

File Name: 916.pdf

UNESCO Region: AFRICA

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**SITE NAME:** Robben Island

**DATE OF INSCRIPTION:** 4<sup>th</sup> December 1999

**STATE PARTY:** SOUTH AFRICA

**CRITERIA:** C (iii)(vi)

**DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE:**

Excerpt from the Report of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the World Heritage Committee

The Committee inscribed this property on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria (iii) and (vi):

Criterion (iii): The buildings of Robben Island bear eloquent witness to its sombre history.

Criterion (vi): Robben Island and its prison buildings symbolize the triumph of the human spirit, of freedom, and of democracy over oppression.

Many members of the Committee expressed their pleasure and emotion and congratulated South Africa for having proposed this site which symbolizes the fight against oppression, the victory of democracy as well as the process of national reconciliation.

Over and over again the members of the Committee paid homage to the vision of President Mandela. The Delegate of Thailand considered that criterion (vi) could be amended during the session so that the inscription of the site would be possible only under this criterion.

The Committee took note of the need to discuss the amendments that could be proposed under criterion (vi).

The Chairperson expressed satisfaction with this inscription and considered that this decision has been taken on the African ground was an honour for Morocco. The Delegate of South Africa expressed her appreciation for the Committee's decision (see Annex VII to this report).

**BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS**

Robben Island was used at various times between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a prison, a hospital for socially unacceptable groups, and a military base. Its buildings, and in particular those of the late 20th century, such as the maximum security prison for political prisoners, bear witness to the triumph of democracy and freedom over oppression and racialism.

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**1.b State, Province or Region:** Western Cape Province

**1.d Exact location:** 33°48' S, 18°22' E

# APPLICATION FOR INCLUSION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST



## Robben Island

Signed [on behalf of State Party]

Z. Pello Jordan

Full name ZWELINDIQA PELLO JORDAN.

Title MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS & TOURISM

Date 17 June 1998.



# ROBBEN ISLAND NOMINATION FILE: WORLD HERITAGE SITE STATUS

## Signature of State Party

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| a. Country  | 1 |
| b. State, province, or region   | 1 |
| c. Name of property   | 1 |
| d. Exact location on map and indication of geographical coordinates to the nearest second | 1 |
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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Legislation**

- \* National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969 (as amended)
- \* Cultural Institutions Act No 29 of 1969 (as amended)
- \* Environmental Conservation Act No 73 of 1989 (as amended)
- \* Regulations relating to the Environment Conservation Act No 73, Schedules 1 and 2
- \* Sea-Shore Act No 21 of 1935 (as amended)

**Appendix B: Integrated Environmental Management System**

- \* Document of the System as developed for Robben Island

**Appendix C: Survey and Catalogue**

- \* Conservation Survey of Robben Island compiled for the National Monuments Council by Patricia Riley, 1993
- \* Operation Sea-Eagle, a survey of the shipwrecks around Robben Island by Drs B. Wertz and Dr J. Deacon

**Appendix D: Surveys of Fauna on the Island**

- \* The Wildlife of Robben Island, Dr Rob Crawford, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town
- \* The Birdlife of Robben Island, Dr Rob Crawford, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town

**Appendix E: Visual material relating to Robben Island**

- \* Historic maps and photographs
- \* Contemporary photographs and slides
- \* Video entitled "The Story of Robben Island"
- \* Illustrated pamphlets





**1. SPECIFIC LOCATION**

- a) *Country*  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
- b) *State, Province or Region*  
WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE
- c) *Name of Property*  
ROBBEN ISLAND (referred hereafter as "The Island")
- d) *Exact location on map an indication of geographical location coordinates*  
18 22" East 33 48" South
- e) *Maps*  
See attached maps  
1:50 000 ref. 3318CD CAPE TOWN 1993  
1:250 000 ref 3318 CAPE TOWN 1994
- f) *Area of property proposed for inscription*  
475 hectares with an area of one nautical mile around the Island which serves as a buffer zone.



## 2. JUSTIFICATION FOR INSCRIPTION

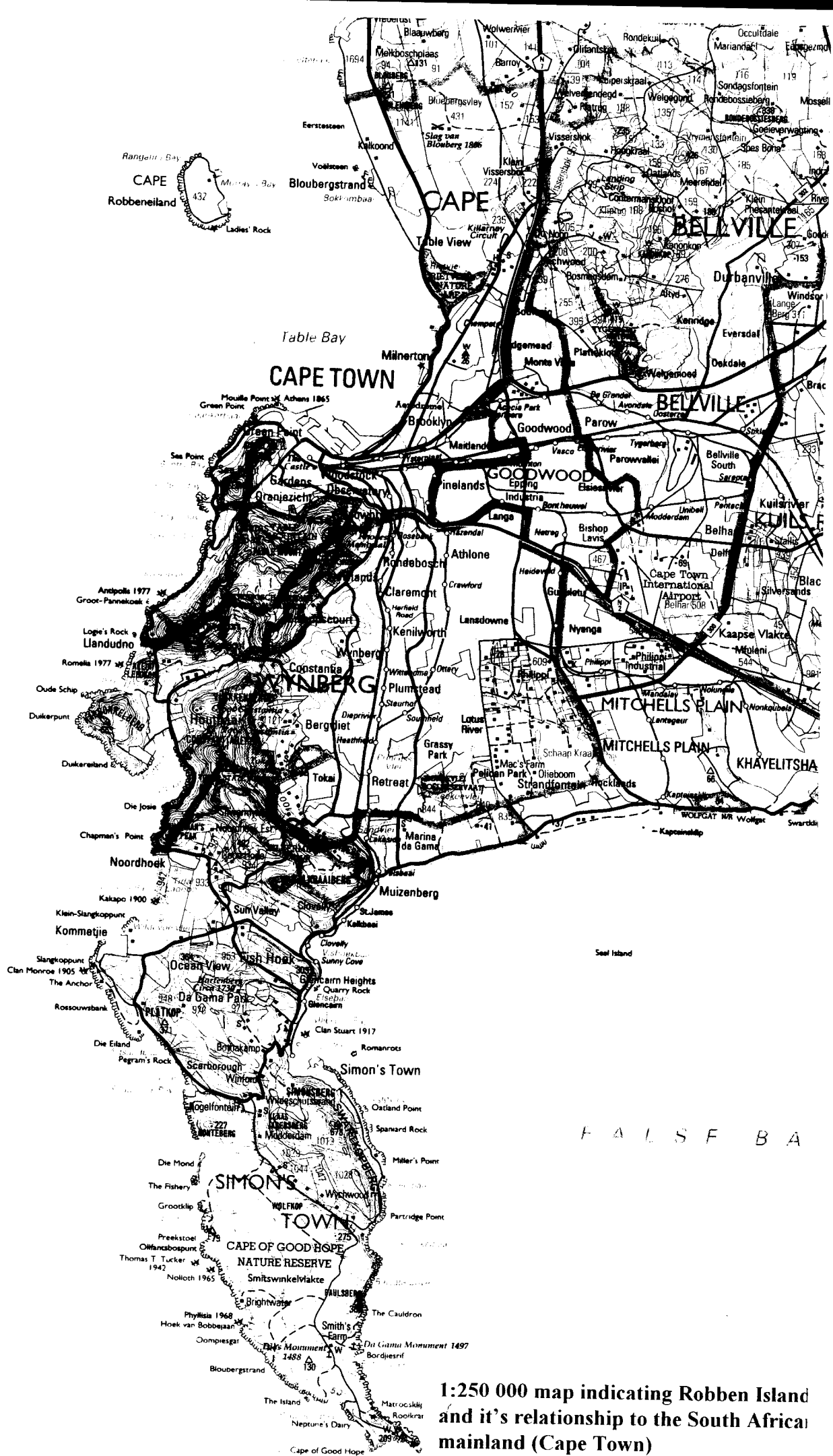
### a) *Statement of Significance*

'Robben Island - from incarceration to liberation. From the punishment of the body to the freedom of the spirit'

Throughout documented history Robben Island has been associated with banishment, suffering and the subjugation of the human spirit. From the earliest days of colonial rule Robben Island has been used as a place of imprisonment for those unfortunate enough to hold differing views from the rulers of the day or who were viewed as outcasts and the unwanted of society. What has transformed it and bestowed a uniqueness differing from other similar places of imprisonment has been the miracle of triumph of the human spirit over such conditions, leading onto the rebirth of a nation in terms of freedom and democracy.

Out of conditions of extreme hardship, pain and suffering has arisen a spirit of hope and tolerance that has, in the words of President Nelson Mandela, turned this island into a world-wide icon of the universality of human rights, of hope, peace and reconciliation. Another famous prisoner, Walter Sisulu, has written 'The name Robben Island is inextricably linked to the struggle against colonialism, for freedom, democracy and peace in South Africa. Robben Island's notorious history as the 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 by another.'

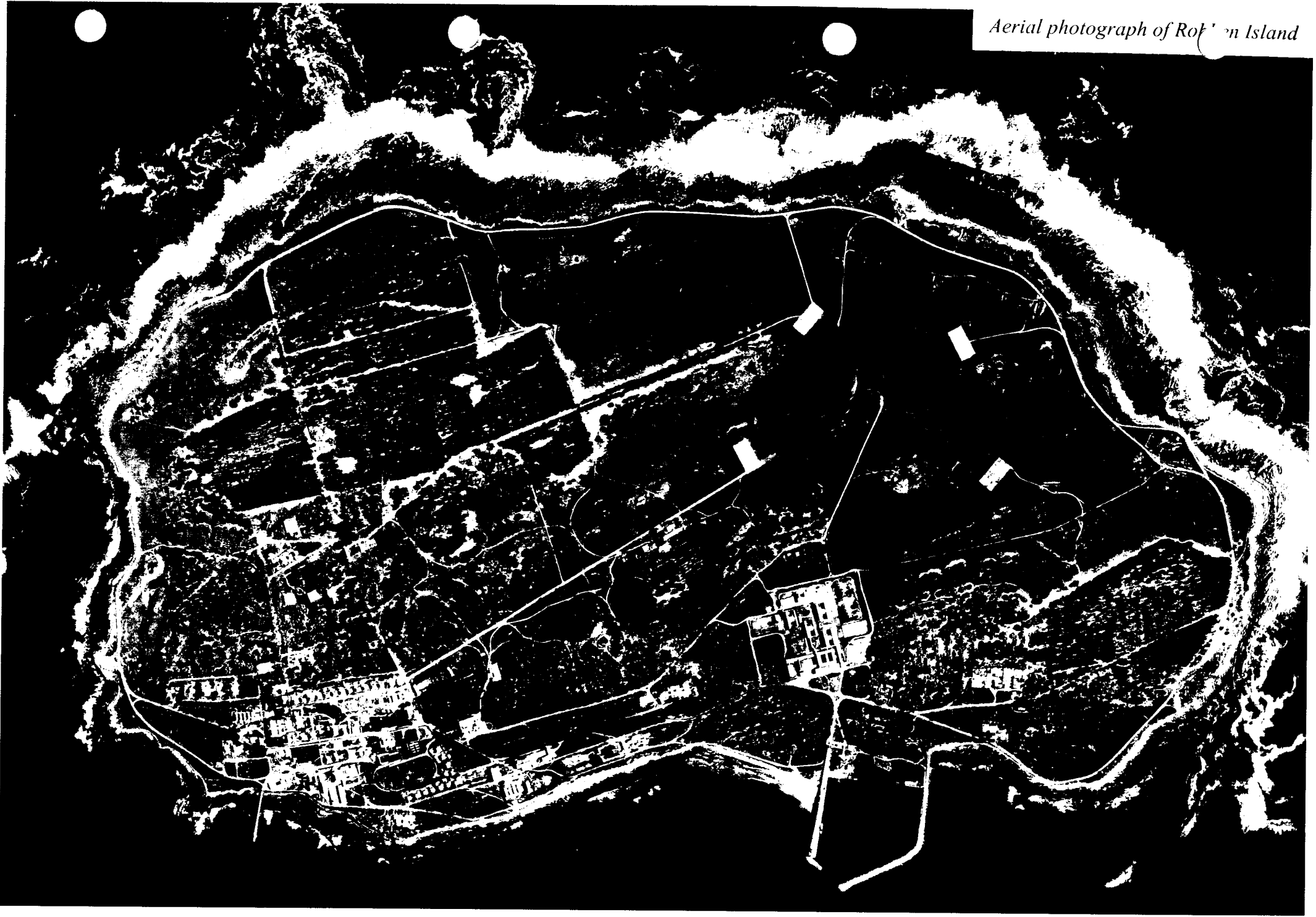
Robben Island, with its past history of the subjugation of the human spirit by means of banishment, imprisonment and suffering has come to symbolise, not only for South Africa or even the African continent, but also the entire world, the miracle of the triumph of the human spirit over enormous hardship and adversity. In so doing it has offered to a world struggling under social injustices and intolerance, the example of the indomitable nature of the human spirit.



1:250 000 map indicating Robben Island and it's relationship to the South African mainland (Cape Town) ref. 3318 CAPE TOWN 1994



*Aerial photograph of Robinson Island*





b) *Possible comparative analysis*

Robben Island has a long and comprehensive history. The earliest records either alluding to or mentioning Robben Island are dated from the late fifteenth century when Portuguese navigators first travelled around the Cape of Good Hope, (known then as the Cape of Storms). Yet to be confirmed is the possibility of Stone age hunter gatherers wandering along its shores when in prehistoric times the island was still a part of the mainland.

In the course of the seventeenth century Robben Island served as a larder or pantry for sailors passing on the long route to the East to trade in spices and slaves. Later it became a place of banishment where various highly placed persons opposed to the various colonial regimes were detained. In the nineteenth century the lepers and mentally ill were sent to Robben Island to remove them from 'normal' members of society and still later the prison was established, first for common law prisoners and then for the political prisoners of the second half of the twentieth century.

Comparisons between Robben Island and other sites are not easily drawn, due to the unique degree of significance described in section (a) above. Two approaches to the comparative analysis have been adopted: the first to compare Robben Island with other islands that have served similar purposes in the past and that have a cultural heritage that reflects the various periods of occupation (criteria iii) and secondly to compare Robben Island with other sites that have unique symbolic significance in a universal context. (Criteria vi)

The island of *St Helena*, situated in the Atlantic Ocean some 1950 kilometres off the African coastline has similarities in its historical development. Although considerably larger than Robben Island, being some 122 square kilometres, it was first discovered by the Portuguese navigator Joao da Nova Costella in 1502. It was then later discovered again by the English explorer Thomas Cavendish in 1588. It became an important stop-off point for sea traffic en route to the East until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1870, serving a similar purpose to that of Robben Island during its time as a victualling station for sailors rounding the Cape of Good Hope. St Helena had a similar history of occupancy, at times being held by the English, the Dutch East India Company and later the British crown.

St Helena served as the place of final exile and imprisonment for the French Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, who was held there from 1815 until his death on the island in 1821. Bonaparte was not held in a prison however, and was allotted comfortable accommodation in a house belonging to the Lieutenant Governor.

*Devil's Island*, off the coast of French Guyana, was used by the French as a high security prison for their most infamous criminals from 1852 until 1953, a period of just over one hundred years. One of the most famous inhabitants of Devils Island was the French officer Alfred Dreyfuss, who was incarcerated there between 1895 and 1899. A victim of political intrigue and anti-semitism, Dreyfuss had



been accused of betraying military secrets to the Germans, he was tried and sent to the penal colony on Devil's Island until 1906, when, after the discovery of his innocence, he was exonerated of the charges against him.

*Alcatraz Island*, a rocky outcrop just off the coast of San Francisco in the United States of America, has always enjoyed notoriety as one of the world's most famous island prisons. Opening in the late nineteenth century, it was finally closed in 1963 and is now used as a prison museum. In its heyday Alcatraz housed some of America's worst common-law criminals.

While similar in purpose, these island prisons have no message of hope to offer the world. The inhabitants have not been transformed by their experiences into great leaders and statesmen who have overcome adversity and gone on to promote democracy, freedom and human rights in a transformed society. As a symbol of liberty comparisons between Robben Island and other sites offering spiritual meanings must be sought.

In the United States of America two sites may serve as useful comparisons, the Statue of Liberty, off New York City and Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

The *Statue of Liberty* was a gift from the French on the centenary of American Independence. Standing at the entrance of New York harbour she welcomes refugees from many parts of the world, and has come to symbolise the spirit of freedom offered to those unfortunate enough to have to flee from oppression, poverty and religious intolerance in the countries of their birth. Both visitors and Americans alike have come to view the Statue of Liberty as the quintessential icon of freedom in a democratic society. (World Heritage Site, criteria (i) and (vi) 1984)

*Independence Hall* in Philadelphia (World Heritage Site criteria (vi) 1979), has been declared as a World heritage Site in celebration of the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution that were signed there in 1776 and 1787 respectively. The universal principles set out in these two documents continue to guide lawmakers all over the world and set out the fundamental principles which guide the American system of justice.

Robben Island differs significantly from these two sites in that the significance of the island transcends a narrow nationalism that, it could be argued, applies to the examples from the USA, and appeals to the broader spread of humanity in a similar manner to that of Auschwitz.

*Auschwitz*, in Poland, (chosen as a World Heritage Site under criteria (vi) 1979), one of the most infamous of the German concentration camps of the Second World War, has been preserved as a reminder of man's inhumanity to humankind and to serve as a lesson of intolerance and oppression in its worst form. As a museum illustrating this cruelty and injustice similarities to the recent prison period of Robben Island can be drawn.

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial, *Genbaku Dome* in Japan is another example of the atrocities committed by man to his kind. A testimony to an event that must

Robben Island



never be repeated, the memorial is a stark and powerful symbol of the achievement of world peace following the unleashing of one of the most destructive energies channelled by mankind..

Robben Island has served many purposes, a pantry, a prison and a symbol of freedom from oppression and a triumph of the human spirit. As such it is unique and may only be compared in part with the examples above. Whilst experiencing many differing occupancies and being used for several different purposes it is the one example that has shown that mankind may rise triumphantly from overwhelming injustices and still show a true desire for reconciliation and understanding to those who have served such cruelties upon them. The message of peace and reconciliation that has originated from Robben Island in recent times is a truly unique one and makes the symbol of Robben Island stand alone as an example for all of mankind and is of universal value.





### *(c) Authenticity*

For the purpose of the Robben Island nomination file it is important to define authenticity in the African context, and most particularly in the context of Robben Island and the way that it is perceived both as a national monument and national icon of peace and democracy. There is an understanding in the field of contemporary South African heritage that the concept of authenticity as defined by the 'first world countries' does not sufficiently encompass some of the qualities viewed as significant in the African experience of heritage. The legacy of hundreds of years of colonial rule in the sub-continent has emphasised the concept of authenticity relating to structures erected by colonial powers and has, to a greater extent, disregarded the intangible heritage so important to Africa. These sites, that are associated with traditions and events, have acquired significance over centuries and rarely bear any physical imprint or structure that serves as a marker to identify the place. Thus to date, most of the acknowledged heritage sites are linked to colonial notions of value and the places associated with the intangible remain unacknowledged.

At present no official conservation charter exists in South Africa. The debates surrounding authenticity in the southern African context are only now in the process of being addressed. For the purposes of the Robben Island Nomination it is important that this is recognised and the current attitude to the conservation of the cultural heritage on the Island clarified.

(The South African chapter of ICOMOS is planning a conference, to be held during the course of this year, to develop a charter specifically geared to the South African situation and understanding of heritage, conservation and authenticity. Similarly, the organisation charged with the official management of cultural heritage in South Africa, the National Monuments Council, is urgently preparing a workshop to discuss, amongst other issues, the concept of authenticity in this country. It is hoped that this debate will be extended to include the sub-continent).

Given the unresolved attitude to authenticity, which is viewed within somewhat different confines to that of the European understanding, the following thoughts attempt to set the parameters of authenticity within the confines of the Robben Island experience.

The Island may be conceived as comprising several distinct components falling under the umbrella of cultural heritage; these being the built environment, with its allied structures, constructed, (and demolished), over a period of some 350 years, and the cultural landscape - transformed by the inhabitants of the Island over that same period and including sites and places of cultural significance.

In terms of the built environment the structures upon the Island have undergone transformation by the inhabitants from earliest times. Structures and buildings erected by the Dutch were reused by the British or demolished to make way for later newer buildings more appropriate to their needs and requirements, Similarly



structures and buildings constructed by the British were reused and altered by later occupants. During this century additional structures have been added to the layering process when the military installations and the prison buildings were constructed. (Refer to Appendix E for illustrations)

This constant layering and over layering is the overriding and consistent factor influencing our understanding of the cultural heritage of Robben Island and testifying to the historic and symbolic power of the site. The evidence of this layering, rather than a frozen, fully 'authentic' snapshot of a particular era, captures for posterity the archive of events on the island demonstrating a singular and unique power and significance in itself. In establishing the new Museum, this attitude has been continued with the utilisation of existing facilities to accommodate newer functions relating to the requirement of the Institution. What remains constant throughout these new developments and indeed throughout the history of the built environment on the Island is the approach to restoration of structures, that being that of minimal intervention, with only the necessary repairs being effected to ensure the stability of the buildings. In instances where more substantial interventions may be required this has either been delayed, awaiting a full and detailed investigation into the historical accuracy and appropriateness of the proposals, or the outcome of Environmental Impact Assessments which may well inform the desirability or otherwise of effecting such alterations.

The presentation of the cultural heritage on Robben Island is largely influenced by the "closeness" of the historical experience, which in itself is unusual in terms of a world heritage site nomination. The decision to make minimal intervention in the built fabric found upon the Island reinforces this closeness, the nearness of history in this context, the healing of recent wounds and the impact of the experience on visitors to the place, many of whom experienced it under very different circumstances.

The buildings on the Island, in particular those that make up the "village" component remain in the same condition as when they were received by the Museum on 1 January 1997, minor repairs involving painting and maintenance have been undertaken in a similar manner to when these structures were built and maintained by the Department of Correctional Services. A limited services upgrade is currently being planned; this will adhere strictly to the Integrated Environmental Management programme that the Museum has committed itself to with Environmental Impact Assessments being undertaken for each component of the upgrade. All proposals are being monitored and discussed with the National Monuments Council and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism who will ensure that visual impact of these proposals is kept to a minimum.

The high security prison has been treated as a complex on its own and unique from all other buildings on the Island. "B Section", the wing where the political prisoners were held during the fifties, sixties and seventies, has been maintained in a state at which those prisoners experienced it during this period. The barren hostility of the prison complex forms a stark contrast to the neat and orderly village used by the prison warders and this contrast forms the purpose of reminding visitors of the history of Robben Island as a place of banishment and purgatory for those unfortunate enough to be sent there unwillingly.



The future use to which the prison is to be put remains under debate: it has been decided that B Section should be presented as it was during the height of its' occupation by South Africa's most famous political prisoners. The entrance area and B Block itself have been painted and furnished according to circumstances that were in existence during the fifties and sixties, finished upon the advice of former inhabitants of that wing. The process of cleaning and maintaining this polished environment was an integral part of the prisoner's experience and is clearly one of the memories held strongly by the inmates. In contrast to B Block is the remainder of the prison, which to date has been left in the exact state as it was found when transfer from the Department of Correctional Services to the newly established Robben Island Museum took place. There is an air of abandonment and hopelessness which is emphasised by poignant reminders such as graffiti and small pieces of broken furniture, which make a considerable contribution to the visitor experience of the place.

It is evident that the landscape is altered from the pristine state of four hundred years ago. The introduction of various fauna such as deer, ostrich and rabbits over the years as well as the introduction of alien vegetation which constitutes much of the present landscape has vastly altered the experience of the Island from that of the early traveller. This landscape however is an integral part of the changing aspect of the Island, referred to previously and regarded as significant to the history and development of the site. The analysis of this cultural landscape and the process of its' "making" will be one of the aspects upon which more detailed studies will be undertaken in the near future.

In terms of the remaining structures existing on the Island, mostly military in nature, these remain as they were when abandoned by the military after the second world war. While requiring a certain amount of limited maintenance in terms of painting and minor repairs the installations, complete with an impressive amount of artillery visible will be the focus of specialist studies and tours by groups such as the military historians.



d) *Criteria under which the inscription is proposed*

Robben Island meets *criteria (iii)* and *(vi)* for cultural sites in terms of the World Heritage Convention.

***Criteria iii***

Robben Island has a well documented history that dates back from 1488 according to written sources, although occupancy by early stone age inhabitants may well be possible, due to the early link of the island to the South African mainland. This will be confirmed by the archaeological investigation due to begin later in 1998.

The physical remains of the long history of banishment, imprisonment and human suffering are well documented and are visible through the memories of both residents who are still living as well as in written and graphic sources. The structures on Robben Island date from the earliest occupation by the Dutch colonists, the English occupation with its churches and institutions built to house the lepers and mentally ill, as well as the residential buildings, the military installations of the Second World War, and finally the structures associated with the more recent occupancy by the prison. These structures represent a period of unbroken human habitation from the midend of the 1600's until the present day.

These buildings and structures represent evidence of a society that played a significant role in the development of the southern african region and its links to the 'civilised' worlds of Europe and the East. This society has long since disappeared and the remnants on Robben Island, being typical examples of their time, are the only remaining examples still in existence. The more recent buildings are unique in that they represent a time in history that has gained universal symbolism while the residents (the ex political prisoners) are still alive. The closeness of this history makes Robben Island and its associated prison structures unique in the international context.

***Criteria vi***

Robben Island is of outstanding universal value for the following reasons.

***'Robben island is a vital part of South Africa's collective heritage. How do we reflect the fact that the people of South Africa as a whole, together with the international community, turned one of the world's most notorious symbols of the resistance of oppression into a world-wide icon of the universality of human rights, of hope, peace and reconciliation.'***

PRESIDENT NELSON MANDELA

*Heritage Day, 24 September 1997 Robben Island*

Robben Island has come to represent an outstanding example of a symbol representing the physical embodiment of the triumph of the human spirit over enormous adversity and hardship. The role of Robben Island in the transformation of an oppressed society has come to symbolise the rebirth of democracy in South Africa, a country which has come to be viewed as a unique example of transformation in a world troubled by political uncertainty.



### 3. DESCRIPTION

#### a) *Description of property*

Robben Island is a low lying rocky outcrop positioned strategically at the entrance to Table Bay and the City of Cape Town, some 9,3 kilometres north of the mainland. Covering an area of some 475 hectares it measures roughly 3,4 km in length and 1,8km in width. Originally part of the mainland it formed the pinnacle of an ancient, now submerged mountain that was linked by a saddle to the mountain known as the Blaauwberg. (Blue Mountain). Geologically it is composed of a lower strata of Malmesbury shale topped by a thick limestone and calcrete deposit covered by sand and shell fragments. The geology of the place provides several of the Island's outstanding landmarks, the shale being evident in the earliest quarry on the Island, "Jan se Gat", which provided the slate used by the Dutch colonists in much of the early building work in Cape Town, while the limestone provided the material used on many of the roads on the Island and which was excavated, as part of a forced labour program, by many of the political prisoners held on the Island.

The rock formations on Robben Island are similar to those of the mainland with the exception of the stratification, which is virtually horizontal or gently undulating in the Island context. Topographically the entire island is low-lying, with the highest point being some 24 metres above sea level and known as "Minto's Hill", named after a nineteenth century Surgeon Superintendent of the General Infirmary situated on the Island. The historic lighthouse, one of the architectural highlights of Robben Island is situated strategically upon the summit of the hill and still serves as an integral part of the signalling system for Table Bay harbour.

As is the case for the Cape Peninsula area of the Western Cape, the climatic conditions on the Island are Mediterranean, with hot dry summers and rainfall occurring in the winter. Climatic conditions are however, more extreme than on the mainland, with stronger winds experienced and a colder and considerably drier winter than Cape Town and its inland environs. The extreme winter gales and tides that batter the north western shores of Robben Island render it inhospitable along that part of the coast and the buildings and village have been established on the more sheltered eastern and southern shores. Murray's Bay Harbour serving all shipping arriving from the mainland, is situated on the eastern shore in the lee of the weather and extreme tidal ranges. The climatic conditions experienced in the Cape winters, combined with the rocky shores, (both visible and submerged) along all but one small section of the coast just south of Murray's Bay harbour, have lead to the many shipwrecks that lie in the waters off Robben Island. There are an estimated 22 ships that are believed to have sunk of this inhospitable coastline, 10 of which were British, 3 Dutch and 3 American. These wrecks are protected in terms of the National Monuments Act and access to them is restricted by both the National Monuments Council and the Robben Island Museum. A survey of these wrecks was carried out in a joint operation between the NMC and the South African Navy in 1992, code named Operation Sea Eagle, and the findings documented.

