Published by Robben Island Museum 2012
RP255/2012
ISBN: 978-0-621-41159-1

This report is also available on
the Robben Island Museum website at
http://www.robben-island.org.za

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The managers and staff of all the departments of RIM
are thanked for their contributions.

Production Co-ordination by Mortimer Daniels
Design & Layout by Kurt van Vrede
Printed by: Asset Print

Cover image: Collection of images from the Robben Island Timeline Exhibition
**NOT ALWAYS AN ISLAND**

Robben Island is an outcrop of rock formed by geological processes extending back in time many millions of years. Rising and falling sea-level periodically changed the appearance of the Island. Over the past 7 000 000 years alone, there were twelve periods of lower sea-level, during these periods the Island was linked to the mainland.

**900-800 million years ago**
Sediments that now form the base rocks of Table Bay and Robben Island were laid down where an ancient river delta entered shallow coastal waters. Ripple marks which can be seen on the base of the oldest quarry in the south of the Island, provide some evidence of this process. This bedrock is now known as the Tygerberg Formation of the Malmesbury Group.

**600 million years ago**
Intrusion of granite into metamorphosed Malmesbury shales, deep in the earth’s crust.

**350-150 million years ago**
Intrusion of molten dolerite during a period of volcanism (the Karoo volcanics), which affected most of southern Africa.

**9-6 million years ago**
Sea-level rose and beach terraces were formed through the deposition of shelly and boulders.

**4-3 million years ago**
Another period of raised sea-level resulted in additional terracing.

**2 million-30 000 years ago**
Sandy limestone and calcite deposits were formed through the cementing of dunes. Partially consolidated coastal dunes were created by strong winds during periods of lowered sea-levels.

**500 000-20 000 000 years ago**
Archaeological evidence shows that early hominids lived in the western Cape during this period. At times of lower sea-level the present Island would have been a hill on the mainland. Both the Island and its environs (the present Table Bay) would have been grassy savannah inhabited by lions, antelope, hippopotamus and other smaller animals, as well as extinct elephants and giant buffalos.

**About 12 000 years ago**
Rising sea-level after the Ice Age again cut the Island off from the mainland. Since that time, it has remained largely unchanged, a part from a further rise in sea level between 7 000 & 3 000 years ago & the continuing formation of unstable dunes.

**EARLY IMPRESSIONS**

Penguins, Sea-dogs & Serpents

For thousands of years before its ‘discovery’ by European explorers, the Island would have been known to the indigenous people of the mainland. Unfortunately, their impressions of the Island are unrecorded and no archaeological evidence of early human use of the Island has yet been found. The earliest recorded impressions are those of sailors and settlers whose need for food supplies changed the Island irreversibly.

1488
Bartolomeu Dias anchored in Table Bay on his return voyage from Mossel Bay. Jan van de Capijn, the commander of Dias’s second ship, may have landed on the Island to kill penguins and seals but the account is not substantiated.

1503
Antonio de Saldanha and his men killed many birds which are called sillicarioes (penguins) and sea wolves and tortoises, of which there was great abundance on the Island.

1505
A Portuguese ship is said to have left some convicts on the Island.

1591
Following hostility between sailors and Khosa on the mainland, the Island was used by voyagers as a place of refuge. Letters were deposited and collected there.

1601
A sailor on the voyage of Sir James Lancaster, who had also visited the Island two years before in 1591, commented ‘In this island there is a great abundance of seals and penguins, in such number as is almost incredible’. Lancaster left six sheep and two rams on the Island for the relief of strangers that might come thither.

