests per year (following the rainy seasons). The cocoa is sold to the Richmond Fermentory.

The fourth stop was at the Redwood Coffee experiment, the farm of Mr Vincent Logan. On Mr Logan’s 3 to 4 acres of gently sloping land, lowland coffee is intercropped with coconut and plantain. The coffee is planted using either

(1) the Coffee Industry Development Company (CIDICO) standard; one seedling per hole with 5 lbs of bioganic fertilizer and 4 oz inorganic 8:21:32, or

(2) the H.A.P. standard of 8 lbs of bioganic fertilizer to 4 oz inorganic 8:21:32 per seedling per hole, or two seedlings per hole with 5 lbs of bioganic and 4 oz inorganic.

Since coffee requires 70%-75% of shade, the farmer has to ensure that shade trees are established before the coffee seedlings are planted. Plantain, fast growing plants, are planted at a distance of 10 feet x 10 feet from the coffee, whilst coconut and plantain provide permanent shade are planted 20 feet x 20 feet.

Coffee plants must be pruned; short internodes and numerous laterals increase the yield. Fertilizing is altered with the rainy season and weeding is done in a circle around the root of the plants.

**DISRUPTION TO JGS EVENTS**

A combination of prolonged inclement weather, especially in the first four months of 1993, and the general election campaign caused postponement, cancellation, and disruption to many of the planned JGS activities for the year 1992/93. Two field trips, the Hillside Agriculture Project and a coastal geomorphology tour St Mary and Portland were re-arranged, throwing other dates on the calendar awry. Amongst the postponement casualties were a hike to the Treasure Beach-Black River area of southern St Elizabeth (May 22nd), and a field trip to Serge Island. In addition, there was a rain-affected evening talk by Professor Meyer-Rochow on the Onabuasulu Cannibals of Papua New Guinea.

**COASTAL GEOMORPHOLOGY FIELD TRIP**

Althea Johnson writes: On 27th March, 1993, a group of fearless geographers, comprising A-Level students from five high schools, their teachers, and JGS members, braved heavy rains and embarked upon a field trip around the eastern section of the island. The aim was to observe coastal features, and the trip is becoming almost an annual event on the JGS calendar, for sixth formers in particular.

It began drizzling along the Stony Hill main road, and by the time we reached the mouth of the Wag Water river near Annotto Bay, the rain had become more intense, and the group had to stay in the bus to view the coastal features.

As we continued towards Buff Bay, Hope Bay and St Margaret’s Bay, and the Buff Bay River, White River, Spanish River, and Swift River, respectively, we noted that each river had suspended sediments of a brown colour at their mouths, and the material was carried out to sea in a brown band which flowed parallel to the coastline.

The rain ceased for the lunch stop in Port Antonio. After lunch the group went to Folly Point and saw arches, stacks, inlets, and bays, and the offshore island, Woods Island. The coastal process of wave refraction was well pronounced.

The coastal sediments from this point eastwards towards Manchioneal are quite different from those at the pre-lunch stops. The beach material is biogenic because the sand grains are composed of calcium carbonate, derived from broken shells and other marine invertebrate remains.

The group stopped at Fairy Hill Bay and Long Bay but visibility was very poor. Along this route the coastline is emergent and offshore fringing reefs are common. Uplift has resulted in the development of a raised reef terrace marking a former sea level. At Nettle Point, Manchioneal, the weather was fairer and the group enjoyed a short hike to the highest point on this pronounced reef terrace. The feature has a pitted surface, the product of solutional action. Hydraulic action and blow holes were in evidence.

The 10-hour trip was long and tiring; the group returned to Kingston via St Thomas.

**VERANDAH TALK**

On Thursday, March 25th, Dr Brian Hudson gave an illustrated lecture 'Verandah talk: prospects and refuges from the Antilles to the Antipodes'. Drawing on cognitive concepts about shelter and landscape, the audience of about 20 JGS members enjoyed a presentation ranging from slides of Aboriginal caves, Greek stoas, and Inca ruins, to a variety of verandahs, balconies, porches and colonnades from around the Caribbean, Britain and Australia. As always, Dr Hudson's talk was entertaining, thoughtful, and interesting, and his colour slides were of outstanding quality both in terms of subject matter and photographic technique.

