CHAPTER 3
CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

INTRODUCTION

As discussed in previous chapters, Robben Island’s layered history is shaped by its different uses in different periods of time. The impact of this on the natural environment of the Island was discussed in Chapter 1. The focus of this chapter is on the impact of these various layers of occupation on the cultural landscape. It isolates the MSP (and its associated sites), quarries, cemeteries and graves, the kramat and churches, and WW2 fortifications, as the main features that have altered the environment and engraved a number of cultural routes or pathways on Robben Island.

REMAINS OF BUILT STRUCTURES

The cultural landscape of the Island has been particularly marked by settlement patterns that have been prevalent on the eastern side of Robben Island:

- In the Dutch period, settlement took place in the central portion adjacent to the beach of Murray’s Bay and northwards from that point.
- During the British colonial period and after, residential development took place almost exclusively to the southeast where the village stands today.
- Boundary Road, on the northern edge of the village, separated the staff and patients of the Infirmary and those with leprosy, who were housed in the various leprosaria to the north of the village.¹
- Prison structures erected after 1900 were all built to the north of this line.
- During WW2, artillery batteries, rifle posts and other buildings were constructed to defend the Island and Table Bay, especially in previously unoccupied areas of the Island.
- Avenues and plantations of Eucalyptus, Cypress and Manatoka were established, thereby introducing trees to the interior and northern parts of the Island.

Today, no buildings from the Dutch period are intact, however a few visible remains of structures exist close to the eastern shoreline and in the northern garden area. Only one building from the leprosaria still stands – a church.

However, a pond and thousands of graves bear testimony to the thousands of people suffering with leprosy who lived on the Island in the 19th and 20th centuries. The WW2 structures that are outside of the general settlement areas have fallen into disrepair, at times they have been taken over by penguins as nesting areas or by alien vegetation. With the exception of these structures and a few buildings of the apartheid prison period, much of the Island away from the east coast remains largely undeveloped, with a perimeter road encircling the Island, link roads and an airstrip and helipad positioned in the interior.

CEMETERIES AND GRAVES

Burials found on Robben Island date to the time of European settlement at the Cape and Robben Island. Most of the burials are located in four cemeteries. During building operations, unmarked graves generally close to the eastern seaboard² have also been found.

Leprosarium Graveyard

In South Africa for many years, people with leprosy, most of whom were black, were perceived negatively due to the racial prejudices of the time.³ After 45 years of the initial establishment of a leprosarium on the Island, the Cape Government passed the Leprosy Repression Act in 1891, which stripped people with leprosy of their civil rights and banished them to the Island.
The leprosarium was closed in 1931 after nine decades of existence. During this period many people with leprosy died on the Island and were buried in a graveyard situated to the north of the Church of the Good Shepherd and the male leprosarium (the buildings of the latter were demolished due to fear of the spread of the disease). This is the Leprosarium Graveyard, where there are many hundred individual graves. The same burial ground was also used for people held at the General Infirmary who died from other illnesses. The area that is presently enclosed by diamond-mesh fencing is just a part of the graveyard on the southern limits. Outside this area to the south, there is at least one grave. To the west and north, there are rows of graves lying under a forest of Australian Myrtle and Wattle trees. The cemetery possibly extended to the site of the MSP, where human bones were unearthed during the digging of foundation trenches in the 1960s and also when a tennis court was constructed in A-Section in the 1970s.

Staff Burial Ground
The Staff Burial Ground of the Infirmary period was situated in the village precinct and is the second largest cemetery, with 253 individual graves. A number of the deceased were people of Irish descent who were working at the General Infirmary, and members of their families. The site is enclosed on three sides within low rectangular dry-stone uncoursed walling.

Graves near the kramat
There are at least five graves that exist close to the kramat, all located on its western side. This is possibly a large cemetery, but the area was for a long time overgrown with bushes and grass, and further investigations need to be conducted to ascertain the position of other burials.

