

TRENCH PEN

BEFORE TRENCH TOWN

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development authority, as the latter Government body made plans for the nation's first urban low-income housing scheme.

The early days of Trench Town

Kingston was founded in 1692 as Jamaica's main trading port and, in 1872, became the country's capital and logical magnet to the landless and the poor, especially after Emancipation in 1838.

With little assistance from the authorities, these individuals set themselves up on the fringes of the city. Trench Pen and Greenwich Park, by then long abandoned bush lands owned by the Trench family heirs, were used mostly to graze animals, cultivate foodstuff and for small-scale craft production. Meanwhile an agglomeration of rough boarding houses began to spring up in what was then deemed the "nicer" areas of the city in neighboring Rose, Jones, Hannah and Denham Towns.

By the 1920s, however, these neighborhoods had become run down and crowded as more and more came to settle in the city. For some, the only answer was the shanty communities now emerging, one of which was Trench Pen.

This open area had become part of the economic base for some West Kingston residents. Here, beasts of burden and drays as well as animals for milking and slaughter were fettered or allowed to roam. Vendors and skilled tradesmen began to spend more time in town, with many setting up shop in enclosed yard spaces. Unhindered by space, women produced bulky and delicate craft items such as Bankra baskets and Yabba-ware, often made from materials found on the land, while men made clay bricks using kilns made in clearings in the bush. Located on the main thoroughfare leading in and out of the city, blacksmiths and wheelwrights established shops and were ensured a fair amount of work. Others found Trench Pen to be conveniently located – close enough to the city centre and close enough to employment outside of Trench Pen.

It can almost be said that Trench Town, this first urban stop for rural migrants who began capturing and fenced off sections of land, was destined to be the spawning ground of many a ground-breaking influence. The distance and quasi isolation allowed those who settled in Trench Pen to practice and participate in long standing rural traditions, while simultaneously exploring emerging ideas, many of which would reach beyond the town's borders. Of particular significance were Revival beliefs, the practice of obeah and the use of herbs for protection and healing. On the streets, meetings, parades and baptisms began weaving the area's unique social fabric. At Christmastime, the Jonkunoo masquerade parades set the tone for the season, while elders entertained and educated the community's children with stories of Anancy, Africa, slavery and great fables. Meanwhile, the East Indian population that settled Trench Pen seasoned the area with their beliefs and diet, which included the use of ganja for meditation.

By the mid 1930s housing had become an issue, and the authorities designated Trench Pen as the site of the first Government urban housing scheme. In 1938, the Central Housing Authority was set up to acquire, survey and develop the area, providing water and sewage, a proper network for drainage and electricity around which to build modern low cost housing as a model for future schemes. This meant that the existing motley settlement of zinc and mill board homes had to be cleared and the residents relocated. The construction of the first set of houses took place between Central and West Roads from 7th and 5th streets. The first set of homes were finally made available to successful applicants starting from 1944, each neatly packaged with a fruit tree at the entrance gate.

The residents of Trench Town would at first enjoy a peaceful life in spite of the gentle poverty most endured. This was a time when the sharing of food or livelihood skills to make the living easier was commonplace. This was the era when the milk and bread vans delivered their goods on awaiting doorsteps before sunrise, and a time when even the sprinkler trucks lumbered in regularly to wash away the dust from the newly cut roads. The violence to come years later would mockery of this period of Trench Town's history.

Trench Town - Project Interrupted

The attempted transformation of Trench Town from a squatter's shanty town to a respectable urban neighborhood, while left incomplete, is still evident today even if its significance has gone unnoticed. Had the plans been actually implemented as designed, Trench Town would have likely been the first real "self-contained" neighborhood in Jamaica, similar to those found in North America that boast the convenience of neighborhood parks, schools, clinics and retail services. The evidence of this much gentler vision for Trench Town now sits in stark contrast to the area's history and reality today.

When the then Central Housing Authority took on the task of upgrading the area, it employed an entire team of architects, technical and administrative staff with which to build, maintain and manage its proposed housing scheme, including rental collection and all. To this day rent is still being collected, although the figure has been adjusted with the times from its original 12 shillings. While the original plan called for residential, educational commercial and civic buildings complete with roads, schools, parks and clinics, most of the commercial and civic buildings were never built. **(show diagram 3.18 – area plan)** Successfully completed were Boys' Town school, the Children's Park and the Ambassador's Theatre. Of the four styles of residences proposed (H, S, U and T shaped), 90% followed the U-type block housing that fostered communal living, much like the one in which Bob Marley lived **(show diagram 3.19 with drawings of the four styles)**. Records do not confirm whether or not authorities intended Trench Town's housing scheme to be experimental, but it is worth noting that it remains to this day unusual in its hybrid concept - rural in design, urban in location and density. Trench Town's architects could not have known that they had help cast the mold for an area whose style of living was to be the unsuspecting influence of a nation.

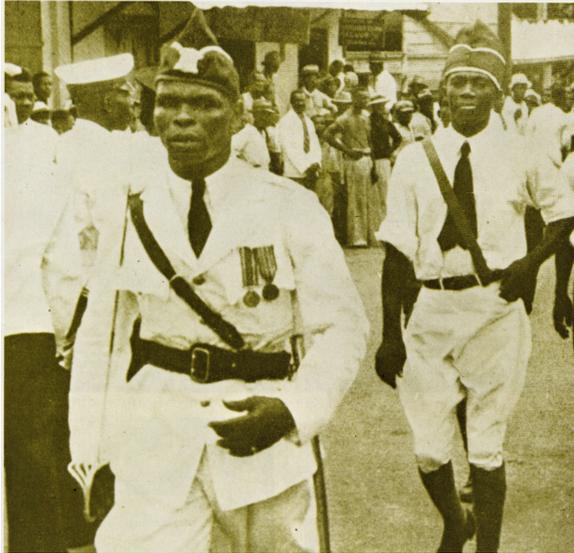
In all, the more than 168 residential buildings took almost nine years to build due to the laborious knog method of construction, a clear influence from Jamaica's colonial past. The visual is a near romantic one - each building was constructed with hand-hewn wood frames, the roof tiles were likely made on site, and carefully placed dowels ensured the buildings stood solid. Initially spanning six urban blocks, two blocks of the tenement yards would be lost to the political wars of the 1970s and 1980s. Of the four blocks that remain today, some still display the original

components used to construct the units, including the hand-hewn Bullet wood frames, cedar window and doors, flat concrete tile roofs and infill of rubble and dirt.

Visuals: The two related diagrams. Also examples of dwellings with the details described in the last paragraph.)

SOME FOUNDATION

St. William Grant

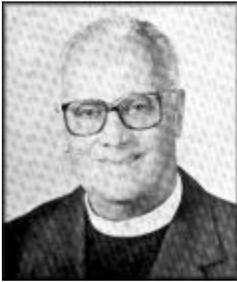


Garveyite, labour rights activist, relentless and colourful voice of the poor, St. William Grant is often referred to as one of Jamaica's unsung heroes. Born on April 15, 1894 in Brandon Hill, St. Mary, he came to Kingston at age 12 and eventually made his way to Trench Town where he lived at _____.

An outspoken man, he would build his life's work around the ideologies of two great Jamaicans. Proud of his black heritage but painfully aware of his brothers' plight, he would become affiliated with the Universal Negro Improvement Association, eventually meeting and befriending Marcus Garvey himself while away in New York. Not surprisingly, Grant quickly climbed his way through the ranks of Garvey's Royal African Guard to the position of Brigadier.

