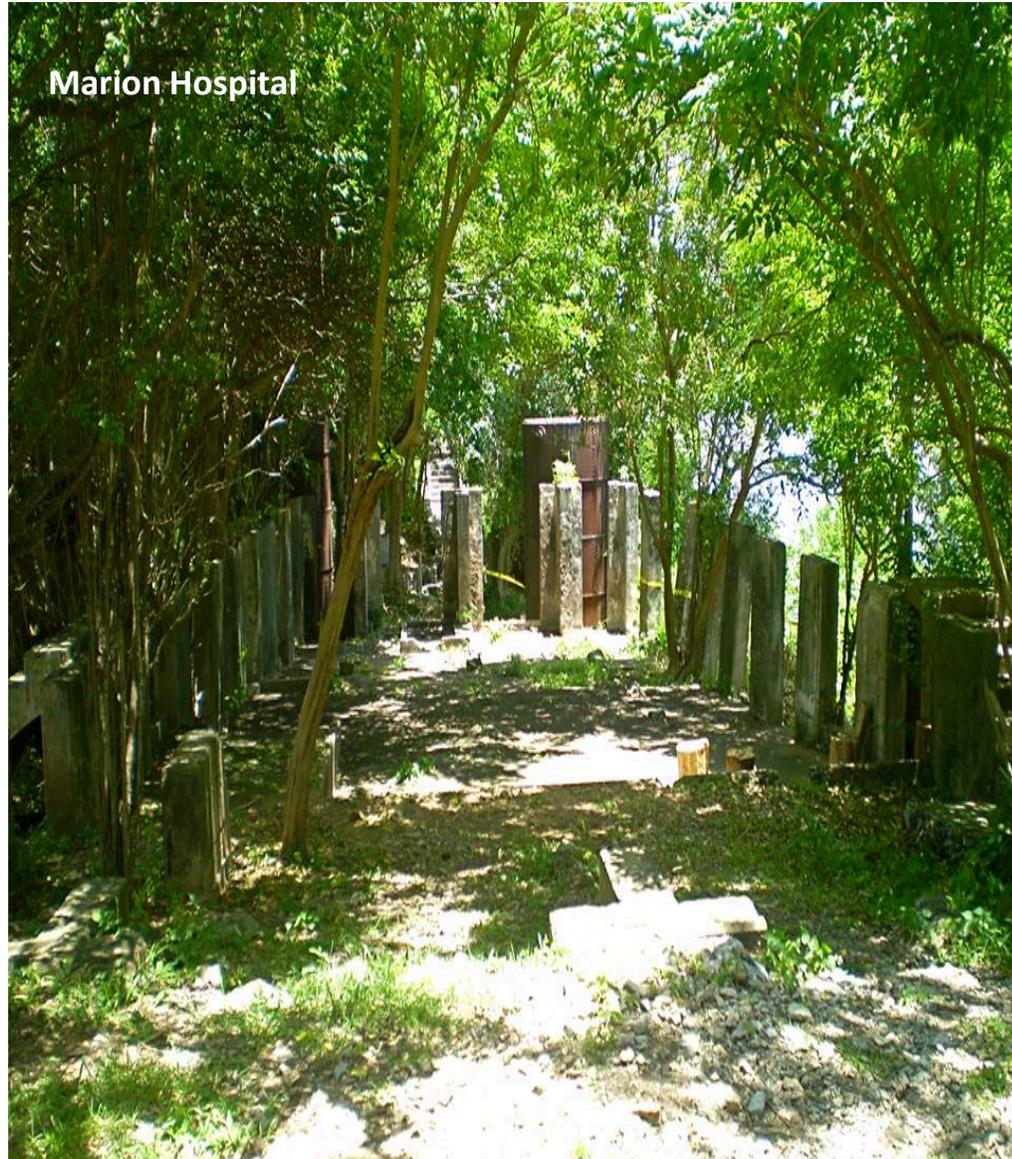


# THE NATIONAL TRUST OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



NELSON ISLAND ..... where history comes alive



## THE NATIONAL TRUST OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The National Trust was established by Act 11 of 1991, amended by Act 31 of 1999, and further amended in January 2015. The main responsibility of the Trust is to safeguard the built and natural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago.