Most older JGS members will remember Brian Hudson as a past President and activitst for the Society, and a respected former geography lecturer in physical planning at UWI. He is presently lecturing at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane. His frequent return visits to the Caribbean have enabled the Society to institutionalise his guest re-appearances.

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RESEARCH ON COCKPIT COUNTRY BORDERS

David Barker and David Miller were recently awarded a research grant from the UWI's Research and Publications Committee to continue their research on forest encroachment and farming systems on the edge of Cockpit Country. Previously, they presented a pilot study of the Windsor area, at the British-Geography Seminar in August, 1992.

A principal objective of the project is to investigate and map, in detail, the dynamics of the patterns and processes of encroachment and abandonment on the borders of Cockpit Country, using aerial photography at selected dates, and field mapping. A second component will examine why some farmers choose to cultivate land in the cockpit forests, whilst others prefer to farm outside the forests. Farmers' decision-making behaviour, their perceptions of alternative farming micro-environments, resource use and cropping systems are to be investigated.

In January, the first phase of the project was undertaken; a detailed survey of a hundred farmers in the vicinity of Troy, on the southern border of Cockpit Country. Paulette Melkile, Clinton Beckford and Christopher Charles formed the interview team, and many of their interviews were conducted in remote farming areas deep in the cockpit forests.

The results of the research project should prove useful to planners in Jamaica's new national parks agency, especially in the difficult geographical task of establishing a meaningful boundary for the national park.

MA FOR KAREN SINCLAIR

Karen, a 1985 geography graduate, recently obtained an MA in Public Administration at Carlton University, Ottawa. She went to Canada on the Institutional Strengthening Programme, (Canadian-Jamaican Training Project) sponsored by CIDA. The focus on Development Administration included courses on Policy Analysis and Environmental Policy. Karen returns to the Planning Institute of Jamaica.

CLAUDETTE HALL

Claudette, a 1983 geography graduate, recently obtained a Masters degree in Urban and Regional Planning (M.U.R.P.) from Alabama A & M University at Huntsville. The course focused on environmental planning, and her dissertation was entitled 'Loss of wetlands in the urbanised area of Madison County 1979-1989, and an assessment of the policies designed for wetland protection'.

Claudette taught in The Bahamas before pursuing her graduate work.
GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

The Geography Teachers Association of Jamaica is an organisation whose objectives are to keep geography alive in the classroom, to look at problems related to the teaching of geography, and to make suggestions and recommendations on aspects of the syllabus as it relates to the teaching of geography. The aim is to get more students involved in geography with proper motivation from their teachers.

Most of the Association's work in the academic year 1992-93 was centred around the School Based Assessment component of the CXC syllabus. This is in the form of a field study undertaken by students at the general proficiency level.

The field study, though not a new component of the CXC geography syllabus, was optional up to 1993. The field study (termed the S.B.A.) will be compulsory for all CXC geography students at the general proficiency level from 1994, and has to be submitted by March. Only a few schools had experience of S.B.A. prior to this; the majority had not undertaken field studies previously. In order to prepare both teachers and students for the field study, a series of workshops and seminars were organised by the Association.

The first major event was a residential workshop held at Moneague Teachers' College in St Ann, from March 4th-7th, 1992. Geography teachers from over 50 schools across the island participated in the workshop which was spearheaded by Mrs Marjorie Vassell, Education Officer in charge of geography in the Ministry of Education, and Mrs Lorna Fraser, Senior Geography teacher at Holy Childhood High School.

During the workshop, teachers were taken through all aspects of the field study, from the preliminaries through the actual field study and then the writing up of the field study report. The exercise was designed to be similar to that expected of students' work for the CXC field study. The course field reports were marked, and each school which had a participating teacher at the workshop was sent a complete set of the field reports.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Association, held at Caenwood Auditorium on November 6th, 1992, Mrs Vassell presented an assessment of the fieldwork. She pointed out some common errors made by teachers and encouraged them not to allow the students to make similar mistakes.

Some of the teachers who were unable to attend the Moneague workshop requested a follow-up one-day seminar to assist them in preparing their students for the field study. Consequently, the Association organised another seminar at Caenwood Auditorium on March 12th, 1993. At this seminar, teachers met in groups where they formulated a series of topics and possible aims and objectives.