Images of the Robben Island Museum Timeline exhibition depicting the multi-layered history of the Island. This dates back 900 million years and concludes in 1999 when Robben Island Museum was declared a World Heritage Site.
# Contents

## 1. General Information

1.1 Submission of the annual report to the executive authority ........................................... 5  
1.2 Applicable Acts and other information ............................................................................... 5  
1.3 Chairperson’s Report .......................................................................................................... 8  
1.4 Report of the Chief Executive Officer ................................................................................ 9  
1.5 Robben Island Museum Performance Information 1 April 2011 - 31 March 2012 ............. 14

## 2. Annual Financial Statements

- Report of the Audit Committee .............................................................................................. 35  
- Report of the Auditor-General ............................................................................................... 37  
- Approval and Statement of Responsibility .......................................................................... 40  
- Accounting Authority’s Report ............................................................................................ 41  
- Statement of Financial Position ........................................................................................... 43  
- Statement of Financial Performance .................................................................................... 44  
- Statement of Changes in Net Assets ..................................................................................... 44  
- Cash Flow Statement ............................................................................................................ 45  
- Accounting Policies ............................................................................................................. 46  
- Notes to the Annual Financial Statements ............................................................................ 55

## 3. Human Resource Management

3.1 Expenditure.......................................................................................................................... 68  
3.2 Employment equity ............................................................................................................ 69  
3.3 Foreign workers ................................................................................................................ 70  
3.4 Leave utilization for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 ......................................... 70  
3.5 Labour relations ................................................................................................................ 71  
3.6 Skills development ............................................................................................................ 71  
3.7 Training Opportunities ..................................................................................................... 71

## Appendix: Materiality and Significance Framework

1. Background .......................................................................................................................... 74  
2. Broad Framework for Robben Island Museum .................................................................. 75  
3. RIM General Approach to Qualitative Aspects ................................................................. 76  
4. Annexure: Detailed/Specific RIM Responses to Requirements ........................................ 77  
   4.1 RIM Response to Fiduciary duties of the Accounting Authority Requirements .......... 77  
   4.2 RIM Response to Annual Report and Financial Statements Requirement .................. 77  
   4.3 RIM Response to Information to be submitted by Accounting Authority Requirement .... 78  
5. Table of Abbreviations ...................................................................................................... 79
Captain Joris van Spilbergen, sailing from Zealand to the East Indies, named the island ‘Isla de Cornelia’ after his mother, but the name did not catch on. He killed ‘a quantity of Pinguins’ which he found ‘crisp of flesh and very tasty’, shot most of the sheep left there by Lancaster, and placed some rack rabbits (dassels) to breed on the island.

1604 An English sailor, David Middleton, described the island as having ‘Penguins. Wild geese, Ducks, Eeke, and Pelicans and divers other Fowle ...’

1608 Dutch Admiral, Cornelius Maedlicift, left sheep to fatten on the island ‘so that if any should come which could get no trade on the mainland, they would find something here.’ The sheep he had found there had been undeniably fat; the tall was 25 inches thick and weighed 11 pounds, being nothing but fat only ... He also found an ‘unspeakable number of sea-dogs with lovely pelts, His men ‘amused themselves by discoiling fully a hundred to death.’

1609 The practice of leaving sheep to fatten on the island continued. Captain William Keeling took fat sheep from the island, leaving lean ones to replace them.

1611 Dutch commercial sealers were shipwrecked off the island, but their fate is unknown.

1615 The establishment of a settlement at the Cape of Good Hope was considered necessary to ensure commerce with the East Indies. In 1631, The English East India Company had proposed sending one hundred convicts there to settle but in 1619 only ten convicts under the leadership of John Doss arrived. After clashing with the local Khoei, they sought refuge on Robben Island. Their fate is uncertain but they may have perished at sea. Later convicts taken to the island begged to be hanged rather than left there.

1620 British Captains Fisheberth and Shilling took symbolic possession of Table Bay in the name of King James I. This gesture was ignored by both Africans and Europeans.

1622 A group of twenty Khoei, under the leadership of Aasheemato, also known as Harry of Hadash, requested a British captain to take them to stay on the island, and they remained there interminably until 1640, by which time the food resources of the Island had been greatly depleted.

1647 Survivors of the Dutch ship ‘Haarlem’, wrecked in Table Bay, sent foraging parties to Robben Island for penguins, penguin eggs and carrots. Their survival and the successful salvage of valuable cargo lent encouragement to Dutch plans to establish a settlement at the Cape.

1653 The arrival of Van Rebeek at the Cape marked the start of European settlement, conquest and expansion in South Africa. Robben Island was essential to the establishment of a refreshment station for the Dutch East India Company as food sources on the mainland depended on trade with the Khoei, who did not always co-operate with the Dutch. The Island became a pantry for provisions such as penguin eggs and meat, pelts and oil from seals, lain-oil, and sheep.