Garrison Church cemetery
A fourth formal cemetery is situated within the low walls surrounding the Garrison Church, where a small number of adults and children were buried from the 1840s to the 1870s. Amongst those buried there are two prominent figures of the Infirmary period – Dr William Edmunds, Surgeon Superintendent from 1862 to 1872, and Reverend Joseph Lehmann, the Moravian missionary who accompanied the first group of people with leprosy to Robben Island in 1845.

SPIRITUAL SITES

The kramat
The kramat is a Muslim religious shrine – one of many built at the Cape over a period of time. Thus for the Muslim community, particularly in Cape Town, Robben Island is an important edifice of their faith. Local inhabitants of the East Indies resisted Dutch colonial expansion. Amongst those who played a significant role in the resistance were high-ranking men such as princes and Imams, some of whom were banished and shipped to Robben Island. In 1682 the prince from the Island of Macassar in present-day Indonesia, and other high-ranking Muslims, were banished to the Island. A simple shrine was erected in honour of the Prince of Madura, Pangerau Chakra Deningrat, who died on the Island in 1754. His body was returned to his son in Indonesia and now lies buried in Jakarta. There are a number of other gravesites in the area including that of Hadjie Matarim who died on Robben Island in 1755. Behind the kramat to the west, within the fenced area, are two graves of other Muslim exiles. However, there are other graves outside the fence, possibly of other Muslims.
The kramat has long been a place of pilgrimage for Muslims and forms part of five kramats forming the ‘Holy Circle of Islam’ surrounding Cape Town. In 1967 the Prison Services used prisoners to replace the structure and build a kramat of similar design to the one in honour of Ghaibi Shah on Lion’s Head in Cape Town. The frame of the building is clad with slate in a style occurring on many buildings erected on the Island during the apartheid prison era.

**The churches**
Robben Island has many churches built during different times and belonging to different religious orders. Today there are only two that remain standing, namely the Church of the Good Shepherd and the Garrison Church. The Church of the Good Shepherd was designed by the renowned architect Sir Herbert Baker and was built from stone. It was for men with leprosy and today it is the only surviving building of the leprosaria.

The interior features, such as the pews, were removed and the carved wooden statue on the portico of the church disappeared at, or soon after, abandonment in 1931. There is however, photographic evidence of the carving in situ. With the closure of the leprosarium, the church was abandoned in 1931, but was refurbished and re-consecrated as the Naval Church in 1942 during WW2.  

Prisoners under the apartheid era subsequently used it for a brief time. The church and a small area of ground surrounding it, are owned by the Church of the Province of South Africa. They refurbished it in 2001 and use it occasionally for special services and commemorative events.

Situated within the village is the Garrison Church which was constructed in 1841 utilising prison labour from the British convict station on the Island. The church was of ‘Cape Gothic’ style in its original finish, with a square tower above the front entrance. The churchyard was used as a burial ground for ministers and other citizens living in the village. The main road in front of the church has appropriately been named Church Street.

The Dutch Reformed Church Parsonage was built in 1894 for the resident chaplain ministering to people with leprosy. The Dutch Reformed Church itself was demolished at the same time as the buildings that housed people with leprosy.

The Parsonage was converted to an Officers’ Mess during WW2 and it was used as a guesthouse when the prison was re-introduced in the 1960s. The building is situated within the village precinct and in 1989 it was refurbished, altered and connected to the Commissioner’s Residency to form the guesthouse.

**WORLD WAR 2**
Robben Island has a high concentration of WW2 sites. There are two main gun emplacements positioned on the south and northeast side of the Island – the De Waal Battery (previously called the Robben Island Battery) and the Cornelia Battery. In addition to the guns of the main batteries, each battery had an engine room, observation posts, fire-control towers, underground bunkers containing ammunition, as well as searchlights, storerooms and small barracks. A large number of pillboxes, barracks and stores were built on numerous sites around the Island.
In order to support this extensive development, a harbour was constructed and new roads were built. The airstrip and cabling linking the many new structures added to the infrastructure. As the Island was the control centre for anti-submarine defences, four loops of cable were laid including one to Melkbosstrand and another to Clifton. The complex now known as Logistics, housed both the listening station and the barracks for the SWANs who operated the anti-submarine defences.