(Appendix B)



The natural environment of Robben Island has undergone considerable change since the original occupation by man in the seventeenth century. The original landscape has been affected by its use both as a place of settlement and as a larder and hence both the flora and fauna now prevalent on the Island are largely elements introduced over a period of some four hundred years of human habitation. The European Rabbit, for example, was introduced in the period of Jan van Riebeeck (c 1652) and have co-existed with indigenous fauna for more than 300 years. Studies of the flora and fauna of the Island have been undertaken by Cape Nature Conservation (the Chief Directorate of Cape Nature Conservation).

The Cape Nature Conservation Report on the Vegetation of Robben Island (1986) states:

*"Adamson (1934) indicates that the island was largely without trees and shrubs in 1933, except for the alien trees which were planted near the buildings on the island, the shrubs having decreased or largely disappeared as a result of past land practices such as intensive grazing by sheep (since 1601), goats and rabbits and as a result of chopping for firewood."*

The original indigenous vegetation is typically that of the "strandveld" type commonly found on the mainland of the west coast of the western Cape Province from the Cape Point area to the Olifants River several hundred kilometres to the north. Alien plant species such as Rooikrans, Manitoeka and Eucalyptus were imported by settlers and are now manifest in the landscape, as are the various types of animal now found there. Much of this more recent vegetation forms sheltering and nesting areas for the rich variety of birdlife found on the Island. Historical records indicate that a vast number of pelicans and ducks lived in breeding colonies on Robben Island, these have since disappeared. Sheep, cattle, bird species such as pheasant and ostrich, rabbits and deer have been introduced for various purposes during recent colonial times replacing the fauna indigenous to the Island, which included penguins, seals and reptiles such as tortoises and mole snakes. It is interesting to note that the Bontebok introduced to the island this century are believed to be pure and therefore provide an important gene pool for this rare subspecies.

The penguins and seals were hunted extensively by early travellers to the Cape in the times when the Island was used as a larder and to this day seals have not returned to the shores of Robben Island.

Robben Island is an important breeding area for sea-birds, which include the African Penguin, Bank Cormorants, Crowned Cormorants and Hartlaub's Gulls, which are endemic to southern Africa. (African Penguins and Bank Cormorants are classified as vulnerable species in terms of the IUCN gradings). It has South Africa's second largest colony of African Penguins, and in recent years the largest colonies of Crowned Cormorants, Hartlaub's Gull and the discrete southern population of Swift Tern. Robben Island also has a substantial population of African Oystercatchers. It also has an increasingly important heronry.

A marine reserve exists in the one nautical mile protected area around the Island and a rich variety of marine life breeds in these waters; shellfish such as crayfish, (lobster), and abalone (perlemoen) enjoy protection in the reserve.



### **Settlement patterns**

Unlike most inhabited islands, settlement of Robben Island has always been characterised by discontinuity. As each different set of users has come and gone - nearly always interspersed with periods of abandonment and neglect - completely different groups of people have been involved in activities on the Island on a short-term basis. Only between 1846 and 1931 is there evidence of more than one generation of a few families employed serving the needs of the patients hospitalised on Robben Island; these families never enjoyed security of tenure or the option to purchase land. It is very few inhabitants who have chosen to stay voluntarily on the Island, (the early Khoi residents led by Autshumao, who acted as interpreter to the Dutch settlers, appear to have been the first and last to do so), and all inhabitants have either been compelled to endure their occupation or have been employed in some capacity as minders. Paradoxically, it seems as if many of the above were reluctant to leave when the time to do so arose.

Since the Island has always been independent of any local authority, decisions and activities relating to physical development and planning have occurred on an ad-hoc basis, most probably determined by the requirements of the current user, with some assistance and funding from the State.

Permanent settlement has always been limited upon Robben Island, largely due to the lack of fresh potable water. Water obtained from boreholes or wells sunk on the Island is brackish and unsuitable for drinking purposes. Historically drinking water had to be collected from rainwater and stored for use and there are indications that the limited underground water supply has decreased since the earliest 17th century. Early settlers were reported to have developed extensive gardens where everything supposedly grew better than on the mainland and the Company (Dutch East India Company) kept a vegetable garden for passing ships. More recently a desalination plant offered a limited facility for deriving suitable quality water and during the occupation of the Island by the prison water was carried across from the mainland on one of the supply vessels and stored in the reservoir situated near the lighthouse on Minto's Hill.

Largely because of the prevailing wind (and possibly because of a desire to remain in sight of the mainland) settlement has always taken place on the eastern side of Robben Island. In the Dutch period it occurred in the central portion above what is now Murray's Bay and northwards from that point. During the British period and after development took place almost exclusively to the south-east where the present village is now located. Boundary Road is said to have formed the barrier between the staff and patients of the institutions housed there. The World War Two batteries to the north and south of the Island cannot be considered to form part of the ordinary settlement pattern. Considering that the village development was undertaken on a somewhat ad-hoc basis, it appears remarkably orderly but it is possible that some demolitions have occurred to accommodate a road system that developed at a later stage.

The remainder of the Island is largely undeveloped with a perimeter road encircling it and an airstrip positioned in the centre.



### ***Chronology of human habitation***

The earliest indications of human habitation are suggested to be the stone (slate) quarry on the south of the island and the lime quarry in the centre, both worked during the period of Jan van Riebeeck (mid 1600). By the late 1600's there was evidence of buildings to accommodate many slaves and some 30 to 50 soldiers, gardens behind them, a large lime burner and a flag flying from the signal hill, now Minto's Hill. By 1777 an annotated panorama by Gordon indicates a bigger settlement at the northern end of the Island in the area now known as Murrays Bay. A building referred to as the "posthouder's huis", (Postholders House) was flanked by long low buildings housing "bannediten" (convicts) on the left and various utility buildings such as a smithy on the right. The soldiers were accommodated in a line of small houses with vegetable gardens to the north of this and the slave gardens were situated some distance further away. No recognisable remains of these early structures are visible and archaeological investigations will further inform the Museum as to the precise position of this early settlement.

Whaling activities during the early 1800's lead to the occupation of the Postholder's House by John Murray and in 1806-1808 a new settlement was built at the southern end of the Island to accommodate the British prison. In 1833 this settlement housed the Commandant, officer's and soldier's barracks, overseer's houses, a bakery, butchery and smithy, workshops and prison accommodation for over 200 prisoners. During the 1840's a church, doctor's residence and parsonage were added. The lighthouse on Minto's Hill was built in 1864 and again in the 1890's there was an increase in building activity to house the lepers placed in isolation on the Island. This settlement remains in an extended form today and is known as the "village", which houses the infrastructure of the Museum with its offices, meeting and conference venues, community facilities, shop and hall.

Halfway between the village and Murray's Bay harbour is a little stone church, referred to as the 'Leper Church', but more correctly named as the Church of the Good Shepherd. The church was built in 1895 to the design of the well known architect Sir Herbert Baker and was used only by the male lepers. The church is positioned on the only portion of land not owned by the State and is the property of the Church of the Province of South Africa. Although not presently in use there are plans to attend to urgent repair work and investigate the possibilities of bringing back traditional worship to this charming little building. Surrounding the church property are the leper graves, half visible between the rampant growth of the encroaching vegetation.

Extensive building activity again took place between 1939 and 1940 when the existing harbour at Murrays Bay was constructed together with the military fortifications built for the Second World War and which include gun emplacements, underground magazines, observation towers, garrison quarters and two coastal batteries.

The final chapter in building history occurred during 1960 when the Department of Correctional services took control of Robben Island and started construction on the maximum security and ordinary criminal prison facilities together with expanded staff facilities.





## *b) Robben Island: History and Development*

### **Summary:**


Robben Island is often simply called 'The Island', a name which encapsulates not only its importance among islands, but also its deep significance for all who know the story of South Africa. In its variegated landscape, its historic patchwork of buildings and its monumental symbolism, Robben Island signifies both the oppressive continuities of South Africa's past and the happy disjuncture of its democratic present. In an international context, it also provides a tangible symbol of success in the struggle towards equal human rights for all people. As one man, Nelson Mandela, endured years of imprisonment on Robben Island to become President of his country, so can all people take hope for their own future.

Robben Island's significant place in the worked today is forged out of a long history of human habitation and use, in which the symbols of oppression and struggle against such oppression have been laid down repeatedly alongside each other. For the purposes of this report its history can be divided into five phases, culminating in its conversion into the Robben Island Museum in 1997. The historical phases are: (i) occasional settlement before 1652 (ii) use as a colonial prison, 1657-1921 (iii) use as a colonial hospital, 1846-1931 (iv) use as a naval base, 1939-1959 and (v) use as a apartheid prison, 1961-1996.

### ***The Pre-colonial Past: occasional settlement before 1652***

The Cape Peninsula and its satellite Robben Island, situated at the tip of Africa, happened in the days of extensive sea traffic between Europe and the East to fall roughly midway between the start and end points of the difficult journey. Between the first documented landing on the Island in 1498 and 1652, the year in which the Dutch East India company (DEIC), a trading company in the Netherlands, first established a settlement at what they called the Cape of Good Hope, Robben Island's natural resources helped to sustain a variety of European sailors on these trade routes. It is of course possible, an future archaeological investigation may prove it to be so, that even before the first Europeans rounded the Cape, indigenous Khoisan from the Cape mainland made use of Robben Island's natural resources, perhaps when lower sea-levels offered easier access to the Island. For the Island is actually the summit of an ancient, now submerged mountain, linked by an undersea saddle to the Blouberg coast of Table Bay.


The first Europeans to land on Robben Island were probably members of Vasco da Gama's fleet in 1498, who stopped to seek shelter and supplies. They stayed a few days on the Island in a dank cave which they named after their homeland Portugal - the name an index of their desperation to leave the ship, or their lack of nationalist fervour. Over the course of the next two hundred years a growing number of European ships made similar stops on Robben Island, seeking a half-way stopping point on their long and dangerous journeys to and from trading centres in the East. The sailors ate seal meat and penguin eggs, used the Island's grazing to fatten sheep from their vessels, and left post there for other ships to collect. The Island thus played an important role in sustaining sailors on the trade routes between Europe and the East. Not only did it offer plentiful food, grazing and (brackish) water near a relatively safe natural landing place, but it also offered relative security from indigenous retaliation against sailors' rougher



in 1652 the Island was suitable for a prison because the indigenous Khoisan - the first objects of his ire - were not known as a seafaring people. Provided access to boats was carefully controlled, prisoners could be relatively safely deposited there in the absence of sturdy mainland gaols. During the early part of the DEIC settlement, however, Robben Island's role as a prison was somewhat subordinate to its importance in supplying raw materials and communications necessary for the survival of the station and the DEIC ships it supplied. The first Robben Island prisoners were slaves and prisoners of war from the East Indies. They were sent to the Island in 1657 to cut stone for the building of the settlement in Cape Town. Later, prisoners also burned shells for lime, lit the signal fires and tended the Company's sheep on the Island. A commander of the Island station commented some years later,

"the island makes a very good penitentiary where rogue, after one of two years' work in carrying shells, begins to sing very small." In the ensuing years, some prisoners attempted to escape, or rebel against the poor treatment they received on the Island, but few were fortunate enough to improve their lot. A growing number of prisoners were sent to the Island for punitive exile or because the DEIC considered them a disruptive influence on the mainland rather than because they were needed for public works on the Island. The first prisoners to be sent to the Island as exiles rather than cheap labourers were three Khoisan, one of whom was Autshumato, dispatched in July 1658; they had escaped by the following year in a stolen boat. In the first half of the eighteenth century, most of the Robben Island prisoners were disgraced DEIC soldiers and sailors, but later more Khoisan and East Indian prisoners were sent to the Island. After 1722 political and religious leaders from the East Indies, where the DEIC was fighting for control over the lands with which it traded, were sent in greater numbers to Robben Island. Today a Muslim shrine or karamat on Robben Island (built in the 1960's on the site of an earlier shrine) honours the memory of these men, especially Sheikh Madura (d.1754) and Hadji Matarim (d.1745). Two other Muslim prisoners from Robben Island were particularly influential in encouraging the growth of Islam at the Cape. Said Aloorie (Tuan Said) became the first official imam (priest) in Cape Town after his release from the Island in 1761. The first chief imam (Kadi) at the Cape was Tuan Guru, who wrote a book on Islamic jurisprudence while imprisoned on the Island between 1780 and 1793. Robben Island was thus, as historian Nigel Penn has said, "one of the crucibles for the consolidation [of Islam] in Southern Africa".

By the end of the eighteenth century, Robben Island was well-established as a prison for those who had fallen foul of DEIC rule at the Cape or their imperial ambitions in the East Indies. When the British captured the Cape in 1795 and retook it again in 1806, they continued to use Robben Island as a prison. Some of the prisoners were from the military (mostly white), few were what could now be defined as political prisoners (mostly black), but the majority were imprisoned on ordinary criminal charges (mostly black). Political prisoners on Robben Island included the Khoisan leader David Stuurman, later banished to New South Wales, and the famous Xhosa prophet Makanna, who drowned while attempting to escape in 1820. Only a tenth of the prisoners on Robben Island at this time were women; all of the women were transferred to a Cape Town gaol in 1835. Most of the prisoners were employed in fish-curing, whaling, stonecutting or lime-burning work on the Island. The prison was closed in 1846, when a General



Infirmery was established on the Island. The prison's closure was part of a scheme to employ able-bodied prisoners on road and harbour-building projects on the mainland. Yet the need for unpaid labour to maintain the General Infirmery resulted in the establishment of a convict station on Robben Island in 1866 - these prisoners were still working in the hospital by the 1920's. The long history of using prisoners to work at various projects on Robben Island is a vital link in the broader story of the widespread use of prison labour in South Africa.

Even after the closure of the main prison in 1846 and the establishment of hospital in its place, Robben Island Continued to be used by the British as a secure place of exile for political prisoners. Many Eastern and Northern Cape leaders, such as the Xhosa chief Maqoma and the Korana leader Piet Rooy, were banished to Robben Island in the 1850's and 1870's respectively. Maqoma and his wife Katje protested in vain against their incarceration. The Hlubi chief from Natal, Langalibalele, was imprisoned on the Island from 1874-75 before being moved to another place of detention in Cape Town. The imprisonment of these important indigenous leaders on the Island helped the British to cement their military victories against indigenous peoples on the expanding frontiers of the colony during the nineteenth century.

### ***Place of Exclusion: Robben Island as a colonial hospital, 1846-1931***

In 1846 a General Infirmery was established on Robben Island to cater for three specific categories of the sick poor in the colony: the insane, the chronically ill and the leprous. The only institution which catered for the mentally ill before then was Cape Town's Somerset Hospital which reserved one side of its quadrangle for such patients. The chronically sick poor had been housed to a variety of gaol hospitals around the colony, the notorious Cape Town Pauper Asylum, an other one in Port Elizabeth, and of course the Somerset Hospital. Lepers had been kept in mission-run stations at Hemel-en-Aarde (Heaven and Earth), a farm near Caledon, and on the Sunday's River near Port Elizabeth before transfer to the Island. The new colonial secretary, John Montagu, faced with the necessity to cut government expenditure at the Cape, wished to save money by centralising provision for these categories of patient. By situating the government-funded hospital on Robben Island he hoped to cut down on malingerers who depended on hospitals for board and lodging.

At this time, both in the Cape and elsewhere, hospitals were patronised mainly by the desperate, poor and dying. The Robben Island hospitals admitted the least able of this group: patients from mainland hospitals who were not likely to be cured, were considered dangerous to the orderliness or healthiness of society and could not generally contribute to their own upkeep in terms of either money or labour. The Robben Island hospitals thus smoothed the work of hospitals and gaols on the mainland, and removed from the streets those people whom middle-class Cape Town found most threatening to their social order. The social and medical profile of the Robben Island patient made the General Infirmery more of a place of exclusion for those who weighed heavily on the hands of government than a place of healing. In implementing formal racial segregation in its hospital wards at varying stages from the 1860's, Robben Island provided an example of racial segregation which many other Cape institutions followed in the 1890's.



There was considerable tension between the idea of Robben Island as a healing place and its well-established image as a place of exile and imprisonment. The first doctor of the General Infirmary was an incompetent and cruel man, John Birtwhistle, who treated his patients like prisoners. The doctor was ousted in 1855 after an official inquiry into mismanagement of the hospital and much public discussion about the disadvantages of having a 'curative' hospital on the tainted prison-land of Robben Island. This was particularly important for the running of the 'Insane Asylum', as mental asylums of this time were trying to move away from the harsh punitive treatment regimes of the past and stress their curative functions. The controversy also fed into a political struggle (being played out in other British colonies too) between middle-class settlers who sought greater independence from Britain, and those who wanted to maintain imperial control. The reform of the Lunatic Asylum was used by the Cape settlers as a symbol of the colony's political and social maturity which helped to justify their for self-rule.

In the latter half of the 1850's, therefore, Robben Island Asylum became the first South African institution to adopt the curatively-oriented 'moral management' system of treating the insane, developed in Britain in the 1840's. Although complaints about the Island's isolation remained, financial restrictions resulted in the asylum being renovated rather than removed from the Island in the 1860's. More middle-class white patients were admitted to the asylum in the 1860's, and greater attempts were made to separate patients by gender, class and then racial designations. Wards in the chronic sick hospital and the leper hospital were also racially segregated by the 1870's and 1890's. Racial segregation was thought by many officials, hospital staff and white patients to be a necessary step towards creating ideal medical and social conditions in the hospital. Robben Island provided an example of racial segregation which many other Cape institutions followed in the 1890's. As more Cape asylums were built, however, some were reserved for rich white clients, and others, like Robben Island, for poor, black and dangerous patients. The Island asylum began to lose its less severely-afflicted middle-classes patients to other asylums in 1875, when the Grahamstown Asylum was established in the Eastern Cape, and in 1891, when the Valkenberg Asylum was built in Cape Town. Catering mainly for black cases thereafter, the Robben Island Asylum finally closed in 1921.

In 1892, the chronic sick hospital was removed from the Island to make way for an expanded leper section. Because of growing fear that the disease was spreading at the Cape, as in other parts of the world, the Cape Leprosy Repression Act of 1891 required that all sufferers from this disease be isolated in leper hospitals. The choice of compulsory segregation as the primary solution to the problem was unusual in comparison with other countries at the time, and was specifically related to racist fears that the spread of leprosy, largely identified as a black disease, would not be halted by education or voluntary measures. At this time Robben Island was the only leper hospital in the colony and it was swamped in 1892 by the unexpectedly large number of lepers, black and white, who were identified under the Act. When other leper hospitals were built in the course of that decade, Robben Island housed the majority of the patients (over 1000 at any one time) and was specifically used to detain re-institutionalised escapes or patients who protested in other ways against their incarceration in mainland hospitals. The leper hospital was closed in 1931 because of rising costs and decreasing case loads.



### ***Protector of the Bay: Robben Island as a naval base, 1939-1959***

Robben Island's sentinel position in the mouth of Table Bay which had made it an ideal signalling site for the DEIC in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries assumed considerable importance during the Second World War. During this war (1939-1945), South Africa was on the side of the Allied Powers, and sent troops to Europe and North Africa. Robben Island became its first point of defence against an attack in Table Bay. Although the feared invasion of South Africa by the Axis powers never materialised, Robben Island's new institutions performed an important training function for the South African military and helped administer a large degaussing range which reduced the chance of ships being sunk by magnetic mines.

By the mid-1930's, Robben Island was empty of patients and prisoners. There had been some discussion about turning it into a holiday resort, but the impending war intervened. It was declared 'reserved for military purposes' in 1936, equipped with harbour facilities and artillery in 1939 (much of which still remains on the Island) and taken over by the South African Permanent Garrison Artillery at the beginning of war. The three batteries of 9.2" guns in Simonstown, Llandudno and on Robben Island comprised the main armament defences of the Cape Peninsula. A degaussing range was set up near Murray's Harbour in 1941, designed to neutralise the magnetic attraction of the hulls to magnetic mines. Over 4,000 ships passed through the range during the war. Robben Island was also central to the operation of the submarine detection cables laid from the Island to the mainland in the middle of the war.

During this period Robben Island was a major training centre of military personnel, accommodating training for Coastal Artillery recruits, for black gunners on anti-aircraft and coastal batteries, for women Artillery Specialists (of the Women's Auxiliary Army Service or WAAS) and for members of the Women's Auxiliary Naval service (SWANS). After 1951, the South African Marine Corps and then the South African Navy took control of the Island until it was claimed by the Prisons Department as a maximum security prison in 1959.

### ***Protector of Apartheid: Robben Island as an apartheid prison, 1961-1996***


Having been devoid of prisoners for nearly half a century, Robben Island accepted the first of its next batch of unwilling residents in 1961. It was used as a maximum-security prison for both ordinary criminals and political prisoners under the apartheid government which had come into power in 1948 and relinquished its hold on the country in 1994. Only black men were chosen for incarceration on the Island. The first wave of political prisoners was sent to the Island in 1962, and the last one were transferred from the Island in 1991. The last ordinary prisoners left the Island on the prison's closure in 1996. The Island's isolation and the cruelty of its prison staff, particularly in the 1960's and early 1970's, made it the most dreaded prison in the country. While conditions improved during the course of the 1970's and 1980's, it remained the most inhospitable outpost of apartheid. As Oliver Tambo commented in 1980, "*The tragedy of Africa, in racial and political terms, [has been] concentrated in the southern tip of the continent - in South Africa, Namibia and, in a special sense, Robben Island.*"



This period of the Island's history is not only the most vivid in current public memory, the best represented in material and oral archives, but it is also the period most easily contrasted to the events in South Africa after 1994. Five, ten, or even twenty years before the first democratic election in 1994, many of South Africa's political leadership, mostly members of the ruling African National Congress and the small but vibrant Pan Africanist Congress, were imprisoned on Robben Island. Ironically, their very incarceration in an apartheid prison protected them from security force assassinations, because the apartheid government feared the adverse publicity the would result from deaths of their high-profile opponents in prison. Many Robben Islanders still suffered physically and mentally from the harsh conditions of prison life and isolation from their families and friends. But while imprisonment brought frustration and difficulty, it also offered the chance to share and debate political dreams and differences with each other across political and generational boundaries. In these ways did Robben Island act as the crucible of the new South Africa.

A key figure in the history of Robben Island is democratic South Africa's first president, Nelson Mandela. Born in 1918, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela became active in anti-Apartheid work through his membership of the African National Congress. He was arrested by the Nationalist South African government in the 1950's, unsuccessfully tried with other activists in the Treason Trial, and arrested again in 1962. After spending a short time as a prisoner on Robben Island, he was recalled to face another trial, the Rivonia Trial. Sentenced to life imprisonment for sabotage and conspiracy against the state, Mandela returned to Robben Island as a prisoner 488/64 in 1964. He was transferred from the Island prison to a mainland prison in 1982 and finally released from prison altogether eight years later, on 11 February 1990. He said in his autobiography that he saw prison as a microcosm of the struggle [against Apartheid] as a whole. 'We would fight inside as we had fought outside... [just] on different terms.' While their counterparts engaged in opposition politics outside the prison, the prisoners fought for their rights to study, to receive mail and visitors, and to play sport within it.

Robben Island has played a crucial role in the life stories of anti-apartheid heroes who are now key political figures, such as Nelson Mandela, but also in the lives of those who are now dead, such as Robert Sobukwe, and those unsung activists and former prisoners who are still alive, but not in the public eye. Its history also embraces the memories of the large number of family members, fund-raisers such as the International Defence and Aid Fund, lawyers and other loyal supporters of the prisoners during their time of incarceration on the Island. The former apartheid officials and prison staff too, have a contribution to offer in documenting the role of the Island in South Africa's past. These stories contribute to the complex web of meaning which surrounds the Island today and makes it the most important but also the most contested site of political symbolism in South Africa. Robben Island's momentous role in some of the most critical events of South African history since 1498 has emerged out of the often overlapping ways in which it has been used and the ways in which it has been remembered. Its new role as a Museum after 1997 represents a significant break with past uses, but simultaneously helps to protect and reconstruct our memories of the Island through the role it now plays in tourism, reconciliation and education in the country.



c) *Form and date of most recent records of property*

The Island has not yet been fully documented by the new Institution the Robben Island Museum, established in 1997. A full scale archaeological investigation is planned to be initiated during the course of 1998 and the terms of reference for this investigation have been formulated.

***The current records available are as follows:***

Conservation Survey of Robben Island compiled for the National Monuments Council by Patricia Riley, 1993

*(Appendix C)*

"Operation Sea-Eagle", (A survey of the shipwrecks of Robben Island) Drs. B. Wertz in collaboration with the National Monuments Council and the South African Navy. 1992.

*(Appendix B)*


Records dealing with the natural environment include the following:

The Wildlife of Robben Island Dr Rob Crawford, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town

*(Appendix D)*

The Birdlife of Robben Island Dr Rob Little, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town

*(Appendix D)*



d) *Present state of conservation*

The buildings and structures on the Island are varied in the degree to which they have been conserved over the years. The buildings used by the Department of Correctional Services have been regularly maintained by the Department of Public Works and a program was established to restore some of the historic buildings, (under the supervision of the National Monuments Council). These buildings are the old Dutch Reformed Church, the Guesthouse, formerly the Old Residency and the Old Parsonage adjoining it. Very little routine work was however, carried out during the last few years of the island by the Department, hence there exists a need to carry out basic repairs and maintenance to most of the buildings.

The military installations have remained untended since their abandonment in the early 1950's and will require restoration as part of the upgrading process in the Integrated Environmental Management programme. This restoration will be carried out with advice from the experts on military history, who are fully involved with the Museum authorities. A 'military route' will form one of the specialised tours and it is envisaged that these structures will be included in this tour.

The buildings controlled by Portnet, the organisation charged with the responsibility of lighthouse installations, have maintained the historic lighthouse as well as the small modern houses serving the personnel; some additional minor work will be undertaken this year.

As discussed in the chapter dealing with authenticity, many of the buildings have served several purposes since their construction during previous centuries. The layers that have been added to these structures have not been removed and in many cases will remain as an illustration of varying occupancies and uses throughout the history of Robben Island. The condition of many of the structures requires maintenance, in some instances minimal repairs and repainting to the correct colour specifications. Some of the earlier buildings, particularly those that used to house the insane, may in future, be restored under the supervision of the National Monuments Council to illustrate the conditions under which these unfortunates survived their occupation on the island. A final decision on this issue will be taken once the Conservation Plan for Robben Island has been completed.

Services are one of the areas that require considerable attention, in particular the road surfaces, water supply and sewage. These are currently in the process of upgrading and all work is being undertaken in accordance with the IEM process with full Environmental Impact Assessments being undertaken for all applications.

***Methodology:***

The state of conservation has been established and the results set out below. The map has been divided into sectors as in the Conservation Survey of Robben Island undertaken by Patricia Riley in 1993. Buildings and structures have been marked up on the maps and numbered for ease of cross reference. Each sector has been numbered and the sites within the sector similarly numbered. Brief explanatory notes relating to each structure have been added relating to the





present state of the site or structure. This system will be used in future monitoring exercises. (*Refer also to section 6 of the nomination file.*)

Where many of the buildings are similar in nature, for example the contemporary houses built for the prison staff in the 1960's, these have been grouped together as the comments relate equally to all structures within the group. Significant landscape features have been identified and included in the report in a similar manner.



*State of Conservation: Robben Island May 1998*

**MAP 1**

**1.1** Disused quarry, worked by the political prisoners- sea wall constructed from earth and laid with loose stones. High exposure to storm tides causing erosion. Damage to a portion of the sea wall which is in the process of restoration prior to winter 1998. Restoration according to National Monuments Council requirements to match original condition. Highly significant. Abandoned.

**MAP 2**

**2.1** Old stone (granite) quarry. Utilised between 1961 and 1974 where the political prisoners were sent on work parties. Indicated on the Sels map of 1794 which could indicate that the quarry was in existence at the time of the Dutch East India Company occupation. Abandoned.

