

## “Karimiaki”

The year would have been 1956 or so. Jim, still in short trousers was a pupil at Quinton Church of England Parish School. Oh how I loved my teacher Mrs Parry. Oh how I loved my school. School was fun; hard work at times but fun. We danced round the maypole, sang wonderful songs and were gently socialised into being fine little, well mannered children. In truth most of were little horrors but nice little horrors if there is such a thing!



I have so many memories of my early schooldays but one such memory survives to this day. She was the love of my life. She was from a far off exotic island. Would we would ever meet? We sang about her. I sang louder than all the other pupils put together. I was obsessed. I think Mrs Parry knew about my obsession and would often side up to me and whisper “Jimmy, let the other children sing as well” We also sang “Down in Demerara” and flapped our arms imitating the birds in the wilderness but “Karimiaki” had won my heart.



Fast forward some sixty-odd years and my childhood dream is about to be fulfilled. I now live on that far off exotic island. Our meeting is getting nearer by the day. My darling wife fully understands my obsession and supports me in the way that only the most understanding spouse can. She even encourages me. “Jim, it’s been your life’s dream and you must see it through” “Bless” as the locals would say. I can’t wait.

The seeds of doubt are rolling in with gathering momentum. It’s been sixty-years, surely it won’t be the same. Time and tide wait for no man. I live in trepidation that my childhood dreams are to be shattered. Would she still be there? Will I recognise her after the ravages of time? I long for Mrs. Parry’s reassurance. She understood me. My wife understands me. So why such doubt?

I know that I must find the place we sang about with such gusto all those years ago. Many of the words of the song were meaningless. I remember singing, nay shouting is a better description “acquoty” at the top of my voice. Hadn’t a clue what it meant but that did not matter. Strange how those meaningless words always stayed with me.

Living now in our island in the sun I have grown accustomed to hearing, what to me is a strange tongue. I understand it and I don’t understand it. I am usually understood but I do have to do the very British when abroad “loud and slow” to ensure comprehension. Being married to a local who lived in England for over thirty-years has been a life-line. I have learnt to say “wha qwaan” and finish every sentence with “yeah man” sufficiently to gain acceptance even though there is an occasional hidden chuckle which I do notice!

My quickly developing understanding of the "lingo" is beginning to pay dividends. I am now able to comprehend that "Karimiaki" is in some way connected to Linstead. Quick google search and voilà. I need to go to St. Catherine. My life's journey must be getting near to completion. "That's it" I shout to Mrs Hill. "I've found it" My heart is racing. My childhood memories come flooding back. The end is in sight.



I rush out to see what is now a mature tree bearing fruit at the back of our house. "Yes, yes" I shout. They are ready. No ripe forcing here. Gather my pickings and find the old straw basket that I have been saving for this occasion. If only Mrs. Parry was alive to see this. "Good luck Jim" I hear as I set off to complete my destiny. I am finally, finally going to solve the mystery of "Karimiaki"



After a lifetime the puzzle is solved. I can finally complete my bucket list. "Karimiaki" is solved.

Jim is going to "carry mi ackee go a Linstead market....."