There was also a general meeting of the Association in January, 1993 which discussed the following topics:

1. Grade 1-9 syllabus
2. Problems and solutions in the A-level geography syllabus
3. Logo for the Association
4. Summary of 1992 geography CXC results
5. An A-Level workshop
6. Problems and solutions in the A-level geography syllabus
7. Logo for the Association
8. Summary of 1992 geography CXC results

This was effectively dealt with by Mrs Fong Kong, senior geography teacher at Immaculate Conception High School.

Yvonne Lee, Secretary

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Sam Bandara, a member of each of the recent expeditions, has experienced both methods of travelling to the site of Nanny Town.

He explains that in 1991 the JDF flew the research team to the site in a helicopter. A landing site had been previously cleared and bushed by Maroons. In 1992, the team had to travel to the site on foot, starting from Windsor in the Rio Grande valley. The journey, with large backpacks and using mules for only part of the journey, took three days, and involved two nights in makeshift huts with plastic sheeting for roofing.

Conditions en route and at the site are extremely tough and, in the absence of radio-contact, fraught with danger. A foot injury to a team member on one occasion, fortunately, was not serious enough to cause problems, but underscored the need for care in negotiating the precipitous and rugged terrain.

In some areas, this phase is presented by artifacts that have been provisionally referred to a Pre-maroon. Some of the participants in the excavation think the makers of the artifacts of this phase might be Arawak. No date can be assigned to this phase yet although it is highly suspected to date between 1500 and 2000 years ago.

The second phase at the Nanny Town site, provisionally referred to as the Maroon phase of occupation, contains ceramics much of which are local grinding stones and a considerable amount of charcoal which, if dated, should hopefully facilitate our understanding of its relationship to other phases. Much of the charcoal comes from levels that contain plenty of ashy layers on surfaces that appear to have been trampled upon or beaten. One fragment of red clay pipe bowl, fragments of gun flint, gun barrel, musket balls, iron nails, green and clear glass bottles are finds from the Maroon phase. Artifacts from the Maroon phase are difficult to distinguish from a later phase representing the period of Maroon encounter with British forces at the site. A date of 400-500 years ago is provisionally assigned to the Maroon phase.

In addition to the finds mentioned above, the Maroon phase, like that of the phase which followed it, contained kaolin smoking pipe stems and bowls, pharmaceutical tools such as scissors, buttons, a coin (Dutch or Spanish origin), a glass bead, fragments of imported ceramics and fragments of a gun barrel.

The third phase is represented by the stone fortification as well as engraved stones. The main finds of this phase include many fragments of smoking pipes, buttons, fragments of gun barrels, buttons, pharmaceutical bottles, nails, imported ceramic bowls, plates and cups, buckles, and a large quantity of green glass bottle fragments. A few post holes are associated with this phase at the site. One of them appears to represent the location of a flag post, possibly erected by the British forces. This hole, approximately 1.5 metres deep from the surface, was lined with stones and located against the back wall of the stone structure.

**Some observations**

Although no dates are available yet for the phases mentioned, the results appear to be very interesting because they raise many issues that suggest the need to begin to rethink interpretation of the history of Jamaica. That Nanny Town was a stronghold which has been occupied for a fairly long period of time, and that its occupation...
could date to periods before colonial contact. This possibility becomes even more attractive if the speculation that the artifacts suggested to be prehistoric or Arawak is confirmed. In this case, one could further suggest that Nanny Town may have been a stronghold or a hiding place of escapees during the Spanish period, and who may have been some of the traditional groups that the Spanish encountered on their arrival. It also appears that some of the traditional groups who may have been on the island and who were already settled at Nanny Town before the Spanish came in, may have eventually welcomed and accommodated escapees from both Spanish and English periods. If we assume that the prehistoric groups were Arawaks, it would suggest that the very first escapees were also Arawaks. Would that mean that the first Maroons were Arawaks? Possibly.

Another issue that follows from the above discussion is that association between material of the first two phases points to the suggestion that a few of the Arawaks who may have escaped into the inaccessible parts of the Blue Mountains and similar places were still around at the time the English sacked the Spanish from the island. Books on the history of Jamaica will have to correct the erroneous impression that the Arawaks had all been exterminated by the Spanish. It appears from the evidence from Nanny Town (pending results of dates), that prehistoric Arawak groups in hideouts in inaccessible areas of Jamaica may have been gradually absorbed into the structure of escaped slave groups which later joined them.