**2.2** Cornelia Battery, World War II fortifications including concrete pill boxes, a command post, 2 gun emplacements with stores and underground magazines, a bunker and a store. All structures have been abandoned since the end of the War and require maintenance and repair to form part of the proposed military history route on Robben Island. Condition: derelict

**MAP 3**

**3.1** Shooting Range - impressive random stone wall behind moving target trench - machinery very rusty. Shooting ridges are still visible, there is no imminent threat to the structure. Condition : abandoned.

**3.2** Disused shooting range clubhouse, light maintenance required. Condition: fair/poor.

**3.3** Spring and tidal pool also known as the leper's pool as it is said that the female lepers were permitted to bathe there. The pool is in a ruined state although it still holds water. This structure may require stabilisation after severe winter storms. Abandoned.

**3.4** Run way for small aircraft. This requires heavy maintenance and is now used only for helicopter landings. Condition: poor.

**MAP 4**

**4.1- 4.3** World War II structures serving the Cornelia Battery including a small arms magazine, stores and offices. The buildings are derelict and require maintenance and repair. They will form part of the military route. Condition: poor.

**4.4** Originally the trade training Centre for the Department of Correctional Services (post 1961). This group also contains some old wooden structures possibly dating from World War II. Requires maintenance. Condition: fair.

**4.5** Old de-gassing station from World War II, derelict. Condition: poor.



**4.6** Stores, post 1961, requires light maintenance. Condition: fair.

**4.7** Visiting facilities for prisoners, post 1961. This complex is used as an introductory facility for visitors to the Robben Island Museum Condition: good.

**4.8- 4.9** Murrays Bay harbour. The working harbour including arrival and administrative buildings, now housing, inter alia small shop and rest room facilities as well as the breakwater walls. The northern breakwater wall will require strengthening against storm tides in the next year. This breakwater is characterised by the use of 'dolosse', concrete interlinking blocks developed in South Africa to act as a barrier against exceptionally rough seas. Condition: good generally.

**4.10 - 4.13** Maximum Security prison. This complex retains its integrity and is the subject of an intensive review on use and presentation to the public. Only light maintenance is required. Condition: fair/good.

**4.15** Kramat, used regularly by the local Muslim population, good condition. This building was constructed over the 1745 grave of the prophet Hadje Mattarm. Condition: good.

**4.16** Lime Quarry, abandoned.

## **MAP 5**

**5.1** Radar Station with tower, of concrete construction. Light maintenance required. No longer in use. Condition: poor.

**5.2** Disused building -light maintenance required. Condition: fair.

**5.3** Ruins - nothing left standing other than marker posts

**5.4** Ruins - nothing left standing other than marker posts

**5.5** Below ground bunker with metal shutter flaps, the swivels for the guns remain. Condition: derelict.

## **MAP 6**

**6.1-6.3** Maximum Security prison, as for 4.10 - 4.13

**6.4** World War II blockhouse. Condition: derelict.

**6.5** Stores, disused. Condition: poor.

**6.6** Graveyard of the lepers. Overgrown and requires clearing, some of the headstones require repairing. Condition: Poor.

**6.7** Stores, these buildings were erected during World War II for the SANF sub-depot Robben Island (SWANS), and they were popularly known as HMSAS Cement. Condition: fair generally.

**6.8 - 6.9** Disused building and brickworks.



**6.10** 'Robert Sobukwe House', outbuildings used to house the dog unit for the prison. Historical significance, light maintenance and interpretation required. Condition: fair

**6.11** Living quarters for Department of Correctional Services personnel. Condition: fair.

**6.12; 6.16** World War II bunker and blockhouse, now abandoned. Condition: derelict.

**6.13** Ruined structure, only foundations and concrete slab remain.

**6.14** Church of the Good Shepherd (Leper Church). Structurally sound, requires maintenance of roof and joinery urgently. Unused at present, the Church of the Province (the owner) has undertaken to complete a full restoration to the requirements of the National Monuments Council. Condition: fair/poor.

**6.15** Medium Security prison (common criminals were housed here), requires maintenance. The complex is not utilized at present. Possible early historic fabric contained within the structure, requires investigation. Condition: fair.

**6.17 - 6.18** Pumphouses, general maintenance

**6.19** Lime quarry, high level of significance as the political prisoners (the Rivonia trialists) were sent on work parties here. Fragile environment with potential damage by increasing numbers of visitors, no vehicular traffic permitted. To be monitored. Guard towers set on the perimeter, dating from World War II, are derelict.

**6.20** Chicken run, disused. Condition: poor.

**6.21** Greenhouses, disused. Condition: poor.

## **MAP 7**

**7.1-7.4** Military installations including gun emplacements, shelters and stores. The group identified as 7.4 have dense planting on top of the concrete roof slabs. Historically significant. The metal fittings are not as badly corroded as those in the bunkers and pill boxes on the coast, all structures require maintenance and some restoration. Condition: derelict.

## **MAP 8**

**8.1** Pumphouse, filtration plant and reservoir, this facility will be replaced during the services upgrade. Structures require light maintenance. Condition: fair

**8.2** Transport Division, group of buildings used by the works division. Light maintenance required. Condition: fair.

**8.3 - 4** Medium Security prison, situated on the position of one of the early Male Leper buildings. This area requires analysis for evidence of earlier fabric, this will form part of the Conservation Plan. Condition: fair.



- 8.5 - 8.9** Staff houses, (post 1961) Condition: good.
- 8.10** Office building (post 1961). Condition: good.
- 8.11 - 8.23** Staff houses (post 1961). Condition: good.
- 8.24** 46 Beach Road - historical cottages - require light maintenance. Condition: good
- 8.25 - 8.26** Sports facilities including clubhouse and field, tennis courts. Condition: fair.
- 8.27** Sick Bay (post 1961). Condition: fair.
- 8.28** Staff Club House, contains fabric from 19th century, could be considered for restoration. Condition: fair.
- 8.29** Old Power Station - industrial building. Condition: poor.
- 8.30** Post Office, constructed 1941. Condition: good.
- 8.31a** Part of old Female Insane Asylum buildings, of considerable historical significance. Possibility of restoring back to original stonework. Condition: fair.
- 8.31b - d** Post 1961 buildings serving various functions. Condition: fair.
- 8.31e** Part of Female Insane Asylum, requires considerable maintenance including a new roof, painting, and the cleaning of the stonework. Could be restored to original state. Condition: poor.
- 8.32** 'John Craig Hall', post 1961. Condition: good.
- 8.33** Rectory - possible restoration back to earlier appearance, c 1845. Condition: good.
- 8.35** Assistant Medical Officer's House, possible restoration to original appearance. Condition: fair.
- 8.36** Anglican Church 1841, maintenance required - removal of unsuitable exterior paint finish and replacement with lime based paint. Condition: good.
- 8.37 & a** Portion of old Male Insane Asylum - needs light maintenance - possibility of bringing back to stone (since plastered) Condition: fair/good.
- 8.38** Shop, possibly includes the remains of an historic buildings within the core. Requires investigation of fabric. Condition: fair.
- 8.39** Old Female Insane Asylum Mortuary. Condition: fair
- 8.40 - 8.74** Modern buildings (housing), constructed between 1940 - 1980. All in good condition.



**8.75** 34 Church Street, historic building, requires light maintenance - currently being replastered internally. Condition: good.

**8.76** Small attached stone cottages - 1877. Condition: fair.

**8.77** Swimming pool, in use. Condition: fair.

**8.78 - 8.89** Structures connected with World War II collectively known as the Robben Island Battery. Now abandoned, their condition ranges from fair to poor.

### **MAP 9**

**9.1** 'Varley's Fort' a World War II structure, the ironwork is completely decayed and the structure is abandoned. Condition: derelict.

**9.2 - 9.5 and .6** World War II bunkers, abandoned. These structures are highly visible and require restoration. Condition: derelict.

**9.3** World War II SWANS Barracks now abandoned, highly visible and require restoration. Condition: derelict.

**9.4** 'Varneys Lime Works', simple pebble deflation, requires restoration. Condition: derelict.

### **MAP 10**

**10.1** World War II Battery Observation point - concrete-bag finish, metalwork fair-concrete spalling, requires maintenance. Abandoned. Condition: derelict.

**10.2** Lighthouse - excellent potential for full restoration - removal of oil based paints. Condition: fair/good.

**10.3 - 10.4** Modern buildings used for housing staff. Condition: fair.

**10.5** Personnel Graveyard (c1858 -1923). Historically significant. The site requires clearing and repair to headstones. requires restoration and maintenance. Condition: derelict.

**10.5a** Timber Celtic cross

**10.6** Primary School, historic building pre 1894. Light maintenance only required. Condition: good.

**10.7** Store, modern structure. Condition: fair.

**10.8** Faure Jetty, historically significant. The concrete is in a poor condition and requires restoration. This structure is highly visible. Condition: poor.

**10.9a and b** Guest Houses, historical buildings restored in the 1980's. Certain interior fittings could be reconsidered. Condition: good.