He would also meet and befriend Sir Alexander Bustamante, who would later become a great labour leader, Jamaica's first Prime Minister and beloved National Hero. To his credit, it would be under Bustamante's leadership that the Trench Town housing scheme would be built. Passionate to a flaw about the plight of the poor class worker, it would not be long before Grant would take to the streets of Kingston, where his public meetings taught the poor and downtrodden about self-reliance and the "back to Africa" movement. Where there was a platform there was William Grant. His friend, Bustamante often joined him in such events, which sometimes escalated to less than peaceful demonstrations and riots. One such attack was made on the Jamaica Gleaner Company for not properly representing the poorer class in its pages. Not without opponents in what was then colonial Jamaica, Grant and Bustamante would be detained several times for participating in riots. Oddly, Grant would suffer a serious and permanent rift with both Garvey and Bustamante, the exact reasons for which have long puzzled historians. William Grant was bestowed the Order of Distinction in 1974 for championing the cause of the poor and working class. He died three years later on August 27, 1977.

The Rev. Dr. Hugh Sherlock, O.J. & Boys' Town



Methodist Minister, talented cricketer, academic and philanthropist, the Rev. Dr. Hugh Sherlock, O.J., was born in lush Portland. As a young boy, he attended Calabar High School, after which he followed his calling and furthered his studies at the Caenwood Theological College, Methodist Missionary, Turks Island. While he would go on from there to achieve much in his most distinguished career as a theologian and sportsman, it is through his role as dedicated benefactor of Boys' Town that he would leave his indelible mark in Trench Town.

Boys' Town

Rev. Hugh Sherlock is synonymous with Boys' Town. Established in 1942, the idea of the centre was hatched out of a recommendation made in 1937 by one Sir Alexander Patterson, who had come to Jamaica to study and suggest reforms for the nation's penal institutions. Hugh Sherlock would, that same year, be ordained a Methodist Minister. In 1940, the YMCA asked the Methodist church to secure Father Sherlock as the boys' club's Founder/Director.

Successful in its request, work began that year in the rented Jones Pen Baptist Hall church, as it was then known. 1942 would be a busy year for Boys' Town and Father Sherlock. In March of that year, the YMCA invited a special committee to raise funds for a development programme which would include vocational training in wood work, tailoring and several 4H projects. A few months later in July, the Director, Rev. Hugh Sherlock, was given a Fellowship by the Montreal YMCA to study boys' work in Canada and the US. In August, a building was provided by the Government in Trench Town on eight acres of land given by the Kingston and St. Andrew Cooperation. Over the years, membership soared to the hundreds in the school whose motto was "We Build". The school remains there on the original eight acres.

Some famous Jamaicans who passed through the hallowed halls of Boys' Town include:

Music

Alton Ellis
Ken Boothe
Theophilus Beckford
Jimmy Tucker
Alton Ellis
Joe Higgs

Sports

Carl Brown – national football captain
Allan ‘Skill’ Cole – international football legend
Larry Wynter – football – former national captain
Les Brown - football
Lloyd Morgan - football

Collie Smith – cricket
Cleveland Richards - cricket
Donald Miller - cricket
Bunny Shaw - cricket
Gladstone Robinson - cricket
Bunny Grant – boxing (former Commonwealth Welterweight Champion)
Percy Hayles – boxing (former World Ranked Welterweight)

Father Sherlock

Known simply as “Father”, Hugh Sherlock has been described as caring, humble, approachable – a man who could walk with kings and still maintain the common touch. A man who always went the extra mile. Said one past student of his late teacher:

“Father Sherlock looked and saw a space in the desert, created an oasis, a legacy....”
Locksley G. Comrie

His dedication and determination to show that hope lurked in every corner gave birth to many a programme at Boys’ Town. These included:

Cricket
Soccer
Junior 4H clubs
Extension school choir
Trade training
Dancing
Citizen’s Council
Scouting
Teen club
Golden age club
Artwork
Steel band playing
Religious activities
Film shows

Some of his other personal achievements included:

Sports. He loved cricket, and used sports as a medium to instill discipline and motivate his students. Father Sherlock himself captained the Boys’ Town cricket team XI, which won many trophies and produced outstanding national and international cricketers and model sportsmen. Collie Smith remains one of his most famous students. A talented cricketer in his own right, Sherlock hit ten centuries between 1947 and 1949. The bat he used proudly remains on display at the Boys’ Town school.

The National Anthem. He co-authored Jamaica's unique prayer-like anthem.

Nation Building. He was active in the national move for independence.

Theology. He was the first third world representative of the World Methodist Council to the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

Social programs. He established Operation Friendship in 1961 in attempt to create a link between those in need of help and those who could give it. In this programme, young men and women come to gain skills free of charge.

Awards. In 1983 he was awarded the Norman Washington Manley Award for Excellence in the Field of Religion.

It is an honour to his legacy that hundreds of his graduates continue to make contributions to the nation in the public and private sectors. Father Hugh Sherlock lived to see much of his efforts bear fruit before passing away in April of 1998.

Ernie Ranglin



“Father of ska”, former Skatelite member, arranger, composer, musical director, internationally renowned jazz guitarist, Ernest Ranglin is as versatile a musician as they get. Born in 1932 in Manchester (Jamaica), Ranglin was part of the rural migration to the city limits, where he mastered the ukulele followed by the guitar on which he can deliver calyso, ska, reggae, pop, blues and jazz. One of Jamaica’s earlier musical ambassadors, Ranglin made a name for himself as far back as the 1960s, and was even declared Europe’s top jazz guitarist by the British music magazine, the Melody Maker within two months of his arrival in England. A musical genius and giant, Ernie Ranglin has claimed many firsts in his career: he was one of the first Caribbean musicians to be invited to the prestigious Newport Jazz Festival in the USA (1973), and was the first musician in Jamaica to be awarded the Order of Distinction.

Many of Bob Marley’s own hits have benefited from the magical touch of this respected arranger and musical director. The two met on the cricket and football fields of Trench Town in the days when Ranglin, who lived as a young man in nearby Jones Town, would spend much of his leisure time in Trench Town playing sports with the younger kids, including the fairly skilled Marley.

Over the years, Ernest Ranglin has thrilled thousands worldwide. His more memorable performances include the 1995 combination with Monty Alexander at the Montreaux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, the 1996 “Night of the Masters” performance in the Barbados Jazz Festival when he headlined with the late great Ray Charles, and the 1997 “Sound of Brazil” show in New York.

Joe Higgs



Devout Rastafarian, vocalist, songwriter, musician, teacher and early recording artiste, Joe Higgs has been referred to as the father of reggae and is considered one of Trench Town's most famous residents.

Born in Kingston on June 3, 1940, young Joe Higgs lived at ___ Third Street, Trench Town. Taking the lead from his mother who sang in her church choir and taught her son about music, he would frequent local talent contests along with neighborhood friend, Roy Wilson. The two began singing together after placing second in the duo segment of one such contest. Higgs himself would go on to do well as a recording artiste, becoming one of the first in the country to be recorded by his then manager, Edward Seaga. (Seaga would become Prime Minister in 1980.) Higgs's debut release "Manny O" with Roy Wilson was a major hit in 1960.

Even as a young man, Joe Higgs's spirit of generosity flowed freely in true Trench Town style. As early as 1960, he held informal but regimented evening music clinics or workshops for many aspiring vocalists in his tenement yard. Free of cost but not free of effort, these music workshops rigorously sculpted future legendary greats in the art of harmony techniques, breath control, music theory and songwriting. Some of his students included Bob Marley, Bunny Wailer and Peter Tosh. In fact, it was at one of his music workshops that Marley and Wailer met the third member of their future group. Higgs would feature significantly in the early professional career of the trio, easily slipping into the role of musical mentor and with the watchful eye of a big brother. Indeed, when Higgs' "Stepping Razor" was disqualified as a festival entry song for being too subversive, he gave the song to his former student, Peter Tosh, who went on to make a hit out of it.