1654 A few men were placed on the Island under a supervisor, who became known as the Postholder. They built a shelter, dug a well, started a vegetable garden, and built a kiln for firing bricks. The Company appointed a shepherd to tend the sheep, and also introduced rabbits and pigs to the Island.

1655 A system of signal fires and beacons on the highest point of the island, known as ‘Vuurterp,’ was instituted to assist ships entering Table Bay.

1657–1658 The Colonial Office banished some slaves and exiles to the Island to cut stone under the supervision of the Postholder, Jan Wouterzoon. He neglected his duties, and was transferred to India in disgrace.

A larger sheep-shed was built by labourers and slaves sent from the mainland. When not building they were expected to kill snakes.

1658 Aasheemato (Harry), an important middle-man and translator between the Khoei and the Dutch, fell into disfavour with Van Rebeek and was, therefore, placed on the Island, together with two other Khoei captives. They were the first political prisoners on Robben Island.

1659 Aasheemato escaped with a fellow Khoei captive by rowing to the mainland in a stolen boat.
1.1 Submission of the Annual Report to the Executive Authority

In accordance with the provision of the Public Finance Management Act (Act 1 of 1999), we have pleasure in submitting for presentation to Parliament this report of the activities of Robben Island Museum for the financial year ended on 31 March 2012.

[Signature]

Mr Ben Dikobe Martins
Deputy Chairperson of Council
31 July 2012

1.2 Applicable Acts and other information

This report is submitted in compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act (108 of 1996); the Cultural Institutions Act, 1998; the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 as amended by Act 29 of 1999; Treasury Regulations, 2001; and other applicable Acts and Regulations.

1.2.1 Foundation

Robben Island Museum (RIM) was established in 1997. Robben Island was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999.

1.2.2 Vision

Robben Island World Heritage Site (RIWHS) as a living museum aims to memorialise and promote its unique universal symbolism of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity and injustice, using both its tangible and intangible resources.

RIWHS will engage its local, national and international stakeholders to develop world class conservation and use programme, and employ strategies that will:
- Reflect its documented memories of the political imprisonment landscape and other historical layers;
- Encourage critical debate and lifelong learning;
- Promote democratic principles and human rights;
- Promote self reflection and spiritual engagement of the site through a world class visitor experience.

Therefore RIWHS shall manage its richly layered resources and associated activities in a manner that promotes economic sustainability and development for itself and local communities.

1.2.3 Mission Statement

In implementing its vision, RIWHS will focus on the following core purposes:
- Implementation of an integrated management approach and tools for the site;
- Enhancement of universal access;
- Implementation of a new visitor management plan;
- Improved interpretation and public programming;
- Review and implementation of policies for the management of the site;
- Ensuring the significance of the site through sound conservation management strategies;
- Providing an opportunity for sustainable economic empowerment.
1.2.4 Statement of Significance

This is based upon the original statement of significance included in the nomination dossier for Robben Island but expanded and developed by Robben Island Museum over the past few years. It is important to note that the significance of Robben Island cannot be fixed. The significance will evolve as more and more people and stakeholders share their experience and the interpretation perspectives change.

‘While we will not forget the brutality of Apartheid, we will not want Robben Island to be a monument to our hardship and suffering. We would want it to be a triumph of the human spirit against the forces of evil. A triumph of wisdom and largeness of spirit against small minds and pettiness; a triumph of courage and determination over human frailty and weakness, a triumph of the new South Africa over the old.’ - A. Kattrada

As a site of living heritage and a national and international symbol of political imprisonment, Robben Island holds strong symbolic associations for humanity. The site is a universal symbol of hope, solidarity and transformation, a site of spiritual reflection, healing and pilgrimage. As such, it offers a world struggling under social injustices and intolerance, the example of the indomitable nature of the human spirit.