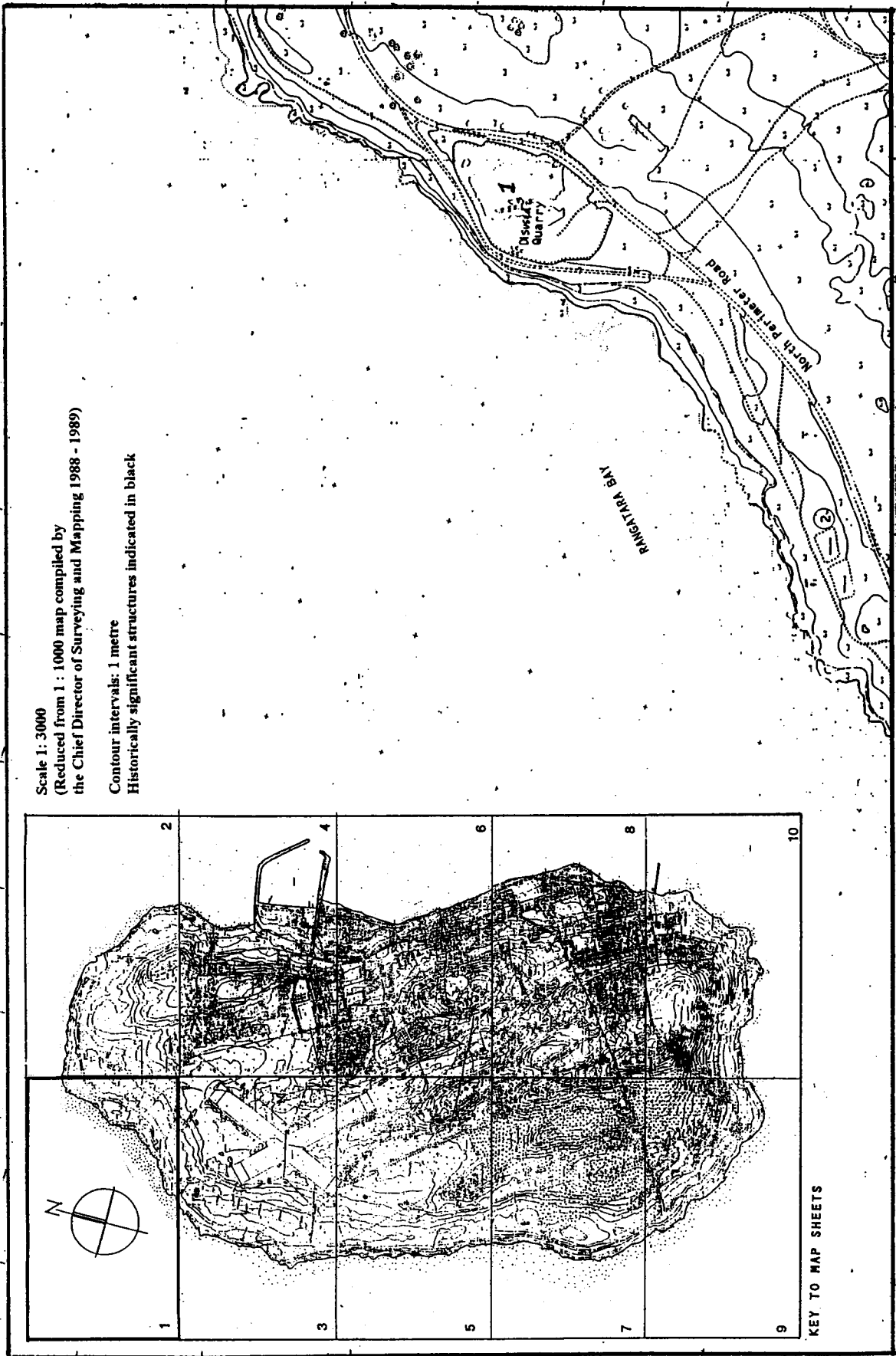


**10-10.24** Residential buildings, modern, currently undergoing routine maintenance. Condition: good.

**10.25** Modern buildings holding a pumphouse and the Pub - requires light maintenance. Condition: good.

**10.26** World War II barracks, abandoned. Condition: derelict.

**10.27** Van Riebeeck's Slate Quarry - no immediate threat, the quarry is no longer used.

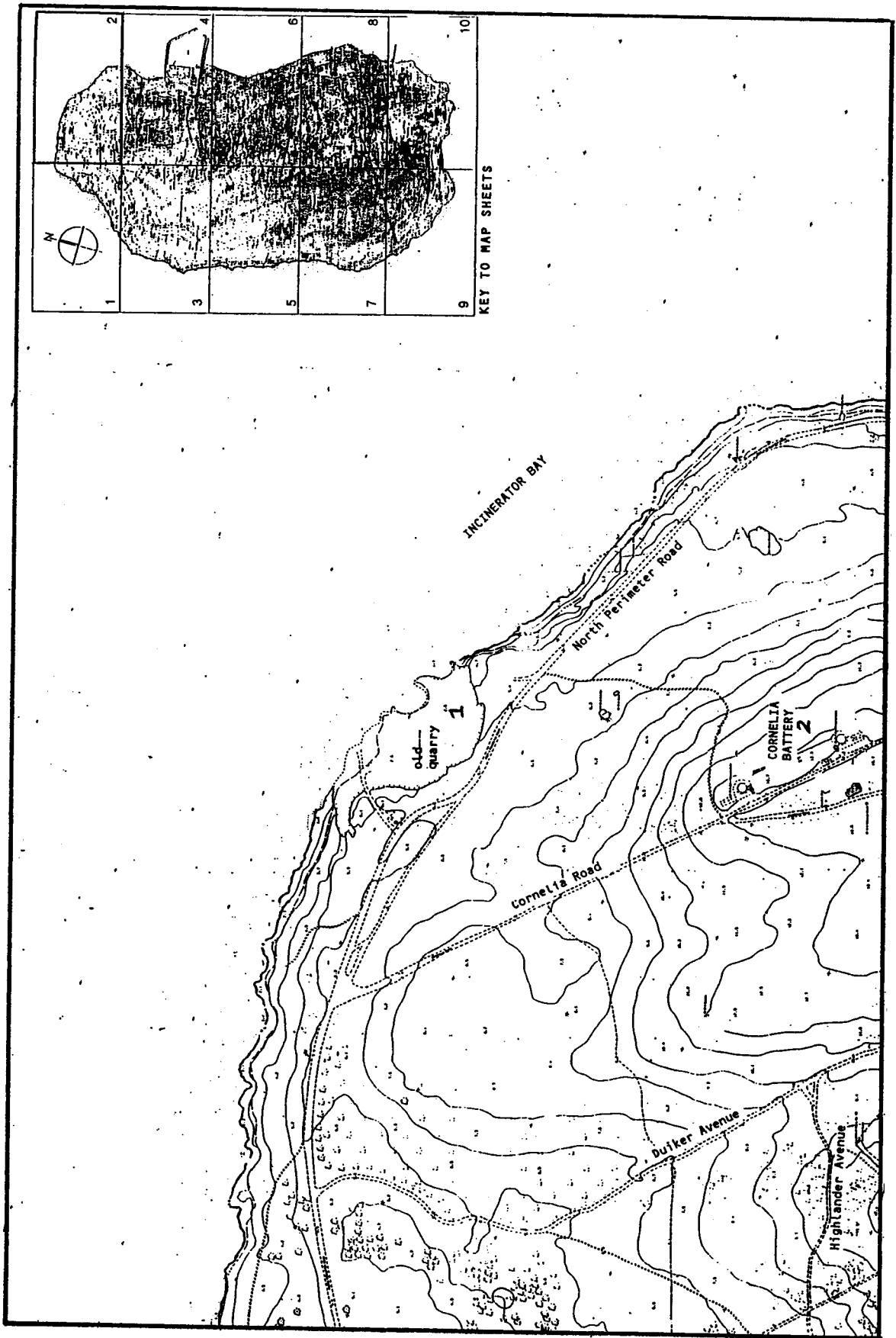


ROBBEN ISLAND: STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT

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Robben Island

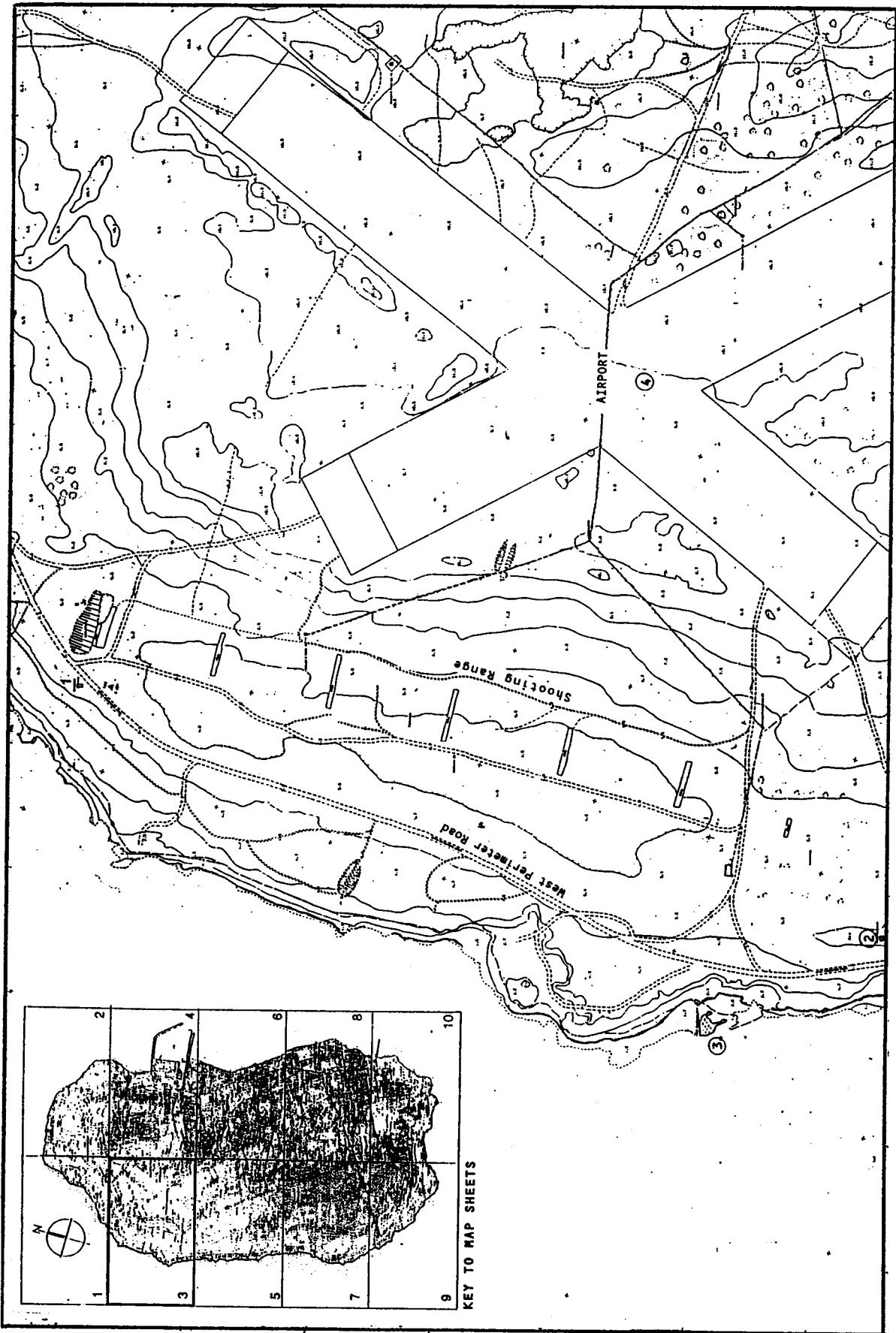




ROBBEN ISLAND: STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT  
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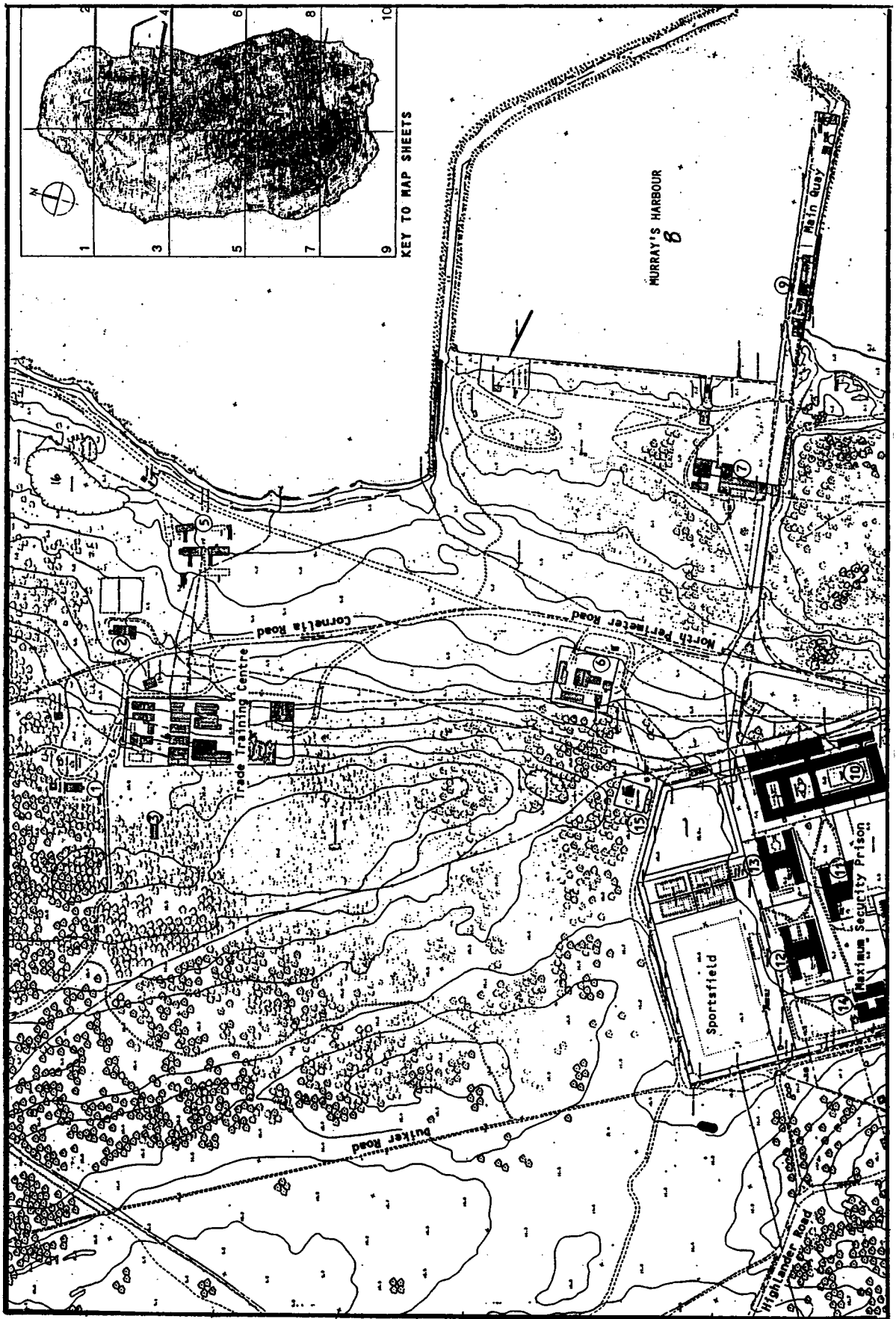
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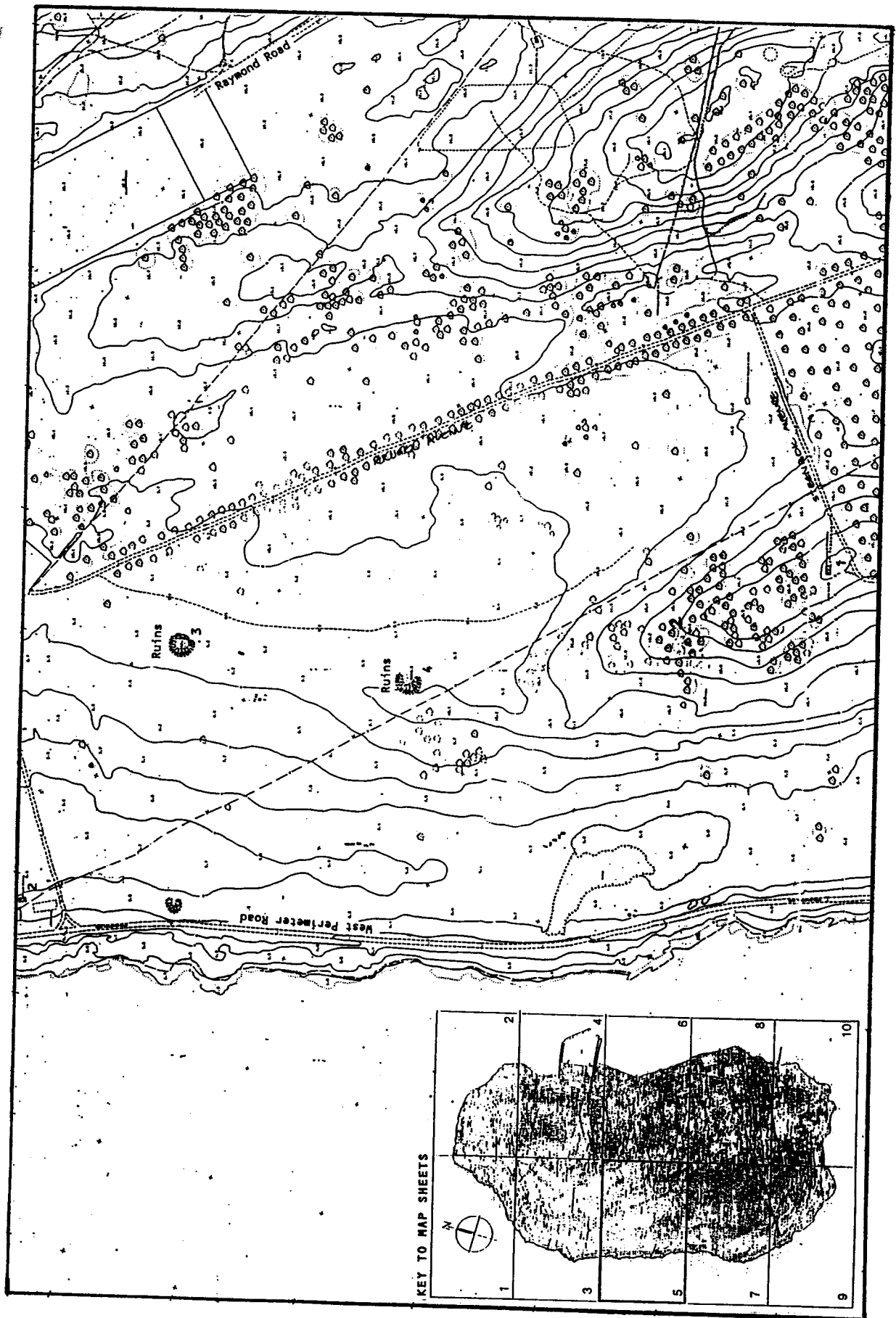
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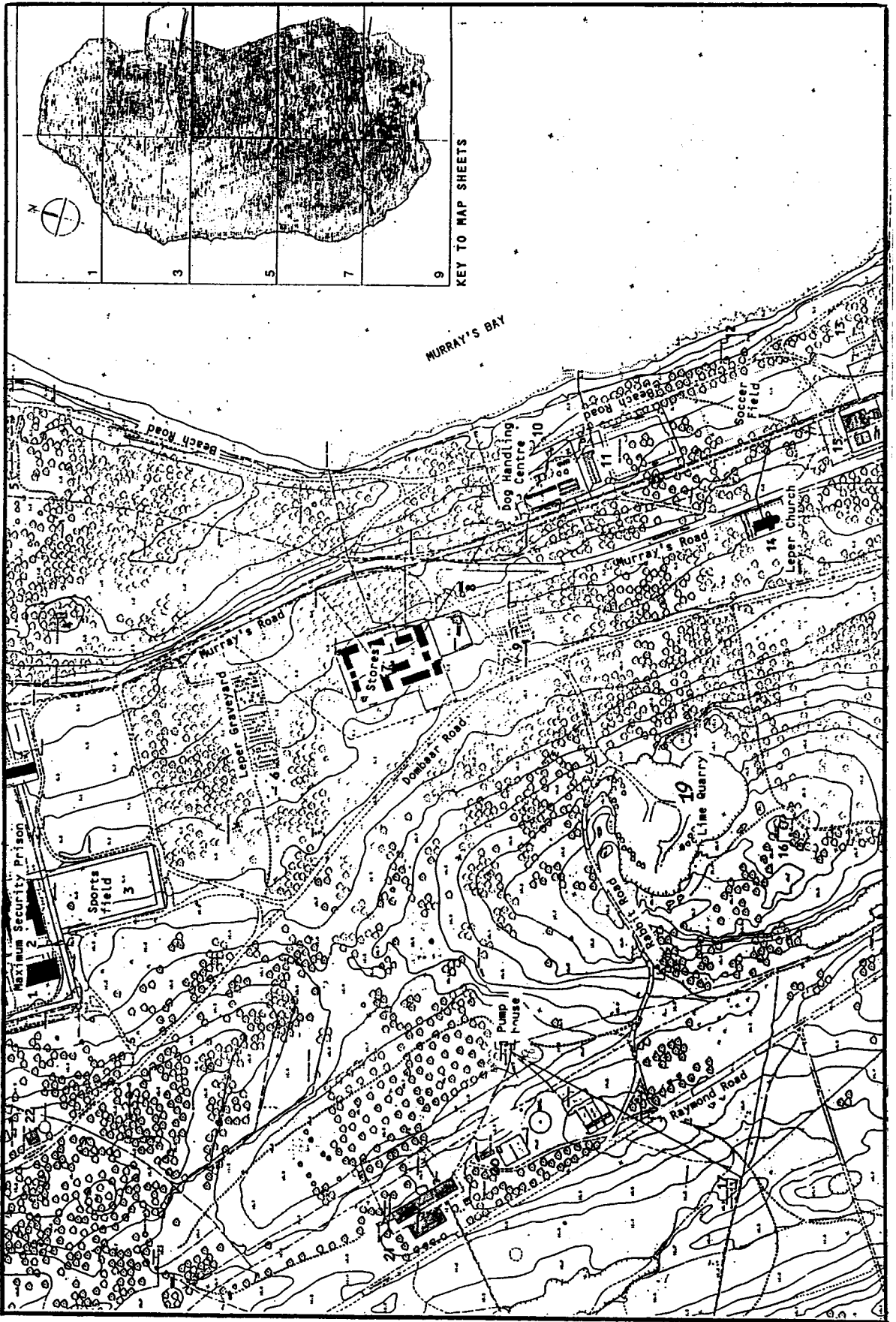
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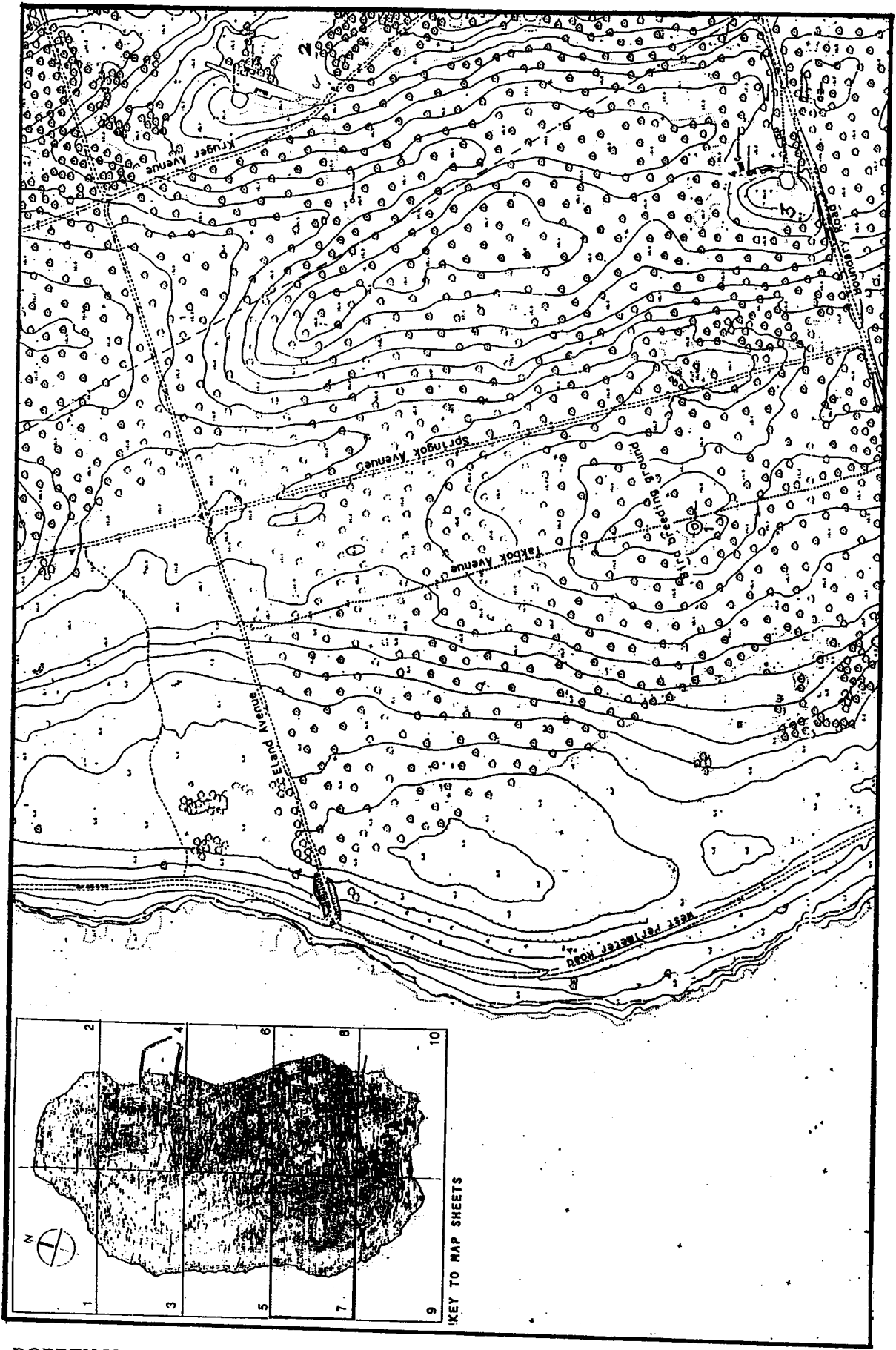
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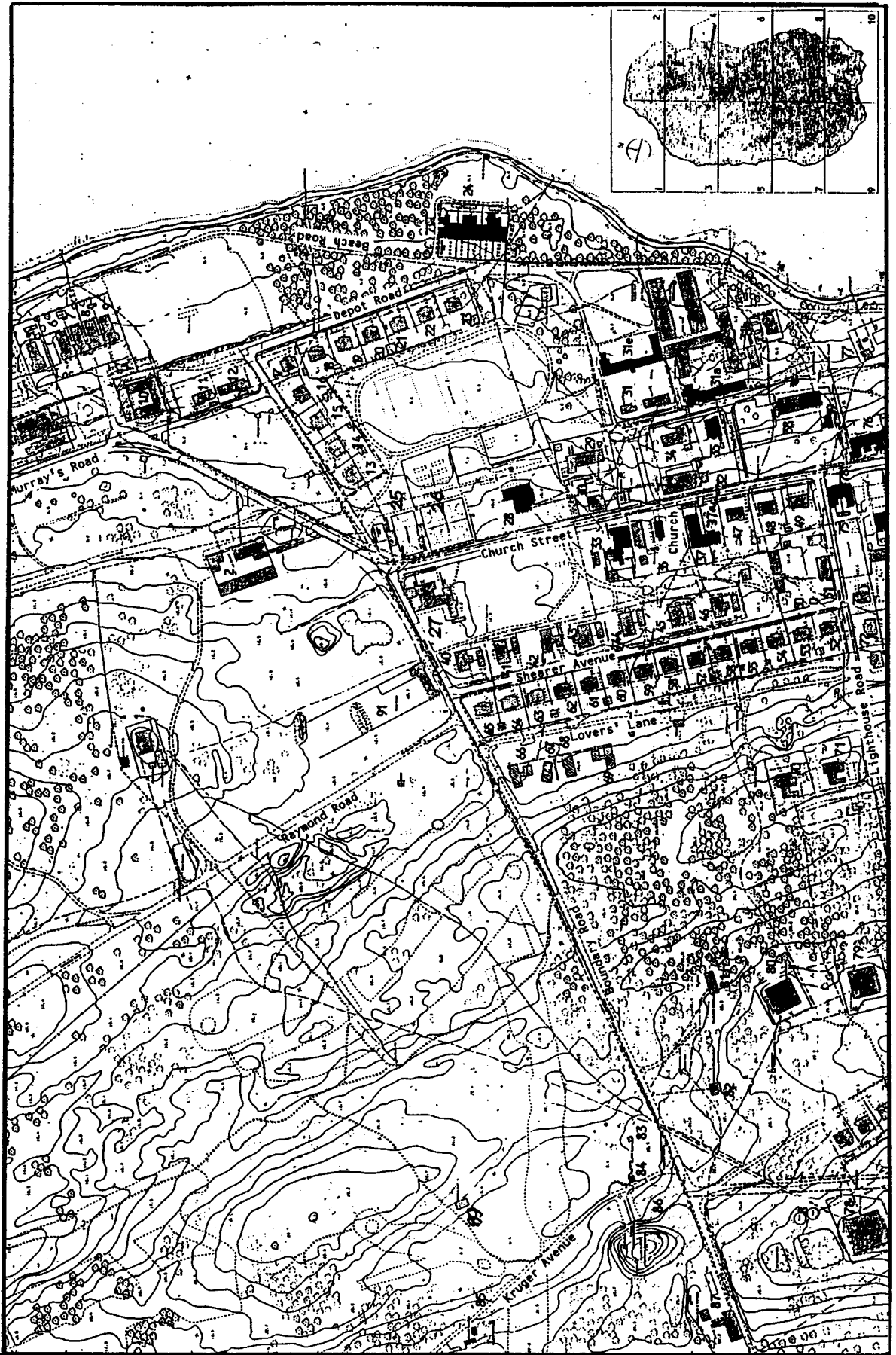
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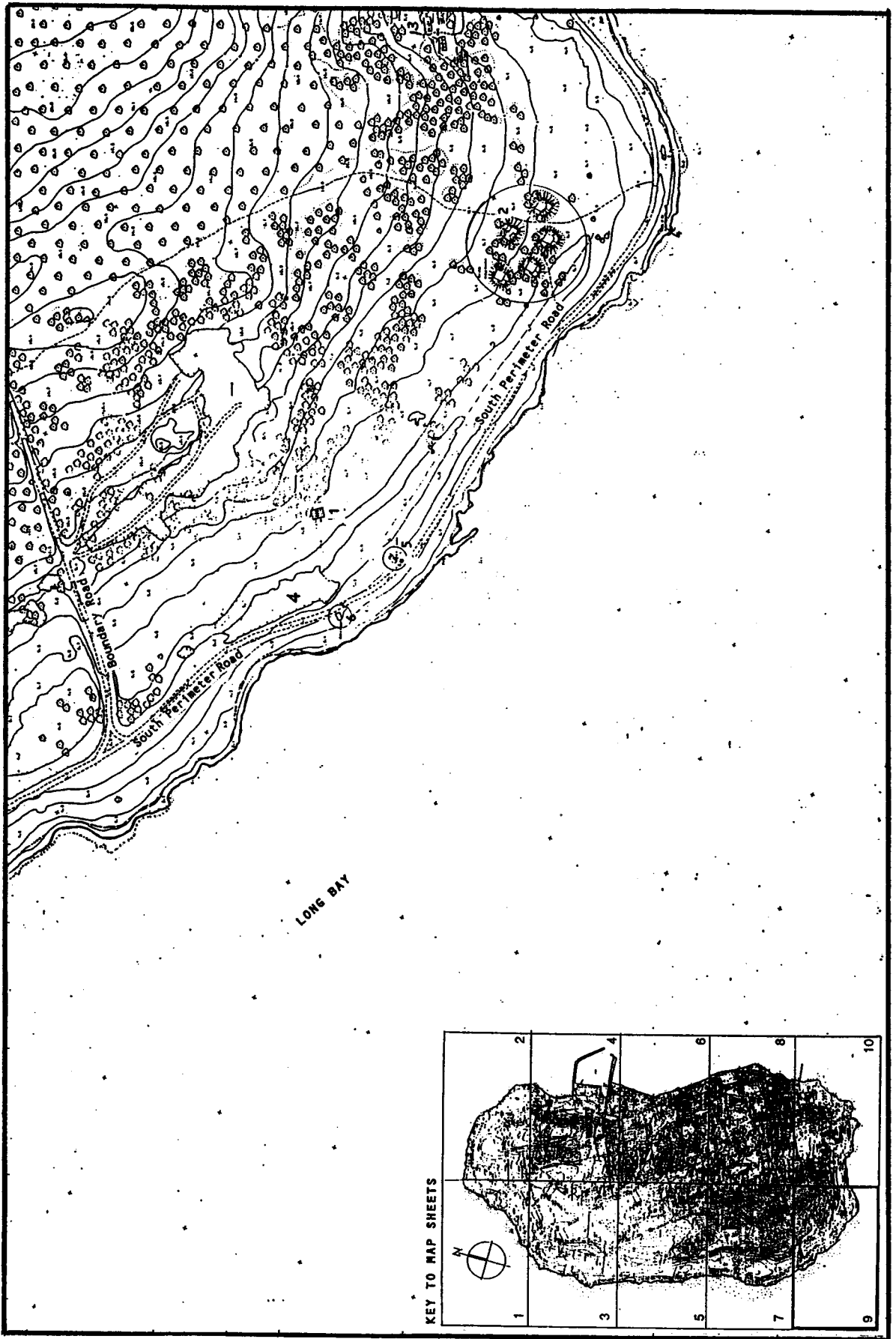
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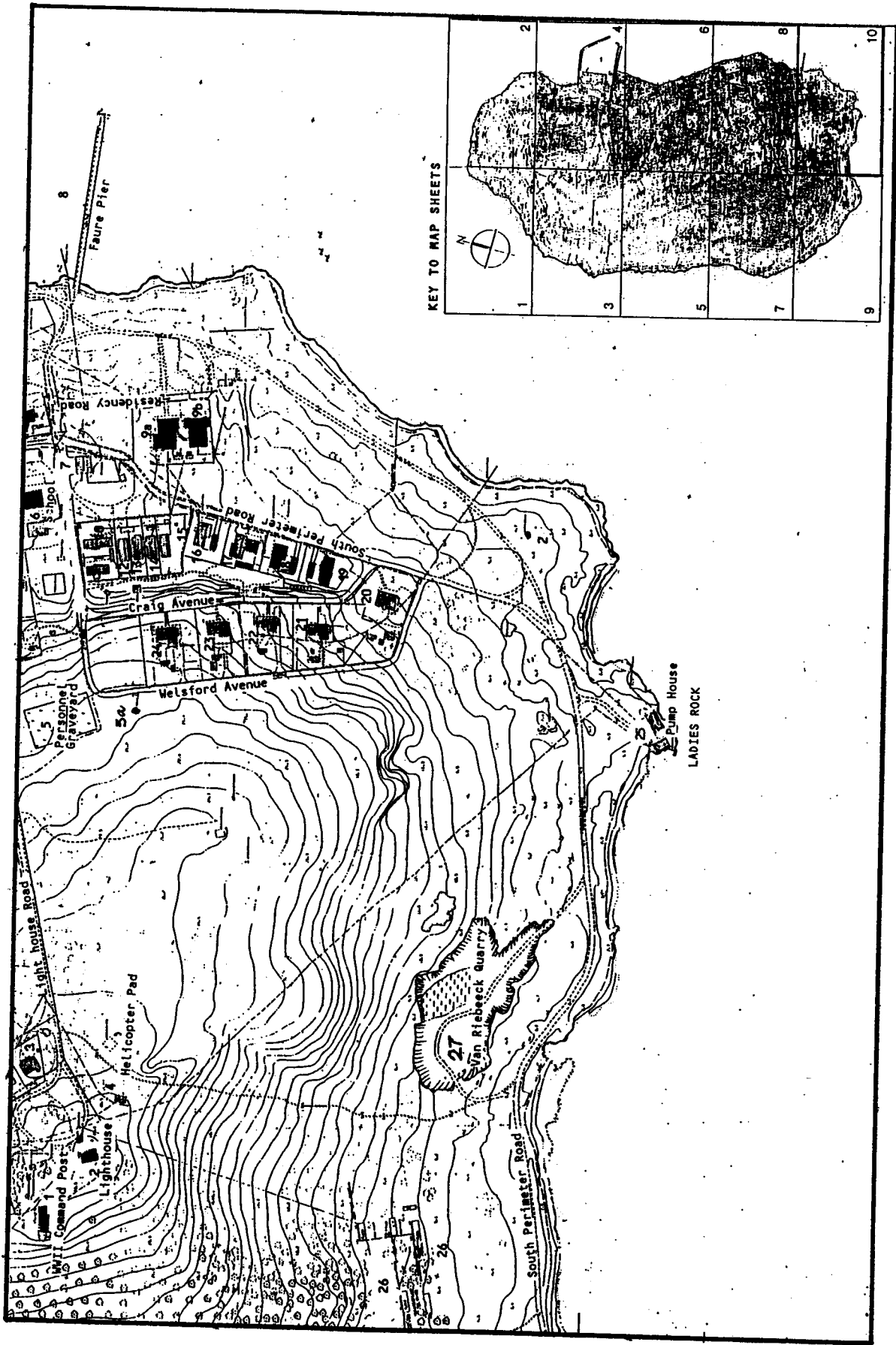


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Robben Island



### *e) Policies and programmes related to the presentation and promotion of the property*

In the eighteen months that the Robben Island Museum has been established a vigorous media campaign has been embarked upon to publicize the new Museum and its status a national monument and conservation showcase both nationally and internationally.

A strategic planning process was implemented by the Interim Management authority of the Robben Island Museum in 1997. The draft development and management plan emanating from this process will soon be finalised and submitted to the new Robben Island Council for approval. Deriving from the vision and mission of the new Museum, the new Robben Island Museum Development Plan will be based on the following criteria and principles:

- economic sustainability and cost efficiency: taking into account the development of partnerships with outside stakeholders, which benefit previously marginalised communities
- environmental sustainability: taking into account natural environmental conditions, possible impact on the health of the Island's inhabitants and visitors and the maximum environmental friendliness
- the historical significance of all resources: this includes the tangible and intangible historical values of the broader natural and cultural history of Robben Island
- current and future multi-purpose use of resources: taking into account the Island's status as a national monument and consequent limit on development of new structures, but the adaptation and restoration/renovation of existing buildings, structures and sites for museum activities

Following the values of an integrated environmental management system, the Robben Island Museum emphasizes the equal consideration of all the above principles and factors in all its development initiatives. The Museum will always strive towards finding an adequate balance of the above factors in any development initiative, by employing thorough research methods in the planning exercise. These will be adequately presented in a public participation exercise to promote the values of transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, in terms of the issues and criteria presented in the section on authenticity earlier in the document it is intended that any proposed development should have minimal intervention upon the existing historical environment but be in line with the concept of a dynamic layering and over layering in a dynamic manner which is the hallmark of the Robben Island experience.

These principles are to be founded upon sound financial management systems based upon the subsidy received from the State as well as independent income generation. Accounting and control systems approved by both the State and private sector have been established and will be audited by both internal and external auditors on an annual basis.



## ***Specific Development Areas***

### **Programmes to promote the Cultural and Natural Heritage**

These specific programmes will focus upon the cultural and natural heritage of Robben Island and ways in which the Museum can present, conserve and further research these aspects.

Robben Island has a rich and diverse history stretching back several thousand years, the last 500 years of which have been well documented. These resources will be used and managed by the Robben Island Museum in an holistic and integrated manner but with special significance being placed upon the recent past and the universal symbolism of the Island as a symbol of "the triumph of the human spirit" over tremendous hardship and adversity.

Areas in the historical development of Robben Island that will also receive special attention and which will be the focus of exhibitions and displays include the following:

- \* Shipwrecks and the early European and colonial influence upon South Africa in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries as the modern global economy emerged
- \* the indigenous peoples (the Khoi Khoi, including historical personalities such as Autshumato and Krotoa)
- \* Slavery and links with the African and world slave route
- \* The influence of Islam both on the Cape and specifically the construction of the five holy shrines or Kramats, one of which is situated on Robben Island and which forms part of what is known in this country as the "Holy Circle of Islam"
- \* The anti colonial struggles of the nineteenth century
- \* Industry and life on Robben Island, with special emphasis upon the whaling activities, the development of the quarries and the tram-line
- \* The medical history of South Africa focussing on the lepers and the insane held on Robben Island
- \* World War II
- \* The Island as an internationally notorious political prison post-1960 (when the anti-apartheid freedom fighters were first brought to Robben Island)

The development of the cultural landscape as a result of these layers of human habitation upon Robben Island will also be considered when developing these initiatives.

The conservation and utilisation of Robben Island's natural resources will take into account the following:

- \* the harvesting and sustainable management of the natural resources including marine resources such as line-fish, abalone, rock lobster and seaweed
- \* the cultivation of terrestrial vegetation such as wood, herbs and vegetables by hydroponic methods
- \* the conservation and management of terrestrial fauna such as antelope and ostriches as well as the bird life on the Island



## **Final Development Programme and Phased Implementation**

It is envisaged that a complete document detailing the Development Programme will be finalised by the end of March 1999 (the end of the current financial year). The phased implementation of the Development Programme will occur over the next five to seven years. The phasing of the various stages of the Plan will be closely linked to and informed by the Integrated Environmental Management System and will include such aspects of the Programme as indicated below:

### ***Education***

The use planning exercise will take into account educational activities and programmes which will be integrated with tours and heritage interpretation. Educational activities (using appropriate technologies) will include international conferences and fora, seminars and workshops, specialist programmes for a variety of audiences and cultural programmes.

### ***Transport***

The investigation of provision for a variety of vehicles (environmentally appropriate) for the use of staff, residents and visitors to the Island. These could include bicycles, mini-busses for the shuttling of visitors including VIPs, special groups, researchers and disabled visitors, a limited number of medium sized buses for tours by day and overnight tourists and school groups, the development of a tram-line along a historically determined route, and walking routes.

### ***Accommodation***

A future use planning exercise will take into account the following planned activities. Self catering facilities for the general public, a corporate precinct operated on a time-share basis, a youth centre, conference facilities, and facilities for staff, overnight visitors and researchers.

Other identified activities include the provision and establishment of shops and catering facilities, fund raising and sponsorship, the provision of permanent conference facilities and the upgrading and ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure and services on the Island.

### ***Mainland Facilities***

It is important that the Robben Island Museum develops its existing facilities on the mainland and establishes satellite information and display centres to serve those visitors unable to visit Robben Island itself. The concept of travelling exhibitions will also be considered as many South Africans are unable to visit Cape Town. Various administrative activities relating to the Museum are also housed on the mainland.

For this purpose several zones on the mainland have been identified and will form part of the phased development and implementation of the project. These include:

1. The formalisation of links with the Mayibuye Centre, which serves as a national repository for documentation relating to the anti-apartheid struggle and which contains many valuable documents created by the political prisoners held on the Island. The Centre is presently housed at the University of the Western Cape.



2. The Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, where the embarkation offices and ferry departure points are situated. The development of the proposed "Gateway Centre" will also be situated here.

3. Community outreach facilities and programmes. (Such as Cowley House in District Six, Cape Town, which housed many of the families visiting the political prisoners held on Robben Island).



#### 4. MANAGEMENT

##### a) *Ownership*

The Island is owned by two Institutions, the State owns the large portion (99%) of the Island and the nautical mile surrounding it. A small area situated to the north of the village, containing the Church of the Good Shepherd is owned by the Church of the Province of South Africa.


The Republic of South Africa  
(represented by) The Director General  
Department of Public Works  
Private Bag X890  
PRETORIA 0001  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Telephone: + 27-12-337-2000

and, the Church by

The Church of the Province of South Africa  
(represented by) Mr R Rogerson  
P O Box 1932  
CAPE TOWN 8000  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Telephone: +27-21- 451 557



b) *Legal status*


The Island is both a declared national monument and a declared cultural institution in terms of government statutes.

The National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969 as amended identifies and protects the Island as a nationally significant heritage resource and affords it the highest level of protection for such resources in the country. The National Monuments Council is the agency responsible for the implementation of the National Monuments Act, any proposal involving any changes whatsoever to a national monument must receive approval from the National Monuments Council. The buffer zone of one nautical mile around Robben Island is also included in the protection offered by this Act.

The current National Monuments Act will be replaced in the near future with a new Heritage Bill, which is in draft stage at present. This new Act will significantly alter the manner in which heritage resources are managed; the intention of this Bill is to effect management of such resources at the most appropriate level of government for such resources e.g many heritage resources are of local importance and will be managed by the local authority, similarly provincial authorities will manage sites and places of provincial significance and the national body will be responsible for national "heritage sites". As Robben Island is one of South Africa's most important heritage sites it will enjoy protection as the national level and continue to be managed by the new national heritage authority.

The Cultural Institutions Act No 29 of 1969 establishes the criteria by which such Institutions are created and managed. In the case of Robben Island the Museum is run by a Director and a management committee within the parameters of this Act. The Act sets out the responsibilities of the management of the Museum and the duties of the Robben Island Council. Aspects such as the auditing of financial affairs are also covered in the Cultural Institutions Act.

*(Refer also to Appendix A: National Monuments Act and Cultural Institutions Act.)*



c) *Protective measures and means of implementing them*

The National Monuments Act, detailed above and in Appendix A, offers protection to the Island together with its natural and cultural assets as well as the one nautical mile buffer zone surrounding it. The intertidal zone also enjoys protection from the Sea Shore Act No 21 of 1935, which protects and controls the use and ownership of the strip of beach between the high and low water marks. (Appendix A)

No alteration, restoration, repair, maintenance, demolition work or any other change, to any part of Robben Island, however minor, may be undertaken without the necessary permission from the National Monuments Council. This takes the form of a legal permit of approval, which is issued upon receipt of a formal application for such alteration. The applications are considered by a committee constituted by the National Monuments Council and comprising experts in various fields of cultural conservation.

In the case of Robben Island, with its attendant environmental protections, (of which cultural resources play a part thereof in terms of the Environment Conservation Act No 73 of 1989-Appendix A), certain listed activities specified in Section 21, Schedules 1 and 2 of this Act requiring Environmental Impact Assessments, must be undertaken. A complete set of documentation is required for each application accompanied by a full motivation. These listed activities include water supply facilities and reservoirs, sewage treatment plants and related infrastructure as well as roads. Various changes in land use also require an Environmental Impact Assessment.





*d) Agency with management authority*

The Robben Island Museum, established in accordance with a decision by the Cabinet of the South African Parliament, is the authority responsible for the day to day management and conservation of the Island. The Director, appointed by the Robben Island Museum Council, is the individual directly responsible:

Professor Andre Odendaal (The Director)  
Robben Island Museum  
Private Bag  
ROBBEN ISLAND 7400  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Telephone: +27-21- 411-1006  
Fax: +27-21- 411-1059  
E-mail: info@robben-island.org.za

It is important to note for further clarification that in terms of a decision by the South African Parliament to ratify the World Heritage Convention in June 1997 and later confirmed by the World Heritage Centre the responsibility for the co-ordination of the Convention is the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism  
Mr Makgolo Makgolo (contact person)  
Private Bag X2  
Roggebaai 8012  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Telephone: +27-21- 402-3068  
Fax: +27-21- 418-2582



e) *Level at which management authority is exercised*

The Director of the Robben Island Museum is responsible for the management of the Museum and related activities. He reports to the Robben Island Council, a body of 18 persons nominated by public process and selected by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology to form the governing body of the Museum. (In terms of the Cultural Institutions Act). The Council is tasked with issues such as policy development and financial issues and is not involved in the day-to-day management of the Museum. The Robben Island Council is comprised of equal numbers of ex political prisoners and specialists with relevant expertise such as historians, conservationists, lawyers, environmentalists etc.