Higgs and Wilson were a [Jamaican](#) singing duo consisting of [Joe Higgs](#) and [Delroy Wilson](#) (aka Roy Wilson). Higgs and Wilson were one of Jamaica's first indigenous recording artists, and their debut single "Oh Manny Oh" sold over 50,000 copies in Jamaica in 1960. In the early 60s they worked with the producer [Coxsone Dodd](#), and had several further hits including "How Can I Be Sure" and "There's A Reward". Higgs went solo after Wilson left Jamaica for America in the late 60s.

REAPING TALENT.

If there is one mystery that begs consideration, it would no doubt be the large number of bona fide celebrities that this small community has generated. Like the mystical Blue Mountains that have given the world its finest coffee bean, the Trench Town phenomenon for raw musical talent is one that may well challenge future scholars.

Collie Smith



Born O'Neill Gordon Smith in the early 1930s, 'Collie' Smith, Jamaica and West Indies all rounder, is arguably one of Boys' Town's most famous past students and was no doubt Rev. Hugh Sherlock's pride and joy.

Described as a gentleman, an embodiment of discipline and man of immense character, he was known for his positive attitude toward life which he approached as a challenge to be dealt with through thought and discipline. He was also known for being fun-loving and deeply religious. Indeed, in the cricket fraternity he was called the *Wayside Preacher*. It was his incredible talent for cricket, however, that won him a place in the hearts of Jamaicans as a genius and one of their favourite sons. Collie Smith not only entertained those who watched him play the sport, he made proud a nation whose name he elevated when he became a centurion (104) in 1963.

Collie Smith died early after lying in a coma for several days from a tragic car accident in England on September 6, 1959. He was only 25 years old.

Visuals - Picture of Collie Smith at Boys Town

Theophilus Beckford



Son of a Jamaica Military Band musician, Boys' Town graduate, master pianist and singer, Theophilus Beckford holds the dubious honour of being ranked as one of Jamaica's unsung heroes. Born in 1936, this early performer who has been associated with ska's origins was known to be a fixture on his veranda on which he would play his Knight brand acoustic piano. Beckford lived at 37B Thompson Avenue. Although he never managed to go on tour, his 1956 hit "Easy Snappin'" won international favour, and was recently the theme song used for an Easy Jeans commercial in Europe. Like so many to come after him, Beckford struggled to get royalties from his recordings, forcing him to scrape a living through the occasional piano gig before his murder on March 20, 2001 at the age of 65. At the time of his death, he was in pursuit of royalties from the makers of Easy Jeans.

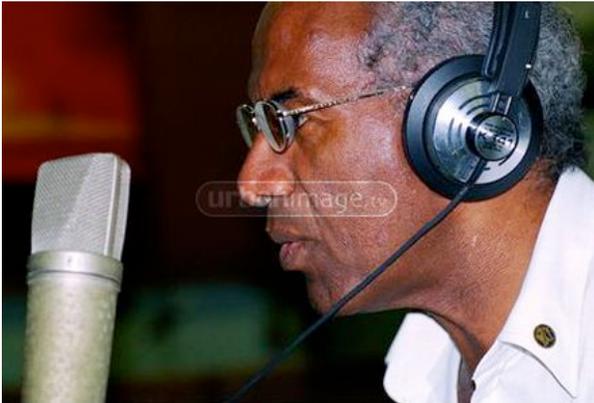
Bongo Herman



Master Drummer, percussionist and Rastafarian, Herman Davis was born in 1943. “Bongo” Herman, as he became more popularly known, began honing his natural-born talent for drums in Trench Town’s famous Nyabinghi house on Fifth Street. As Trench Town and its resident Rastafarians continued to nurture Herman’s faith, his repertoire of drum and percussion instruments expanded, and included a white chamber pot, a testament perhaps of his versatility and, even more so, of his creativity.

Like many others, his career was nudged to an encouraging start thanks to the Vere John Opportunity Hour at the Ambassador Theatre in Trench Town. The famed amateur show was the first of many public performances for Bongo Herman, who would go on to tour on international stages with several of Reggae’s royals, including Jimmy Cliff, Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, the Mighty Diamonds and Capleton. A devout Rastafarian, however, no doubt one of his proudest moments came in 1966, when he was one of a handful selected to play his drums at the welcoming ceremony of Haile Selassie at the Norman Manley International Airport.

Jimmy Tucker



Former child star, educator, church administrator, true patriot and published author, Jimmy Tucker is that rare multi-talent that never ceases to produce or amaze. Born in the early 1940s, young Jimmy Tucker, who lived on Fourth Street for a while with his family, developed a penchant for the semi-classic. Blessed with a voice that has been described as “outstanding”, he began recording as early as age 12 and even performed locally with international giants such as Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughn and Billy Eckstine. His talent would secure him a scholarship to study in the United States where he earned his Bachelor’s degree in Arts and Masters in Divinity. In his adulthood he would use his talent to produce several albums on matters of spiritualism and patriotism, recording old Jamaican classics including the national anthem, and authoring several companion booklets alongside the albums.

Bunny and Scully



Both Kingston born, Noel 'Scully' Simms and Arthur 'Bunny' Robinson grew up as childhood friends in Trench Town, attending the same primary school and spending time with the Boys Town youth club. Making their debut as a singing duo at school, the two were regulars at the Vere Johns Opportunity variety show in the early 1950s. Their efforts resulted in their first recorded tune in 1953 ("End of Time" and "Give Me Another Chance"), making them one of Trench Town's earlier acts to hit the recording studio, and a leading force in the change of musical appetite from rhythm and blues to ska. The achievement would help to clear the path for others to follow, including Alton Ellis and Leroy Sibbles and the Heptones. The longtime friends recorded up until the 1960's, after which they drifted apart. Both were conferred with Badge of Honour meritorious in October, 2004.

Alton Ellis



Former Boys' Town student, ska heavy weight, rock steady pioneer, reggae wonder. Acknowledged as one of the first singers to be recorded in Jamaica, Alton Ellis moved to Trench Town on Fifth Street just shortly after the first phase of construction was completed in 1944, a still relatively peaceful era of Trench Town's troubled history. Although initially performing as a dancer, this musical talent would get an early start to his career as a performer through the Vere John Opportunity Hour at the Ambassador's Theatre complex. Once his career as a singer began, he performed alone at first, after which he would team up with industry colleague Eddie Perkins, with whom he would write "Muriel". Considered a significant player in the ska movement, Ellis has also been widely credited with being a major part of the takeover of rock steady from its predecessor. Indeed, his hit single "Get Ready, Rock Steady" seemed to appropriately herald the arrival of the rock steady era. No surprise then that most of Ellis's biggest hits came in the 1960s.

