

# The St Helena Ambassador

... An Extraordinary Place on a Path to Prosperity

Issue: 10 August 2013

## CPA Delegation Departs after Busy Week

**D**eparting the Island on Tuesday 6 August was a Delegation from the UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).

At Governor Capes' invitation and financed by the Governor's Delegated Fund, the Delegation were on-Island for a week to hold a series of seminars for newly elected Councillors, as a major part of their induction process.

While here, members of the Delegation briefed Elected Members on their role as Councillors, the leadership required from them, strategic policy making and the function of Committees, dealing with conflicting pressures, working with officials, the importance of keeping the community informed, effective communication, scrutiny and accountability, and the ethical behaviour and standards expected from Elected Members.



**CPA Delegation L to R:** John Grimes , Tim Crookall, Lord Shutt of Greetland OBE FCA , Joyce Watson and Barry Paint

## Raising Awareness of Diabetes

**D**iabetes is known as the silent killer and approximately 16% of the Island

population has been diagnosed with the condition.

To raise awareness of this problem on St Helena, a series of Awareness Sessions were held in July at various Clinics and Community Centres around the Island.

National Diabetes Week is normally held every June and the sessions here on St Helena were to raise awareness of the seriousness of diabetes and to educate the public on how to avoid complications related to the condition. At each session there were information stalls on diabetes and how it can be prevented and controlled. Government Directorates, Schools and other organisations were also encouraged to take part in a Mufti Day - 'Wear Denim for Diabetes' - to raise awareness of the condition and raise funds to help the cause.



Corporate Support staff Wearing Denim for Diabetes

Diabetic Nurse, Jackie Henry, helps patients suffering with diabetes by educating them on their diet, complications and risk factors. She also conducts blood tests for surveillance and to ensure the condition is being kept under control. Jackie also leads special clinics to assess patients' overall condition, their foot care and carries out Doppler and monofilament

screening to check compliance. Jackie said:

*"Despite the high number of diagnosed cases on St Helena, 648 in total, the response from the public at these information sessions was disappointing. During this month five new cases of diabetes were diagnosed and it is a worrying trend on the Island. Small changes to our diet, lifestyles and increased exercise all make a difference in preventing and controlling the disease."*

## First Ever St Helena Field Guides are Published

**A** first ever series of books, entitled 'Field Guides to the Flora of St Helena', was launched on St Helena on 1 July 2013 and released in the UK a month later.

The series, consisting of three titles, 'Lichens of St Helena', 'Mosses & Liverworts of St Helena' and



'Flowering Plants & Ferns of St Helena', describes in total nearly 1000 plant and lichen species which are currently in the wild on St Helena, both native and introduced. The detailed species accounts cover identification, history and ecology and are complemented with distribution maps and keys. The series is also illustrated

with over 2100 photos.

Dr Phil Lambdon, an author of one of the titles, explained the idea behind the series:

*"The idea started in 2008 when Andrew Darlow and myself carried out a botanical survey of St Helena as part of the South Atlantic Invasive Species Project. After six months of wandering the Island looking at plants we had learned a lot. We had compiled a long list of new, introduced species and turned up some interesting information about the natives and endemics, including rediscovering one extinct Sedge and describing two grasses new to science. We thought it was a good opportunity to share our findings with the wider public.*

*"A few years earlier, Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks had instigated visits by experts on Lichens and Bryophytes, so we decided to also bring these on board, enabling us to aim for a comprehensive series of three books. Things took off when the Overseas Territories Environment Programme agreed to provide the funding."*

The three titles are each written by different authors - 'Lichens of St Helena' was written by an experienced Dutch Lichenologist, Andre Aptroot, who has studied lichens in many parts of the tropics; 'Mosses & Liverworts of St Helena' was written by Bryologist, Martin Wigginton from the UK, who has also worked widely in the tropics, especially in Africa; and 'Flowering Plants & Ferns of St Helena' was written by Dr Phil Lambdon, who has been working in Nature Conservation on St Helena for five years.

The series was edited by Andrew Darlow and Dr Lambdon and has been published by Pisces Publications, a specialist publisher of natural history and conservation books.

Putting together this series has taken five years. Dr

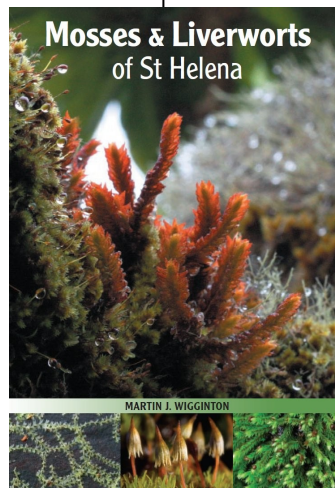
Lambdon explained that this started with the maps which were produced during the original botanical survey.

*"Every species had to be carefully described with field notes and we needed numerous long hikes to photograph plants. Sometimes the species were not in flower or the light wasn't good enough so we didn't always get the shots on the first attempt. In total we have certainly walked over 1000 km.*

*"I also spent a year of painstaking research at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, gathering background information and comparing St Helena's plants with specimens from elsewhere in the world. Even after everything was written, typeset and illustrated, Andrew and I finally had to spend countless hours proofreading."* St Helena has been widely famed for its special flora for centuries, but this is the first time that a Field Guide has been produced to showcase this. There have been a few

academic works on the Island's plants, but a Field Guide is different - it is fully illustrated and expressed in easily understandable language which can literally 'guide' even the beginner through the subject. Aside from the endemics, there has been no information available at all until now. Dr Lambdon explained:

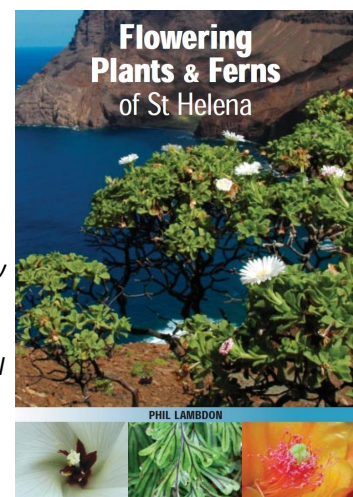
*"Our main aim was to write something which would help Saints appreciate their environment, and also be a useful tool for conservationists in the battle to save our extremely threatened endemics. Hopefully it will also help to entice tourists to visit once the airport is*



*finished.*

*"Overall, I hope the books will raise the profile of conservation on St Helena, both at home and on the international stage. Having been in the dark ages for so long, we now probably have more comprehensive plant literature than any small Island in the world!"*

'Field Guides to the Flora of St Helena' are now on sale through the St Helena National Trust Office and the Museum in Jamestown, or they can be purchased directly from the St Helena Nature Conservation Group. Internationally, they can be bought through a number of major on-line booksellers, or by visiting the SNCG website (<http://www.shnccg.org/>), where there is a reduction offer on a full set of three volumes.



publicrelationsofficer1@sainthelena.gov.sh



+ 290 2368



[www.sainthelena.gov.sh](http://www.sainthelena.gov.sh)

## The St Helena Private Sector

**E**nterprise St Helena (ESH) hosted an official Open Day on 19 July 2013 to mark its first year in operation.

The Open Day, held at the ESH Business Park at Ladder Hill, showcased what ESH has been doing over the last 12 months, the opportunities and activities that will be available in the next 32 months (the estimated time until the airport opens), and the opportunities for development and business growth.

One local business entrepreneur who has invested in St Helena and now runs a successful business from the ESH Business Park is Deborah Benjamin, Manager of Benji's Cleaning Service. We caught up

with Deborah to find out about her business and how it has grown over the last five years.



### Benji's Cleaning Service 5 Years on

**O**wned by Deborah Benjamin of Half Tree Hollow, Benji's Cleaning Service has been in operation now for 5 years during which time the business has grown to 60 employees serving 115 properties. Set up on 9 May 2008, Benji's Cleaning Service was born out of Deborah's passion for cleaning and domestic work.

Having left the Island in 1984, spending 12 years on Ascension, 3 years on the Falklands and 6 years in the UK - all the time operating in domestic work - when Deborah came home on a break she realised that she wanted to set up her own cleaning business. She finally took the plunge in 2008. Benji's Cleaning Service was set up using Deborah's own finances and in the beginning was solely run and worked by her. She started out with just 2 hoovers, 4 brooms, 2 cases of polish, cleaning cloths, mops and a ladder all brought with her from the UK. Back then, Deborah worked 12 hour shifts from 7.30am to 7.30pm, offering general cleaning of houses, offices and accommodation, window cleaning, floor polishing and scrubbing and deep cleaning of cupboards and stoves.

Five years later, Deborah now employs 60 full time and part time employees and operates from Unit 15 of the ESH Business Park, Ladder Hill.

Deborah said:

*"The availability of premises like the units at the Business Park is very convenient when running a business. Before, I used to work from home until early hours in the morning - but now having my own office has enabled me to complete all my paperwork during working hours and also hold meetings with my staff."*

Benji's Cleaning Service now offers carpet cleaning and will soon provide cleaning of upholstery. The business serves private homes, the private sector,

Government offices, Crown Estates and commercial properties. Deborah is thinking of expanding her business to include car cleaning, but a suitable location and limited utilities are factors which need to be considered.

About her business

Deborah said:

*"In the five years of operation, I have received very few complaints and clients are satisfied with the services we offer. All of my cleaners must work to a certain standard and I am in constant contact with clients to ensure they are satisfied with the services they are paying for."*

*I believed that there was a gap in the market for my type of business and with word of mouth and advertising my business has grown to the size that it is today."*

To Saints overseas who might be thinking of returning home to start a business, Deborah advised:

*"If you are thinking of coming home to set up a business you must be really sure that this is what you want to do and be willing to work long hours. There will be downtimes but you must be prepared to take the bad with the good and always enjoy what you do."*

*"My business is a perfect example that if you really put your mind to something, it will take off - but I would not have got where I am today without perseverance and the backing of a reliable and dedicated team!"*



Deborah Benjamin

## News Snippets

### Airport Update

An Airport Site Visit to Prosperous Bay Plain on Tuesday 6 Aug showed continuing work filling Dry Gut and levelling of the platform for the Combined Building, which will house Air Traffic Control. Basil Read is currently blasting approximately 22,000 cubic metres of suitable rockfill material a day on Prosperous Bay Plain. Dry Gut has now been filled up to 240m, with another 60m to go. For further information on the Airport Project please see [www.sainthelenaaccess.com](http://www.sainthelenaaccess.com)



**Dry Gut**



**Levelling of the Platform for the Combined Building**

### Return of Island Games Team

The St Helena Team returned on 30 July from the 2013 Small Island Games in Bermuda - where St Helena won a Gold and two Silver Medals. Team Members were Pam Young , Jeremy Roberts and Ryan Pelley (Team Managers), Carlos Yon, Patrick Young and Simon Henry (Shooting) Lee Yon and Ryan Benjamin (Badminton) and Martin Buckley and Peter Bagley (Golf).



### St Helena Student Graduates

Student, April Lawrence, graduated from the University of Portsmouth on 23 July with a Second Class Honours (Upper Division) Degree in Sociology and Psychology.

April returns to St Helena in October following a short holiday in the UK.



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[publicrelationsofficer1@sainthelena.gov.sh](mailto:publicrelationsofficer1@sainthelena.gov.sh)



+ 290 2368



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