To defend the Island against bombardment or bombing by the enemy, an extensive system of underground bunkers was established that included a hospital, a power plant, and ammunition dumps. A network of tunnels connected the various sites.

Some of the gun sites were dismantled and refurbished after the Department of Prisons took over the Island in the 1960s. More recently the WW2 buildings of the Logistics and Medium B complexes have been refurbished, however most structures require maintenance, including the underground bunkers and other structures further away from the village and prison precincts.

When Robben Island was declared a MSP the building was adapted and became an integral part of the Political Imprisonment Landscape. Originally it was a corrugated iron (zinc) building with no secure cells, and so warders chained prisoners to the benches. In the late 1970s a double-storey brick building was erected on the site with a red face-brick exterior. The building contained offices, waiting rooms and barred cells. Once imprisoned on Robben Island, prisoners only crossed to the mainland to face further interrogation or charges, or to visit hospitals. Their memories of Jetty 1 cells are often associated with sickness and ill health.

Family and friends visited political prisoners on Robben Island with great difficulty, negotiating stressful procedures linked to applications, permits and passes. After long journeys to Cape Town they often struggled to find accommodation. At Jetty 1 they sat in waiting rooms reserved for ‘non-whites only’ whilst preparing themselves for their visit to the Island. Anxiety, fear, excitement and hope framed their wait for the ferry. At times rough weather or not having correct documentation could result in visitors returning home without seeing their loved ones. Return journeys were harder as they had to leave their loved ones behind.

Warders and their families visited the mainland only on their two weekends off per month. For them, arrival at Jetty 1 meant a return to work and the isolation of Robben Island. They left the ‘freedom’ and relaxation of mainland life behind at Jetty 1.

POLITICAL IMPRISONMENT

Jetty 1
Jetty 1, in Table Bay Harbour Cape Town, was originally part of the harbour landscape. At that time it consisted largely of railway tracks and warehouses and was constructed of corrugated metal sheets.

The beach of Murray’s Bay was the original landing place on the Island. In the 1800s three jetties were built on the Island’s eastern shores. The first two were washed away by stormy seas and the third, the Faure Jetty, was used for over 50 years and although rickety, still exists. Only vessels with shallow draughts could dock at the jetty, so most passengers and goods were first loaded onto a launch and ferried to the jetty. Veterans recall that during WW2, the Isie would dock at the jetty so that they could disembark in the village thus avoiding the need to use transport from the harbour to the village.

Maximum Security Prison (MSP)
The Maximum Security Prison (MSP) is located just west of Murray’s Bay Harbour. It was built by political and common law prisoners in the 1960s, utilising stone and stone aggregate from the Jan van Riebeeck and Bluestone Quarries. The exterior of the walls has stone cladding with pointed jointing, giving the impression of a stone wall. However, concrete and blocks make up the thickest sections of the walls. D-Section, an H-block, was the first structure completed using the common stone finish, and the dining hall was the last. A prefabricated building for administration offices was added later.
The MSP comprises of:

- Four H-block General Sections, each consisting of four general cells designed to hold 52 inmates;
- A U-shaped Isolation Block consisting of approximately 90 single cells;
- A catwalk above the Isolation Block’s courtyard;
- A Hospital;
- An Administration Section, kitchen and dining hall;
- Five Watchtowers;
- Double fencing of 5 metres high surrounding the site and walls of 3 metres high surrounding courtyards and separating the sections;
- Sports fields.