The key functions of the National Trust are protection, preservation, conservation, education and promotion of heritage. This is achieved through listing and acquiring of heritage properties, research, compilation of photographic and architectural records, public awareness, facilitating public access and enjoyment of heritage properties, advocacy and advice.

Nelson Island Heritage Site and the Five Islands were placed under the jurisdiction of the National Trust. Redevelopment of Nelson Island has been the focus, with restoration of existing buildings, construction of a replica cottage and upgrading of the landscape.

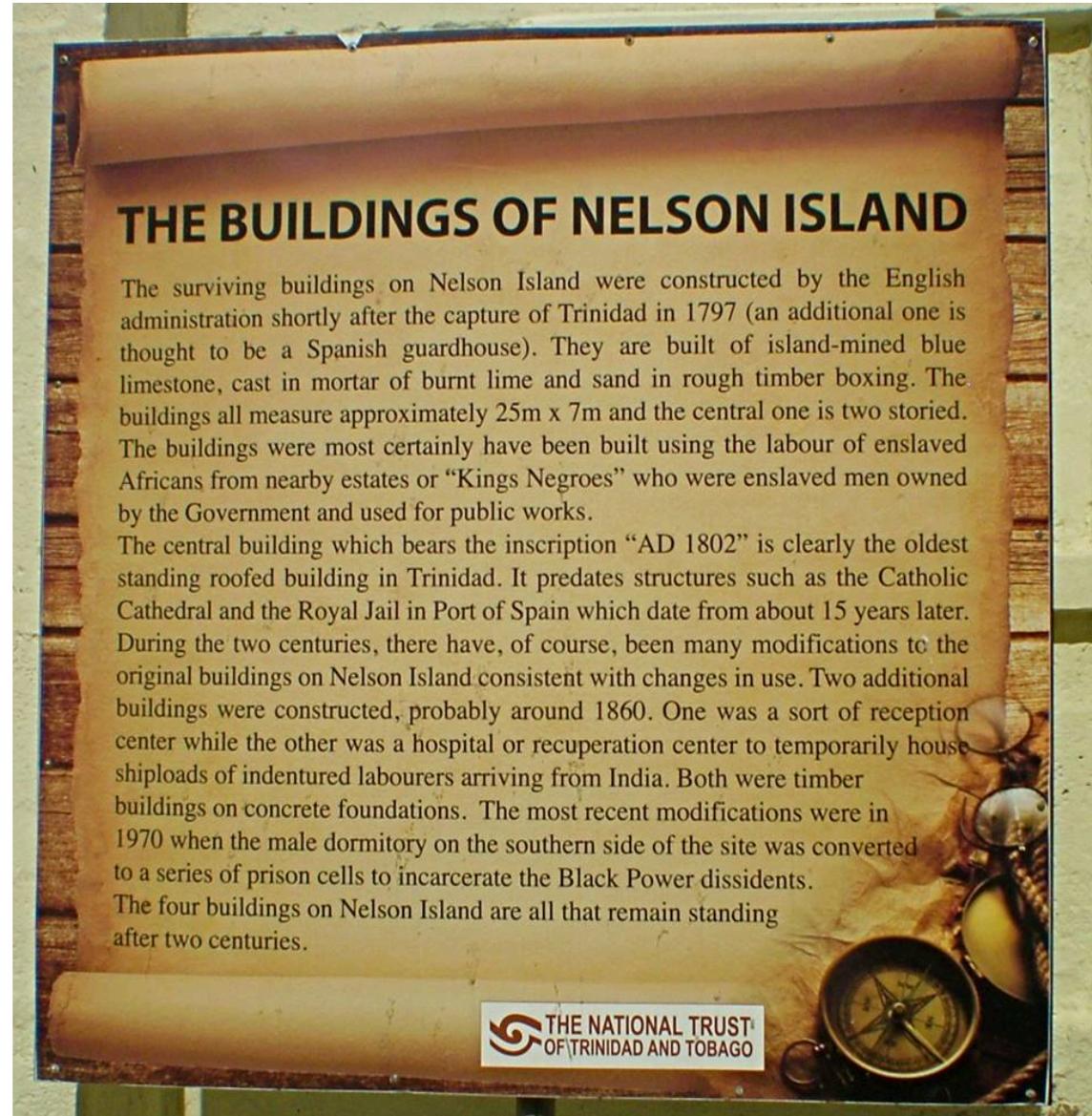
Since the initial restoration, the emphasis of the Trust has been to educate citizens on the history of Trinidad and Tobago through the Annual Nelson Island Experience.