The Director is also supported by a team of managers who are responsible for various aspects of the Museum, including Estates and Services, Heritage, Human Resources, Tours and Media as well as Financial Management.



*f) Agreed plans related to property*

The future development of Robben Island will proceed in accordance with the development framework laid out in the Cabinet recommendations of 4 September 1996 as well as the report of the Future of Robben Island Committee informed by an extensive public participation process in which approximately 200 proposals were received.

The Cabinet recommendations were that:

*"Robben Island should be developed as a World Heritage Site, National Monument and National Museum, which can become a cultural and conservation showcase for the new South African democracy, while at the same time maximising the economic, tourism and educational potential of the island, and so encouraging that multi-purpose usage.*

*The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology should become the new controlling authority, taking over from the Department of Correctional Services on 1 January 1997.*

*The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, in terms of the Cultural Institutions Act should name Robben Island a Declared Cultural Institution and appoint a governing Council and Director.*


*With regard to the Museum functions above, Robben Island should be run as a site museum, where the total environment is preserved in an integrated way, in line with modern international conservation approaches, and that the ex-political prison be converted into a Museum of the Freedom Struggle in South Africa.*

*The Robben Island Museum should be conceptualised and built upon three pillars: Robben Island as the core; administrative facilities and a complementary site on the mainland; and a national and international function, designed both to promote international co-operation and to connect directly to broader transformation processes in South African society, for example by reinforcing and giving direction to the plethora of other legacy projects being proposed countrywide to deal with the struggle for and the establishment of democracy in South Africa.*

*In order to equip the new Robben Island Museum in an expeditious and cost effective way, the Minister should request the University of the Western Cape to agree to the incorporation of the Mayibuye Centre and the non-profit-initiated Robben Island Gateway project in the new Robben Island Institution.*

*After taking control on 1 January 1997, the new controlling authority should initiate a systematic and broadly participative planning process, facilitated by a suitably qualified agency, for the long term development and multi-purpose use of Robben island.*

*The special history of Robben Island be taken into account during the planning and development process, amongst others via the inclusion of ex-political prisoners and a representative from the President's Office on the Council of the new Declared Cultural Institution, as well as through arrangements which can contribute to the socio-upliftment of ex-prisoners.*



*The new controlling authority should make special efforts to generate income independently of State funds, inter alia by establishing a Robben Island Trust, with President Mandela as patron-in-chief and a panel of distinguished South African and international trustees.*

*The redevelopment of Robben Island should be phased."*

The Robben Island Museum, operating as a living or site museum, aims to develop the Island as a national and international heritage and conservation project for the new millennium. In managing its resources and activities, the museum strives to maintain the unique symbolism of the Island, to nurture creativity and innovation, and to contribute to socio-economic development, the transformation of South African Society and the enrichment of humanity.

In interpreting its vision, the Robben Island Museum constantly focuses on the following core essences:

- \* the political and universal symbolism of Robben Island
- \* the cultural and natural heritage and resources of Robben Island
- \* Robben Island as a platform for critical debate and lifelong learning
- \* Robben Island as an institution which ensures economic sustainability and development



g) *Sources and levels of finance*

Robben Island Museum is funded by the State through the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. The infrastructure and buildings on the Island are funded by the Department of Public Works. The Robben Island Museum also accrues an income through overseas donor funding from agencies such as NORAD and SIDA, sponsorships from the South African private sector and fees and profits made through the running of the tours and sales from the shops and restaurant on Robben Island. Project income for 1998/9 includes:

**INCOME SOURCE** (S A Government and funds generated directly by the Museum)

**AMOUNT** (in S A Rands, US dollars in brackets)

Ferry service income  
6,000,000 (\$ 1.165 mil)

Mess/restaurant sales  
100, 000(\$ 19 417.00)

Shop sales  
2,000, 000 (\$ 388 350.00)

Guest houses/sales  
100, 000 (\$ 19 417.00)

Administration: other  
50, 000 (\$ 9 708.00)

Post Office Sales  
100, 000 (\$ 19 417.00)

State Subsidy  
24,298,000 (\$ 4,72 mil)

Interest on investments  
1,000, 000 (\$ 194 174.00)

Media core sales  
15, 000 (\$ 2 912.00)

Petrol sales  
20, 000 (\$ 3 883.00)

Rentals: Hall, conference  
20, 000 (\$ 3 883.00)

**TOTAL**  
**33,703,000 (\$ 6,54 mil)**



An additional financial grant has been allocated to Robben Island by Norway to fund the development of an Integrated Environmental Management System and the preparation of the nomination for World Heritage Site Status. This aid package amounts to

3 million Norwegian Kroner (approximately R 1,95 Million, depending on fluctuating rate of exchange)

The Department of Public Works has made an amount of R 11 million (\$ 2,13mil.) available from State emergency funds for the upgrading of the infrastructure on Robben Island.



## *h) Sources and expertise and training in conservation and management techniques*

In order to run the Museum and manage Robben Island as a national monument successfully various skills have been identified as being necessary within the staffing structure of the Museum. These include managerial and financial skills, experience in the management of the cultural and natural environments as well as specific conservation skills relating to the built environment, the natural environment, and curatorial duties. Any shortcomings existing at present will be addressed by specialist consultants who have, as part of their brief, the requirement to develop capacity by training the staff of the Robben Island Museum in the required skills.

The Robben Island Museum has developed relationships with various local and international conservation training and professional bodies. An agreement with ICCROM has been reached whereby the Robben Island Museum will send a number of its staff for training in conservation methods and techniques. This will occur at the ICCROM headquarters in Rome. The Robben Island Museum has and is continually increasing its contacts with world-renowned museums and training institutes, such as the Smithsonian Institute, Amistad Research Centre, Paul Getty Institute, ICOMOS (International), the Commission on Preservation and Access (USA), the International Federation of Film Archives and other conservation institutions.

The Robben Island Museum is an institutional member of the South African Chapter of ICOMOS, which ensures that any training opportunities are made available. The Museum is also a member of SAMA, the South African Museums Association School for Conservation, which also offers training opportunities in the field of specialist techniques relating in particular to the conservation of historic building materials.

Although formal training in conservation has not until now been offered at a tertiary level the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg is in the process of formulating a masters degree in heritage management, and the Robben Island Museum itself, together with the University of the Western Cape and the University of Cape Town, has developed a post graduate degree in heritage training to assist disadvantaged students to enter the sphere of heritage resource management.

A management policy to develop a special programme to train the artisans and workman employed by the Department of Public Works on Robben Island will also be initiated this year. This will ensure that maintenance work done to the buildings on Robben Island is done correctly and with the due consideration necessary for historic buildings and structures. This programme will be structured by the National Monuments Council in collaboration with the national Department of Public Works.

In the field of Environmental Education, budgetary allocations have been set aside for the training of staff in environmental management techniques. Several of the South African Universities offer post graduate degrees in this field, including the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.



### *1) Visitor facilities and statistics*

Because Robben Island is protected by both heritage and environmental conservation measures, the number of visitors to and inhabitants on the Island is strictly controlled. Environmental Impact Assessments, in line with the national environmental legislation, are part of the management plan which necessitates that impact assessments of each prospective development is carried out.

The maximum number of visitors currently permitted on the Island has been determined by an environmental impact assessment carried out during 1997 prior to the promulgation of the regulations attendant to the Environment Conservation Act (referred to in Section 4 c). This exercise was undertaken to ascertain the carrying capacity of Robben Island and resulted in a recommendation that the Island could take 1 200 visitors per day upon condition that the service infrastructure was upgraded. The impact of the increase in visitor numbers will be monitored on an on-going basis and the results of this preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment will be audited in the first phase of the Integrated Environmental System in the process of development at present.





*j) Property management plan and statement of objectives*

Robben Island is managed according to a Property Management Agreement between the Robben Island Museum, the National Monuments Council and the Department of Public Works. This agreement, which is in the process of being established, will set out detailed maintenance schedules relating to the structures, buildings and services upon the Island, as well as the natural landscape in which these are found. ( Issues such as limited vegetation clearing, which may be necessary, will fall under this category) This management procedure will be finalised at the end of October, simultaneously with the first phase of the environmental management system discussed below.

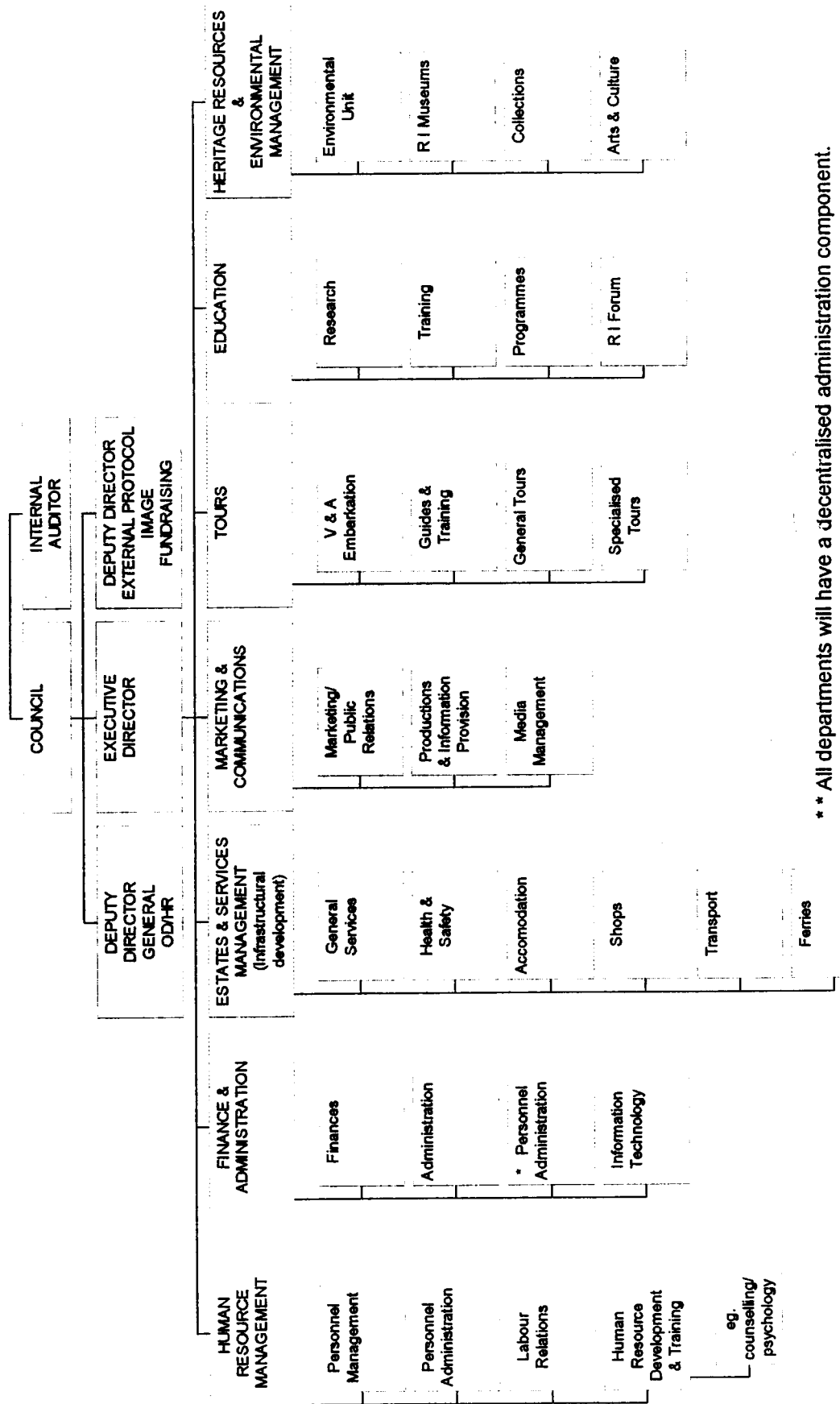
An integrated environmental management approach, which includes an environmental policy, environmental management plan and environmental management systems is currently being developed for Robben Island to ensure that the negative impact of all future development is minimised. This has been funded by a grant from Norway. The environmental management procedure is recommended by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and involves public participation and the mitigation of any negative impact on both the natural and cultural environments. The Environmental Management System will be developed in a series of phases with the first phase consisting of the complete draft scheduled for completion in October 1998. The entire process will be completed by the end of December 2000. More details of this process are contained in Appendix B.



k) Staffing levels (Professional, technical and maintenance)

The staffing complement of the museum is detailed in the organogram and table below.

## STAFF STRUCTURE



\*\* All departments will have a decentralised administration component.



The Department of Public Works permanent employs approximately 30 people, who are involved in maintenance and repair work on Robben Island. The maintenance and renovation standards used are guided by the National Monuments Council guidelines and permits, as well as Robben Island Museum policy documents. (Any restoration work will be carried out by specialist independent contractors, who will be appointed by public tender and approved by the Robben Island Museum and the National Monuments Council.)

The Public Works staff comprise labourers and artisans who are controlled by works foremen; additional management skills are offered by the staff based in the (local) Western Cape office of the Department of Public Works, from which all maintenance work is co-ordinated.



## 5. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

### a) *Development pressures*

Future developments on Robben Island are strictly controlled by the National Monuments Council Act and the Environment Conservation Act. All future developments need to take into account the National Monument's Council guidelines, in relation to the buildings and archaeological resources on the Island. Environmental regulations legislated by the Environmental Conservation Act ensure that no development of potential significant negative impact can be undertaken, without permits from the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

Robben Island is protected from any developmental pressures from the mainland precisely because it is an Island. As the entire island is a museum there are no outside pressures for commercial development. However, any major developments on the neighbouring mainland which may affect the environment of Robben Island are also regulated by the Environment Conservation Act.

Robben Island Museum employs two security companies for the protection of the Island's movable and immovable assets, on a 24-hour basis. The whole Island is patrolled. Strict measures are enforced regarding access control and movement of workers as well as residents on the Island. As a result of one nautical mile around the Island included as a National Monument, patrols at sea form part of the security functions.



b) *Environmental pressures*

Robben Island Museum staff are trained in various emergency strategies, designed to manage any potential environmental pressures. These are:

- \* Explosion/bomb-blast management strategies
- \* Contingency plans for ferry emergency situations
- \* Contingency plans for shipping disasters along the coast

The impact of visitors on the island is strictly controlled; all visitors are accompanied by guides as part of a formal tour, most of which are conducted (at present) in busses. Opportunities for walking are limited and visitors are informed on the sensitivity of the island environment on their arrival and given printed information on appropriate 'behaviour' while visiting.

There is also a contingency plans for managing any potential nuclear outfalls from the nuclear power station of Koeberg Nuclear Power Station, which is stationed on the West Coast, within a 16km safety-zone radius from Robben Island. Robben Island forms part of the Koeberg and Environs Developmental Committee which shares the responsibility of activating and controlling appropriate emergency services.



### c) *Natural disaster and preparedness*

Robben Island staff are trained in the following strategies to manage several natural disasters which may occur on the Island or in the surrounding environment:

- \* Fire management contingency plans
- \* Coastal oil spill contingency plans
- \* Shipwrecks

Erosion A danger of erosion due to exceptionally high seas exists along, in particular, the northern coastline. Repair work to the sea wall of the quarry on this coastline is presently underway under the supervision of the National Monuments Council and a specialist professional team. Constant monitoring after winter storms will ensure that damage is kept to a minimum along the coast.

The existing roads on Robben Island are subjected to a higher volume of traffic than during previous occupancies. A policy for the maintenance and repair of the road services is underway and this will be included in the conservation plan.



*d) Visitor/tourism pressures*

As with development pressures, all visitor and tourism pressures are regulated and monitored by environmental impact audits, as required by the integrated environmental management approach adopted by the Robben Island Museum Council, as one of the four core objectives of its management plan.



e) *Number of inhabitants on the property, buffer zone*

All inhabitants of Robben Island are members of staff of Robben Island museum, the Department of Public Works and Portnet, (the institution responsible for lighthouses in South Africa), or Sealink (the company responsible for the official ferries serving Robben Island). The number of inhabitants on Robben Island are controlled by a housing and accommodation policy. There are currently 124 permanent residents on Robben Island, including Robben Island Museum, Department of Public Works staff.





## 6. MONITORING

### a) *Key indication for measuring the state of conservation*

#### **Cultural and Built Environment**

Refer to the report on the present state of conservation, section 3 (d). The state of conservation will be monitored on an annual basis using the report in section 3(d) as a benchmark. Wear and tear by visitors, particularly to the prison complex, will be monitored on a more regular basis.

#### **Natural environment.**

Studies relating to the status of the birdlife on the Island have been carried out over a number of years, the details are contained in Appendix D entitled "The Wildlife of Robben Island" and "The Birdlife of Robben Island." This report also contains records of marine life in the protected zone.

Records of land-based mammals (buck etc) are contained within various reports compiled by the Department of Correctional Services, the most recent records dating from 1995.

These reports can act as a benchmark for monitoring future numbers of bird, mammal and marine species.



## *b) Administrative arrangements for monitoring property*

The monitoring of the state of conservation will be linked to the Integrated Environmental management process that has been adopted by the Robben Island Museum.

A program of ongoing monitoring of both the built as well as the natural environment will be established and this will form part of the on-going management program of the authority. (The Museum). An audit of the Island will be initiated during the course of 1998, this audit will include the state of conservation report of all built structures as well as the current status and numbers of bird and animal life presently on the Island. Marine life such as seals, shellfish will also require inclusion in this program. This audit will form the baseline from which the state of conservation may be managed in the future.

### ***Cultural Environment***

Monitoring of the cultural environment of the Island will be carried out on an annual basis by the Museum as part of its maintenance program. The state of conservation report can serve as baseline information against which the condition of the various buildings and structures can be measured. It is suggested that the format of the report of the state of conservation be used when making an annual assessment. This assessment would be undertaken in consultation with the National Monuments Council and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, which is also responsible for the management of cultural resources in terms of the Environment Conservation Act, and recommendations regarding remedial action or restoration work would be compiled jointly by both parties and would be undertaken under their joint supervision. (Refer to section 3 (d))

### ***Natural Environment***

The Sea Fisheries Research Institute (part of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism) has an established program for the ongoing monitoring of bird and marine life (Refer again to Appendix D). This program is based upon a series of fortnightly or monthly inspections of the birdlife, land-based mammals and marine life found on the Island and in the buffer zone.. Behavioural traits, breeding numbers and patterns, reproductive success, survival, feeding habits and migratory patterns are all monitored and form part of a long term program established by this Department. This program is run independently but with the full approval of the Museum authorities.



c) *Results of previous reporting exercises*

No previous system existed for reporting on the state of conservation on the Island. Routine maintenance work was carried out by the Department of Correctional Services on the buildings in the village and on the prison building itself. During the last five years of their occupation of Robben Island the Department reduced its maintenance schedule dramatically and when the Robben Island Museum took over the island in 1997 it became evident that a full audit of all buildings would be required in order to ascertain the requirements for maintenance, repair or restoration. This audit will form part of the conservation plan to be initiated this year.

The historic lighthouse was maintained, although not always using appropriate materials, by Portnet, the institution responsible for the lighthouse and apart from minor repair work requires very little maintenance work.



## 7. DOCUMENTATION

*a) Photographs, slides and video entitled 'The Story of Robben Island'*

Refer to Appendix E for photographs and slides

*b) Copies of property management plans and extracts of other plans relevant to the property*

Relevant legislation is listed below and is contained in Appendix A.

National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969

Cultural Institutions Act No 29 of 1969

Environment Conservation Act No 73 of 1989 and attendant regulations  
Government Gazette No 18261 Notice No 1182 dated 5 September 1997

Sea Shore Act No 21 of 1935



### c) *Bibliography*

Below please refer to a selected bibliography on Robben Island. The works detailed below are considered to be the definitive sources of reference. An extensive archive of documentation on the Island exists at the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, in Cape Town. These archives hold a vast store of documents relating to particularly to the anti apartheid struggle and cover much of the recent history of the prison on Robben Island. The archive contains inter alia personal papers of many of the political prisoners, video footage of interviews and events relating to the personalities held there, publications and artefacts from the period during which the political prisoners were held there. The contents may be accessed via a database held at the Mayibuye Centre.

The Cape Archives, in Roeland Street, Cape Town, contains many valuable historic documents relating to Robben Island, including a selection of early maps and photographs, as does the South African Library in the Company Gardens in Cape Town. The Cape Archives is also the repository for the records of the Department of Correctional Services during their occupation of Robben Island.

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## VIDEOS

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WILSON, Lindy. 1988. *Robben Island, Our University.*

*Compiled by Kim M Walker*

*Assistant Librarian at the National Monuments Council*

*20 June 1997*



*d) Address where inventory, records and archives are held.*

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Republic of South Africa

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111 Harrington Street  
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Robben Island



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*Linocut:* "Amanyundululu Esiqithini" - Xolile Mtakatya  
*Photo:* Marl Skinner

ROBBEN ISLAND  
NOMINATION FILE:  
WORLD HERITAGE SITE STATUS

Amendment to text updated March 1999

Text amended in sections 2 a,b &c; section 3 b, c &d  
and  
Additional Appendix F

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Legislation**

- \* National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969 (as amended)
- \* Cultural Institutions Act No 29 of 1969 (as amended)
- \* Environment Conservation Act No 73 of 1989 (as amended)
- \* Regulations relating to the Environment Conservation Act No 73, Schedules 1 and 2
- \* Sea-Shore Act No 21 of 1935 (as amended)

### **Appendix B: Integrated Environmental Management System**

- \* Document of the System as developed for Robben Island

### **Appendix C: Survey and Catalogue**

- \* Conservation Survey of Robben Island  
Compiled for the National Monuments Council by Patricia Riley, 1993
- \* Operation Sea Eagle, a survey of the shipwrecks around Robben Island by Drs B Wertz and Dr J Deacon

### **Appendix D: Surveys of the Fauna on the Island**

- \* The Wildlife of Robben Island, Dr Rob Crawford, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town
- \* The Birdlife of Robben Island, Dr Rob Crawford, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town

### **Appendix E: Visual material relating to Robben Island**

- \* Historic maps and photographs
- \* Contemporary photographs and slides
- \* Video entitled AThe Storey of Robben Island≡
- \* Illustrated pamphlets

### **Appendix F: Additional information relating to the built environment**

- \* Robben Island: Survey of the Built Environment, Lucien le Grange and Nicholas Baumann & Revel Fox & Partners

**1. SPECIFIC LOCATION**

**a) Country**

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**b) State, Province or Region**

WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE

**c) Name of Property**

ROBBEN ISLAND (referred hereafter as "The Island")

**d) Exact location on map an indication of geographical location coordinates**

18 22" East 33 48" South

**e) Maps and/or plans**

See attached maps

1: 50 000 ref. 3318CD CAPE TOWN 1993

1 : 250 000 ref 3318 CAPE TOWN 1994

**f) Area of property proposed for inscription**

475 hectares with an area of one nautical mile around the Island which serves as a buffer zone.

## 2. JUSTIFICATION FOR INSCRIPTION

### a) Statement of Significance

>Robben Island - from incarceration to liberation.

From the punishment of the body to the freedom of the spirit= Robben Island is a place of great symbolic value and is directly associated with ideas, beliefs as well as events that are of eminent universal significance. With its history of banishment, imprisonment and suffering it has come to symbolise, not only for South Africans or the African continent, but also for the entire world, the miracle of the triumph of the human spirit over enormous hardship and adversity.

Of the many roles that Robben Island has assumed over the past four hundred years, it primarily served as a place of banishment and isolation. Throughout documented South African history, the Island has been associated with incarceration, pain and the subjugation of the human spirit. During the periods of Dutch and English occupation of the region, the Island was used as a place of imprisonment for those who opposed colonial rule. With the early banishment of Khoisan leaders, Malaysian Muslim religious figures and Xhosa chiefs to the Island, its role as a symbol of resistance against oppression was established. The Island=s more recent ability to function as a crucible for the consolidation of the anti-apartheid movement bears further testimony to the symbolic value of the place.

However, out of these conditions of extreme hardship, pain and suffering has arisen a spirit of hope and tolerance that has, in the words of President Nelson Mandela, turned this island into a world-wide icon of the universality of human rights, of hope, peace and reconciliation. Another famous prisoner, Walter Sisulu, has written > The name Robben Island is inextricably linked to the struggle against colonialism, for freedom, democracy and peace in South Africa. Robben Island=s notorious history as the 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 by another.=

It is this condition of duality - of suffering and hope, of resistance and tolerance - embodied within the spirit, history and cultural landscape of Robben Island, that underscores the site=s significance and imbues it with special symbolic value.

Robben Island offers to a world struggling under social injustices and intolerance, the example of the indomitable nature of the human spirit.



## b) Possible comparative analysis

Robben Island has a long and comprehensive history. The earliest records either alluding to or mentioning Robben Island are dated from the late fifteenth century when Portuguese navigators first travelled around the Cape of Good Hope (known then as the Cape of Storms). Yet to be confirmed is the possibility of Stone age hunter gatherers wandering along its shores when in glacial times the island was still linked to the mainland.

In the course of the seventeenth century Robben Island served as a larder or pantry for sailors passing on the long route to the East to trade in spices and slaves. Later it became a place of banishment where various highly placed persons opposed to the various colonial regimes were detained. In the nineteenth century the lepers and mentally ill were sent to Robben Island to remove them from >normal= members of society and still later the prison was established, first for common law prisoners and then for the political prisoners of the second half of the twentieth century.

Comparisons between Robben Island and other sites are not easily drawn, due to the unique degree of significance described in section (a). Two approaches to the comparative analysis have been adopted: the first to compare Robben Island with other islands that have served similar purposes in the past and that have a cultural heritage that reflects the various periods of occupation (criteria iii) and secondly to compare Robben Island with other sites that have unique symbolic significance in a universal context. (Criteria vi)

Devil=s Island, off the coast of French Guyana, was used by the French as a high security prison for their most infamous criminals from 1852 until 1946, a period of just under one hundred years. The island, together with two others, Royale and Saint-Joseph Islands, comprised a penal settlement so harshly run and with such an unhealthy climate, that many prisoners died and few managed to escape. Devil=s Island became known as a place from which there was no return.

One of the most famous inhabitants of Devils Island was the French officer Alfred Dreyfuss, who was incarcerated there between 1895 and 1899. A victim of political intrigue and anti-semitism, Dreyfuss had been accused of betraying military secrets to the Germans, he was tried and sent to the penal colony on Devil=s Island until 1906. After a series of investigations and public support from such eminent personalities as Emile Zola, who published his famous *J=Accuse* letter on the front page of the

newspaper *L=Aurore*, Dreyfus was finally pronounced innocent of all his alleged crimes and was reinstated as a major in the French Army.

Although comparisons may be drawn between the Dreyfuss case and the experience of the political prisoners on Robben Island the ultimate message of Devil=s Island is not that of a triumph of the human spirit and the sending of a message of peace and reconciliation for the future. It also differs dramatically in that the Robben Island prisoners were not merely passive observers of their fate but were fully instrumental in participating in the ultimate transformation of their circumstances.

Goree Island, situated off the West Coast of Senegal, was developed as a centre for the expanding trade in African slaves. For more than two hundred years during the slave trade Goree Island was a slave-holding warehouse, trading in African men, women and children. The unfortunates were imprisoned within the holding warehouses on the island until they could be shipped across the Atlantic Ocean via the dehumanising Middle Passage. Tens of thousands of Africans left the island and were sold into slavery in South America, the Caribbean and North America.

Goree Island has come to symbolise to many a place of pilgrimage, (similar in many ways to that of Robben Island), to mourn and remember those family ancestors who were sold into slavery. One of the main focus points of the island is the ADoor of No Return≡, which has become a sort of AWailing Wall≡ for many descendants of the slaves. The Slave House, a French colonial building at the water=s edge is a reminder to visitors of the manner in which African families were literally torn apart and sent to many parts of the world. This place, which for many encapsulates the tragic and inhuman attitude of one group to another, may in many respects be considered to parallel the symbolism of the main prison on Robben Island.