Upon completion, the different sections were named – the general sections were called A, B, C and D-Section, while the isolation single-cells section was called Khulukuthu. In the 1960s both political and common law prisoners were housed together in the general sections and spent their days engaged in hard labour on various sites. The isolation Block, Khulukuthu, was used to house the leadership from all organisations, and those regarded as influential, and thus became known as the leadership section. A number of the cells in the western wing were also used to confine prisoners who were being punished.

Khulukuthu was the name the prisoners gave this section because part of it was used as a punishment section for prisoners, who were placed in solitary confinement and often given a spare diet. There is no direct translation as it is an expression meaning, ‘throwing something spontaneously into something’. Punishment was often meted out in an arbitrary and spontaneous manner by the warders.

In the mid-1970s, the Isolation Block was divided into three different sections and a high wall constructed in an attempt to prevent communication between these sections:

- B-Section, comprising the eastern wing of the block, continued to house the leadership figures;
- The young BCM militants and MK cadres were housed in A-Section, which was made up of the southern and most of the western wings;
- The punishment section became the small C-Section.

Both A- and B-Sections had communal rooms for eating and recreational activities, as well as courtyards that were used for tennis and small gardens. In A-Section, each political organisation had its own area in the courtyard for meetings.

The general sections that were formerly named A, B, D and C were renamed D, E, F and G-Sections respectively. For a number of years D-Section was used to house the Namibian political prisoners, and only a few South African youths were placed there. The D category prisoners that arrived in the 1970s and 1980s were placed in E-Section. Once they had been moved to a higher category, they were transferred to G- and F-Sections. Prisoners of G- and F-Sections were provided with opportunities to learn trades in the workshops of the transformed Ou Tronk, whereas the inmates of other sections spent their days in their cells.

All prisoners in South African prisons are categorised from A to D. D category prisoners have the fewest privileges including number of letters and visits, and what they can purchase from the prison tuckshop, among others.

**Gardens**

A number of prison courtyards were turned into recreational spaces that included sports and gardening. The courtyards of the Isolation Block, D-Section and the Hospital are all known to have had gardens, and today there is still evidence including flowers, trees and even a grapevine in a Hospital courtyard. Gardening contributed to the prisoners’ physical and emotional well-being by providing an opportunity to introduce flowers, fruit and vegetables into their impersonal and harsh environment.

Initially it was a struggle to get permission from the authorities to establish gardens, however once it was accepted practice, the fruit of the gardens provided cultivators with an opportunity to present gifts to their comrades. One prisoner stated that this was symbolic of hope and liberation as the fruits were cultivated in the ‘barren’ prison environment. Gardens also had a practical political element by opening up opportunities for political debate and also by providing hiding places – the first draft of *Long Walk to Freedom* was hidden in the B-Section garden.
**Sports fields**

In the struggle to improve their conditions in prison, political prisoners placed much emphasis on sport and recreation and the most popular outdoor sport was football followed by rugby and tennis. There were eventually four football fields, one of which also had rugby posts, and six tennis courts. D- and E-Sections had football fields close to the cell blocks and after the demolition of the **Zink Tronk**, F- and G-Sections shared a field. The A-Section prisoners were taken to a field close to the airstrip for their football games.

Prisoners in B-, and later in A-Section, were given permission to build tennis courts in their courtyards. Later four courts were built next to the main sports field west of F- and G-Sections. Today the fields and courts of the MSP still exist, but are threatened by the elements. Sport was an opportunity to compete with opponents, but also provided opportunities to build bridges across political and generational divides. Much emphasis was put on the rules of a game, and the administration of sports clubs was turned into an opportunity for imparting organisational skills.

**Zink Tronk**

During the construction of the MSP, prisoners were housed in the **Ou Tronk** (Old Jail) and the **Zink Tronk** (Zinc Jail). The **Zink Tronk** was located next to F- and G-Sections, on the north side. Later this area became the sports field and tennis courts of the general sections.

The **Zink Tronk** was specifically constructed to house a large number of prisoners during the 1960s and was retained until the mid-1970s when it was demolished. The jail was a large rectangular building with a large courtyard in the middle. The building was constructed from corrugated iron and comprised general cells, a small section of single cells, a library, ablution facilities and a clinic. The complex was surrounded by a high fence with a guard post at each corner.