# THE NATIONAL TRUST OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

This takes the form of commemoration events featuring reenactments, dramatic and cultural presentations, lectures, tours, exhibitions, displays, films and workshops.

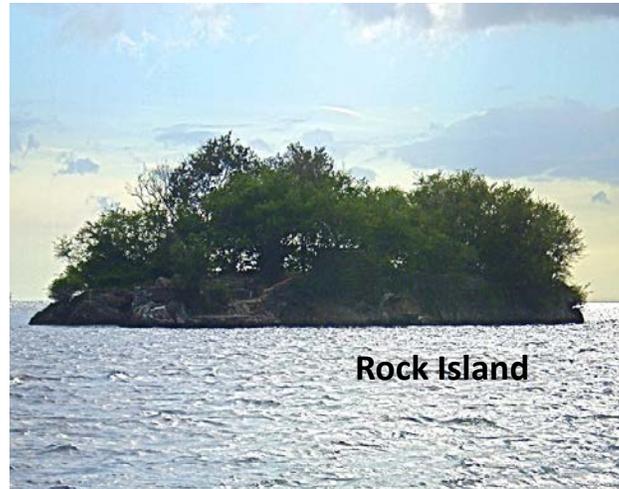
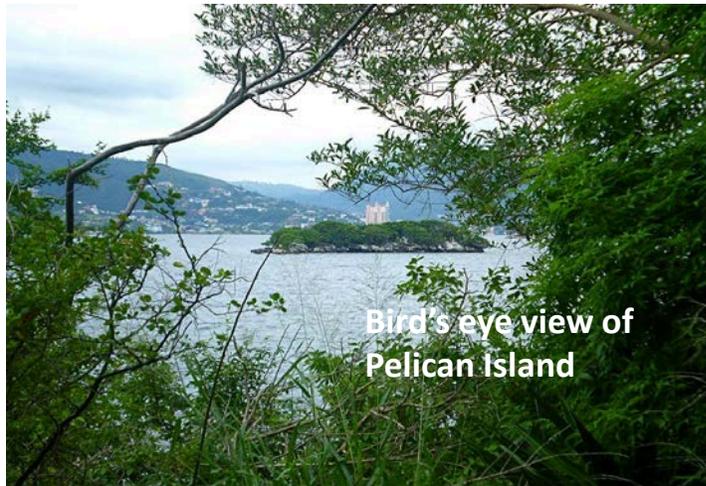
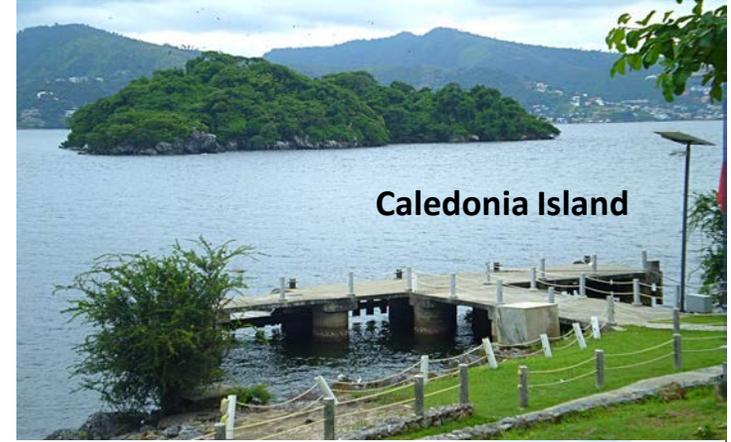
The visitor experience on Nelson Island is also being enhanced to address leisure and enjoyment. Cultural and related events lend to greater accessibility and functionality of the island.