Delroy Wilson



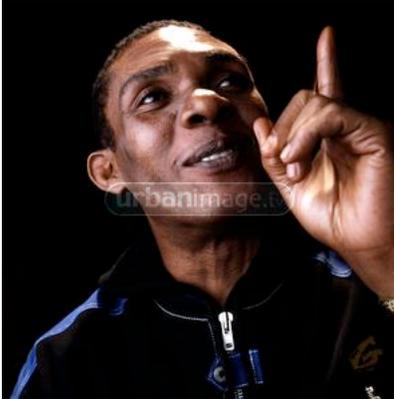
Born in Kingston on October 5, 1948, Delroy Wilson lived with his family at number five Second Street. Singing and writing songs as a young teenager, Delroy Wilson would enjoy the celebrity of being one of the first out of Trench Town to be recorded, but not the financial rewards that hardly trickled in. Ironically, his “Better Must Come” tune was popularized by the People National Party’s political campaign slogan in the 1972 elections, even though the song had nothing to do with politics. Rather, it was thought to be statement on Wilson’s part about his and the plight of other artistes who had not benefited financially from their craft. Given the embryonic stage of Jamaica’s recording industry, this was a common complaint. While Wilson’s 1971 hit may well have helped the Michael Manley-led PNP dance their way to an historic victory, Wilson’s financial woes saw little improvement in his own lifetime. A locally beloved and respected singer, he died in 1995. Ironically he was laid to rest in a funeral that possibly held more grandeur than he had ever enjoyed while alive.

Leroy Sibbles



Tenor, bass guitarist and rhythm master par excellence, Leroy Sibbles was born in Trench Town in 1949 and lived at _____. The inspiring lead singer of one of Jamaica's greatest vocal groups, the Heptones, Sibbles worked as a welder before forming the group in 1965 with fellow Trench Town-born friends Earl Morgan and Barry Llewelyn. Sibbles was only a teenager when he penned the group's openly sexual *Fatty Fatty* while hanging about in his yard. It is said that an older and well-endowed lady who happened to walk past Sibbles at that moment may well have had some influence on the controversial hit song. Included in the elite group of artistes who helped to ease Ska into Rock Steady, Sibbles and his Heptones delivered unforgettable classics such as "Book of Rules", as well as a long list of influential and hit songs. But Sibbles' work went well beyond the harmonizing Heptones. A respected "riddims" maestro known for his signature Afro-Jamaican flavour in his bass guitar, his work features heavily in many other artiste's classic hits. As for the Heptones, the group broke up when Sibbles became one of the thousands to emigrate in the 1970s, heading for the safer shores of Canada.

Ken Boothe



International reggae star and local crowd favourite, Ken Boothe a.k.a. “Mr. Rocksteady” is the contemporary of other fellow Trench Town talents such as Alton Ellis, Leroy Sibbles and Delroy Wilson, all of whom made their mark in the 1960s following Ska.

As one of 11 children, Boothe knew the challenges of poverty and struggle as a child, and received little more than an elementary school education to get his life started. That would not stop his natural talent from flourishing. Even before the legendary Bob Marley became a known entity across the Atlantic, Ken Boothe’s voice had already caught the attention of foreign ears, a reputation that would win him the title “Black Knight of Reggae” in England. One of the first Jamaican artistes to achieve gold in Europe, Boothe’s popular hit cover “Everything I Own” held firm at the top of the pop charts in England for four straight weeks after its unforgettable debut in that country.

Junior Brathwaite



Early Wailer and natural talent, Franklin Delano Alexander Brathwaite was born on April 4, 1949 in Rema, the heart of Kingston's famous inner city.

Junior Brathwaite, as he became known, never imagined a musical career for himself, and instead entertained dreams of becoming a doctor. As a teenager, however, he met and merged with a group of youngsters who would go on to make waves in the industry. Upon joining Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer, Brathwaite became a Wailer, impressing producers with his natural voice. In an interview many years later, however, a reflective Brathwaite would admit that at the time he was distracted with other things, such as going to school and "playing ball" (soccer).

A handful of Wailer tunes are proof of Brathwaite's gift of voice. After recording "Simmer Down" with the Wailers in 1963, he sang the lead on their subsequent "Habit", "Straight and Narrow Way", "Don't Ever Leave Me", "It Hurts to Be Alone" and "I'm Still Waiting". Then in 1964, still holding onto his dreams of being a doctor, the young Brathwaite left the band and the country for the United States. He would only record some twenty years later in 1984 at the insistence of Bunny Wailer to work on the "Never Ending Wailer" recording project. This album features some of Brathwaite's last recordings. Ironically, his nostalgic "Together Again" on the same album implores one to "remember your fallen brother". Brathwaite himself would be murdered on June 2, 1999.

Hortense Ellis



Born in Trench Town in 1949, Hortense Ellis is the sister of Alton Ellis, a true daughter of Trench Town, and one of the early female Jamaican singers. This talented vocalist who also lived on Fifth Street began her brief career after winning a talent contest. Ellis would complete her recordings between 1962 and 1967, including some with brother Alton. Many will remember their successful cover of Neil Sedaka's "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do". Taking time out first to be mother to her many children, she would not return to music until the 1990's.

Dean Fraser



Saxophonist extraordinaire, producer, arranger, songwriter and performer, Dean Fraser has been dubbed the “Dean of the Jamaican Institute of Instrumentation”. His work supports his reputation. His magical touch on the great horn instrument has been featured on no less than 1,000 albums.

Born in Kingston in 1955, Fraser lived at _____ in Trench Town and spent some eight years honing his skill under the watchful eye of Sonny Bradshaw. Learning much about the industry while a part of that legendary band, Fraser soon ventured out on his own, coming out with his first album in 1978 under producer Joe Gibbs. Over the next few years, the Jamaican talent’s career would be taken to new heights.

Equally comfortable playing jazz or dancehall, Fraser had no problems moving with the changing trends of popular music. Indeed, he has covered more artistes than can be counted. It was his heart-stopping rendition of Bob Marley’s *Redemption Song* at the 1983 Reggae Sun Splash, however, that cemented his solo career and validated him as a local jazz royalty. This version would also be recorded at a later date. Today, Dean Fraser is a Jamaican household name among music lovers spanning several genres of music.

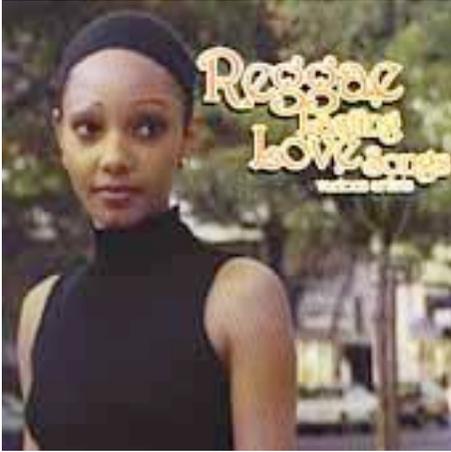
The Abyssinians



The Abyssinians found fame in the late 1960s, at a time when the Rastafarianism had taken hold, with Trench Town being its genesis. Donald Manning, Lynford Manning and Bernard Collins, all Trench Town residents, were the Abyssinians. Their signature song, which has also been labeled as reggae's less heralded anthem, is Satta Massagana, a song that many have deemed to be one of the most covered songs in reggae history.

Friends before fame came knocking, Donald Manning and Bernard Collins started attending Rastafarian meetings in Trench Town where they got their taste for drums under the watchful eye of Mortimer Planno and other influential elders. Unlike other roots-reggae groups, however, this trio's career did not take off, producing only two albums and one live tour.

Cynthia Schloss



Former Trench Town Primary student, the late Cynthia Schloss was the songbird with a distinctive sound and flair for performance that held her loyal fans captive. A telephone operator for the former Jamaica Telephone Company when she made her first steps in the music industry, she was still employed there when she got her first break in 1972. That was the year she emerged the winner of a local amateur talent show. Her first booking abroad would take her to the lights of New York. Miss Schloss leaves behind a legacy of music that includes favourites such as “Words Are Impossible” and “Love Me Forever”.

