

MNT NEWSLETTER

June 2025

AND WE'RE BACK—AGAIN!

HELLO!

It's been some time since we last shared an MNT Newsletter — but that's about to change. From June 2025, we'll be publishing a biannual newsletter, issued mid-year and at year's end. So, sit back, relax, and catch up on everything the Trust has been working on.

Future issues will feature Archive, MNT news stories, updates from our Council Members (find out who they are and what being a Council Member means to them), and Spots on Our Staff, where you'll get to meet our team one by one and learn a little more about what they do at the Trust.



CONGRATULATIONS

The Montserrat National Trust family extends heartiest congratulations to Mrs. Dulcie James, (MNT President), and Dr. Jean Handscombe, (MNT Volunteer Archivist) for being included in His Majesty, the King's, Birthday Honours List. The announcement was made on Friday, 13 June, by Her Excellency, the Governor, at the Governor's Residence.

Mrs. James was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for her contribution to public and voluntary service.

Dr. Handscombe was awarded the Member of the British Empire (MBE) for her volunteerism in leading archiving, historical and archeological research at the Montserrat National Trust.



UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES CONSERVATION FORUM

In early February, we welcomed the Scientific Team from the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) as part of the DPLUS 192 Biodiversity Toolkit Project. They worked with on-island partners at the MNT, Museum, Department Of Environment, as well as the Ministry of Education to continue work on ensuring that the Montserrat environment caters for the well-being of the people, flora and fauna of the island.

As part of the project, the Trust was also delighted to host renowned natural history illustrator Lizzi Harper, who led several art sessions during her visit. These sessions included groups such as Monty's Messengers, Monty's Ambassadors, art students from the Montserrat Secondary School, and community members.

The winning entries for the Children's Biodiversity Art Competition were awarded prizes, which were generously sponsored by the UKOTCF.



MONTSERRAT'S KING'S BATON RELAY & COMMONWEALTH CLEAN OCEAN PLASTIC CAMPAIGN

In May, Montserrat proudly welcomed the King's Baton Relay, as part of a wider Caribbean journey promoting environmental stewardship and unity across the Commonwealth. Locally, the Monty Ambassadors led a plastic cleanup activity under the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Plastic Campaign hosted by the Montserrat Commonwealth Sport Association

This important initiative brought together local communities, schools, and organisations in a coordinated beach cleanup effort—aimed at reducing plastic pollution, raising awareness, and gathering vital data on coastal waste patterns.



Impact Highlights:

- ◆ 2,075 pieces of plastic collected
- ◆ 989.98 lbs. / 449.05 kg of plastic removed from our coastline

Thanks to the passionate efforts of all involved, Montserrat continues to demonstrate its commitment to protecting our natural environment and inspiring change - one clean shore at a time.

MONTSERRAT NATIONAL TRUST PRESERVING THE PAST * PROTECTING THE PRESENT * ENRICHING THE FUTURE

MNT Newsletter

EDITED BY NAME

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MONTERRAT NATIONAL TRUST FLOWER SHOW AND GARDEN PARTY 2025

This year's celebration honors Montserrat's resilience, marking three decades since the Soufriere Hills volcanic eruption. Theme: "Rising from the Ashes: 30 Years in Bloom" pays tribute to the island's remarkable journey, its vibrant flourishing landscape, a living symbol of hope, determination, and the enduring spirit of its people.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the dedicated staff and volunteers whose tireless efforts made this event a resounding success. Special appreciation goes to the members of the Tea Party and Flower Show Committees, Anthony Tangkai, Ann Granger, Chadd Cumberbatch, Dr. Tiffannie Skerit, and the Brownies for their invaluable contributions and support.

Together, we continue to bloom.



RESTORATION OF SUGAR MILL MUSEUM AT RICHMOND HILL & INTERPRETATION OF ST ANTHONY CHURCH SITE

The Trust submitted a proposal to the Government of Montserrat for the refurbishment of the Old Sugar Mill at Richmond Hill to serve as a Visitor Centre. This location overlooks the buried city of Plymouth and will feature before-and-after photographs and interactive exhibits.

Additionally, the Anglican Church sought the Trust's advice on developing the St Anthony Church site as a space of historic and cultural interest.

In early May, Dr Reginald Murphy (UNESCO Commissioner from Antigua) visited Montserrat for meetings with the Trust, Government officials, members of the Anglican Church, the MVO, DMCA, and the Montserrat Tourism Office. Dr Murphy consulted on both projects, and will provide a Report offering recommendations on archaeology and heritage restoration and interpretation.