Official figures for 1964 indicate that the MSP and **Zink Tronk** housed 1 395 political and common law prisoners. Some prisoners have stated that the total figure was closer to 2 000 inmates.

When the Namibian political prisoners arrived in 1968, they were incarcerated in the **Zink Tronk** alongside high security common law prisoners. Later other prisoners convicted under the Terrorism Act were also housed there.

**Ou Tronk**

The **Ou Tronk** was initially made up of five long WW2 wooden barracks, a kitchen and ablution facilities. In the 1950s the buildings were converted to a medium security prison, and in 1960 eight new plastered brick buildings were designed and erected to serve as a temporary maximum security prison. A large number of common law prisoners, soon followed by an equally large number of political prisoners, were incarcerated here while quarrying and chopping stone for the building of the MSP. Mandela was imprisoned in the **Ou Tronk** for a few weeks in 1963 prior to the arrests of the Rivonia trialists, and again for two weeks with six of the trialists in 1964 until the Isolation Block of the MSP was completed.

After hard labour on the Island was brought to an end in the mid-1970s, the Prison Services converted the **Ou Tronk** to workshops where prisoners received training in a range of crafts and trades. Many political prisoners took the opportunity to learn new skills, including building, plumbing, carpentry, and painting, among others. They earned a small income for work completed and most also gained certificates in their craft. A number went on to utilise their
newly learnt skills outside prison. One prisoner, Geneva Morake, utilised the bricklaying skills he had acquired to build his own house after his release.

The wooden barracks of the Ou Tronk were in disrepair and in the 1990s were demolished, leaving only the bare concrete slabs as a reminder of their earlier presence.

**Sobukwe Complex**

Four buildings at the Sobukwe Complex were erected during WW2 for various purposes, including barracks, mess facilities and a hygiene office. The latter, designated T159 became Robert Sobukwe’s house, while T158 was an ablation and wash area. In the mid-1970s two long, parallel dog kennels were built in front of the Sobukwe House to house aggressive dogs that were brought onto the Island for night patrol in the double fencing of the MSP.

From 1963 to 1969 Sobukwe stayed in a small white house which had formerly been used by black warders who were removed from the Island. His living quarters consisted of two small rooms, one used as a bedroom / study and the other as a kitchen and ironing room. Furnishings were sparse and included a bed with a coir mattress, cupboard, table, chair, bookcase and floor mat. At one stage Sobukwe established a small garden in front of his house.

A separate ablation block, with hot and cold running water and a shower, was located outside his living quarters. Another empty bungalow constituted the only other building in the relatively large fenced area where he was detained. His children stayed in this bungalow when they were allowed to visit him from 1967.

Outside the fenced area on the southern side, stands a long building that has been used in a number of ways since it was built in WW2. It was used as a school for the children of coloured warders in the early 1960s and was converted into a hostel for dog-handlers in 1977. The warders lived in single quarters in the hostel in close proximity to their dogs.

**Bamboo Factory**

During WW2 the South African Navy built a Degaussing Station on Robben Island, including instrumentation rooms, offices and living accommodation. Degaussing was devised as a countermeasure to the magnetic mines the Germans began to lay, which were more lethal than the earlier mines. The only suitable position for the first degaussing range in the Cape Town area was close to the eastern shore of Robben Island.

In the MSP period, the Degaussing Station was converted into a Bamboo Factory. The two buildings of the Bamboo Factory are located between the Ou Tronk and the shore, just north of the harbour. They are rectangular buildings made of plastered brick. After kelp seaweed (bamboo) was collected and dried on racks outside the buildings, it was cut up and processed by machine into a fine powder inside the buildings. Working conditions were very poor and the Namibian prisoners working there went on strike to protest against the extremely dusty conditions, and to request an improved work situation before returning to work.