Adina Edwards



Born in Kingston in, accordion player and gospel-blues songbird, Adina Edwards grew up in Trench Town at _____. While still a young girl, she sang for pennies on the sidewalks of Kingston's busy commercial streets. A set back in 1972 set her straight on the path to success, when her accordion broke and was replaced by her growing base of admirers in the area. The public act of kindness caught the attention of a top local record producer, securing Adina her first recording contract and break in the business. She quickly grew in her talent to become a respected recording and stage artiste, only to fall on hard times once more when her contract was abruptly terminated. Once again old friends and neighbours came to her rescue, and held a huge benefit concert for the talented singer.

ESTABLISHED CORNERSTONES

Long before the nation really began to take note of Trench Town, the area was already developing a quiet reputation for attracting outcasts, thanks in part to a group of strange men who wore in matted braids, smoked marijuana and called themselves Rastafarians.

The source of Rastafarianism lies in a specific geographical area, the Nile Valley. While it is suggested that the term *nyabinghi* comes from that religion's 1850's spiritual and political movement in East Africa, the origin of the drums of nyabinghi is traced to a complicated blend of 'Buru', 'Kumina' and 'Revival' styles of drumming in the western part of Kingston by the Rastafarians.

Many think that reggae is 'real Rastaman music', but would be surprised to learn that nyabinghi drumming is the only true music of Rastafarianism. Oswald Williams, known worldwide as 'Count Ossie', was one of the pioneer recorders of nyabinghi and was one of the first Rastafarian drummers. In the 1950s, Back O' Wall and West Kingston began attracting the curious from various classes, lured by the appeal of African and Afro-European forms of music. At that time in particular, the Rastafarians were very vocal about economic hardships and racial discrimination, and would meet regularly amongst themselves. Their meetings featured only a rumba box. Ossie had learned to play the drums during his many trips to 'reason' with other Rasta brethren, and eventually ordered a custom built set of akete drums. He created a drumming style based on the Buru pattern, which eventually became known as the music of Rasta. Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus are the most well known musicians playing and recording nyabinghi music today. With over 20 albums, starting from 'Nyabinghi' in 1974, they have successfully taken the nyabinghi music of the Rasta meetings to the commercial reggae mainstream.

The rasta calendar is highlighted by certain sacred events. These include His Imperial Majesty's coronation (November 2), His Imperial Majesty's ceremonial birthday (January 6), his visit to Jamaica (April 25), his personal birthday (July 23), emancipation from slavery (August 1) and Marcus Garvey's birthday (August 17). The festivities associated with these occasions can last for several days. Originally used to bring death to the oppressors by invoking the power of Jah, dancing nyabinghi at these gatherings is now purely ceremonial. It involves the drumming of at least three different hand drums (funde, bass, akete), chanting, dancing, the spiritual use of the holy herb and praise to Jah Rastafari.

Mortimmer Planno



Rastafarian elder and beacon in the movement, mentor, psychologist, playwright, intuitive actor, university lecturer, prolific reader and author of numerous texts, journals, songs and poetry, Mortimer Planner's reach is as international as is the music of his former student, Bob Marley.

Born in Kingston in 1920, Planno, as he would be known, came to believe that Haile Selassie I was the living God, and wholeheartedly accepted the teachings of Rastafari in 1939. That same year he moved to Trench Town and settled in at ____ Fifth Street, becoming one of the founding members of Kingston's first Rastafarian camp. There he would be referred to as Ras Morti or Brother Kummie. As the numbers curious about the faith grew, Planno's home would soon become a practical mecca for many followers both inside and outside of Trench Town from all walks of life. Says football legend and an eventual follower, Alan 'Skill Cole, "it was always crowded at Planno's house, especially on a Friday night. Sometimes it felt like a big party."

Planno is known and respected amongst Rastafarians worldwide due to his steadfast concern for the welfare of all Rastafari. His devoted studies on the various matters relating to faith, reinforced by his intellectual brilliance, earmarked him as one of the most distinguished elders of the movement.

While Rastafarians have always experienced persecution from the system, in the early days it was particularly abusive. Planno, along with brethren from other "Houses", asked the then University College of the West Indies to carry out a survey of the Rastafari movement. The intention of this study was to try and establish a better relationship with the Government of Jamaica, and also to understand the Repatriation process. In 1959, Arthur Lewis, the then Chancellor, sent a delegation amongst the brethren to ascertain their real needs. The report was a success and Planno was an integral member of a ten-man fact finding mission sent in 1961 to Africa, where they were to explore the possibilities of repatriation.

As a result of the Mission to Africa, April 21st is now observed as Grounation Day, a Rastafari holy day. On that day in 1966, Haile Selassie made his historic visit to Jamaica drawing over 100,000 believers (both Rastafari and "bald head") who waited impatiently at the airport and along the Palisadoes strip to get a glance. Planno was selected to be the first to greet His Imperial Majesty at the door of the plane before His

Majesty set foot on the tarmac. Planno's fame leapt to an all time high when he managed to placate the anxious crowd, allowing the Emperor to reach the awaiting limousine.

Away in the United States with his mother at the time of Selassie's visit and now convinced of the Rastafari faith, it was Planno whom Bob Marley would first seek out on his return home later that year. It was during such a visit at Planno's Fifth Street home that Marley would meet 'Skill' Cole, the man who would become his confidante, manager and closest friend. Meanwhile, Planno would nurture young Marley's growing faith in Rastafari, teaching him about the principles, rites and customs of the religion. His influence would be reflected in some of Marley's earlier works such as "This Train", "Payaaka" and "Chances Are". Says Cole of the sage elder, "Planno always believed in Bob no matter what. He just knew he'd make it big one day. Always."

Vincent ‘Tarta’ Ford



Known as “Jack Tar” and then as “Tarta”, Vincent “Tarta” Ford was born in 19__ at number eight Upper First Street, back then considered a desirous Trench Town address for its proximity to the wide neighborhood park. Fame found Ford early, when at only 13 he saved a young boy from drowning while diving for coins by the ships docked in Kingston’s deep harbour.

Also musically inclined, the local hero first met the young Bob Marley when the future star was 13 and Tarta was 17. The two developed a bond that would become legendary in itself. Not only did Ford help nurture Bob’s musical appetite, he was often the only source of comfort to Marley’s often empty stomach. Once when Bob’s mother left for the US and his guardian aunt returned to the quiet of the countryside, it was Tarta who gave him a roof over his head in his kitchen where Bob slept on a table Tarta used for gambling.

Tarta, having worked as a chef at the neighborhood Boys’ Town school, would eventually start up a little kitchen in his First Street yard, which he and Marley would refer to as “the casbah”. There he would struggle to make and sell home made dishes to local residents, simple favourites such as calaloo and dumplings. At times when Marley was numb with hunger, it would be at Tarta’s that he would find free food whenever some could be spared. When Bob decided to turn his attention to learning the guitar, it was Tarta who would stay up with him all night, turning the leaves of the “Teach Yourself Guitar” book that Marley had scraped together to buy. There they would sit as the teenager diligently strummed the chords, trying to make sense of the diagrams in the flickering light of the oil lamp. In the mornings their nostrils would be black from the smoke.

Tarta still remembers the early days in the tenement yard with his late friend:

“Hungry? Sometimes we were worse than hungry. Both our bellies would bawl out with a *krenk* sound! Even once when Bob was singing, and his stomach was going, I had to tease him and ask, “what was that sound?” Oh yes! Sometimes I swear we had to use chains to hold down those worms in our stomachs making all that noise. We went through some things, I tell you.”