MUSEUM NEWS

Made in Montserrat: Preserving Our Maker Traditions

Plenty is happening at the National Museum of Montserrat! Right now, we're proud to highlight **Made in Montserrat**, an interactive exhibition celebrating the island's long tradition of making rather than buying. From cassava graters and coal pots to flour sack bloomers and carnival costumes, this exhibit showcases objects created by Montserratians through the years.

Supported by the **Arcadia Fund**, the **British Museum**, and the **Endangered Material Knowledge Programme (EMKP)**, this project documents Montserrat's material heritage through photography, cataloguing, and community memory-sharing. You can learn more here: <https://www.emkp.org/made-in-montserrat-legacy-digitization-for-material-objects-in-the-national-museum-of-montserrat-collection/>

We're also excited about a second EMKP project: **The Uke: Montserrat's Last Locally Crafted Musical Instrument**. In collaboration with local documentary filmmaker **Mr. Randall Greenaway** and the uke makers **Mr. Wilfred White** and **Mr. James Benjamin Baker**, this initiative documents Montserrat's string band culture and the island's last uke makers. Find out more here: <https://www.emkp.org/the-uke-montserrats-last-locally-crafted-musical-instrument/>

Alongside these projects, visitors can enjoy:

- **Music and Masquerades** — try playing a steel pan, xylophone, or hoshos and snap a selfie with Festival characters like The Masquerader, The Bull, and Miss Goosie.
 - **Amerindians: Montserrat's First Peoples** — discover the island's earliest human inhabitants and view archaeological finds dating from 2880 BC to the 1660s AD.
 - **Our Story: 1960–2010** — explore a photo exhibition documenting Plymouth before and after the volcanic eruptions and watch the **Montserrat Volcano Observatory (MVO) Film** — shown on Saturdays only.
- Visit us Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays, 10 am–3 pm** to experience our exhibits and browse the **1768 Gift Shop**. And if you have objects, memories, or stories about Montserrat's makers or string band culture, we'd love to hear from you!

Contact us:

☎ 1-664-491-3036

✉ museum@montserratnationaltrust.ms

🌐 <https://montserratnationaltrust.ms/national-museum/>

FROM THE ARCHIVES

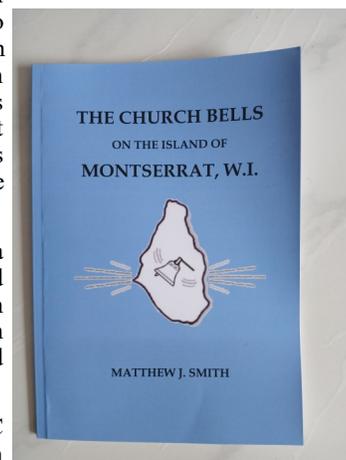
Church bells ringing are only occasionally heard now in Montserrat though they used to be a regular part of the island's soundscape. A recent publication by author, Matthew J Smith, however brings back vividly to mind and ear much of the history of our church bells.

In 2001, Matthew came to Montserrat to rehang the bell from St. Peter's Anglican church after he had helped refurbish it in a workshop in England. After completing his task, and with the kind cooperation of Mr. Jim Bass, Matthew spent his remaining days on island surveying all the church bells he was allowed to visit during that time of heavy volcanic activity. He also began seeking information about those he could not get to see or that had already been destroyed.

Returning to England, he became engrossed in producing his magnum opus Buckinghamshire Bells and Belfries that was published in 2019. Twenty years after his time in Montserrat, having rediscovered his notes from that visit, he began to put together the draft of a slim volume to document that aspect of Montserrat's history and sent it to the Director of the Montserrat National Trust for comment. The Trust's Archive became involved in helping Matthew find more information through archival records, photos and most usefully through interviews with local members of the community who recalled the bells in their churches and the uses they were put to. The author too spent countless hours researching online information about Montserrat's church bells and dealing with all production details. And yes, the text includes instructions on accessing I Remember Safari City Part 1 to hear the lovely bell of St Patrick's Village Anglican as it called parishioners to worship on Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday, 1993.

The result is a 2025 publication entitled The Church Bells on the Island of Montserrat, W.I. It is a small gem of a book that The Trust is grateful to have as an addition to its collection of curated material on Montserrat's history. Since both the author and The Trust are aware that the information about Montserrat's church bells in the book, though extensive, is not exhaustive, the book ends with an invitation to all who read it to offer any additional technical details or memories. They will be included in a subsequent printing.

Limited copies are available at The Trust's Gift Shop in Salem and at the Museum in Little Bay for EC \$35 and for those in the UK from the author who can be reached at buckinghamshirebells@gmail.com for £9 (includes postage and packing within the UK).



