

# The St Helena Ambassador

... An Extraordinary Place on a Path to Prosperity

Issue: 4 February 2013

## GOVERNOR CAPES TURNS KEY FOR BIGGEST BLAST YET!

**O**n 4 February 2013 His Excellency Governor Capes (pictured) turned the key and triggered the biggest blast to date on the airport project—using 73 tons of explosives to generate 120,000 cubic metres of material. This will be used for the fill in Dry Gut where the majority of work continues apace. Blasting is now happening once a week but will soon be taking place once a day to generate enough rockfill for the earthworks team to upscale its work. **To date, Dry Gut has been filled with 250,000 cubic metres of fill out of the 8 million cubic metres required, to raise the level by almost 100 metres.**

The night shift has also now started and the earthworks teams are familiarising themselves with night conditions. At present one team is working the night shift, increasing to four teams by the end of March.

In Rupert's Valley, the Basil Read team are busy with concrete works for the Bulk Fuel Installation. Work also continues on the Haul Road where it is being cut down to formation level to allow heavy plant machinery to move from Rupert's to the airport site on Prosperous Bay Plain.

There are currently 269 Saints employed on the airport project.





## NEW WORLD RECORD FOR JACOB'S LADDER CHALLENGE

**F**ive Minutes and 16 seconds is the new record for the 699 step challenge of Jacob's Ladder - now held by visiting Consultant Engineer, Graham Doig, who has knocked previous record holder, German marathon runner Stephan Schlett, off the top spot.

Graham, who works for Fairhurst and is from Inverness in Scotland, was recently on St Helena to carry out improvements to the Island's water supply and took part in the charity challenge to raise funds for local youth club New Horizons. The ladder, which links Jamestown to Ladder Hill Fort some 620 feet above sea level, is a near vertical climb in places and was a daunting prospect for Graham in the days leading up to the challenge. He was convinced that he had no chance of breaking the record and had a real feeling that he would let his supporters down.

At the time of the ascent, a small but vocal crowd gathered at the bottom of the Ladder, while Graham ran up and down the road to warm up - as officials checked the timing system.

Graham recounts the events of the day:

"As I headed off the crowd cheered and this had the effect of making me go too quickly. I started to pay for this as I approached the half way mark and was labouring as I passed the medics. I decided to go on all fours to try and keep the momentum up. I usually don't do this until the steep section at the end but it helped to keep the pace up for a while. As I approached the final section I was again struggling. I kept hearing my kids back home in my head telling me I had to do it. I was breathing hard and tried to push beyond my comfort zone. Then I heard the crowd yelling from the top and this gave me an extra boost. As the noise from the crowd rose I found that I was somehow, to my utter surprise, able to sprint the last 50 or so steps.

"At the top I collapsed, sucking and blowing like a demented steam train. I could hear voices in echoes as if I was in a dream.



"But I was happy that I had given my all. Then, through the fog of exhaustion, I heard voices saying 'he's got it' and '5min 16secs'. At first I did not believe them, and kept repeating 'NO WAY'. Then as everyone kept telling me, including the officials, it dawned that I had indeed 'got it'. I was ecstatic. I ran over to

the wall at the top of the ladder and let out a scream of pure delight, mixed with a large slice of relief."

Graham is a keen road cyclist, who commutes 13 miles each way to work most days and does some road racing with the local club (Moray Firth Cycle Club, based in Inverness). Graham first visited the Island in October 2010 and was fascinated by the ladder and the physical challenge it presented. Back then, he climbed it a few times and managed a best, unofficial time of 5mins 35secs. He returned in 2011, but with the pressure of work only managed one ascent. On the most recent trip Graham was on Island for two weeks and agreed, with encouragement from Martin Squibbs, Water and Drainage Manager, to have a go at an official time.

It certainly paid off. Well done Graham!



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## A TASTE FOR EVERYONE

**T**he St Helena Distillery, owned and solely run by Paul Hickling, has been in operation since 2006 and has recently relocated from the cellar of Donny's Bar on the Seafrost to Paul's residence at Alarm Forest.

The Distillery is now housed in a purpose-built two storey building where the process for making spirits is much easier. There is also space for a large storage room and an area for siting 10 fermenting tanks, half of which are now in operation. Alcohol processing takes place on the ground floor and in time the top floor of the building will be converted into a visitor centre with a bar, to allow visitors to relax and overlook Paul working in the gallery below.

Starting off with the production of the well known Tungi spirit, Paul has expanded his production line to include White Lion Spiced Rum, Midnight Mist Coffee Liqueur and Jamestown Gin - what Paul describes as 'something for everyone'. He has also just started to produce mini versions product which are sold as a collectors pack.

Paul has also experimented with making a Brandy and a White Wine. He hopes the former will be ready for the bicentennial commemoration of Napoleon's exile (1815) in 2015 when he will produce 1000 limited edition bottles. In future, if Paul secures extra help, he would like to go into making Brandy full time and also possibly a Banana Liqueur made exclusively from local bananas.