Nelson Island represents settlement, transformation, growth and development. History comes alive and is therefore better understood on the Island.



# THE FIVE ISLANDS

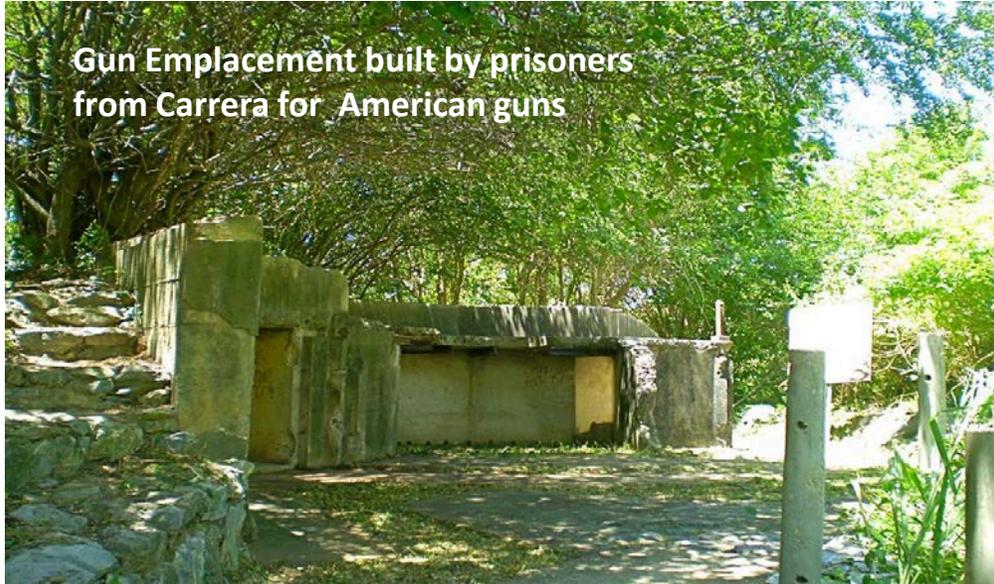
The Five Islands are really six islands, Caledonia, Nelson, Lenagan, Pelican, Rock and Craig. Caledonia is joined to Craig by a four foot wide manmade concrete causeway, and thus the Five Islands. Nelson Island is featured in the cover photo.



# NELSON ISLAND HERITAGE SITE – A STEP INTO HISTORY

- Nelson island was used by the Amerindians as a stopover point for fishing and bartering.
- In 1498 the Spanish utilized the Island as a strategic defence base with cannon emplacements and a small guard post.
- In 1797 the British fortified the island with cannons on Spanish foundations. The guns were removed to Fort Picton around 1805.
- In 1802 the first concrete building in Trinidad was built by Government owned African slaves, called Kings Slaves, as a barracks for British soldiers.
- From the 1820's the Five Islands were given as grants to be used as holiday homes by the British elite.
- During the period 1866 to 1917, 114,000 indentured Indian immigrants were processed on Nelson Island for transfer to sugarcane, cocoa and coconut estates.
- Nelson Island was used as an assembly facility and repatriation point up to 1936, for ex-indentureds returning to India.
- During World War II (1940 – 1945) Nelson Island was used by the Americans as an outer defence for the seaplane base at Chaguaramas.
- A reinforced concrete gun emplacement was built by prisoners from Carrera for the American guns during this period.
- Iconic labour leader Tubal Uriah Butler was incarcerated on the island from 1937 to 1939 and during World War II.





