

In the Caribbean

by S. D. SISSONS

AFTER TAKING off from London Airport and expecting a straight flight to Bermuda, I was surprised to see the Scottish hills below—we were re-routed via Iceland and later on New York, where seventeen degrees of frost somewhat disconcerted the passengers who had only brought tropical kit with them.

The weather in Jamaica was a relief. It was lovely—the cool season there. I was based at an hotel in Kingston, with a swimming pool just outside my room. It was December.

My job was to carry out a mobile VHF survey of the whole of the island for the Public Works Department of Jamaica. This meant finding and locating sites suitable for repeater stations so that vehicles travelling anywhere in the island could be contacted by P.W.D. Headquarters in Kingston or by engineers based in various towns.

The island consists basically of a broken central plateau which divides the rich southern plains from the luxury holiday resorts of the northern coast. The eastern end of this plateau rises to the 7000-foot peaks of the Blue Mountains.

We began the survey by picking out the possible repeater sites, travelling round the island by car over the Blue Mountains in the east, and from Kingston through Ginger Hill, west to the Cockpit Country, through places with names descending from the days of Spanish rule, to others as descriptive as Alligator Pond in the south and Maggoty in a western river valley. Not far from Accompong is Me No Sen You

No Come. Years ago a surveyor came to a village in the Cockpit Country where his presence had not been requested. Trying persistently to gain admission he had been hotly told: "Me no sen—you no come!"

We were searching for high spots which had as their main characteristics easy access, nearby power and a good view. When we had done this we set up the transmitter on the first of the selected sites and installed the receiver in the Land-Rover.

This work entailed a great deal of



One of the modern streets of Kingston, where S. D. Sissons was based during his survey of Jamaica. The capital and commercial centre of the island, it was almost completely rebuilt after the earthquake of 1907



ABOVE: In the Land-Rover at Montego Bay during the VHF Survey in Jamaica, S. D. Sissons using the H.P. 12 Communications Set. He was working up to thirty miles distance from the transmitter in the hills

BELOW: Roy Lyons of The Wills Battery Co., our agents in Jamaica, with the Land-Rover containing the survey receiver at Buff Bay on the north-east coast

driving and it seemed as though we must have passed through nearly every town and village in Jamaica, as far apart as the American millionaires' playground of Montego Bay and the slums of Golden Grove. We got to know Port Royal, once the headquarters of that buccaneer, Captain Morgan. It was known as the City of Vice, and most of it disappeared under the sea in an earthquake in 1692. My colleague on the survey, Roy Lyons, who has lived all his life in Jamaica, said that he thought he knew the country until that survey.

We were received very well wherever we went and enjoyed wonderful hospitality from all sorts of people. One thing that I found enjoyable was the fact that no colour bar whatsoever exists. The locals were very interested to hear about life in England, and were keen on emigrating. It was usually the unskilled people who thought of doing so, as the skilled workers were in employment and

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H.R.H. Princess Margaret, with Lady Foot, wife of the Governor, seen on the bamboo raft in which she shot the rapids during their trip on the Rio Grande, at Port Antonio, Jamaica

content to live in a warm climate rather than a London peasouper, but a great number have come to this country in the last year or two. There are nearly 100,000 of them in England now.

I was lucky enough to be in Kingston when Princess Margaret landed at Port Royal, when she visited the island on her West Indian tour. All Jamaica seemed to be out to greet her and her landing remains in my mind as a splendidly colourful occasion.

A few days after the arrival of the Princess, Gerald Lipson, ex-M.W.T., of the Jamaican Police Telecommunications, asked me to give him a hand in testing the performance of walkie-talkies; Princess Margaret was later to go down the Rio Grande and the police wanted to be in communication with a

following raft. By the time we had rigged our apparatus and got to the river on the day of our test it was almost dark, and I had the doubtful pleasure of shooting the rapids at night. When I got off the raft I was told that I was the first person ever to go down the Rio Grande in the dark.

The survey finished at the end of March and I moved on to British Honduras. I spent Easter at Miami before flying to Nassau for a few days. Next I flew to New York via Boston as New York International Airport was fog-bound. I returned to the U.K. towards the end of April by the B.O.A.C. luxury flight, the Monarch. Home again—what more could I wish for, except, perhaps, a glass of Jamaica rum punch.