Alcatraz Island, a rocky outcrop just off the coast of San Francisco in the United States of America, has always enjoyed notoriety as one of the world=s most famous island prisons. Opening in the late nineteenth century, it was finally closed in 1963 and is now used as a prison museum. In its heyday Alcatraz housed some of America=s worst common law criminals.

While similar in purpose, these island prisons have no message of hope to offer the world. The inhabitants have not been transformed by their experiences into great leaders and statesmen who have overcome adversity and gone on to promote democracy,

freedom and human rights in a transformed society. As a symbol of liberty comparisons between Robben Island and other sites offering spiritual meanings must be sought.

In the United States of America two sites may serve as useful comparisons, the Statue of Liberty, off New York City, and Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

The Statue of Liberty was a gift from the French on the centenary of American Independence. Standing at the entrance of New York harbour she welcomes refugees from many parts of the world, and has come to symbolise the spirit of freedom offered to those unfortunate enough to have had to flee from oppression, poverty and religious intolerance in the countries of their birth. Both visitors and Americans alike have come to view the Statue of Liberty as the quintessential icon of freedom in a democratic society. (World Heritage Site, criteria (i) and (vi) 1984)

Independence Hall in Philadelphia (World Heritage Site criteria (vi) 1979), has been declared as a World Heritage Site in celebration of the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution that were signed there in 1776 and 1787 respectively. The universal principles set out in these two documents continue to guide lawmakers all over the world and set out the fundamental principles which guide the American system of justice.

Robben Island differs significantly from these two sites in that the significance of the island transcends a narrow nationalism that, it could be argued, applies to the examples from the USA, and appeals to the broader spread of humanity in a similar manner to that of Auschwitz.

Auschwitz, in Poland (chosen as a World Heritage Site under criteria (vi) 1979) one of the most infamous of the German concentration camps of the Second World War, has been preserved as a reminder of man=s inhumanity to humankind and to serve as a lesson of intolerance and oppression in its worst form. As a museum illustrating this cruelty and injustice similarities to the recent prison period of Robben Island can be drawn.

Robben Island has served many purposes, a pantry, a prison but most significantly a symbol of freedom from oppression and a triumph of the human spirit. As such it is unique and may only be compared in part with the examples above. Whilst experiencing many differing occupancies and being used for several different purposes it is the one example that has shown that humankind may rise triumphantly from overwhelming injustices and still show a

true desire for reconciliation and understanding to those who have served such cruelties upon them. The message of peace and reconciliation that has originated from Robben Island in recent times is a truly unique one and makes the symbol of Robben Island stand alone as an example and is of universal value.

### c) **Authenticity**

For the purpose of the Robben Island nomination file it is important to define authenticity in the African context, and most particularly in the context of Robben Island and the way that it is perceived both as a national monument and national icon of peace, democracy and reconciliation. The legacy of hundreds of years of colonial rule in the sub-continent has emphasised the concept of authenticity relating to structures erected by colonial powers and has, to a greater extent, disregarded the intangible heritage so important to Africa. These sites, that are associated with traditions and events, have acquired significance over centuries and rarely bear any physical imprint or structure that serves as a marker to identify the place. Thus to date, most of the acknowledged heritage sites are linked to colonial notions of value and the places associated with the intangible remain unacknowledged.

The concepts of authenticity contained within the Nara Document form the basis upon which the authenticity of Robben Island as a World Heritage Site is argued. The assessment and judgement of authenticity is particularly focussed upon the Aspirit and feeling<sup>1</sup> conveyed by the places and spaces that have formed the physical expression or focus of the experience of the prisoners in their journey from Aincarceration to liberation<sup>2</sup>. The experience of oppression finally transformed into the present day miracle of the triumph of the human spirit is demonstrated in the physical fabric of the site and the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed, the wardens and the prisoners, may clearly be understood when viewing the various prison buildings and the manner in which these buildings and places have been interpreted.

---

<sup>1</sup>

1. Nara Document on Authenticity, Paragraph 13

In terms of the values embodied in the statement of significance for Robben Island, it is important that the physical manifestation of the cultural heritage is consistent with the sources of information relating to the specific site.<sup>2</sup> (Where this information is not available either in written records or from oral history sources the site has remained unchanged from the condition it was when the prison was closed in 1996) Particular emphasis in this regard has been taken when interpreting the sites of the old Gaol and Prison, a process which is still underway. Similarly the opportunity of interpreting the intangible heritage of Robben Island offers the new occupiers of the island, the Robben Island Museum, with a challenge that is presently under debate.

The Island may be conceived as comprising several distinct components falling under the umbrella of cultural heritage; these being the built environment, with its allied structures, constructed (and demolished) over a period of some 350 years, and the cultural landscape - transformed by the inhabitants of the Island over that same period and including sites and places of cultural significance.

In terms of the built environment the structures upon the Island have undergone transformation by the inhabitants from earliest times. Structures and buildings erected by the Dutch were reused by the British or demolished to make way for later newer buildings more appropriate to their needs and requirements, Similarly structures and buildings constructed by the British were reused and altered by later occupants. During this century additional structures were been added to the layering process when the military installations and the prison buildings were constructed.

This constant layering and over layering is the overriding and consistent factor influencing our understanding of the cultural heritage of Robben Island and testifying to the historic and symbolic power of the site. The evidence of this layering, rather than a frozen, fully >authentic= snapshot of a particular era, captures for posterity the archive of events on the island demonstrating a singular and unique power and significance in itself. In establishing the new Museum, this attitude has been continued with the utilisation of existing facilities to accommodate newer functions relating to the requirements of the Institution. What remains constant throughout these new developments and indeed throughout the history of the built environment on the Island is the approach to restoration of structures, through

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2. Nara, Paragraph 9

*minimal intervention*, with only the necessary repairs being effected to ensure the stability of the buildings. In instances where more substantial interventions may be required this has either been delayed, awaiting a full and detailed investigation into the historical accuracy and appropriateness of the proposals (as initiated in the specialist study entitled *ARobben Island: A Survey of the Built Environment*≡ attached as appendix to this dossier) or the outcome of Environmental Impact Assessments which may well inform the desirability or otherwise of effecting such alterations.

The presentation of the cultural heritage on Robben Island is largely influenced by the *Acloseness*≡ of the historical experience, which in itself is unusual in terms of a world heritage site nomination. The decision to make minimal intervention in the built fabric found upon the Island reinforces this closeness, the nearness of history in this context, the healing of recent wounds and the impact of the experience on visitors to the place, many of whom experienced it under very different circumstances.

The concept of *Apilgrimage*≡

The concept of the presentation of Robben Island Museum as a site of pilgrimage is evident in the experience offered to visitors who are taken on a voyage of discovery illustrating the hardships experienced by the prisoners. It culminates in a visit to the main prison, which physically embodies the final triumph of the human spirit over oppression and insurmountable odds.

The pilgrimage begins with an exhibition entitled *30 Minutes*, situated within the old visitors section, adjacent to the harbour, which creatively depicts the experiences of both visitors and prisoners for the brief half an hour permitted for official visits. This section of the pilgrimage forms the introduction to the concept of incarceration to liberation - the overall theme of Robben Island today.

Perhaps it is at the site of the Old Gaol, now semi-ruined and derelict, that the most severe forms of physical punishment and hardship can be portrayed to the visitor. Prior to, and during, the construction of the main prison, both common law and political prisoners were held at this facility and subjected to the most brutal forms of treatment. The stories of prisoners held here during these early days are testimony to the circumstances that prevailed in the early sixties. Here, at the beginning of the journey telling the story of the Island, the message of abandonment and terror remains clearly evident.

The high security prison has become the focus of the museum experience and the use of the building and displays contained within the various sections illustrate the differing experiences of the groupings of prisoners held there. The authenticity of that experience is demonstrated by the space and contents of each section. For example, AB Section, the wing where the political prisoners were held during the sixties and seventies, has been maintained in a state at which those prisoners experienced it during this period. The entrance area and B Block itself have been painted and furnished according to circumstances that were in existence during the sixties, finished upon the advice of former inhabitants of that wing. The process of cleaning and maintaining this polished environment was an integral part of the prisoner's experience and is clearly one of the memories held strongly by the inmates. In contrast to B Block, are other parts of the prison complex, which by means of creative interpretation such as the use of sound tapes of the prisoners themselves explaining the manner in which they transformed their incarceration into a school for learning and critical debate and in the course of interaction with the warders, came to change their attitudes in a positive way.

Other sections contain exhibits of photographs, furniture and objects which were used by the prisoners. The reinterpretation of the prison to house a series of museum displays and exhibitions serves to illustrate and amplify the relationship between the spirit and feeling of its inhabitants and the final triumph of the human spirit over overwhelming odds, that the Island now symbolises.

The message of authenticity that is integral to Robben Island is the conveyance of the many varieties of experience by the inhabitants of the place. The sites and buildings tell a story over time that may be related back to the messages and emotions experienced by the occupants culminating in the final triumph of the human spirit over enormous hardship and adversity.



## **d) Criteria under which the inscription is proposed**

Robben Island meets criteria (iii) and (vi) for cultural sites in terms of the World Heritage Convention.

### **Criteria iii**

Robben Island has a well documented history that dates back from 1488 according to written sources, although occupancy by Stone Age inhabitants may well be possible, due to the early link of the island to the South African mainland. This will be confirmed by the archaeological investigation which has been initiated and is presently at an exploratory stage.

The physical remains of the long history of banishment, imprisonment and human suffering are well documented and are visible through the memories of residents who are still living as well as in written and graphic sources. The structures on Robben island date from the earliest occupation by the Dutch colonists, the English occupation with its churches and institutions built to house the lepers and mentally ill, as well as the residential buildings, the military installations of the Second World War, and finally the structures associated with the more recent occupancy by the prison. These structures represent a period of unbroken human habitation from the mid end of the 1600s until the present day.

The criterion of symbolic value is today embodied in the various cultural landscapes that exist on the Island. These >landscapes= include the >landscape= of prisoners, the >landscape= of the infirm, the military >landscape= and the cultivated >landscape=.

These buildings and structures contained within these landscapes represent evidence of a society that played a significant role in the development of the southern African region and its links to the >civilised= worlds of Europe and the East. This society has long since disappeared and the remnants on Robben Island, being typical examples of their time, are the only remaining examples still in existence. The more recent buildings are unique in that they represent a time in history that has gained universal symbolism while the residents (the ex political prisoners) are still alive. The closeness of this history makes Robben Island and its associated prison structures unique in the international context.

### **Criteria vi**

Robben Island is of outstanding universal value for the following

reasons.

**>Robben island is a vital part of South Africa=s collective heritage.**

**How do we reflect the fact that the people of South Africa as a whole, together with the international community, turned one of the world=s most notorious symbols of the resistance of oppression into a world-wide icon of the universality of human rights, of hope, peace and reconciliation.=**

**PRESIDENT NELSON MANDELA  
Heritage Day, 24 September 1997  
Robben Island**

Robben Island has come to represent an outstanding example of a symbol representing the physical embodiment of the triumph of the human spirit over enormous adversity and hardship. The role of Robben Island in the transformation of an oppressed society has come to symbolise the rebirth of democracy in South Africa, a country which has come to be viewed as a unique example of transformation in a world troubled by political uncertainty.

### **3. DESCRIPTION**

#### **a) Description of property**

Robben Island is a low lying rocky outcrop positioned strategically at the entrance to Table Bay and the City of Cape Town, some 9,3 kilometres north of the mainland. Covering an area of some 475 hectares it measures roughly 3,4 km. In length and 1,8km in width. Originally part of the mainland it formed the pinnacle of an ancient, now submerged mountain that was linked by a saddle to the mountain known as the Blaauwberg. (Blue Mountain). Geologically it is composed of a lower strata of Malmesbury shale topped by a thick limestone and calcrete deposit covered by sand and shell fragments. The geology of the place provides several of the Island's outstanding landmarks, the shale being evident in the earliest quarry on the Island, AJan se Gat, which provided the slate used by the Dutch colonists in much of the early building work in Cape Town, while the limestone provided the material used on many of the roads on the Island and which was excavated, as part of a forced labour program, by many of the political prisoners held on the Island.

The rock formations on Robben Island are similar to those of the mainland with the exception of the stratification, which is virtually horizontal or gently undulating in the Island context. Topographically the entire island is low-lying, with the highest point being some 24 metres above sea level and known as Minto's Hill, named after a nineteenth century Surgeon Superintendent of the General Infirmary situated on the Island. The historic lighthouse, one of the architectural highlights of Robben Island, is situated strategically upon the summit of the hill and still serves as an integral part of the signalling system for Table Bay harbour.

As is the case for the Cape Peninsula area of the Western Cape, the climatic conditions on the Island are Mediterranean, with hot dry summers and rainfall occurring in the winter. Climatic conditions are however, more extreme than on the mainland, with stronger winds experienced and a colder and drier winter than Cape Town and its inland environs. The extreme winter gales and tides that batter the north western shores of Robben Island render it inhospitable along that part of the coast and the buildings and village have been established on the more sheltered eastern and southern shores. Murray's Bay Harbour serving all shipping arriving from the mainland, is situated on the eastern shore in the lee of the weather and extreme tidal ranges. The climatic conditions experienced in the Cape winters, combined with the rocky shores, (both visible and submerged) along all but one small section of the coast just south of Murray's Bay harbour, have led to the many shipwrecks that lie in the waters off Robben Island. There are an estimated 22 ships that are

believed to have sunk off this inhospitable coastline, 10 of which were British, 3 Dutch and 3 American. These wrecks are protected in terms of the National Monuments Act and access to them is restricted by both the National Monuments Council and the Robben Island Museum. A survey of these wrecks was carried out in a joint operation between the NMC and the South African Navy in 1992, code named Operation Sea Eagle, and the findings documented. (Appendix C)

The natural environment of Robben Island has undergone considerable change since the original occupation by man in the seventeenth century. The original landscape has been affected by its use both as a place of settlement and as a larder and hence both the flora and fauna now prevalent on the Island are largely elements introduced over a period of some four hundred years of human habitation. The European Rabbit, for example, was introduced in the period of Jan van Riebeeck (c 1652) and have co-existed with indigenous fauna for more than 300 years. Studies of the flora and fauna of the Island have been undertaken by Cape Nature Conservation (the Chief Directorate of Cape Nature Conservation).

The Cape Nature Conservation Report on the Vegetation of Robben Island (1986) states:

Adamson (1934) indicates that the island was largely without trees and shrubs in 1933, except for the alien trees which were planted near the buildings on the island, the shrubs having decreased or largely disappeared as a result of past land practices such as intensive grazing by sheep (since 1601), goats and rabbits and as a result of chopping for firewood.≡

The original indigenous vegetation is typically that of the *Astrandveld*≡ type commonly found on the mainland of the west coast of the western Cape Province from the Cape Point area to the Olifants River several hundred kilometres to the north. Alien plant species such as Rooikrans, Manitoka and Eucalyptus were imported by settlers and are now manifest in the landscape, as are the various types of animal now found there. Much of this more recent vegetation forms sheltering and nesting areas for the rich variety of birdlife found on the Island. Historical records indicate that a vast number of pelicans and ducks lived in breeding colonies on Robben Island, these have since disappeared. Sheep, cattle, bird species such as pheasant and ostrich, rabbits and deer have been introduced for various purposes during recent colonial times replacing the fauna indigenous to the Island, which included penguins, seals and reptiles such as tortoises and mole snakes. It is interesting to note that the Bontebok introduced to the island this century are believed to be pure and therefore provide an important gene pool for this rare subspecies.

The penguins and seals were hunted extensively by early travellers to the Cape in the times when the Island was used as a larder and to this day seals have not returned to the shores of Robben island.

Robben Island is an important breeding area for sea-birds, which include the African Penguin, Bank Cormorants, Crowned Cormorants and Hartlaub=s Gulls, which are endemic to southern Africa. (African Penguins and Bank Cormorants are classified as vulnerable species in terms of the IUCN gradings). It has South Africa=s second largest colony of African Penguins, and in recent years the largest colonies of Crowned Cormorants, Hartlaub=s Gull and the discrete southern population of Swift Tern. Robben Island also has a substantial population of African Oystercatchers. It also has an increasingly important heronry.

A marine reserve exists in the one nautical mile protected area around the Island and a rich variety of marine life breeds in these waters; shellfish such as crayfish, (lobster), and abalone (perlemoen) enjoy protection in the reserve.

#### Settlement patterns

Unlike most inhabited islands, settlement of Robben Island has always been characterised by discontinuity. As each different set of users has come and gone - nearly always interspersed with periods of abandonment and neglect - completely different groups of people have been involved in activities on the Island on a short-term basis. Only between 1846 and 1931 is there evidence of more than one generation of a few families employed serving the needs of the patients hospitalised on Robben Island; these families never enjoyed security of tenure or the option to purchase land. It is very few inhabitants who have chosen to stay voluntarily on the Island, (the early Khoi residents led by Autshumao, who acted as interpreter to the Dutch settlers, appear to have been the first and last to do so), and all inhabitants have either been compelled to endure their occupation or have been employed in some capacity as minders. Paradoxically, it seems as if many of the above were reluctant to leave when the time to do so arose.

Since the Island has always been independent of any local authority, decisions and activities relating to physical development and planning have occurred on an ad-hoc basis, most probably determined by the requirements of the current user, with some assistance and funding from the State.

Permanent settlement has always been limited upon Robben Island, largely due to the lack of fresh potable water. Water obtained from boreholes or wells sunk on the Island is brackish and unsuitable for drinking purposes. Historically drinking water had to be collected from rainwater and stored for use and there are indications that the limited underground water supply

has decreased since the earliest 17th century. Early settlers were reported to have developed extensive gardens where everything supposedly grew better than on the mainland and the Company (Dutch East India Company) kept a vegetable garden for passing ships. More recently a desalination plant offered a limited facility for deriving suitable quality water and during the occupation of the Island by the prison water was carried across from the mainland on one of the supply vessels and stored in the reservoir situated near the lighthouse on Minto's Hill.

Largely because of the prevailing wind (and possibly because of a desire to remain in sight of the mainland) settlement has always taken place on the eastern side of Robben Island. In the Dutch period it occurred in the central portion above what is now Murray's Bay and northwards from that point. During the British period and after development took place almost exclusively to the south-east where the present village is now located. Boundary Road is said to have formed the barrier between the staff and patients of the institutions housed there. The World War Two batteries to the north and south of the Island cannot be considered to form part of the ordinary settlement pattern. Considering that the village development was undertaken on a somewhat ad-hoc basis, it appears remarkably orderly but it is possible that some demolitions have occurred to accommodate a road system that developed at a later stage.

The remainder of the Island is largely undeveloped with a perimeter road encircling it and an airstrip positioned in the centre.

### Chronology of human habitation

The earliest indications of human habitation are suggested to be the stone (slate) quarry on the south of the island and the lime quarry in the centre, both worked during the period of Jan van Riebeeck (mid 1600). By the late 1600's there was evidence of buildings to accommodate many slaves and some 30 to 50 soldiers, gardens behind them, a large lime burner and a flag flying from the signal hill, now Minto's Hill. By 1777 an annotated panorama by Gordon indicates a bigger settlement at the northern end of the Island in the area now known as Murrays Bay. A building referred to as the Aposthouder's huis, (Postholders House) was flanked by long low buildings housing Abannediten (convicts) on the left and various utility buildings such as a smithy on the right. The soldiers were accommodated in a line of small houses with vegetable gardens to the north of this and the slave gardens were situated some distance further away. No recognisable remains of these early structures are visible and archaeological investigations will further inform the Museum as to the precise position of this early settlement.

Whaling activities during the early 1800's lead to the occupation of the Postholder's House by John Murray and in 1806-1808 a new settlement

was built at the southern end of the Island to accommodate the British prison. In 1833 this settlement housed the Commandant, officer=s and soldier=s barracks, overseer=s houses, a bakery, butchery and smithy, workshops and prison accommodation for over 200 prisoners. During the 1840's a church, doctor=s residence and parsonage were added. The lighthouse on Minto=s Hill was built in 1864 and again in the 1890's there was an increase in building activity to house the lepers placed in isolation on the Island. This settlement remains in an extended form today and is known as the Avillage≡, which houses the infrastructure of the Museum with its offices, meeting and conference venues, community facilities, shop and hall.

Halfway between the village and Murray=s Bay harbour is a little stone church, referred to as the >Leper Church=, but more correctly named as the Church of the Good Shepard. The church was built in 1895 to the design of the well known architect Sir Herbert Baker and was used only by the male lepers. The church is positioned on the only portion of land not owned by the State and is the property of the Church of the Province of South Africa. Although not presently in use there are plans to attend to urgent repair work and investigate the possibilities of bringing back traditional worship to this charming little building. Surrounding the church property are the leper graves, half visible between the rampant growth of the encroaching vegetation.

Extensive building activity again took place between 1939 and 1940 when the existing harbour at Murrays Bay was constructed together with the military fortifications built for the Second World War and which include gun emplacements, underground magazines, observation towers, garrison quarters and two coastal batteries.

The final chapter in building history occurred during 1960 when the Department of Correctional services took control of Robben Island and started construction on the maximum security and ordinary criminal prison facilities together with expanded staff facilities.

## **b) History and development**

Robben Island is often simply called >The Island=, a name which encapsulates not only its importance among islands, but also its deep significance for all who know the story of South Africa. In its variegated landscape, its historic patchwork of buildings and its monumental symbolism, Robben Island signifies both the oppressive continuities of South Africa=s past and the happy disjuncture of its democratic present. In an international context, it also provides a tangible symbol of success in the struggle towards equal human rights for all people. Just as one man, Nelson Mandela, endured years of imprisonment on Robben Island to become President of his country, so can all people take hope for their own future. Mandela=s experience, and the experiences of other anti-Apartheid prisoners on the Island, poignantly illustrate the triumph of the human spirit over adversity.

Robben Island=s significant place in the world today is forged out of a long history of human habitation and use, in which the symbols of oppression and struggle against such oppression have been laid down repeatedly alongside each other. For the purposes of this report its history can be divided into five phases, culminating in its conversion into the Robben Island Museum in 1997. The historical phases are: (i) occasional settlement before 1652 (ii) use as a colonial prison, 1657-1921 (iii) use as a colonial hospital, 1846-1931 (iv) use as a naval base, 1939-1959 and (v) use as a apartheid prison, 1961-1996.

### **The Pre-colonial Past: occasional settlement before 1652**

— In the days of extensive sea traffic between Europe and the East, the Cape Peninsula and its satellite Robben Island fell roughly midway between the beginning and end of the difficult journey. Between the first documented landing on the Island in 1498 and 1652, the year in which the Dutch East India Company (DEIC), a trading company in the Netherlands, first established a settlement at what they called the Cape of Good Hope, Robben Island=s natural resources helped to sustain a variety of European sailors on these trade routes. The first Europeans to land on Robben Island were probably members of Vasco da Gama=s fleet in 1498, who stopped to seek shelter and supplies. Because the Island is actually the summit of an ancient, now submerged mountain, linked by an undersea saddle to the Blouberg coast of Table Bay, it is of course possible that even before the first Europeans rounded the Cape, indigenous Khoisan from the Cape mainland had made use of Robben Island=s natural resources, perhaps when lower sea-levels offered easier access to the Island. During the 1630s, we know for certain that a group of Khoi under the leadership of Autshumato lived intermittently on the Island for about eight years.

The Island played an important role in sustaining sailors on the trade



routes between Europe and the East. Not only did it offer plentiful food (seal meat and penguin eggs), grazing and (brackish) water near a relatively safe natural landing place, but it also offered relative security from indigenous retaliation against sailors= rougher methods of acquiring supplies on the mainland and a safe place to leave mail. The presence of Robben Island thus made Table Bay a more attractive place for European settlement than other bays along the coast. In 1652 the DEIC sent Jan van Riebeeck and a group of followers to establish a refreshment station in Table Bay, in order to supply passing ships with medical supplies, food and water. Robben Island was instrumental in the survival of the DEIC settlement during the initial lean years of its existence after 1652, providing emergency supplies of food for the Dutch and offering a safe grazing place for some of their livestock. Signal fires on the Island also gave those in Cape Town adequate warning of ships= arrivals, helping to protect the DEIC settlement against their European competitors. Stone and lime from the Island were used for building.

#### Place of Banishment: Robben Island as a colonial prison, 1657-1921

Robben Island was used as a secure prison for opponents of the DEIC at the Cape and in the East Indies, helping the DEIC to establish better political and economic control over these areas. Robben Island=s role as a prison, however, was initially subordinate to its value in supplying raw materials and communications necessary for the survival of the station and the DEIC ships it supplied. Under British rule in the nineteenth century the imprisonment of important indigenous leaders on the Island helped the British to cement their military victories against indigenous peoples on the expanding Eastern and Northern frontiers of the colony. The long history of using political and ordinary criminal prisoners to work at various public and commercial projects on Robben Island is a vital link in the broader story of the widespread use of prison labour in South Africa.

During the first century and a half of European travel around the tip of Africa, the odd mutineer sailor or hapless convict had been abandoned on the Island, or had fled there from the mainland. The first Robben Island prisoners in the colonial period were slaves and prisoners of war from the East Indies sent there in 1657 to cut stone for the building of the settlement in Cape Town. Later, prisoners also burned shells for lime, lit the signal fires and tended the Company=s sheep on the Island. A commander of the Island station commented some years later,

Athe island makes a very good penitentiary where a rogue, after one or two years= work in carrying shells, begins to sing very small.=

In the ensuing years, some prisoners attempted to escape, or rebel against the poor treatment they received on the Island, but few were fortunate

enough to improve their lot.

Robben Island was also, as historian Nigel Penn has said, A one of the crucibles for the consolidation [of Islam] in Southern Africa<sup>2</sup>. After 1722 many political and religious leaders from the East Indies were banished to Robben Island by the DEIC. Today a Muslim shrine or *karamat* on the Island (built in the 1960s on the site of an earlier shrine) honours the memory of these men, especially Sheikh Madura (d.1754) and Hadji Matarim (d.1745). Two other Muslim prisoners from Robben Island were particularly influential in encouraging the growth of Islam at the Cape. Said Aloerie (Tuan Said) became the first official imam (priest) in Cape Town after his release from the Island in 1761. The first chief imam at the Cape was Tuan Guru, who wrote a book on Islamic jurisprudence while imprisoned on the Island between 1780 and 1793.

Under British rule after 1795, Robben Island continued to be used as a prison, mainly for men. Only a tenth of the prisoners on Robben Island were women, and all of them were transferred to a Cape Town gaol in 1835. Most of the prisoners were employed in fish-curing, whaling, stonecutting or lime-burning work on the Island. Political prisoners on Robben Island at this time included the Khoisan leader David Stuurman, later banished to New South Wales, and the famous Xhosa prophet Makanna, who drowned while attempting to escape in 1820. Even after the closure of the main prison in 1846 and the establishment of a hospital in its place, Robben Island still accommodated both ordinary criminals (who worked in the hospitals after 1866) and political prisoners. Many Eastern and Northern Cape leaders, such as the Xhosa chief Maqoma and the Korana leader Piet Rooy, were banished to Robben Island in the 1850s and 1870s respectively. The Hlubi chief from Natal, Langelibalele, was imprisoned on the Island from 1874-75. The imprisonment of these important indigenous leaders on the Island helped the British to cement their military victories against indigenous peoples on the expanding frontiers of the colony during the nineteenth century.

#### Place of Exclusion: Robben Island as a colonial hospital, 1846-1931

<sup>2</sup> In 1846 a General Infirmary was established on Robben Island to cater for three specific categories of the sick poor in the colony: the insane, the chronically ill and the leprosy. At this time, both in the Cape and elsewhere, hospitals were patronised mainly by the desperate, poor and dying. The Robben Island hospitals admitted the least able of this group: patients from mainland hospitals considered incurable, dangerous and unable to work. The Robben Island hospitals thus smoothed the work of hospitals and gaols on the mainland, and removed from the streets those people whom middle-class Cape Town found most threatening to their social order. The social and medical profile of the Robben Island patient

made the General Infirmary more of a place of exclusion for those who weighed heavily on the hands of government than a place of healing.