Material associated with the stone structure at the site of Nanny Town clearly supports the view that the structure was not built by the Maroons (as is usually claimed in Maroon oral traditions). The feature may have been used later after the Maroons took over the site but only after the British had left Nanny Town.

Not much can be said about other issues such as the relationship between Nanny Town and other known Maroon settlements in the vicinity of the site as well as those in other parts of the island during the period of its occupation, and the social network that may have have bound them in any relationships. It is also premature to speculate about the structural pattern of the settlement because not much of the site has not yet been excavated.

BLUE MOUNTAINS EXPEDITION TO NANNY TOWN, 1973-74

Though probably known to Maroon hog hunters, the actual site of Nanny Town was brought to the attention of the scientific community by Alan Teulon, in 1967. He found a carved stone built by the English soldiers who occupied the town between 1734 and 1739.

Between December 1973 and January 1974, the Scientific Exploration Society with the co-operation of the Institute of Jamaica mounted an expedition to the site of Nanny Town, led by Lt. Harley Nott. Site Director of the Expedition, Tony Bonner, described the site as ‘little disturbed since abandoned about 235 years years ago and there was a scattering of artifacts on the surface of the ground, mainly early 18th century British green bottle fragments. There may have been an occasional visit from a hog hunter; while some blank cartridge cases show evidence of a visit by military personnel in recent years.’

The expedition team undertook archaeological work at the site and recovered many artifacts such as musket barrels, musket balls, hammers and flints for muskets, clay pipes, buttons, early green glass bottle necks and bases, iron axe heads and red earthenware. The collection and the photographs taken on the expedition are housed in the Institute of Jamaica.

Sources and further reading

With much more data on the physical nature of the settlement as well as those of other maroon sites, it should be possible to attempt serious generalisations on the character and mechanism of the functional adaptation of the maroons over time.

There is a very strong chance that the final results will require that some issues of the history of Jamaica be revised. The results of the 1991 excavation appear to have re-opened the opportunity towards the understanding and better appreciation of the heritage of the maroons within the general history of Jamaica.

The University of the West Indies research programme continues with further excavations and it is hoped that more evidence will be obtained which will provide an expanded version of the generalisations being made. It cannot be assumed that much has been achieved at this time. All the material (finds, slides, photo prints etc) of this excavation are housed in the Archaeological Laboratory of the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, where analysis is being conducted. The next and last major excavation season at Nanny Town is scheduled for August 6th to September 2nd this year.

Kofi is a member of the Department of History at Mona, and he has firmly established the study of Archaeology at UWI. He is also a JGS Member.

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NEWS OF MEMBERS

Michael Tharkur has joined the Caribbean Development Bank in Barbados, teaming up with Cheryl Dixon, who is currently the Head of the Environmental Desk at the same Institution. Michael, like Cheryl, was working for the Planning Institute of Jamaica at the time of recruitment, and was also a member of the JGS Council.

Lorna Fraser, one of Jamaica's most experienced geography teachers, is leaving Holy Childhood High School to take up a position at the Ministry of Education.

Mrs Theolora Reynolds, formerly a geography teacher at Munro College in St Elizabeth, has joined the staff of the University of the West Indies, as warden of Mary Seacole Hall of Residence.

Agatha Addy, formerly geography teacher at Jamaica College, has joined the staff of the Natural Resources Conservation Authority.

OVERSEAS MEMBERS

The Council is encouraging members to recruit friends from overseas to join the Society. Former geography graduates of UWI are particularly welcome, and may wish to use the opportunity to stay in touch with Jamaica and the Geography Department at UWI. Annual overseas membership is US$5.

Arawak Answers
1. Guyana
2. Xaymaca
3. Zemi
4. Petroglyphs
5. Caciques
6. Coas
7. Silk Cotton Tree
8. White Marl, just outside Spanish Town; it is the site of a former Arawak village
9. Batos
10. Alcos

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ITEMS FOR NEWSLETTER

Send your news, views, ideas and information to the Editor for publication. Try your hand at writing a short article on your activities as a professional geographer. The Newsletter needs your contributions.

Jamaican Geographer

ISSN 1017-4753

Editor: David Barker
Address: Department of Geography, The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston 7, Jamaica, Phone 927-2129

Typesetting: PMLM Ltd.
Printing: University Printers, The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston 7, Jamaica

8 – Jamaican Geographer (8), May 1993