Gun Emplacement built by prisoners from Carrera for American guns



Corridor of Jails Cells in Building C

## A STEP INTO HISTORY

- Austrian and German Jews declared “enemy aliens” were detained on the island for three months during World War II.
- After the Second World War, Nelson Island served as a youth camp training young men in various skills.
- During the period 1965 to 1979, the University of the West Indies used the island for field courses in marine biology.
- In 1970 activists of the Black Power Movement were detained on Nelson Island during labour and economic unrest in the country.

## FIVE ISLANDS – GATEWAY TO HERITAGE



The Five Islands have been important in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. Caledonia, the largest, housed the quarters of the Medical Officer who attended to sick Indian immigrants. This island was also used to detain Jewish women and children during World War II. It is reported as well that Tubal Uriah Butler spent some time on Caledonia Island.

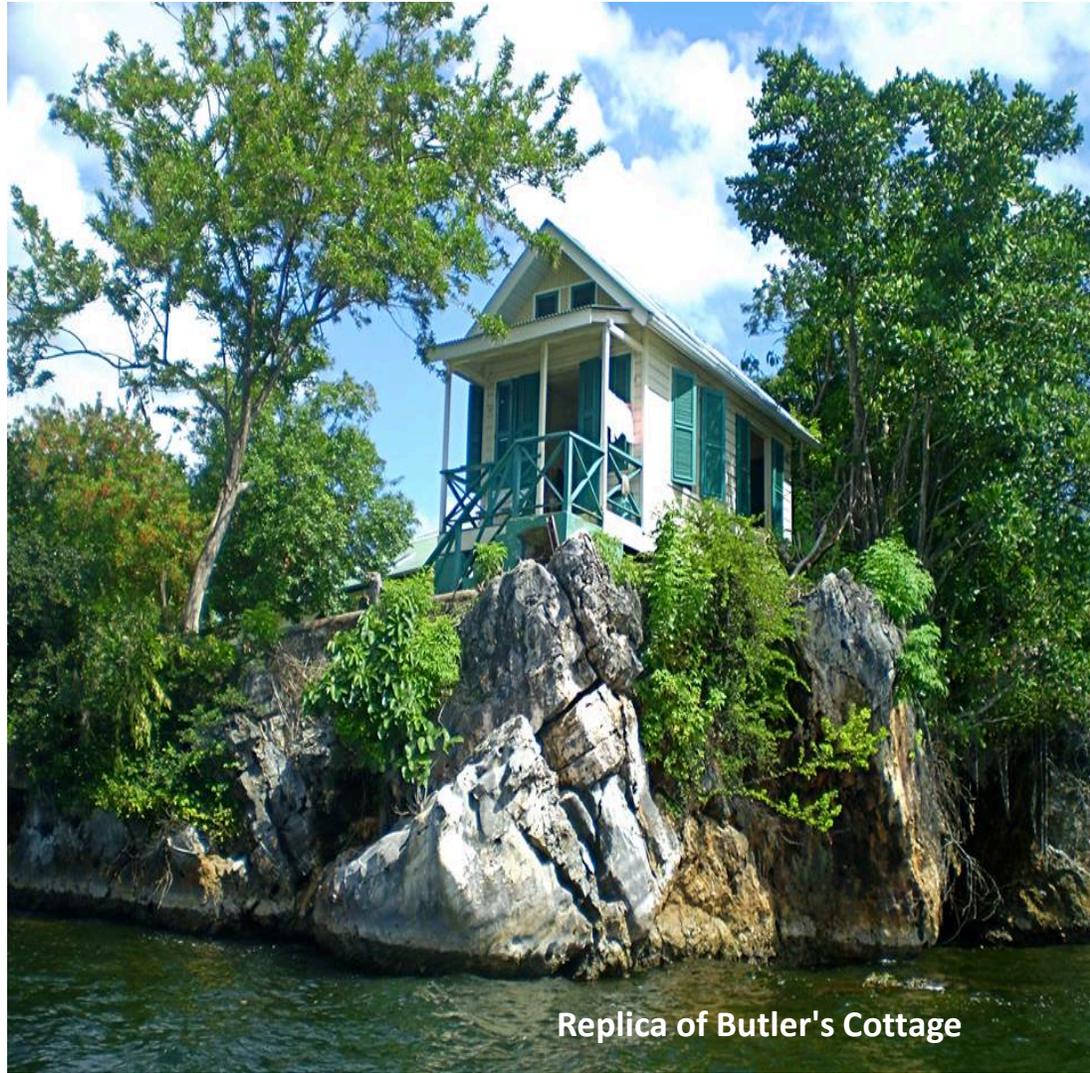
Sir Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago was married on Caledonia Island. In 1970 detainees were taken by boat to Caledonia to have visits with their families.