Banishment, forced labour, imprisonment, isolation, and resistance to these civil rights infringements, inscribe Robben Island’s history over more than three centuries. It’s cultural and natural landscapes, its views and vistas and the memories it holds, bear eloquent testimony to the physical and psychological hardships endured by those held on the Island during centuries of colonialism and apartheid.

Yet it is the resilience, struggles and fighting spirit of the people of South Africa - interwoven with those of Africa and the world - and the triumph of liberation and democracy, that constitute Robben Island’s universal significance. Robben Island has come to symbolize, not only for South Africa, or even the African continent, but also the entire world, the resilience and the eventual triumph of humanity over enormous hardship and adversity.

The existing quarries, prisons, WWII gun emplacements, infirmaries and the remnants of the demolished leprosaria and 17th century gardens evidence Robben Island’s long history of human habitation.

The spatial relationships between the precincts – historically dividing the sick from the healthy, men from women, black from white, prisoners from free – provide a tangible reference point to ideologies of separation and division. Alien fauna and flora introduced over time form part of the complex construction of Robben Island as a cultural landscape of extraction and destruction.

Human graves, both marked and unmarked, create a vast largely uncharted historic layer below the surface of the eastern coast. These elements, collectively, bear testimony to Robben Island’s layered history, multiple voices and significances. This layered history mirrors, in microcosm, the history of colonialism and apartheid in Southern Africa, and the struggle against them.

Robben Island is described as a ‘university of life’. Under harsh prison conditions, the Island became a crucible, generating a kaleidoscope of experiences through which strategies for a future society based on tolerance, respect and non-racialism were nurtured and implemented.

The emphasis on education, on debate and on life-long-learning is testimony to the fight for justice and education and is key to Robben Island’s role as a heritage site and its human rights discourse.

Robben Island’s tangible and intangible resources, its oral histories, documentary evidence, collections, structures, artefacts and landscapes hold the potential to provide a complex, dense interpretation of this world heritage site, its interconnections with other sites and its associated values.

In the words of ex-political prisoner Walter Sisulu:
"Robben Island’s notorious history as a place to which so-called undesirables of our society were banished. Should be turned around into a source of enlightenment and education on the dangers of myopic philosophies, social and economic practices whose primary and sole objective is the oppression of one group over another...."

Robben Island was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1999 under criteria (iii) and (vi) of the World Heritage Convention’s Operational Guidelines. Criterion (iii) requires that ‘a site bears unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or has disappeared’; and criterion (vi) requires that sites should be ‘directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance’.

The justification for inscription reads: ‘the buildings of Robben Island bear eloquent testimony to its sombre history’ and ‘Robben Island and its prison buildings symbolize the triumph of the human spirit, of freedom and of democracy over oppression’.

RIM Annual Report 2011 - 2012
1.2.5 Corporate Governance

RIM is governed by a Council appointed by the Minister of Arts and Culture. The Council is appointed to serve for a period of three years. During the 2011/2012 financial year the Chairperson of Council was unable to attend Council meetings because she was appointed Premier of the North-West province in November 2010. The Deputy Chairperson carried out the duties of the chairperson until his resignation in June 2012 after his appointment as the Minister of Transport. The term of the current Council will expire in March 2013. The duties of Council, as stipulated in the Cultural Institutions Act, 1998 (Act 11 of 1998 as amended), are to:

- formulate policy;
- hold, preserve and safeguard all movable and immovable property of whatever kind placed in the care of or loaned or belonging to the declared institution concerned;
- receive, hold, preserve and safeguard all specimens, collections or other movable property under its care and management under section 10(1) of the Act;
- raise funds for the institution;
- manage and control the monies by the declared institution and to utilize those monies for defraying expenses in connection with the performance of its functions;
- keep a proper record of the property of the declared cultural institution;
- submit to the Director-General any returns required by him or her in regard thereto and cause proper books of account to be kept;
- determine, subject to this Act and with the approval of the Minister, the objects of the declared institution; and,
- generally carry out the objects of the institution.

In addition the Council:
- appoints, in consultation with the Minister, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO);
- determines the operating hours of the institution;
- determines the conditions under which the public may visit the institution; and,
- determines the admission charges that may be paid.

1.2.6 Management

The Executive Management consists of the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Financial Officer.