Like many others, Tarta lives to tell the story of a comfortable Trench Town, when the neighborhood lived in some level of comfort and peace, a time when it was becoming a magnet for the driven and the talented.

“... You see how the houses are set, with one house over here and another right over there. No wall, one common yard. For instance, our yard went straight through Delroy Wilson’s yard, and so on.

Those days Trench Town was nice – like Hollywood.... You had all kinds of dancers and singers....many of them now live uptown. But we had a whole heap of famous people who lived right down here, or who always came to just hang out.... Of course, what made 6th and 8th Street special was that Bob used to live there. Before that he lived on 2nd Street, number 17, with his mother.”

Sixth and Eighth Streets would in fact be aptly referred to as the “musical yard”, so named for the music that pulsated through the sound systems promoting the many dances held in Trench Town. As the younger of the two, Marley would often be the recipient of Tarta’s voice of wisdom, a lesson that helped shape the often impatient Marley. Ford still remembers when Rita first came to the “yard” and was testing her musical talent:

“Bob would get annoyed with her when she seemed to have missed a note. I’d have to say, ‘no wait. Jus cool, man. Give her some time. She’ll figure it out’. But that was Bob at work. He could be rough, especially if he was there singing, and you’re there frigging with the harmony that he wants to hear. I mean I was a big man to him, and yet let me tell you, if he showed up and said, ‘come now’, I’d sit there quiet as anything while he played with his guitar. With Bob, if you cut him you get no blood.”

Tarta’s gentler approach to the opposite sex would figure significantly in Marley’s career. His international calling card, *No Woman Nuh Cry* was penned by Vincent Ford after he witnessed a domestic fight between a neighborhood couple.

“No one really tried to mess with me, I made sure of that. That’s also why no one tried to take set on Bob. Once a man was coming to box me, well I boxed him first good and proper. But it wasn’t the same for a woman, though. Whenever I’d see that I’d have to say, “alright, that’s not good.... Cool now nuh man.””

It is the memory of Marley at work, however, that burns vividly in Vincent Ford’s memory.

“But (....) the joy in him, you could just see it. And when he said, ‘come’, he meant come let us make music, let’s make a hit. No time for questions! So we’d be working at it for hours, and then maybe I’d leave and then Bunny would come in, and Bob would stay, keeping at it and the session would continue. Sometimes by the time he’s already created the tune the others are just showing up in time to fit in....and then when Bob’s gone, we might stay behind rehearsing what we just did....”

With time came change, however, and at some point in the 1970s the walls went up and the violence came down on Trench Town:

“At first we’d just jump the walls and go where we wanted to go. But then the violence came and that’s when men started digging holes *through* them just so they could run when they had to. We used to live okay here, you know. We had bread trucks, water sprinkler trucks to wash the streets... But then the politics came and ruined that. They’d beat who they wanted to beat, shoot who they wanted to shoot. That’s what made Bob leave here”

And no Hollywoodesque community would be complete without insider stories given by reliable sources. When Vincent Ford refers to Marley and his Wailers being “one family”, he knows what he’s talking about. Little known is the fact that Bunny Wailer’s father and Bob’s mother had a romance which produced a daughter, Pearl. The mutual sister to Bob and Bunny would then go on to have a child for Peter Tosh.

“So ah one whole family,” says Tarta. “One whole link.”

George Robinson



Born on September 17th, 1932 in Lucky Hall Pen, Saint Mary, this part time construction worker and fisherman would find fame through his love of cooking cornmeal porridge for the Trench Town residents, a gesture that won him a place in Bob Marley's "No Woman Nuh Cry".

'Georgie', as he was known, would eventually come to live in the third room with his mother and sisters at number six First Street. At number three Sixth Street lived a ship's captain by the name of Marcel. The captain would take young Georgie to sea on a large fishing boat, giving him a taste for the life of a fisherman while the youngster adjusted to life in Trench Town. There, the observant Georgie noted the many influences in and around his urban home, which included Chinese and East Indians who were setting up various kinds of businesses, and the Rasta settlements that had developed in the large enclosed yards in and around Trench Town. Many, he thought, were wolves in sheep clothing.

Older than Marley and the Wailers by some 13 or more years, Georgie would eventually swap the life of a construction worker for that of a fisherman. A typical community man, he was always known for having a pot of cornmeal porridge on the go, which he would eagerly share with his fellow Trench Town residents. The logwood he would also collect himself with which to make the fire. Some say he traveled to as far as Maypen Cemetery for the logwood. As immortalized by Marley's famous "No Woman Nuh Cry", Georgie was indeed the one to provide the fire that Marley and his friends used for light as they sang and practiced playing their guitar throughout the night. In the mornings he would have either tea or a pot of cornmeal porridge ready so that they could fill their empty bellies once more.

RUDE BOY AMBASSADORS

Hon. Robert Nesta Marley, O.M.



Reggae superstar, musical genius, voice of the downtrodden, Bob Marley is Trench Town's most famous resident and timeless gift to a world that has seen many changes since his premature death.

Born on February 6, 1945 to Cedella Malcolm and Norval Marley, an Englishman of the British West Regiment, the first home quiet Bob knew was the place of his birth – the cool, lush hills of St. Ann in a village called Nine Miles. Although his parents were technically married, Bob never knew his father, who lived in Kingston. When the boy was just five, Norval Marley convinced the much younger Cedella to let him take their son to Kingston for a better life, but would ended up leaving the boy in the care of others. Making the discovery quite by accident, Cedella would reclaim her firstborn from the streets of Kingston, and whisk him back to the safety of her Nine Miles.

Trench Town

When Bob was 12, Cedella joined the urban migration wave and headed for Trench Town, to which her companion, Thaddius 'Toddy' Livingston, had recently moved. Their new address for 12 shillings a month was 19 Second Street, and the year was 1957. This period in Trench Town's history was somewhat like a cauldron. Still enjoying relative peace, Jamaica's soon-to-be most famous housing project was alive with the sounds of American rhythm and blues while feeding on the rumblings of the Rastafarian faith soon to take hold in the 1960s. Already showing an interest in music that had long outgrown his homemade sardine tin guitar, it was here in Trench Town that the teenage Marley got his first taste of American popular music for which he developed an instant fascination. It is said that he most enjoyed the sounds of Sam Cooke, Curtis Mayfield and Ray Charles. Meanwhile, Jamaican musicians were on the verge of developing their own authentic sound.

Once in Trench Town, Bob was reunited with his Nine Miles childhood friend, Bunny Livingstone, with whom he began harmonizing. It was here where he would first meet the mentors and friends who were to influence and become part of his short life both professionally, spiritually and personally. These included Vincent 'Tarta' Ford, Mortimer Planno, Alton Ellis, Peter Tosh, Alan 'Skill' Cole and Alvarita Anderson.

Life at first was not easy for Marley in his new urban dwelling. The town that was considered the home of outcasts took issue with his light-coloured skin and Caucasian features. A shy and introspective thinker from an early age, young Marley kept to himself and his music, spending much of his time practicing his guitar and writing

songs in Tarta's courtyard. For a while, Marley attended a private school in the area associated with a Wesleyan church. By the time he was 16, however, he would swap his formal education and subsequent job as a welder, which he had taken at the urging of his mother, for his real education with Joe Higgs, Trench Town's resident music teacher. It was through Higgs that he and Bunny would meet the third Wailer, Peter Tosh.