Rock Island served as a quarantine station for first class passengers arriving from India. The island was also used by the

Americans during their occupation, and they built a footbridge on piles from Nelson to Rock Island.

Lenagan was the site of an Isolation Hospital for Indian immigrants who arrived suffering from contagious diseases. It also served as a cremation site for those who succumbed to their illnesses.

Governor of Trinidad and Tobago, Lord Harris, honeymooned on Craig island. Pelican and Craig Islands were used mostly as grants by the British to vacation before the 1960's.



Replica of Butler's Cottage

## REDEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

The National Trust is dedicated to the redevelopment of Nelson Island continuing with restoration, maintenance, beautification and conservation activities on the island.

Nelson Island has been transformed from an island overgrown with shrubbery and abandoned buildings, to four heritage buildings, three restored with minor modifications and a replica of Butler's Cottage.

In keeping with the need to be environmentally conscious, the island utilizes mainly solar energy to power all its buildings and external lights.

A beautiful courtyard has been paved and signage mounted on concrete walls in recognition of the many peoples who occupied the island.

Walking trails have been repaired and signage placed throughout, so the island of 1.7 hectares is accessible and visitor ready.

## REDEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

A photographic exhibition has been set up on the upper level of the Hall of the Peoples, to give a pictorial history of the Indentured Indian Immigrants, Tubal Uriah Butler and the 1970 Black Power Movement, representing events that took place on Nelson Island.

The Mess Hall has been restored in an open design and can now be utilized for lectures, meetings, functions and other social events.

The buildings have been opened up to allow visitors to fully explore, the grounds are being maintained for visitor access and safety, and flowers are being planted to add to the beauty of the island.



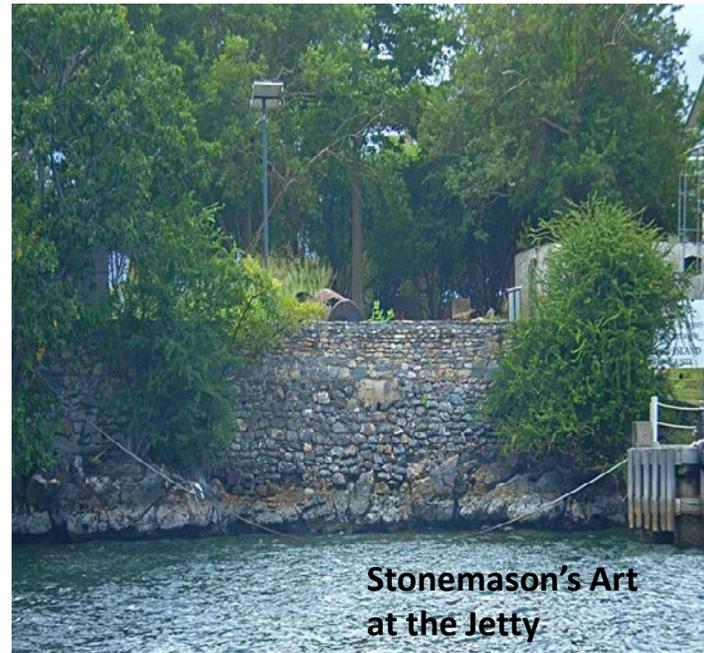
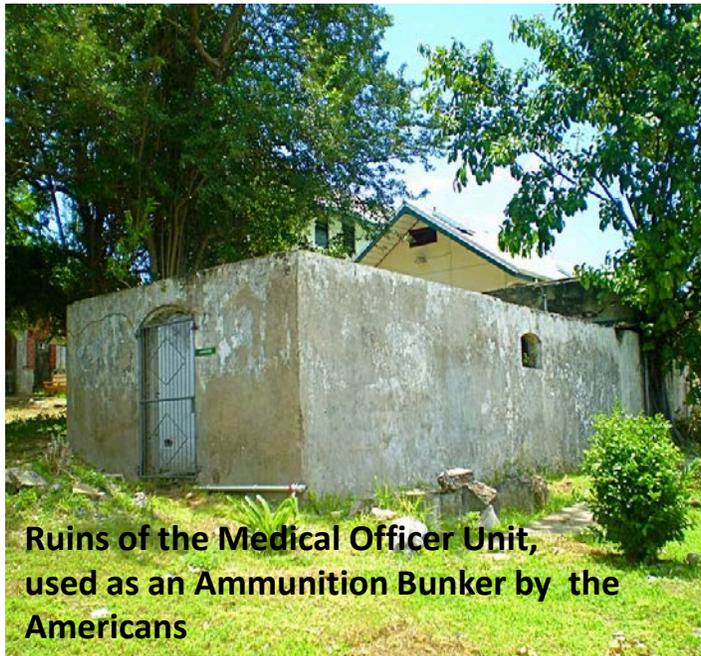
**Courtyard with plaques of peoples who occupied Nelson Island**

## RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION

There are several ruins on the island which will be restored to create functional buildings. A Museum and Gift Shop are to be constructed, as well as suitable quarters for resident security personnel. There was once an Open Verandah and this will also be reconstructed.

Besides the main jetty, the island has two other landing areas for boats, with the original steps still intact. These landing points will be restored to cater for boats bringing in day visitors to the island.

Conservation efforts will be directed towards rainwater harvesting for cleaning of buildings, the courtyard, flushing of toilets and for use in the garden.



## RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION

Ecologically there are iguanas, millipedes, vultures, pelicans and bats on Nelson Island, and there may be other species, as it was once recorded that snails lived on the Five Islands.

With ongoing landscaping activities, flowers of a hardy variety have been planted to add colour to the vegetation as well as ferns and succulents. In the future the intent is to bring in butterflies to populate the island.

Given the rich soil from the guano deposited by the vultures and pelicans, there are opportunities to bring a horticultural industry to the island, by composting and sale of plants and manure.



## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

The Five Islands have been aptly called the “Gateway to Heritage” given the role they have played in the peopling of Trinidad and Tobago.

Nelson island and the Five Islands offer a rich history from colonization, indentureship, World War II, labour uprisings and revolutionary periods in the country.

The National Trust recognizes that a visit to Nelson Island is on-site education, where citizens and especially students, are able to explore an historical classroom. This education hub allow students to gain valuable knowledge about events that form part of the history of Trinidad and Tobago.

Nelson Island therefore contributes to a better understanding of what is being taught in the history curriculum at schools. In 2015, 973 primary, secondary and tertiary students visited the island.

Under the aegis of the National Trust, Nelson Island will continue to be promoted as a unique learning experience, which gives a sense of identity and an understanding of heritage.

As Nelson Island continues to be restored, it will bring a greater sense of pride, and appreciation for the patrimony of Trinidad and Tobago.



# NATIONAL TRUST TEAM

## STAFF

Valerie Taylor  
Interim Chief Executive Officer

Judith Marchan  
Administrative Manager

Kara Roopsingh  
Research Officer

Marlon Green  
Research Assistant

Cheryl Ali  
Events Coordinator/Receptionist

Janelle Ovid  
On The Job Trainee

Tiy Cross-Lovelace  
Social Media

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Neisha Ghany  
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**Garden at Nelson Island**

## BANKERS

First Citizens  
Cor. Park & Duke Streets  
Port of Spain

## AUDITORS

PKF  
90 Edward Street  
Port of Spain

**Ruins of Sterilization Unit on  
Lenagan Island**