Currently, Paul's customers are mostly locally based and his products can be found in St Helena shops and pubs. In a month, Paul turns out between 250 and 300 bottles, easily recognisable in shops, including a bottle that reflects the steps of Jacob's Ladder. Paul explains that it is difficult to export the spirits and is also very expensive.

Paul said: "Since the start up in 2006, demand has increased and should get better when the airport is completed - but of course everything takes time. I am now on the tourist trail as well which is an added advantage - I had the Arc Rally Fleet up here earlier this year and am looking forward to the next cruise ship visit in April.

"Feedback from customers overseas reports that Tungi is the most popular drink - winning the Silver and Commended Medal in 2007 and 2009 respectively in a UK international spirit competition. People respect it as an exceptionally good drink as it is very smooth. The White Lion Spiced Rum did not take off as well as expected but is now growing fast. The Midnight Mist is also going very well but the fastest growing of all is the Jamestown Gin - people love it!"

### **The Process from Prickly Pear to Bottled Tungi Spirit**

The process involves first fermenting the prickly pear (tungi) fruit with a small amount of sugar and yeast, which is then made into a mash or a wash. This then ferments for two weeks, during which time the alcohol is produced. This then goes into the Still to produce the spirit, which is then watered down as it is very strong. When it is down to the volume and strength it should be, it is bottled and packaged to go. From picking the fruit to bottling, the process takes approximately three weeks.



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## NEW BUS SERVICE TRIAL FOR ST HELENA

**T**oday (11 February 2013) sees the start of the new trial run for the St Helena bus system with six revised routes, including a new cross country route and additional runs.

The trial, which will run up until the end of July, is the result of an extensive review that started in April 2012. This analysed existing documentation and previous work, and looked at how the existing service was used by collecting passenger data and consulting employers and transport operators. Views were gathered on how the system could be improved and a questionnaire was issued to the public. A key aim of the review was to retarget the way the public subsidy was being used. The study looked at all forms of transport on the Island, including the home to duty buses, to see how the whole system could be better integrated. Results gathered from the review were then used to inform what the new improved and cost effective service should look like.

The study found that the existing arrangements for home to duty transport were generally working well for Government staff and private sector workers, such as those at Solomon's, Thorpes and Queen Mary Stores. So, this has not been changed. The concept of incorporating transport for health workers into the existing arrangements has however, been included, meaning that people can get on the same buses that are being used for home to duty workers.

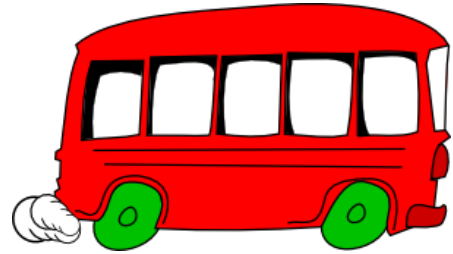
For routes to the outlying districts - Blue Hill and Sandy Bay - a Dial a Ride system has been examined. Passengers would call into a central point before making the journey, which would then be coordinated to enable customers to share transport with other people. The cost would then be lower than if you took a taxi by yourself. This service is not operational at the moment, but should be in the near future.

During the trial period, data will be collected to inform future provision. If there is demand for additional routes, then inclusion of these journeys will be considered. Further work will also include targeting the subsidy more effectively to cater for vulnerable groups who may need concessions or special fares. These changes will then be introduced in the permanent routes from the end of July.

Joshua's taxis will operate the new trial service, with Solomon's continuing to do the route to Blue Hill. Colin's Garage will continue to operate the route to Sandy Bay. A timetable for the new trial bus service is now available. It

is hoped that the additional times on the timetable will encourage Government staff to work more flexible hours.

Transport is key to people and goods moving around the Island more flexibly, safely and cost effectively — and will be kept under review.



**Talented architectural designers are being invited by St Helena Government to enter a competition to design homes for future developments on the Island.**

The competition encourages innovative young designers and architects to come forward with ideas for quality homes that are innovative and affordable—and is being advertised on the SHG website and in the international press.

His Excellency Governor Capes will chair a judging panel made up of Housing Executive, Andy Crowe, Government Architect, James Stewart and representatives of local residents. Islanders will also be able to make their comments on each of the shortlisted entries, and there will be a public exhibition on St Helena in April, before the judging panel sits.

Housing Executive, Andy Crowe said:

"Great architecture has helped to attract visitors to many places around the world. So we are looking for quality homes that are affordable and eye-catching and which reflect St Helena culture. It's a good way of making sure that we invest as wisely as possible in the future of the Island. We're aiming to offer the winning designer the chance to build some of the new homes that we need in our Comprehensive Development Areas, as well as giving self-builders a modern, new blueprint."

For more information about this exciting competition, visit **A Housing Design for St Helena**, on the Homepage of the SHG website: [www.sainthelena.gov.sh](http://www.sainthelena.gov.sh)