**Landbou**

Landbou is a sandy site situated to the southwest of the MSP and close to the Limestone Quarry. As part of a punishment regime, prisoners were marched from the MSP to work on this site. Once they arrived there they were forced to push wheelbarrows with metal wheels, loaded with sand, in the soft sandy soil from one part of the site to another, for no apparent purpose. It was also on this site that warders beat and tortured prisoners. At least two prisoners are recorded to have been buried up to their necks, leaving only their heads exposed for breathing. It is also reported that on asking whether they were thirsty
the warders urinated on their faces. This site epitomises the extreme forms of humiliation meted out by two infamous warders in particular, the Kleynhans brothers, who worked in collaboration with common law prisoners to brutalise political prisoners in the early 1960s.

**The Hydroponics Building**
The Hydroponics Building, which started as a dairy, is located on Raymond Road to the southwest of the MSP. It is of a similar style to many of the 1960s buildings on the Island, with an exterior of stone cladding like that of the MSP. Later the building was transformed into a greenhouse with a translucent roof, creating an environment conducive for the rapid growth of plants. It was used for growing vegetables and fruit, such as tomatoes and cucumbers, using hydroponic methods. Smaller buildings in the vicinity housed engines that pumped and supplied water to the site. A stone-walled cattle kraal was constructed in the environs of hydroponics. From the 1960s to the 1980s, political prisoners worked at the site, initially as part of their punishment, but later it was regarded as part of their ‘social rehabilitation’.

one can imagine the noise and confusion, with several people simultaneously shouting to each other in different languages. In a situation where many prisoners were only allowed one half-an-hour visit every six months, this was an extremely harrowing experience.

From 1983 A category prisoners, the most ‘privileged’ group, were allowed contact visits in small rooms in the Centre. Contact visits were later extended to all prisoners. All visits were monitored and recorded. The room to the immediate right of the archway, going towards the prison, was initially a dentist’s room, but in the early 1980s it was used to house the sound equipment that monitored and recorded prison visits.

**Murray’s Bay Harbour**
Murray’s Bay Harbour is situated on the east coast of the Island. It is a relatively small harbour that consists of one breakwater and the quay where all the staff and visitors’ boats from the mainland arrive. The quay was established within the area of the earliest landings on the Island, and was built in historical phases, with the first major works completed during WW2.¹¹

After WW2 the harbour was enlarged, and during the 1960s prisoners built the high wall that hides the view of Table Bay as well as new buildings. The buildings housed rooms such as the waiting room for warders and their families and visitors, ablution facilities, and an X-ray room to check visitors for weapons. The harbour master’s office was built on the second floor with a view of the bay.
Airstrip
The airstrip consists of two 700-metre long and 10-metre wide asphalt landing strips orientated in southeast and southwest directions. It is linked by tracks from each runway to Perimeter Road and to the MSP. The airstrip was part of the infrastructure developed on Robben Island during the WW2 period. Building commenced early in 1940 and was completed at the end of 1942. In this period it was used for supplies, and for bombers and reconnaissance aircraft that had run out of fuel or encountered other problems whilst on patrol. During the apartheid prison period the airstrip was used to bring prison officials to and from the Island. Unlike other prisoners, the Rivonia trialists were brought to the Island on a chartered Dakota airplane.\(^{12}\)

Medium B Security Prison
The Medium B Security Prison (that was used to incarcerate common law prisoners) is located on the northern edge of the Village between Church Street and the east coast of the Island. The complex was used as a Medium Security Prison from the late 1960s, and during this period was considerably altered by the Department of Public Works(DPW). The oldest part of the complex comprises three blocks of equal width and a large hangar-like structure with a curved roof. Walls of 3 metres high topped with barbed wire surround the structure, and all windows were barred. Most cells were large general cells, however some buildings were adapted to house a number of single cells for isolation or punishment purposes. These structures, housing cellblocks and the main kitchen, date back to the WW2 period. More recently Medium B Security Prison has been converted into a Multi-Purpose Learning Centre with some surfaces, such as walls and concreted surfaces, and the footprint of the site, being conserved to show their historical use. The structures were converted into facilities for the Learning Centre and include conference rooms, a Resource Centre, eating and accommodation spaces.

