

Gun Boat Beach

The bathing beach and recreation park along the Palisadoes Road, in the area known as Gun Boat began in 1955.

The work was commissioned by the Government and work was done by Sidney M. Wood of the American Shore Erosion Control. Most of the area at the time was covered with mangrove, swamp, sand and morass.

The beach was named after the rusting hulk of a Haitian Gun Boat. It was opened at 5 pm on the 30th June 1959 by Irish King, Major of Kingston

Bathing beauty contests and water skiing displays were features of the inaugural celebration of Gun Boat Beach. Presiding over the function was Florizel Glasspole, Chairman of the Palisadoes Development Committee and Member of Parliament for the constituency.

It was the intention of the Palisadoes Development Committee that when the beach was opened it would provide beach and garden facilities. The elaborate plan also included the construction of hotels and a road network commencing at the Harbour View roundabout to August Town and the University of the West Indies Mona Campus through the Hope River area. Unfortunately the latter was not accomplished.

Accomplished though, was the play ground at Gun Boat Beach at a cost of fifteen (£15000) thousand pounds. The beach and playground was fashioned after the Miami Beach in Florida U.S.A. It was also developed from morass and swamp.

Catering service was also provided, and an advertisement for concession aires was published in the Gleaner of July 2, 1959.

The St. John Ambulance Brigade began to post members at Gun Boat Beach on Sundays and public holidays in November 1959. This was intended to offer greater protection. A first aid post was also established by the Government.

World War II brought the construction of a fleet air station in the area. This was later developed into the present airport - Norman Manley International Airport. Unfortunately by 1973 Gun Boat Beach had begun to show signs of neglect and pollution. Today Gun Boat Beach is a ghost of what it once was.