In the 1850s the Robben Island Asylum became the first South African institution to adopt the curatively-oriented >moral management= system of treating the insane developed in Britain. More middle-class white patients were admitted to the asylum in the 1860s, and greater attempts were made to separate patients by gender, class and then racial designations. Wards in the chronic sick hospital and the leper hospital were also racially segregated by the 1870s and 1890s. Racial segregation was thought by many officials, hospital staff and white patients to be a necessary step towards creating ideal medical and social conditions in the hospital. Robben Island provided an example of racial segregation which many other Cape institutions followed in the 1890s. As more Cape asylums were built, however, some were reserved for rich white clients, and others, like Robben Island, for poor, black and violent patients. The Robben Island Asylum finally closed in 1921. In 1892, the chronic sick hospital was removed from the Island to make way for an expanded leper section. At this time Robben Island was the only leper hospital in the colony and it was swamped in 1892 by the unexpectedly large number of lepers, black and white, who were compulsorily segregated under the Leprosy Repression Act. When other leper hospitals were built in the course of that decade, Robben Island housed the majority of the patients (over 1000 at any one time) and was specifically used to detain re-institutionalised escapees or patients who protested in other ways against their incarceration in mainland hospitals. The leper hospital was closed in 1931 because of rising costs and decreasing case loads.

#### Protector of the Bay: Robben Island as a naval base, 1939-1959

Robben Island=s sentinel position in the mouth of Table Bay which had made it an ideal signalling site for the DEIC in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries assumed considerable importance during the Second World War. During this war (1939-1945), South Africa was on the side of the Allied Powers, and sent troops to Europe and North Africa. Robben Island became its first point of defence against an attack in Table Bay. Although the feared invasion of South Africa by the Axis powers never materialised, Robben Island=s new institutions performed an important training function for the South African military and helped administer a large degaussing range which reduced the chance of ships being sunk by magnetic mines.

By the mid-1930s, Robben Island was empty of patients and prisoners. There had been some discussion about turning it into a holiday resort, but the impending war intervened. It was declared >reserved for military purposes= in 1936, equipped with harbour facilities and artillery in 1939 (much of which still remains on the Island) and taken over by the South

African Permanent Garrison Artillery at the beginning of war. The three batteries of 9.2≅ guns in Simonstown, Llandudno and on Robben Island comprised the main armament defences of the Cape Peninsula. A degaussing range was set up near Murray=s Harbour in 1941, designed to neutralise the magnetic attraction of the hulls to magnetic mines. Over 4,000 ships passed through the range during the war. Robben Island was also central to the operation of the submarine detection cables laid from the Island to the mainland in the middle of the war.

During this period Robben Island was a major training centre for military personnel, accommodating training for Coastal Artillery recruits, for black gunners on anti-aircraft and coastal batteries, for women Artillery Specialists (of the Women=s Auxiliary Army Service or WAAS) and for members of the Women=s Auxiliary Naval service (SWANS). After 1951, the South African Marine Corps and then the South African Navy took control of the Island until it was claimed by the Prisons Department as a maximum security prison in 1959.

#### Protector of Apartheid: Robben Island as an apartheid prison, 1961-1996

Having been devoid of prisoners for nearly half a century, Robben Island accepted the first of its next batch of unwilling residents in 1961. It was used as a maximum-security prison for both ordinary criminals and political prisoners under the apartheid government which had come into power in 1948 and relinquished its hold on the country in 1994. Only black men were chosen for incarceration on the Island. The first wave of political prisoners was sent to the Island in 1962, and the last ones were transferred from the Island in 1991. The last ordinary prisoners left the Island on the prison=s closure in 1996. The Island=s isolation and the cruelty of its prison staff, particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s, made it the most dreaded prison in the country. While conditions improved during the course of the 1970s and 1980s, it remained the most inhospitable outpost of apartheid. As Oliver Tambo commented in 1980, AThe tragedy of Africa, in racial and political terms, [has been] concentrated in the southern tip of the continent B in South Africa, Namibia and, in a special sense, Robben Island.≅

This period of the Island=s history is not only the most vivid in current public memory, the best represented in material and oral archives, but it is also the period most easily contrasted to the events in South Africa after 1994. It is in this period that we can see most clearly how the Island symbolises the triumph of the human spirit over oppression and adversity. Five, ten, or even twenty years before the first democratic election in 1994, many of South Africa=s political leadership, mostly members of the ruling African National Congress and the smaller but vibrant Pan

Africanist Congress, were imprisoned on Robben Island. Ironically, their very incarceration in an apartheid prison protected them from security force assassinations, because the apartheid government feared the adverse publicity that would result from deaths of their high-profile opponents in prison.

Today, many of these men are political leaders in the new democratic government. The life stories of the Robben Island prisoners who helped to lead South Africa into democracy, symbolise the broader movement towards a culture of human rights in the country. Many Robben Islanders suffered physically and mentally from the harsh conditions of prison life and isolation from their families and friends. But while imprisonment brought frustration and difficulty, it also offered prisoners the chance to challenge prison restrictions, to share and debate political dreams and differences with each other across political and generational boundaries. Freedom provided the opportunity to apply the political and humanitarian principles, hard-fought and finely honed on Robben Island, in the broader national arena. In these ways did Robben Island act as the crucible of the moral and political cornerstones of the new South Africa.

A key figure in the history of Robben Island is democratic South Africa's first president, Nelson Mandela. Born in 1918, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela became active in anti-Apartheid work through his membership of the African National Congress. He was arrested by the Nationalist South African government in the 1950s, unsuccessfully tried with other activists in the Treason Trial, and arrested again in 1962. After spending a short time as a prisoner on Robben Island, he was recalled to face another trial, the Rivonia Trial. Sentenced to life imprisonment for sabotage and conspiracy against the state, Mandela returned to Robben Island as prisoner 488/64 in 1964. He was transferred from the Island prison to a mainland prison in 1982 and finally released from prison altogether eight years later, on 11 February 1990. He said in his autobiography that he saw prison as a microcosm of the struggle [against Apartheid] as a whole. We would fight inside as we had fought outside  $\Psi$  [just] on different terms. While their counterparts engaged in opposition politics outside the prison, the prisoners fought for their rights to study, to receive mail and visitors, and to play sport within it.

Conditions in the old prison until 1963, and indeed for the next decade in the new prison were terrible. This can be illustrated by the story of Johnson Mlambo, a member of Poqo, the armed wing of the Pan Africanist Congress, who was sent to Robben Island in 1963 on a charge of sabotage. As an African prisoner he was not allowed to wear long trousers, socks or underwear. Indian and coloured prisoners were given socks, shoes and jerseys, and a different (and better) prison diet. Visits and letters were limited; sleeping and ablution facilities were extremely primitive. The lights were never switched off. Prisoners were forced to

undergo humiliating body searches and to perform hard manual labour on the Island roads and in its quarries. Ill from exhaustion one day, Mlambo was buried up to the neck in the sand and forced to endure one of the warders= urinating on his head. On other occasions he, like many other prisoners, was physically assaulted by the warders. External pressure from organisations like the United Nations, the Red Cross and Amnesty International, political pressure from people like Helen Suzman within the country, and complaints from prisoners gradually resulted in better conditions in the prison. Organising their complaints through grievance committees, prisoners sought to present a united and powerful front to the authorities. They also made a concerted effort to befriend the harshest warders, seeking thereby to soften their attitudes and to educate them. When negotiations failed, prisoners tried hunger strikes. As Suzman pointed out, the fact that the prisoners were strong, united, organised and well-informed made their resistance more effective.

This pressure on the authorities resulted in an improvement in general living conditions and prisoners were gradually also allowed more study and recreation privileges during the 1970s and 1980s. Robben Island became the >university= of the anti-Apartheid struggle as prisoners educated themselves, each other and their warders. Some of authorities. Elias Motsoaledi, a Rivonia triallist, was one of those who sought to challenge the prison environment in a different way. He grew grapes, peaches, tomatoes and flowers from carefully salvaged pips and seeds, providing fellow prisoners with a taste of beauty and hope. Prisoners also helped to keep themselves strong, both mentally and physically, by organising team sports, sporting events and competitions among themselves. These activities were important for other reasons too, as Indres Naidoo explained in 1982:

ABefore, our enemy had been physical cruelty, now it was boredom, isolation, the psychological decay of an endlessly unproductive and confined existence; so the [mini-Olympic] Games [and other recreational activities] were an important way of getting ourselves mobilized, using our inner resources to smash the routine and monotonous futility of prison life.≡

In the 1980s, the prisoners= Recreation Committee sought to bridge generational and political gaps between prisoners in two of the sections by appealing to the authorities for permission to undertake joint recreational activities, such as soccer and rugby games, and the watching of videos. Imprisonment on Robben Island thus provided anti-Apartheid activists with more than just a period of forced isolation from society: it provided an opportunity to form a community which fought for its collective rights, and strengthened its members emotionally, politically, physically and intellectually.

One personal story which helps to illustrate the triumph of the human spirit over adversity at Robben Island is that of Wilton Mkwayi. Wilton was an ANC activist from Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape who was

involved in the organisation of Umkhonto weSizwe, the armed wing of the banned ANC. He was in love with Ireen Mhlongo, a nurse working in a Soweto hospital. After being on the run from the authorities for some months after the Rivonia arrests, Wilton was arrested. After his conviction he was sent to the Robben Island prison in 1964, before he had a chance to marry Ireen. But Wilton did not give up his dream: every year he made an application to marry her from prison, and every year for 23 years he was refused on the grounds that prisoners were not allowed to get married. During this time their relationship was conducted via letters (censored and limited in number), or through the visitors= grille (contact visits were later permitted). Finally, in 1987, the prison authorities relented, and the two were married with quiet dignity in Pollsmoor Prison on the mainland. By this time Mkwazi was 64 and his bride 62. As a special concession, the pair were allowed to spend three hours together after the ceremony B the longest time they had spent together in 24 years. On his return to the Island, Mkwazi celebrated with the other prisoners, but his happiness did not last as Ireen died of cancer the following year, and President P.W. Botha refused permission for him to attend the funeral. It was only after Mkwazi=s release a year later that he could erect a tombstone at her grave. In spite of a lifetime of struggle against political and personal oppression Mkwazi was able to find love again B with British nurse Patricia Long, whom he married in 1996.

Robben Island has played a crucial role in the life stories of anti-apartheid heroes who are now key political figures, such as Nelson Mandela, but also in the lives of those who are now dead, such as Robert Sobukwe, and those unsung activists and former prisoners who are still alive, but not in the public eye. Its history also embraces the memories of the large number of family members, fund-raisers such as the International Defence and Aid Fund, lawyers and other loyal supporters of the prisoners during their time of incarceration on the Island. The former apartheid officials and prison staff, too, have a contribution to offer in documenting the role of the Island in South Africa=s past. These stories contribute to the complex web of meaning which surrounds the Island today and makes it the most important but also the most contested site of political symbolism in South Africa. Robben Island=s momentous role in some of the most critical events of South African history since 1498 has emerged out of the often overlapping ways in which it has been used and the ways in which it has been remembered. Its new role as a Museum after 1997 represents a significant break with past uses, but simultaneously helps to protect and reconstruct our memories of the Island through the role it now plays in tourism, reconciliation and education in the country.

**c) Form and date of most recent records of property**

The Island has not yet been fully documented by the new Institution the Robben Island Museum, established in 1997. A full scale investigation of the built environment and archaeology is presently underway (as well as various other studies relating to the environment in general).

The current records available are as follows:

Conservation Survey of Robben Island compiled for the National  
Monuments  
Council by Patricia  
Riley, 1993  
(Appendix  
C)

Operation Sea-Eagle (A survey of the shipwrecks of Robben Island) Drs B Wertz in collaboration with the National Monuments Council and the South African Navy. 1992

Robben Island: Survey of the Built Environment by Lucien le Grange Architects & Urban Planners and Nicholas Baumann & Revel Fox & Partners Architects & Urban Planners 1998 (Compiled as part of the IEM Process - specialist study) (Appendix F)

Records dealing with the natural environment include the following:

The Wildlife of Robben Island by Dr Rob Crawford, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town (Appendix D)

The Birdlife of Robben Island by Dr Rob Little, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town (Appendix D)



#### **d) Present state of conservation**

The buildings and structures on the Island are varied in the degree to which they have been conserved over the years. The buildings used by the Department of Correctional Services have been regularly maintained by the Department of Public Works and a program was been established to restore some of the historic buildings, (under the supervision of the National Monuments Council). These buildings are the old Dutch Reformed Church, the Guesthouse, formerly the Old Residency and the Old Parsonage adjoining it. Very little routine work was however, carried out during the last few years of the island by the Department, hence there exists a need to carry out basic repairs and maintenance to most of the buildings.

The military installations have remained untended since their abandonment in the early 1950's and will require restoration as part of the upgrading process in the Integrated Environmental Management programme. This restoration will be carried out with advice from the experts on military history, who are fully involved with the Museum authorities. A >military route= will form one of the specialised tours and it is envisaged that these structures will be included in this tour.

The buildings controlled by Portnet, the organisation charged with the responsibility of lighthouse installations, have maintained the historic lighthouse as well as the small modern houses serving the personnel; some additional minor work will be undertaken this year.

As discussed in the chapter dealing with authenticity, many of the buildings have served several purposes since their construction during previous centuries. The layers that have been added to these structures have not been removed and in many cases will remain as an illustration of varying occupancies and uses throughout the history of Robben Island. The condition of many of the structures requires maintenance, in some instances minimal repairs and repainting to the correct colour specifications. Some of the earlier buildings, particularly those that used to house the insane, may in future, be restored under the supervision of the National Monuments Council to illustrate the conditions under which these unfortunates survived their occupation on the island. A final decision on this issue will be taken once the Conservation Plan for Robben Island has been completed.

Services are one of the areas that require considerable attention, in

particular the road surfaces, water supply and sewage. These are currently in the process of upgrading and all work is being undertaken in accordance with the IEM process with full Environmental Impact Assessments being undertaken for all applications.

**Methodology:**

The state of conservation has been established and the results set out below. The map has been divided into sectors as in the Conservation Survey of Robben Island undertaken by Patricia Riley in 1993. Buildings and structures have been marked up on the maps and numbered for ease of cross reference. Each sector has been numbered and the sites within the sector similarly numbered. Brief explanatory notes relating to each structure have been added relating to the present state of the site or structure. This system will be used in future monitoring exercises. (Refer also to section 6 of the nomination file.)

Where many of the buildings are similar in nature, for example the contemporary houses built for the prison staff in the 1960's, these have been grouped together as the comments relate equally to all structures within the group. Significant landscape features have been identified and included in the report in a similar manner.

## **STATE OF CONSERVATION: ROBBEN ISLAND**

### **MAP 1**

- 1.1 Disused stone quarry reopened and worked by the political prisoners after the abandonment of the "Van Riebeeck" quarry to the south. Sea wall later constructed from earth and laid with stones by the prisoners to provide protection from the elements and to prevent tidal flooding.

High exposure to storm tides causing erosion and partial disintegration of the structure. Linked originally to the maximum security prison by a 1km, 2m deep trench, later replaced by an enclosed wire corridor. The quarry itself was fenced on three sides to secure the area. Guard towers and the security fencing of the tunnel and at the quarry are no longer extant.

Highly significant as an integral component of the 'landscape of prisoners' and in terms of its ability to demonstrate an attitude towards punishment. Restoration of sea wall and possible recreation of link to prison according to National Monuments Council requirements.

### **MAP 2**

- 2.1 Old stone (granite) quarry. Utilised between 1961 and 1974 where the political prisoners were sent on work parties. Indicated on the Sels map of 1794 which could indicate that the quarry was in existence at the time of the Dutch East India Company occupation. Abandoned.
- 2.2 Cornelia Battery, World War II fortifications including concrete pill boxes, a command post, 2 gun emplacements with stores and underground magazines, a bunker and a store. All structures have been abandoned since the end of the War and require maintenance and require to form part of the proposed military history route on Robben Island. Significant as an integral part of the 'military landscape'. Condition: derelict.

### **MAP 3**

- 3.1 Shooting Range - impressive random stone wall behind moving target trench - machinery very rusty. Shooting ridges are still visible, there is no imminent threat to the structure. Condition: abandoned.
- 3.2 Disused shooting range clubhouse, light maintenance required. Condition: fair/poor.

- 3.3 Spring and tidal pool also known as the leper's pool as it is said that the female lepers were permitted to bathe there. The pool is in a ruined state although it still holds water. This structure may require stabilisation after severe winter storms. Abandoned.
- 3.4 Runway for small aircraft constructed as part of the fortification of the Island during the Second World War. The runway requires extensive and expensive maintenance and is now only used for helicopter landings. Condition: poor.

#### **MAP 4**

- 4.1 - 4.3 World War II structures serving the Cornelia Battery including a small arms magazine, stores and offices. The buildings are derelict and require maintenance and repair. Significant as part of the military landscape and proposed to form part of the military route. Condition: poor.

- 4.4 The old prison, "die Ou Tronk" later adapted to accommodate the trade training centre for the Department of Correctional Services.

The old prison originally consisted of fourteen different buildings some of which are extant. It had a holding capacity of some five hundred inmates. None of the communal cells had toilets or running water. Ablution facilities were provided in two separate blocks. Some of the buildings were constructed of brick. The walls of several of the communal cells, the administration block and the kitchen were prefabricated. Three separate sections accommodated prisoners with different classifications. Isolation cells and a small hospital formed part of the complex.

Highly significant in terms of its role in the 'landscape of prisoners' It accommodated the first political prisoners sent to the Island in 1962, mostly members of the PAC and Poqo. Nelson Mandela was also briefly imprisoned in the old prison prior to the Rivonia trial. The Rivonia trialists were held in the isolation cells for a short while after the trial prior to their relocation to Section B of the new maximum security prison which was under construction.

During 1963 and 1964 the prison was vastly overcrowded with sixty to seventy prisoners in each cell. Common law prisoners were mixed with political prisoners and some of the worst excesses of the prison experience occurred in this complex. The prison was closed down when the new maximum prison and the Zinc Tronk (zinc jail) was opened in 1964. Parts of the prison were demolished but other sections were retained and later adapted as a training centre.

Highly significant, as an integral component of the 'landscape of prisoners' and in terms of its ability to demonstrate an attitude to punishment which sought to break the human spirit. Its material remains symbolizes human suffering and the fortitude and endurance of the political prisoners that prevailed.

The condition of the buildings is generally poor. The complex should be the subject of a detailed conservation study to establish the extent and condition of the original structures and an appropriate strategy for conservation.

4.5 Old degaussing station from World War II, derelict. Significant in terms of its role as part of the military landscape. Condition: poor.

4.6 Stores, post 1961, requires light maintenance. Condition: fair.

4.7 Visiting facilities for prisoners, c1964

Significant element of the "landscape of prisoners" in terms of attitudes towards punishment and the manipulation of political prisoners contact with the outside world.

The complex is presently used as an introductory facility for visitors to the Robben Island Museum. Condition: good.

4.8 - 4.9 Murray's Harbour. Constructed originally in 1940 as an integral part of the Island's fortification system during the Second World War. Enlarged in 1956/7 and later in 1987/88.

The working harbour includes arrival and administrative buildings, a small shop and restroom facilities.

The site is significant in terms of its being the first point of contact with the Island for arriving prisoners and its relationship with the maximum security prison immediately to the west. The site also has archaeological significance as the original Dutch East Indian Company outpost was located within the precinct.

4.10 - 4.13 The Maximum Security Prison

The prison is the core component of the "landscape of prisoners" and one of four prisons utilised on the Island between 1960 and 1996, the others being the old prison, 4.4., the zinc prison and the common law prison.

The complex retains its integrity and is the subject of an intensive study regarding its use and presentation to the public.

It is highly significant in terms of its symbolic role, epitomizing the role of Island as a place of banishment and isolation, of suffering

and hope, of resistance and tolerance and the eventual triumph of the human spirit over enormous hardship and adversity.

The prison was built in a series of phases from 1963 and reflects the changing attitude towards punishment and the role of the Island as an echo of political changes over time in the broader national context.

It was constructed using common law and political prisoner labour.

Design capacity was for approximately 650 prisoners. The seven cell blocks were given alphabetical designations from A to G. Sections A, B and C consisted of single, solitary or isolation cells built around three sides of a courtyard. The rest comprised communal cells, each accommodating approximately sixty prisoners.

Section B, comprising thirty cells located on both sides of a corridor running the length of the prison wing, accommodated the Rivonia trialists and others. Each cell measures approximately 2m x 2m.

Initially inmates were allowed no furniture and slept on mats on the floor. In 1977 beds were provided with a small stool and table. None of the cells had toilet facilities.

Significant personalities of the country's political and intellectual leadership, including President Nelson Mandela, were incarcerated in this wing.

The influx of prisoners after the Soweto riots of 1976 resulted in physical changes to the prison including the insertion of high walls to increase security and isolation. Later additions included recreational facilities, largely a result of pressure exercised from outside agencies including the International Red Cross. Helen Suzman was also active in maintaining international and national attention focused on the Island.

Namibian prisoners were kept in complete isolation with no contact with the South African political prisoners for the first four years. They were initially incarcerated in a section of the zinc prison and then transferred to a separate wing of the new maximum security prison. Toivo ya Toivo was held with the high security prisoners in Section B of the new prison.

The physical condition of the prison is fair to good. Rusting metal work needs attention.

The zinc tronk (prison) was located at the rear north west wing of the maximum security prison, on the site now occupied by the sportsfields. The prison was partly constructed of brick but predominantly comprised corrugated iron sheeting attached to a wooden frame set on a concrete base. It consisted on three separate sections accommodating common law prisoners, ANC and PAC and Namibian prisoners (SWAPO). A small section of the prison was also used as a prison hospital until the hospital wing of the new prison was completed.

The prison was demolished in 1974.

4.15 Kramat, used regularly by the local Muslim population, good condition. This building was constructed over the 1745 grave of the prophet Hadje Mattarm. Condition: good.

4.16 Lime Quarry, abandoned.

The site is a highly significant component of the "landscape of prisoners" in terms of the ability to demonstrate the role of hard labour in the attempt to crush the spirit of the political prisoners and the use of the site as a forum for political debate and education.

It is one of the largest of at least nine quarries that have existed on the Island over time. The quality of the lime was not adequate for building purposes and was used mostly for surfacing the roads on the Island.

Prisoners from Section B initially worked in isolation in the stone quarry in the north west. They were later transferred to the lime quarry where they laboured in all weather conditions and the glare of the sun off the white walls and the lime dust caused permanent eye damage. Hard labour in the quarry lasted for thirteen years and was suspended in 1997.

Conditions in the quarry were a source of constant struggle between the political prisoners and the warders. The cessation of quarrying activities in 1977 and a range of small incremental victories were the result of a sustained campaign by the prisoners and the International Red Cross and individuals such as Helen Suzman. The quarry was thus an arena for the conduct of the struggle and also a place of reconciliation where mutual respect developed between warden and prisoners.

The duality which contributes to the symbolic value of the island of suffering and hope, of resistance and tolerance is embodied in the cultural landscape of the lime quarry.

The harsh dramatic physical quality of the quarry is being threatened by the infestation of alien vegetation and intervention is required to retain its symbolic significance.

## **MAP 5**

- 5.1 Radar Station with tower, of concrete construction. Light maintenance required. No longer in use. Condition: poor.
- 5.2 Disused building-light maintenance required. Condition: fair.
- 5.3 Ruins - nothing left standing other than marker posts.
- 5.4 Ruins - nothing left standing other than marker posts.
- 5.5 Below ground bunker with metal shutter flaps, the swivels for the guns remain. Condition: derelict.

## **MAP 6**

6.1 - 6.3 Maximum security prison, as for 4.10 - 4.13.

6.4 World War II blockhouse. Condition: derelict.

6.5 Stores, disused. Condition: poor.

6.6 Graveyard of the lepers.

Highly significant component of the leper colony period, 'the landscape of the infirm' c1846 to 1931. The forceful incarceration of leprosy patients on the Island and the attitude of isolation and banishment reinforced the role of the Island as a dumping ground for what were perceived to be social misfits. The separation of the races, sexes and different classes of patients further reinforced the central idea of separation, both from the mainland and between different groups of people on the Island.

A very small portion of the graveyard which extends up to the maximum security prison has been cleared. Much of it is overgrown and headstones are being damaged. Extensive clearing and repair is required. Condition: poor.

6.7 Stores, these buildings were erected during World War II for the SANF sub-depot Robben Island (SWANS), and they were popularly known as HMSAS Cement. Condition: fair generally.

6.8 - 6.9 Disused building and brickworks.

6.10 Robert Sobukwe House

The Robert Sobukwe House is located adjacent to the quarantine



station for dogs, erected near Murray's Bay in 1893, with twenty eight kennels and special staff quarters. From 1963 Robert Sobukwe was held here in solitary confinement for a period of 6 years.

Highly significant in terms of the attitude to separation and banishment of political prisoners and the implications of the General Law Amendment Bill which specifically introduced the Sobukwe clause which enabled Robert Sobukwe to be detained without trial after his initial sentence had expired.

The isolation and separation of Robert Sobukwe from the rest of the political prisoners epitomised the symbolic role of the Island as a place of banishment and the different forms this sense of isolation took. He had no direct contact with any other prisoners on the Island and was never allowed to participate in the sport or cultural activities which were organised by the prisoners.

6.11 Living quarters for Department of Correctional Services personnel. Condition: fair.

6.12 - 6.16 World War II bunker and blockhouse, now abandoned. Condition: derelict.

6.13 Ruined structure, only foundations and concrete slab remain.

6.14 Church of the Good Shepherd (Leper Church). Structurally sound, requires maintenance of roof and joinery urgently. Unused at present, the Church of the Province (the owner) has undertaken to complete a full restoration to the requirements of the National Monuments Council. Condition: fair/poor.

6.15 Medium Security Prison

Used exclusively to accommodate common law prisoners after 1974 when they were moved out of the maximum security prison and zinc prison.

Until then common law prisoners were mixed with political prisoners in the maximum security and used as a means of breaking the spirit and solidarity of the political prisoners.

When in 1991, the political prisoners were released, common law prisoners were again accommodated in the maximum security prison. Until 1993 approximately seven hundred common law prisoners were incarcerated in this building.

Significant component of the "landscape of prisoners" in terms of its role as one of the remaining prisons on the Island.

Unutilised at present and maintenance required. There is the possibility that early historic fabric is contained within the structure and archaeological investigation is required. Condition: fair.

6.17 - 6.18 Pumphouses, general maintenance.

6.19 Refer to 4.16.

6.20-6.21 Chicken run and greenhouses, disused.  
Condition: poor. Significant in terms of the cultivated landscape and the extent to which this reflects the changing role and use of the Island over time.

From the early 1830 concerns about the use of low lying bushes for fuel and the overgrazing of the pastures, particularly by large flocks of sheep and rabbits which were introduced by van Riebeeck resulted in the planting of trees to attempt to stabilise the driftsand. In 1892 some 26 000 trees were planted on the Island. In the same year shooting rights on the Island were granted to A Ohlsson who fenced off a portion to the south west and planted wattle and shrubs over an extension area.

Efforts to green the Island with various programmes of tree and grass planting continued into the twentieth century. In 1907, convicts were used to plant thousands of trees supplied from mainland nurseries. Special outdoor enclosures were constructed where trees and hedges were planted to control the driftsand.

During the second World War extensive efforts were made to plant trees around the two main batteries to provide camouflage. Because of its isolation the Island has lately been used by the agricultural college at Stellenbosch as an isolated breeding yard to maintain pure strains of the African Yellow Honey bee.

The cultivated landscape is significant in reflecting the changing nature of the Island. Cultivated stands are being threatened by the spread of alien and invasive vegetation and intervention is required.

## MAP 7

7.1 - 7.4 Military installation including gun emplacements, shelters and stores. The group identified as 7.4 have dense planting on top of the concrete roof slabs. Historically significant. The metal fittings are not as badly corroded as those in the bunkers and pill boxes on the coast. All structures require maintenance and some restoration. Condition: derelict.

## **MAP 8**

8.1 Pumphouse, filtration plant and reservoir, the facility will be replaced during the services upgrade. Structures require light maintenance. Condition: fair.

8.2 Transport Division, group of buildings used by the works division. Light maintenance required. Condition: fair.

8.3 - 8.4 Refer to 6.15.