The details of the story of the Marley's life and career path is well known amongst his fans and is the subject of many a books and websites. Many will recall that once Marley and his friends formed "The Rude Boys" in 1961, they never looked back. Becoming the "Wailing Wailers" a year after making their first recording *Judge Not*, Marley's first big break came at age 18 when he wrote *Simmer Down*, a song he supposedly had written for his mother who was more than skeptical of her son's career choice. Riding the ska wave that had just emerged out of the area, *Simmer Down* gave Marley and his Wailers the kick start that they needed.

Cross Roads

1966 was a significant year for Bob Marley. Still unconvinced that her son had a future in music, Cedella sent him a plane ticket that year to join her in the United States, where she was now living with her new husband. Still the obedient son, Bob would make the move to Delaware, but not before marrying the young girl whom he had met and fallen in love with in Trench Town the year before. It is a well-known secret that Bob and Rita first made love in Tarta's kitchen, where Bob would temporarily live while his mother was away preparing for their new life in the United States. Again taking a job as a welder, Bob's eight months absence from Jamaica only made him firmer in his resolve to be home. Through his bride, Rita, he watched closely from afar when in that same year, Haile Selassie made his historic visit to Jamaica, giving new life to Marley's curiosity of the already growing Rastafarian movement.

That October, a wider-eyed Bob returned to the island and to the life and career that awaited him. On his return he would begin to seek the company and counsel of his spiritual mentor, Mortimer Planner, at whose Fifth Street home he would meet new friends and influences, such as Alan 'Skill' Cole. The following year he converted from Christianity to Rastafarianism, and became a father for the first time. (In all, Bob Marley would father 11 children with seven women.) Upon his return he would reunite with his Wailers and pick up from where they had left off. This time, however, a new and slower beat was emerging in the very town where socio-political rumblings were picking up the pace.

It is a testament to his talent, adaptability and savvy, that in his short life, Bob Marley spanned the gamut of Jamaica's music, from Ska to Rock Steady to Reggae. Buoyed by his new Rastafarian faith, the locksed singer used simple words with which to sing about complex issues such as war, poverty and oppression. This was the era of conscious lyrics and Bob Marley was its leader. When in 1971 he signed up with Chris Blackwell's Island Records, he made many albums and scores of hits and soon became an international voice for peace, calling for freedom, enlightenment and love. Again, the timing was significant. Marley's newfound international fame neatly merged with the black independence movement of the 1970s in Africa and South America, helping to cement his rebel image that had been cultivated through his music. At the same time,

Reggae was enjoying much attention in the US, no doubt influencing Rolling Stones Magazine choice of Bob Marley and the Wailers as the band of the year in 1976.

Meanwhile, a still young independent Jamaica was coming into its own, and was entering its political adolescence, a turbulent period forever emblazoned in the memories of Jamaicans who lived through it. Bob Marley by now was seen as a near political force, garnering the superstar invitations by local government to headline peace concerts in an attempt to quash mounting tension between political factions. Marley would narrowly survive an attack by gunmen the afternoon before the peace concert, the shock of which would send him to Europe in a self-imposed exile. It was Marley's attempt to heal from the hurt inflicted by hands of his own countrymen. Perhaps too much had changed for the man who had not had the luxury of stability in life. By now he and the original Wailers had split up, and Jamaica had entered what is still considered to be its darkest hour in terms of political violence. While the country's greatest superstar was on a plane to England, new celebrities were filling the gap. In the Jamaica of the late 1970s, guns were the law through which area *dons* ruled.

Final Years

Now in England, Marley's aptly named Exodus album soared to the top of the charts in 1977. In the same year, a homesick Marley would receive a ring from Selassie's grandson in honour of his work, and then discover the cancer that would eventually put an end to his work and life. The discovery came after an injury to his toe during a game of soccer, the other love of Marley's life. Says best friend, Alan Cole "Bob loved his soccer second only to his music. And he was pretty good at it, too." For the man who could have anything he wanted, Marley never let go of the simple things that made him happy. International soccer star, Alan Cole was Marley's best friend and final manager under his own Tuff Gong label, which Cole had started with just \$10 of his own money. "Any chance Bob got," says Cole, "whether it was in a hotel room while on tour or out in his backyard, he had that ball with him. It was the same with his blue jeans. Bob just loved his jeans. (display a pair) We started that revolution of wearing jeans on stage. We even had someone in the States make them just for us."

Remaining true to his Rastafarian beliefs and therefore refusing to amputate the cancerous toe, Marley returned to the island in 1978 for the famous Peace Concert, during which he would bring together the leaders of the two warring political parties on stage. That year Marley the United Nations would award him with their medal for peace. In 1979, he and the Wailers would be the only international artistes invited to perform in Zimbabwe by the Freedom Fighters as the nation celebrated their independence that year. In 1981, a month before his death, the Jamaica government would award him with the Order of Merit, the nation's third highest honour in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the country's culture.

It was Alan Cole who would be with Marley the day he collapsed in Central Park while jogging. The superstar finally surrendered to the disease on May 11, 1981 in a Miami hospital. He was only 36. On the day of his burial, men, women and children from all walks of life lined the streets of Kingston to bid a final farewell to the man who put reggae, Trench Town, and, to some extent, Jamaica on the world map. In the procession blazed a convoy of Rastafarians on motorcycles surrounding Marley's old pale blue VW bus. Traditionally strict school principals bent the rules and let their

uniformed students break from their lessons to pour onto the sidewalks so that they too could pay their last respects to the man who lived for peace. His massive state funeral on May 21st would mirror the disproportionate impact that this lone man from tiny Trench Town has had on the world.

Today, this simple tenement yard that was the genesis of his prolific career stands proud today as a reminder of Marley the man, his music and his message. It will forever remain a testament to the world of what greatness can be wrought from such humble beginnings.

PETER TOSH



“I’m a stepping razor, don’t watch my size, I’m dangerous.” The fact that such a prolific songwriter and musician could embrace the lyrics of another and immortalize them, speaks to the caliber of the Mystic Man, the Bush Doctor himself, Peter Tosh.

Born Winston Hubert McIntosh on October 19, 1944 in Bluefields, Westmoreland (west Jamaica), Tosh would be raised by an aunt after his father abandoned him and his mother shortly after his birth. Raising her nephew in a loving but strict Christian home, young Hubert would eventually take issue with Christianity and embrace Rastafarianism. In 1956, the future Wailer and his aunt left the quiet countryside for the potential of the city. His aunt would pass away soon after, leaving the 15 year-old Tosh in the care of an uncle who lived on West Road, Trench Town. In Trench Town he would encounter the troubling “rude boy” phenomenon of the 1960s, but found solace in the company of two new friends who shared his love for music. With the arrival of Trench Town’s newest resident and his “real” guitar, the Wailers were formed.

Even as a young man, Peter Tosh questioned what he saw and often acted on it. He refused to comprehend how in a black country like Jamaica he never saw a black lawyer, judge, doctor or minister. This inspired the burgeoning extremist to be defiant of authority and the “Babylon shitsem”. Tosh’s contempt was neatly tempered by his legendary wit and sense of humour, which had him coining his own jargon (e.g. system was *shitsem*, management was *damagement* and Kingston was *Kill-some*). As for the man who was closely associated with “the herb” not only did he believe that marijuana was a healing herb, he sang about legalizing it, openly smoked it and was often beaten and arrested for it. No doubt this “don’t care” attitude helped to make him so revered, even today.