The Administration Block
The Administration Block is situated opposite the former Medium B Security Prison in a rectangular block with a paved forecourt, but originally it was a U-shaped structure with an internal forecourt. It is located on a site that was previously part of the male leprosarium. It was also associated with the WW2 period of Robben Island and therefore has historical significance. During the apartheid prison period the building served as the prison headquarters on Robben Island. Currently the building is used as office space and earmarked for rehabilitation in 2007.

The Village
The Village precinct consists of the area in the southeast of the Island bounded by Boundary Road to the north, the Lighthouse area in the west, and the coastline to the south and east. Construction of the Village began under British colonialism and some buildings date back to the 1840s. However most of the houses were constructed in the last 50 years. The current set up of the Village is characterised by the location of public facilities along Church Street, including the school, the Garrison Church, the clinic, the Club House and the post office. The Village also accommodates the Residency and Dutch Reformed Parsonage (Guesthouse), the Anglican Parsonage, and the Male and Female Asylums. The area of the shop in the east of the Village is regarded as the centre of the Village. There is a petrol pump, a swimming pool and a playground with mini-golf in close proximity to the shop. The residential, single-storey houses are concentrated on the western side of Church Street and around the sports field.
Quarries

Quarries are amongst the most important features of the landscape of Robben Island and contribute considerably to the significance of the site. There are 20 quarries recorded on the Site Register Database for the Island. Many of these are concealed by vegetation, and some have been filled in. The history of the three largest quarries is known, while the rest are obscured by poor documentation.

The oldest quarry is the Jan van Riebeeck Quarry – or Jan se Gat (Jan’s Hole) – situated to the southeast of the Island. It is said that the quarry was opened and extensively mined for slate at the time of Jan van Riebeeck from 1652, employing forced labour. The slate was used in construction works in the emerging European settlement at the Cape that today is Cape Town. This quarry continued to be worked intermittently for 300 years until 1963 when it was closed, but not before the early political prisoners kept at the Ou Tronk and MSP had been forced to work there.

The Bluestone (slate) Quarry, situated on the northwest coast of the Island, was also started in the 17th century. After the closure of the Jan van Riebeeck Quarry in 1963, mining operations were stepped up at the Bluestone Quarry with an increasingly large number of political prisoners enduring forced labour there. The Bluestone Quarry is a place of harrowing accounts of warder brutality against the prisoners. Due to the winter storms and high seas the prisoners were forced to build a dyke or wall to protect the quarry from the sea, using stone, grit and sand. In 2001 the wall was breached during a maritime storm and the opening has since widened into a substantial gap in the wall. A study has been carried out with a view to repairing it – the lack of its repair so far has been a major concern particularly to those ex-political prisoners who worked in it.

The Limestone Quarry is a large excavation located inland, southwest of Murray’s Bay Harbour. Lime was first quarried here during the Dutch colonial period. From 1963, political prisoners from the general section were deployed to work there. However, they were soon replaced by inmates from the isolation cells of B-Section who worked there for many years. The glare of the limestone and the dust thrown up in the quarrying process caused permanent damage to the prisoners’ eyes. Much of the limestone excavated from this quarry was used to surface the roads on the Island, giving them their characteristic shimmering glare.

Prison-to-worksites-pathways: cultural routes

During the 1960s and 1970s political prisoners were routinely marched from the prison to worksites along designated pathways. It is possible to trace the pathway linking the MSP with the Bluestone Quarry and there are also oral records of this pathway and others used during this period. The path to the Bluestone Quarry was a narrow passageway completely caged with fencing on the sides and top. It was made from diamond-mesh wire mounted on timber posts. Today the structures are no more, although stumps, which are the remains of the posts can still be seen. However, it is reported that earlier on there was a trench that linked the prison to the Bluestone Quarry. The prisoners were herded to the quarry by warders and there were dogs on-guard on the sides of this passageway. It is reported that the warders would often exploit such moments to taunt and mistreat the prisoners.