FEATURED NEWS

MOUNTAIN CHICKEN RECOVERY PROGRAMME

The MCRP is an NGO comprising of multiple international, regional and local organisations, working towards the goal of rewilding the Mountain Chicken.

The mountain chicken (*Leptodactylus fallax*) is the largest frog found in the Caribbean, native to the islands of Montserrat and Dominica. This species of frog was once a delicacy and the name comes from its large size and meat, which locals say tastes like chicken. This critically endangered amphibian inhabits moist forests and river valleys, where it feeds on insects, small vertebrates, and even other frogs.

In 2002, the deadly fungal disease chytridiomycosis struck Dominica, wiping out most of the wild population. Montserrat followed in 2009. Today, the mountain chicken population has declined by 99%, but these frogs are tenacious and have a fighting chance! Conservation efforts are ongoing to save this unique species!

Currently Funded by Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, and based at the National Trust, the MCRP team are working towards saving the Mountain Chicken Frog from extinction. Located within the Centre Hills, a Semi Wild Safe Haven Enclosure was erected in 2018 to house this species. The team study the interactions between the species and the Infectious Disease Chytridiomycosis aka the Chytrid Fungus so that they can understand how we could potentially mitigate its effect in the wild. The team is tasked with maintaining the enclosure and following husbandry guidelines to keep this species comfortable within their space.

More MCRP updates to come! 🐸💚

THANK YOU

A BIG THANK YOU!

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Mr. John Kinney for his generous donation to the Oriole Gift Shop. This donation allowed us to install air conditioning ahead of schedule. It's already making an incredible difference for our visitors — and we're so grateful for your support!

Another thank you goes to Steve Patterson for his donation of photographs and paintings, of Parsons Estate House - painted by Julie Ryder Sturge, Montserrat Stamps, and post cards of the paintings, available to purchase from the Gift Shop.

Every contribution makes a real impact. If you'd like to get involved or find out how you can help, we'd love to hear from you:

☎ +1-664-491-3086

✉ info@montserratnationaltrust.ms

Thank you for being part of our community. Together, we're preserving Montserrat's heritage for generations to come.

MNT NEWSLETTER

IN OUR NEXT EDITION

- ◆ Get to know the MNT Council Members
- ◆ Spot on the Trust Employees
- ◆ Christmas Carol Service—Light of the World
- ◆ Medicinal Plants

DID YOU KNOW?

MNT RENTALS

* SALEM

Our MNT Conference Room, Garden, and Gazebo are available for bookings — perfect for events, celebrations, or photo shoots.

* WOODLANDS BEACH

Not only do turtles use Woodlands Beach, you can too.

The facilities at Woodlands Beach continue to be an attractive place for islanders and holiday makers alike to meet and celebrate.

For a set fee (based on numbers) payable to the Trust you can book the covered area, kitchen and bathroom facilities. For an additional fee payable to MUL ,you can have electricity and running water.



MNT NURSERY

We also operate a Nursery with a wide variety of plants and offer a propagation service: bring us a sapling, and we'll help it grow into something beautiful (and maybe keep one for ourselves!).

For further information and to book please contact the Trust.

VOLUNTEERING

We're always looking for helping hands! Opportunities include:

Children & Youth Programmes, Fundraising, Garden care & nursery propagation, Gift Shop, Museum & Archive, Heritage site restoration, Tours.

MNT MEMBERSHIP, RENEWAL AND LEAVING A LEGACY INITIATIVE

Have you thought about becoming a member of the Montserrat National Trust? Or are you already a member and need to renew your membership? Perhaps you'd like to leave us a legacy in your Will?

Well, it's time to stop thinking and get doing. By becoming a member or leaving a legacy you will be helping us to preserve the natural environment and cultural heritage of this beautiful island.

The MNT is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation dedicated to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and cultural heritage of Montserrat.

And not forgetting our current members and life members - a special thanks for your continued support.

For more information on memberships, please get in touch 📞 +1 - 664-491-3086 or ✉ info@montserratnationaltrust.ms.

THE MNT GIFT SHOP

Discover something uniquely Montserratian!

We're always updating our shelves with new items, including handmade local crafts, Montserratian specialty foods, and authentic souvenirs that reflect the island's rich heritage and culture.

In line with our commitment to sustainability, the Montserrat National Trust proudly supports small-scale, fair-trade producers and eco-friendly products. So every purchase helps preserve both our environment and our traditions.

Stop by and find a gift with a story. The Oriole Gift Shop is open: Monday to Thursday - 8:30 am – 4:30 pm, Friday - 8:30 am – 3:00 pm.
📞 +1-664-491-3086