The genius of Tosh goes far beyond his musical brilliance and continued even after the Wailers broke up. In Jamaica and throughout the world, every sufferer still identifies with his music. “Get Up Stand Up” is one of the most important anthems ever written for freedom fighters in the world. Co-written with Marley, it was performed by Sting, Bono and others as the theme for the Amnesty International World Tour of the late 80s. Concerned about the plight of Africans and their descendants, he was a hero in Africa and a superstar in South Africa. He was among the first to sing about apartheid, and declared his M-16 shaped guitar as “firing shots” at all them devil disciples. For Tosh, music was his weapon of choice with which to fight the oppressive apartheid system. In 1983, his performance in Swaziland saw freedom fighters from neighboring

South Africa crawling across the border on their stomachs through mine fields, just to see this icon of rebellion.

On September 11, 1987, Tosh's Kingston home was broken into by three intruders, including a man he had befriended and tried to help find work after a long jail sentence. Tosh was shot and killed. Dennis Lobban surrendered to the police, and was tried and convicted by a jury in a short eleven minutes. The real motive for his murder, robbery or assassination, has never been determined. What is known for certain is that with his passing, the world lost a voice that took on apartheid, political persecution, police brutality and poverty on behalf of those who would not or could not.

Bunny Wailer



Singer, composer, conscious artiste, devout Rastafarian and last surviving original member of the famous trio that took reggae to the world, Bunny Wailer never did take to the limelight that followed his group's every move.

Born Neville Livingston on April 23, 1947 in Nine Miles, the would-be Wailer spent the first few years of his childhood in the lush hillside village of St. Ann. As one of 16 children between his parents, "Bunny Wailer", as he would become, grew up in the kind of poverty as did his childhood and neighborhood friend, Robert Marley. Nurturing his own musical talent, Bunny, like Marley would fashion his first guitar from electric wire, sardine tins and bamboo sticks and spend hours practicing his craft and dreaming of his future.

Originally from Kingston, Neville's father would decide to return to the bustling city to seek better fortune, and took his shop business and family to a new urban community to which many rural residents were flocking. It was at that point that Bunny Wailer's new home address became ___ Second Street, Trench Town.

No doubt influenced by friendship between their father and mother that had started back in Nine Miles, Bunny would be reunited with his Marley friend in Kingston, when he and Cedella moved to Trench Town shortly thereafter. Their friendship picked up from where it left off, with the two harmonizing on their sardine guitars under a tree into the late hours of the night. The friendship between Cedella and the older and married Livingston continued in Trench Town, and produced a sister in common for young Bob and Bunny, further cementing their close relationship. She would be named "Pearl". With the arrival of Peter Tosh and his "real guitar", the lives of the three Wailers followed a common thread, from practicing in Bob's yard to becoming the Wailing Rude Boys, the Wailing Wailers, and then the Wailers.

Preferring to follow the beat of his own drum from the start, however, Bunny Wailer at times found himself in trouble with the law, and was often the target of police surveillance and harassment in Trench Town. Wailer even spent 14 months in prison for possession of marijuana. It is said that his prison time helped to cement his anti-establishment sentiments, leading to somewhat rebellious decisions such as refusing to go on tour abroad during wintertime, a personal issue which conflicted with the plans made for the group by its then manager, Island Records.

A respected talent in his own right, Bunny Wailer is responsible for several classics that have long surpassed his career as a Wailer, including his signature hit, "Dreamland" sung by Marcia Griffiths. When the group broke up in 1973, Bunny went into seclusion until 1982, retreating to his 142 acre crop farm. He would resurface several years later much to the delight of his fans, playing to sold out performances in New York's Madison Gardens. Still greatly appreciated overseas and the recipient of the keys to several cities, the lone surviving Wailer rarely performs in his homeland, and has twice been the unfortunate victim of expressed displeasure at the hands of a new generation of Jamaicans for whom reggae is a relic of the past. For reggae aficionados, however, Bunny Wailer will forever remain one of Trench Town's most outstanding voices and talents.

POLITICS

DIVIDE & RULE

1976 - The Birth of the New Jamaica

If the small community of Trench Town is to be envied for possessing an unequal share of gems, then its history of unrelenting violence and suffering is its ultimate and most unwanted equalizer. And while the propensity for the violence found in many inner cities worldwide is not unique to this one, the Trench Town story is truly a frustrating one.

Starting from as far back as the late 1960s, the area that was already becoming the prolific spawning ground for some of the world's greatest talents, began to get a taste of the bitter diet of violence it would live on in the decades to follow. With the 1970s, came the reign of unprecedented terror that residents still talk about to this day. Many would not survive. It is no exercise in hyperbole that in those days, Trench Town was likened to well-known international battlegrounds, such as the Gaza Strip.

Much attention has been paid to the violence that is synonymous with the town that gave the third world its first real superstar. Little has been effective enough to ease it. Call it an awful coupling of conditions. A poor and struggling community named Trench Town is planted and grown on the soil of one political party's persuasion, and lies literally across the way from another community, Tivoli Gardens, whose foundation belongs to the opposing and equally ambitious political party.

The result is a tragic one. The two forces are not some underground warring factions, but representatives of the two major and therefore powerful political parties of the day – the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP). As development took place in the 1960s, there was a heavy emphasis on Tivoli Gardens, represented by Edward Seaga of the JLP, then Minister of Development. In the 70s, Tony Spaulding, then the Minister of Housing for the PNP, speeded up the development of the Trench Town area with a passion. All this ultimately helped to fuel the innate rivalry between the two factions, as development in each area was neither equal, simultaneous nor sustained by job creation. Rather, political patronage was the order of the day and was largely responsible for Trench Town's inability to firmly tackle its problem.

Brother was pitted against brother for the "good" of a political organization. Residents began to see violence as a means to defend their community. One moved from the level of petty criminal to crime lord to "don", or master of his turf. Over the years, various "dons" emerged on both sides of the political fence, and enjoyed protection from political allies. This made the job of the police difficult at best. Peace treaties and initiatives became nothing more than photo ops for everyone while allowing them to ignore the root cause. The dons who managed to escape an early death would live to enjoy equal or even greater power than their former "bosses". No doubt some will become immortalized in oral history. To this day the names still surface - from Jackie the High Priest in Tivoli Gardens to his heirs Claudie Massop, Bya Mitchell and Jim Brown. Supporters of the PNP were well represented by Bury Boy, Feather Mop and Bucky Marshall.

Meanwhile, opportunists in the form of hoodlums, gang leaders and gunmen ran rampant, terrorizing residents and their children. Arson, razing, stoning and murders were so commonplace, that at times the military had to step in with tanks and guns. Time was often measured by curfews. Schools closed and children stayed indoors. Any

attempt in the name of progress was halted until peace returned, such as the construction of new and much needed government homes. To move from one section to another literally meant risking one's life. Meanwhile, politicians angrily pointed fingers at the other, while the residents buried their dead. Some simply fled. The famous Seventh Street has been the scene of much trouble in its day, with the area where it meets Collie Smith drive called "No Man's Land". The police post that stands there today is the result of its sad reputation.

Today, little has changed and Trench Town and its neighboring communities continue to live in a seesaw existence of fear and uneasy calm. Local newspapers still report on the violence and sometimes loosely display the names "Trench Town" when referring to areas technically outside the Kingston 12 zone. (For Marley die-hards, the sentimental definition of "Trench Town" is offered in his *Natty Dread Locks* in which he sings about moving from First Street all the way up to Seventh Street.) These news reports are usually greeted by a nation that is all but numb to the problems of an area that could once overlook poverty to share a simple meal and sing while hanging out the laundry to dry. For those who lived and thrived on the streets of this, the world's most famous inner city community, the peaceful pace of the days of old is a fading memory - the haunting beat of a distant drum that they hope one day to hear again.