There were many other routes that led to different parts of the prison, such as the Limestone Quarry, the Bamboo Factory, Landbou, the Ou Tronk, the dumping site, the harbour, and the Visitors’ Centre, among others (see the Interpretation Plan in Addendum 4).
INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE ISLAND

The use of the Island over time led to the introduction of new infrastructure to meet the needs of its inhabitants. In each historical period new infrastructures were developed that have formed different cultural landscapes. Much of this infrastructure remains intact and retains elements of its historical past.

The infrastructure of Robben Island was originally made to serve a very restricted group of people. However, from servicing a restricted prison environment, the existing infrastructure must now accommodate an increased number of staff, residents and visitors. Today, some of the infrastructure has been upgraded in order to accommodate the increased visitor numbers and the new use of Robben Island.

**Rocks**

Robben Island has currently an extensive network of roads. Several of these roads have been upgraded in order to accommodate the requirements of the Island’s new role. Four types of road surfaces are present:
- Black tar;
- White stone and bitumen;
- Interlocking cement pavers;
- Crushed limestone.

It is important to note that only the roads that support Robben Island’s current operations have been upgraded. Most of the internal network of roads on the Island have remained in their original condition so as to support the proposed walking tours and retain the integrity of the original surface treatment.

**Murray’s Bay Harbour**

Recently the breakwater was reinforced and extended to make the harbour safe for vessels berthed there in stormy weather and to ensure the protection and continuation of working harbour operations. A T-jetty with a floating section attached to the main quay was introduced to enable easier access for physically challenged people in order to meet the principle of universal access.

**Water**

There is a desalination plant at Robben Island that produces up to 500 000 litres of potable water per day. The storage capacity on the Island is currently 2.5 million litres of water, which is also available for fire fighting. Due to the upgrading of the desalination plant the groundwater is now able to recharge and in the future could be used for irrigation once the aquifer has recharged itself.

The Island has its own power supply system and at present five 275 kilowatt (KV) generators provide for the electricity needs of the Island. Almost half of the power used is consumed at the desalination plant. However, electrical power is increasingly being recognised as critical to the development of Robben Island in many other areas. The overall objective is to develop a comprehensive energy strategy of reducing dependence on fossil fuels, increasing the use of renewable energy sources (solar, wind and waves), and focusing generally on energy efficiency.

**Waste management**

Two streams of waste are currently being generated on the Island, namely solid waste and water-borne waste. Solid waste is collected by DPW and deposited at an officially designated waste site on the Island. From here an appointed contractor removes it to a registered site on the mainland. Water-borne sewage is captured in an interceptor sewer line and transferred to a single point where the effluent is macerated before being discharged into the ocean. This marine outfall has been authorised by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) and is subject to permit conditions. The outfall has been in operation for a number of years and complies with the permit conditions.

CONCLUSION

The cultural landscapes described in this chapter provide evidence of the impact of different occupations on Robben Island. The tangible and intangible elements that have been described are important features that contribute to the significance of Robben Island. These features include numerous cultural routes or pathways embedded on Robben Island and enhance the uniqueness of the Island as a WHS. A key issue that emerges is the importance of retaining the significance of the heritage resource and providing excellence in heritage management.

ENDNOTES

2 - Found during digging of trench for infrastructural upgrade in 2001.
4 - A computerised inventory was compiled by the Genealogical Society in 2004.
6 - Maps of Robben Island, 1895 and 1903.
10 - Degaussing involves circling the ship with a current-carrying cable of sufficient capacity to neutralise the ship’s magnetism and therefore it would not attract magnetic mines.
13 - Ross, N., Robben Island, p. 192.