8.5 - 8.9 Staff houses, (post 1961). Condition: good.

8.10 Office building (post 1961). Condition: good.

8.11 - 8.23 Staff houses (post 1961). Condition: good

8.24 46 Beach Road. Historical cottages dating from the late nineteenth century. Insensitive additions. Require further investigation in terms of role with the General Infirmary e.g. to establish whether they were the accommodation for private white patients. Condition: good.

8.25 - 8.26 Sports facilities including clubhouse and field, tennis courts. Condition: fair.

8.27 Sick Bay (post 1961). Condition: fair.

8.28 Staff Club House, formerly Medical Superintendents House, c1846. Considerable significance within the landscape of the infirm as marking the transfer from Military Command to General Infirmary. Although both the exterior and interior have been extensively remodelled sufficient original fabric and documentary evidence warrants consideration for restoration. Condition: fair.

8.29 Old Power Station - industrial building. Condition: poor.

8.30 Post Office, constructed 1941. Condition: good.

8.31a Part of old Female Asylum dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Of considerable significance within the 'landscape of the infirm' in terms of its historical role of accommodating the mentally disabled and the attitudes of banishment and separation of the

sexes.

Possibility of restoring to original. Condition: fair.

8.31b-d Post 1961 building serving various functions. Condition: fair.

8.31e Part of the old Female Asylum dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Of considerable significance within the 'landscape of the infirm' in terms of its historical role of accommodating the mentally disabled and the attitudes of banishment and separation of the sexes.

Significant landmark quality negatively impacted by prefabricated sheds to the south.

Requires considerable maintenance including a new roof, painting, and the cleaning of stonework. Could be considered for restoration to original state. Condition: poor.

8.32 'John Craig Hall', post 1961. Condition: good.

8.33 Rectory, Anglican Parsonage, c.1845

Of considerable historic significance in terms of the role of the church within the General Infirmary. Extensively remodelled with parapets to the front and sides. Interior almost intact. One of the earliest structures on the Island and should be considered for restoration. Condition: good.

8.35 Assistant Medical Officers House, c.1894

Of considerable historic significance in terms of its role within the General Infirmary. In relatively good condition and should be considered for restoration.

8.36 Anglican Church c.1841

Of considerable historic and aesthetic significance. Designed by Sir John Bell, constructed with convict labour and the first religious building on the Island.

Maintenance required, including the removal of unsuitable exterior paint finish and replacement with lime-based finish. Condition: good.

8.37 Portion of old Male Insane Asylum c.1846

Significant component of the "landscape of the infirm". Requires light maintenance and possible restoration to original stone finish. Condition fair/good.

- 8.38 Shop, includes early historic structure.  
Further archaeological investigation of fabric required. Condition: fair.
- 8.39 Old Pharmacy c.1894  
Significant component of the General Infirmary period. Condition: fair.
- 8.40 - 8.74 Modern buildings (housing), constructed between 1940 - 1980. All in good condition.
- 8.75 34 Church Street, historic building, requires light maintenance - currently being replastered internally. Condition: good.
- 8.77 Swimming pool, in use. Condition: fair.
- 8.78 - Structures connected with World War II collectively known as the Robben Island
- 8.89 Battery. Highly significant component of the military landscape. Now abandoned, their condition ranges from fair to poor.

## **MAP 9**

- 9.1 'Varney's Fort'  
Second World War structure. The structure allegedly built by Varney is in the immediate vicinity. He was a male mental patient who constructed a stone circular wall "for his own protection" in case the Island was "attacked". He made lime for the "engineers" on the Island and was not subject to the normal discipline. Evidence of his activities featured in the 1861 Commission of Inquiry. The structure is abandoned. Condition: derelict.
- 9.2 - 9.5/6 World War II bunkers, abandoned. These structures are highly visible and require restoration. Condition derelict.
- 9.3 World War II SWANS Barracks now abandoned, highly visible and require restoration. Condition: derelict.
- 9.4 'Varneys Lime Works', simple pebble deflation, requires restoration. Condition: derelict.

## **MAP 10**

- 10.1 World War I Battery Observation point.  
Highly significant component of the military landscape. Concrete-bag finish; metal and fair-concrete spalling. General maintenance

required. Abandoned and used for radio, TV masts. Condition: derelict.

- 10.2 Lighthouse, designed by John Scott Tucker, foundation stone laid 23 January 1862. Constructed using local stone on Minto Hill, the highest point on the Island and on the same location where van Riebeeck had lit signal fires to serve as a navigational aid and signalling system. The lighthouse has operated for the last one hundred and thirty years and it thus represents the only continuous and permanent activity on the Island over this period.

Highly significant in terms of the symbolic role of the Island as "beacon of hope". Excellent potential for full restoration including the removal of oil-based paints. Condition: fair/good.

- 10.3 - 10.4 Modern buildings used for housing staff. Condition: fair.

- 10.5 Personnel Graveyard (c.1858 - 1923)

Historically significant component of the General Infirmary period. The staff of the Infirmary and their families lie buried here.

The site requires clearing and repair to headstone and the dry stone walling that surrounds the graveyard. Condition: derelict.

- 10.5a Timber Celtic Cross

- 10.6 Primary School, previously Library and Billiard Room c.1894.

The core section possibly the original lime house illustrated on the 1846 drawing. Also previously a ward for the chronically sick.

Highly significant in historic terms and the layering which reflects different stages of the Island's history.

- 10.7 Store, modern structure. Condition: fair.

- 10.8 Faure Jetty, reinforced concrete pier, built 1896.

Historically significant. The structure is highly visible. The concrete is in a poor condition and requires restoration. Condition: poor.

- 10.9 The Residency c. 1895; now the Island Guest House.

Victorian stone dwelling with corrugated iron roof and timber verandah. The building is historically significant in terms of its role in accommodating the Commissioner for the Island from 1895.

Inappropriate recreation of octagonal tower in 1989 and interior

refitting should be reconsidered. Condition: good.

10.9b Dutch Reformed Parsonage, similar in appearance to 10.9a but possibly earlier. Recently renovated and linked to 10.9a as part of guest house. Condition: good.

10.10- 10.24 Residential buildings, modern currently undergoing routine maintenance. Condition: good.

10.25 Modern buildings accommodating a pumphouse and the Pub, originally the site of the slaughterhouse. Light maintenance required. Condition: good.

10.26 World War II barracks, abandoned. Condition: derelict.

10.27 Van Riebeeck Slate quarry.

Probably the oldest worked site on the Island. Established at the time of Van Riebeeck and extensively mined by the Dutch for stone used in building works on the mainland. The quarry remained in use, intermittently, for approximately three hundred and twenty years. It was finally closed in 1963. Historically of considerable significance. Dutch graffiti in the vicinity is also of historic significance and requires protective intervention.

e) **Policies and programmes related to the presentation and promotion of the property**

In the eighteen months that the Robben Island Museum has been established a vigorous media campaign has been embarked upon to publicize the new Museum and its status as a national monument and conservation showcase both nationally and internationally.

A strategic planning process was implemented by the Interim Management authority of the Robben Island Museum in 1997. The draft development and management plan emanating from this process will soon be finalised and submitted to the new Robben Island Council for approval. Deriving from the vision and mission of the new Museum, the new Robben Island Museum Development Plan will be based on the following criteria and principles:

- \* economic sustainability and cost efficiency: taking into account the development of partnerships with outside stakeholders, which benefit previously marginalised communities
- \* environmental sustainability: taking into account natural environmental conditions, possible impact on the health of the Island's inhabitants and visitors and the maximum



environmental friendliness

- \* the historical significance of all resources: this includes the tangible and intangible historical values of the broader natural and cultural history of Robben Island
- \* current and future multi-purpose use of resources: taking into account the Island's status as a national monument and consequent limit on development of new structures, but the adaptation and restoration/renovation of existing buildings, structures and sites for museum activities

Following the values of an integrated environmental management system, the Robben Island Museum emphasizes the equal consideration of all the above principles and factors in all its development initiatives. The Museum will always strive towards finding an adequate balance of the above factors in any development initiative, by employing thorough research methods in the planning exercise. These will be adequately presented in a public participation exercise to promote the values of transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, in terms of the issues and criteria presented in the section on authenticity earlier in the document it is intended that any proposed development should have minimal intervention upon the existing historical environment but be in line with the concept of a dynamic layering and over layering in a dynamic manner which is the hallmark of the Robben Island experience.

These principles are to be founded upon sound financial management systems based upon the subsidy received from the State as well as independent income generation. Accounting and control systems approved by both the State and private sector have been established and will be audited by both internal and external auditors on an annual basis.

#### Specific Development Areas

##### Programmes to promote the Cultural and Natural Heritage

These specific programmes will focus upon the cultural and natural heritage of Robben Island and ways in which the Museum can present, conserve and further research these aspects.

Robben Island has a rich and diverse history stretching back several thousand years, the last 500 years of which have been well documented. These resources will be used and managed by the Robben Island Museum in an holistic and integrated manner but with special significance being placed upon the recent past and the

universal symbolism of the Island as a symbol of the triumph of the human spirit over tremendous hardship and adversity.

Areas in the historical development of Robben Island that will also receive special attention and which will be the focus of exhibitions and displays include the following:

- \* Shipwrecks and the early European and colonial influence upon South Africa in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries as the modern global economy emerged
- \* the indigenous peoples (the Khoi Khoi, including historical personalities such as Axtshumato and Krotoa)
- \* Slavery and links with the African and world slave route
- \* The influence of Islam both on the Cape and specifically the construction of the five holy shrines or Kramats, one of which is situated on Robben Island and which forms part of what is known in this country as the Holy Circle of Islam
- \* The anti colonial struggles of the nineteenth century
- \* Industry and life on Robben Island, with special emphasis upon the whaling activities, the development of the quarries and the tram-line
- \* The medical history of South Africa focussing on the lepers and the insane held on Robben Island
- \* World War II
- \* The Island as an internationally notorious political prison post-1960 (when the anti-apartheid freedom fighters were first brought to Robben Island)

The development of the cultural landscape as a result of these layers of human habitation upon Robben Island will also be considered when developing these initiatives.

The conservation and utilisation of Robben Island's natural resources will take into account the following:

- \* the harvesting and sustainable management of the natural resources including marine resources such as line-fish, abalone, rock lobster and seaweed

- \* the cultivation of terrestrial vegetation such as wood, herbs and vegetables by hydroponic methods
- \* the conservation and management of terrestrial fauna such as antelope and ostriches as well as the bird life on the Island

### Final Development Programme and Phased Implementation

It is envisaged that a complete document detailing the Development Programme will be finalised by the end of March 1999 (the end of the current financial year). The phased implementation of the Development Programme will occur over the next five to seven years. The phasing of the various stages of the Plan will be closely linked to and informed by the Integrated Environmental Management System and will include such aspects of the Programme as indicated below:

#### Education

The use planning exercise will take into account educational activities and programmes which will be integrated with tours and heritage interpretation. Educational activities (using appropriate technologies) will include international conferences and fora, seminars and workshops, specialist programmes for a variety of audiences and cultural programmes.

#### Transport

The investigation of provision for a variety of vehicles (environmentally appropriate) for the use of staff, residents and visitors to the Island. These could include bicycles, mini-busses for the shuttling of visitors including VIPs, special groups, researchers and disabled visitors, a limited number of medium sized buses for tours by day and overnight tourists and school groups, the development of a tram-line along a historically determined route, and walking routes.

#### Accommodation

A future use planning exercise will take into account the following planned activities. Self catering facilities for the general public, a corporate precinct operated on a time-share basis, a youth centre, conference facilities, and facilities for staff, overnight visitors and researchers.

Other identified activities include the provision and establishment of shops and catering facilities, fund raising and sponsorship, the provision of permanent conference facilities and the upgrading and

ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure and services on the Island.

### Mainland Facilities

It is important that the Robben Island Museum develops its existing facilities on the mainland and establishes satellite information and display centres to serve those visitors unable to visit Robben Island itself. The concept of travelling exhibitions will also be considered as many South Africans are unable to visit Cape Town. Various administrative activities relating to the Museum are also housed on the mainland.

For this purpose several zones on the mainland have been identified and will form part of the phased development and implementation of the project. These include:

1. The formalisation of links with the Mayibuye Centre, which serves as a national repository for documentation relating to the anti-apartheid struggle and which contains many valuable documents created by the political prisoners held on the Island. The Centre is presently housed at the University of the Western Cape.
2. The Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, where the embarkation offices and ferry departure points are situated. The development of the proposed Gateway Centre will also be situated here.
3. Community outreach facilities and programmes. (Such as Cowley House in District Six, Cape Town, which housed many of the families visiting the political prisoners held on Robben Island).

#### **4. MANAGEMENT**

##### **a) Ownership**

The Island is owned by two Institutions, the State owns the large portion (99%) of the Island and the nautical mile surrounding it. A small area situated to the north of the village, containing the Church of the Good Shepherd is owned by the Church of the Province of South Africa.

The Republic of South Africa (represented by)

The Director General

Department of Public Works

Private Bag X890

PRETORIA

0001 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Telephone: + 27-12-337-2000

and, the Church by

The Church of the Province of South Africa (represented by)

Mr R Rogerson

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CAPE TOWN

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## **b) Legal status**

The Island is both a declared national monument and a declared cultural institution in terms of government statutes.

The National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969 as amended identifies and protects the Island as a nationally significant heritage resource and affords it the highest level of protection for such resources in the country. The National Monuments Council is the agency responsible for the implementation of the National Monuments Act, any proposal involving any changes whatsoever to a national monument must receive approval from the National Monuments Council. The buffer zone of one nautical mile around Robben Island is also included in the protection offered by this Act.

The current National Monuments Act will be replaced in the near future with a new Heritage Bill, which is in draft stage at present. This new Act will significantly alter the manner in which heritage resources are managed; the intention of this Bill is to effect management of such resources at the most appropriate level of government for such resources e.g. many heritage resources are of local importance and will be managed by the local authority, similarly provincial authorities will manage sites and places of provincial significance and the national body will be responsible for national heritage sites. As Robben Island is one of South Africa's most important heritage sites it will enjoy protection as the national level and continue to be managed by the new national heritage authority.

The Cultural Institutions Act No 29 of 1969 establishes the criteria by which such Institutions are created and managed. In the case of Robben Island the Museum is run by a Director and a management committee within the parameters of this Act. The Act sets out the responsibilities of the management of the Museum and the duties of the Robben Island Council. Aspects such as the auditing of financial affairs are also covered in the Cultural Institutions Act.

(Refer also to Appendix A: National Monuments Act and  
Cultural  
Institutions  
Act.)



**c) Protective measures and means of implementing them**

The National Monuments Act, detailed above and in Appendix A, offers protection to the Island together with its natural and cultural assets as well as the one nautical mile buffer zone surrounding it. The intertidal zone also enjoys protection from the Sea Shore Act No 21 of 1935, which protects and controls the use and ownership of the strip of beach between the high and low water marks. (Appendix A)

No alteration, restoration, repair, maintenance, demolition work or any other change, to any part of Robben Island, however minor, may be undertaken without the necessary permission from the National Monuments Council. This takes the form of a legal permit of approval, which is issued upon receipt of a formal application for such alteration. The applications are considered by a committee constituted by the National Monuments Council and comprising experts in various fields of cultural conservation.

In the case of Robben Island, with its attendant environmental protections, (of which cultural resources play a part thereof in terms of the Environment Conservation Act No 73 of 1989-Appendix A), certain listed activities specified in Section 21, Schedule 1 and 2 of this Act requiring Environmental Impact Assessments, must be undertaken. A complete set of documentation is required for each application accompanied by a full motivation. These listed activities include water supply facilities and reservoirs, sewage treatment plants and related infrastructure as well as roads. Various changes in land use also require an Environmental Impact Assessment.



**d) Agency with management authority**

The Robben Island Museum, established in accordance with a decision by the Cabinet of the South African Parliament, is the authority responsible for the day to day management and conservation of the Island. The Director, appointed by the Robben Island Museum Council, is the individual directly responsible:

Professor Andre Odendaal (The Director)

Robben Island Museum

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ROBBEN ISLAND

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E-mail: [info@robben-island.org.za](mailto:info@robben-island.org.za)

It is important to note for further clarification that in terms of a decision by the South African Parliament to ratify the World Heritage Convention in June 1997 and later confirmed by the World Heritage Centre the responsibility for the co-ordination of the Convention is the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism

Mr Makgolo Makgolo (contact person)

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Roggebaai

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Telephone: +27-21- 402-3068 Fax: +27-21- 418-2582

**e) Level at which management authority is exercised**

The Director of the Robben Island Museum is responsible for the management of the Museum and related activities. He reports to the Robben Island Council, a body of 18 persons nominated by public process and selected by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology to form the governing body of the Museum. (In terms of the Cultural Institutions Act). The Council is tasked with issues such as policy development and financial issues and is not involved in the day-to-day management of the Museum. The Robben Island Council is comprised of equal numbers of ex political prisoners and specialists with relevant expertise such as historians, conservationists, lawyers, environmentalists etc.

The Director is also supported by a team of managers who are responsible for various aspects of the Museum, including Estates and Services, Heritage, Human Resources, Tours and Media as well as Financial Management.

**f) Agreed plans related to property**

The future development of Robben Island will proceed in accordance with the development framework laid out in the Cabinet recommendations of 4 September 1996 as well as the report of the Future of Robben Island Committee informed by an extensive public participation process in which approximately 200 proposals were received.

The Cabinet recommendations were that:

A Robben Island should be developed as a World Heritage Site, National Monument and National Museum, which can become a cultural and conservation showcase for the new South African democracy, while at the same time maximising the economic, tourism and educational potential of the island, and so encouraging that multi-purpose usage.

The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology should become the new controlling authority, taking over from the Department of Correctional Services on 1 January 1997.

The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, in terms of the Cultural Institutions Act should name Robben Island a Declared Cultural Institution and appoint a governing Council and Director.

With regard to the Museum functions above, Robben Island should be run as a site museum, where the total environment is preserved in an integrated way, in line with modern international conservation approaches, and that the ex-political prison be converted into a Museum of the Freedom Struggle in South Africa.

The Robben Island Museum should be conceptualised and built upon three pillars: Robben Island as the core; administrative facilities and a complementary site on the mainland; and a national and international function, designed both to promote international co-operation and to connect directly to broader transformation processes in South African society, for example by reinforcing and giving direction to the plethora of other legacy projects being proposed countrywide to deal with the struggle for and the establishment of democracy in South Africa.

In order to equip the new Robben Island Museum in an expeditious and cost effective way, the Minister should request the University of the Western Cape to agree to the incorporation of

the Mayibuye Centre and the non-profit-initiated Robben Island Gateway project in the new Robben Island Institution.

After taking control on 1 January 1997, the new controlling authority should initiate a systematic and broadly participative planning process, facilitated by a suitably qualified agency, for the long term development and multi-purpose use of Robben island.

The special history of Robben Island be taken into account during the planning and development process, amongst others via the inclusion of ex-political prisoners and a representative from the President=s Office on the Council of the new Declared Cultural Institution, as well as through arrangements which can contribute to the socio-upliftment of ex-prisoners.

The new controlling authority should make special efforts to generate income independently of State funds, inter alia by establishing a Robben Island Trust, with President Mandela as patron-in-chief and a panel of distinguished South African and international trustees.

The redevelopment of Robben Island should be phased.≡

The Robben Island Museum, operating as a living or site museum, aims to develop the Island as a national and international heritage and conservation project for the new millennium. In managing it=s resources and activities, the museum strives to maintain the unique symbolism of the Island, to nurture creativity and innovation, and to contribute to socio-economic development, the transformation of South African Society and the enrichment of humanity.

In interpreting its vision, the Robben Island Museum constantly focuses on the following core essences:

- \* the political and universal symbolism of Robben Island
- \* the cultural and natural heritage and resources of Robben Island
- \* Robben Island as a platform for critical debate and lifelong learning
- \* Robben Island as an institution which ensures economic sustainability and development

## **g) Sources and levels of finance**

Robben Island Museum is funded by the State through the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. The infrastructure and buildings on the Island are funded by the Department of Public Works. The Robben Island Museum also accrues an income through overseas donor funding from agencies such as NORAD and SIDA, sponsorships from the South African private sector and fees and profits made through the running of the tours and sales from the shops and restaurant on Robben Island. Project income for 1998/9 includes:

**INCOME SOURCE**( S A Government and funds generated directly by the Museum)

**AMOUNT**(in S A Rands, US Dollars in brackets)

Ferry Service income:	6,000,000	(\$1.165mil)
Mess/Restaurant Sales	100,000	(\$19 417.00)
Shop Sales:	2,000,000	(\$388 350.00)
Guest House Sales	100,00	(\$19 417.00)
Administration	50,000	(\$9 708.00)
Post Office Sales	100,000	(\$19 417.00)
State Subsidy	24,298,000	(\$4,72mil)
Interest on Investments	1,000,000	(\$194 174.00)
Media Core Sales	15,000	(\$2 912.00)
Petrol Sales	20,000	( 3 883.00)
Rentals: Hall, Conference	20,000	(\$ 3 883.00)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33,703,000</b>	<b>(\$6,54mil)</b>

An additional financial grant has been allocated to Robben Island by Norway to fund the development of an Integrated Environmental Management System and the preparation of the nomination for World Heritage Site Status. This aid package amounts to 3 million Norwegian Kroner (approximately R 1,95 Million, depending on fluctuating rate of exchange) The Department of Public Works has made an amount of R 11 million (\$ 2,13mil.) available from State emergency funds for the upgrading of the infrastructure on Robben Island.

**h) Sources and expertise and training in conservation and management techniques**

In order to run the Museum and manage Robben Island as a national monument successfully various skills have been identified as being necessary within the staffing structure of the Museum. These include managerial and financial skills, experience in the management of the cultural and natural environments as well as specific conservation skills relating to the built environment, the natural environment, and curatorial duties. Any shortcomings existing at present will be addressed by specialist consultants who have, as part of their brief, the requirement to develop capacity by training the staff of the Robben Island Museum in the required skills.

The Robben Island Museum has developed relationships with various local and international conservation training and professional bodies.

An agreement with ICCROM has been reached whereby the Robben Island Museum will send a number of its staff for training in conservation methods and techniques. This will occur at the ICCROM headquarters in Rome.

The Robben Island Museum has and is continually increasing its contacts with world-renowned museums and training institutes, such as the Smithsonian Institute, Amistad Research Centre, Paul Getty Institute, ICOMOS (International), the Commission on Preservation and Access (USA), the International Federation of Film Archives and other conservation institutions.

The Robben Island Museum is an institutional member of the South African Chapter of ICOMOS, which ensures that any training opportunities are made available. The Museum is also a member of SAMA, the South African Museums Association School for Conservation, which also offers training opportunities in the field of specialist techniques relating in particular to the conservation of historic building materials.

Although formal training in conservation has not until now been offered at a tertiary level the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg is in the process of formulating a masters degree in heritage management, and the Robben Island Museum itself, together with the University of the Western Cape and the University of Cape Town, has developed a post graduate degree in heritage training to assist disadvantaged students to enter the sphere of heritage resource management.

A management policy to develop a special programme to train the artisans and workman employed by the Department of Public Works on Robben Island will also be initiated this year. This will

ensure that maintenance work done to the buildings on Robben Island is done correctly and with the due consideration necessary for historic buildings and structures. This programme will be structured by the National Monuments Council in collaboration with the national Department of Public Works.

In the field of Environmental Education, budgetary allocations have been set aside for the training of staff in environmental management techniques. Several of the South African Universities offer post graduate degrees in this field, including the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

## **I) Visitor facilities and statistics**

Because Robben Island is protected by both heritage and environmental conservation measures, the number of visitors to and inhabitants on the Island is strictly controlled. Environmental Impact Assessments, in line with the national environmental legislation, are part of the management plan which necessitates that impact assessments of each prospective development is carried out.

The maximum number of visitors currently permitted on the Island has been determined by an environmental impact assessment carried out during 1997 prior to the promulgation of the regulations attendant to the Environment Conservation Act (referred to in Section 4 c). This exercise was undertaken to ascertain the carrying capacity of Robben Island and resulted in a recommendation that the Island could take 1 200 visitors per day upon condition that the service infrastructure was upgraded. The impact of the increase in visitor numbers will be monitored on an on-going basis and the results of this preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment will be audited in the first phase of the Integrated Environmental System in the process of development at present.



**j) Property management plan and statement of objectives**

Robben Island is managed according to a Property Management Agreement between the Robben Island Museum, the National Monuments Council and the Department of Public Works. This agreement, which is in the process of being established, will set out detailed maintenance schedules relating to the structures, buildings and services upon the Island, as well as the natural landscape in which these are found. ( Issues such as limited vegetation clearing, which may be necessary, will fall under this category) This management procedure will be finalised at the end of October, simultaneously with the first phase of the environmental management system discussed below.

An integrated environmental management approach, which includes an environmental policy, environmental management plan and environmental management systems is currently being developed for Robben Island to ensure that the negative impact of all future development is minimised. This has been funded by a grant from Norway. The environmental management procedure is recommended by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and involves public participation and the mitigation of any negative impact on both the natural and cultural environments. The Environmental Management System will be developed in a series of phases with the first phase consisting of the complete draft scheduled for completion in October 1998. The entire process will be completed by the end of December 2000. More details of this process are contained in **Appendix B**.

**k) Staffing levels (Professional, technical and maintenance)**

The staffing complement of the museum is detailed in the organogram and table below.

The Department of Public Works permanently employs approximately 30 people, who are involved in maintenance and repair work on Robben Island. The maintenance and renovation standards used are guided by the National Monuments Council guidelines and permits, as well as Robben Island Museum policy documents. (Any restoration work will be carried out by specialist independent contractors, who will be appointed by public tender and approved by the Robben Island Museum and the National Monuments Council.)

The Public Works staff comprise labourers and artisans who are controlled by works foremen; additional management skills are offered by the staff based in the (local) Western Cape office of the Department of Public Works, from which all maintenance work is co-ordinated.

## **5. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY**

### **a) Development pressures**

Future developments on Robben Island are strictly controlled by the National Monuments Council Act and the Environment Conservation Act. All future developments need to take into account the National Monuments Council guidelines, in relation to the buildings and archaeological resources on the Island. Environmental regulations legislated by the Environmental Conservation Act ensure that no development of potential significant negative impact can be undertaken, without permits from the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

Robben Island is protected from any developmental pressures from the mainland precisely because it is an Island. As the entire island is a museum there are no outside pressures for commercial development. However, any major developments on the neighbouring mainland which may affect the environment of Robben Island are also regulated by the Environment Conservation Act.

Robben Island Museum employs two security companies for the protection of the Island's movable and immovable assets, on a 24-hour basis. The whole Island is patrolled. Strict measures are enforced regarding access control and movement of workers as well as residents on the Island. As a result of one nautical mile around the Island included as a National Monument, patrols at sea form part of the security functions.

## **b) Environmental pressures**

Robben Island Museum staff are trained in various emergency strategies, designed to manage any potential environmental pressures. These are:

- \* Explosion/bomb-blast management strategies
- \* Contingency plans for ferry emergency situations
- \* Contingency plans for shipping disasters along the coast

The impact of visitors on the island is strictly controlled; all visitors are accompanied by guides as part of a formal tour, most of which are conducted (at present) in busses. Opportunities for walking are limited and visitors are informed on the sensitivity of the island environment on their arrival and given printed information on appropriate >behaviour= while visiting.

There is also a contingency plans for managing any potential nuclear outfalls from the nuclear power station of Koeberg Nuclear Power Station, which is stationed on the West Coast, within a 16km safety-zone radius from Robben Island. Robben Island forms part of the Koeberg and Environs Developmental Committee which shares the responsibility of activating and controlling appropriate emergency services.

**c) Natural disaster and preparedness**

Robben Island staff are trained in the following strategies to manage several natural disasters which may occur on the Island or in the surrounding environment:

- \* fire management contingency plans
- \* Coastal oil spill contingency plans
- \* Shipwrecks

**Erosion**

A danger of erosion due to exceptionally high seas exists along, in particular, the northern coastline. Repair work to the sea wall of the quarry on this coastline is presently underway under the supervision of the National Monuments Council and a specialist professional team. Constant monitoring after winter storms will ensure that damage is kept to a minimum along the coast.

The existing roads on Robben Island are subjected to a higher volume of traffic than during previous occupancies. A policy for the maintenance and repair of the road services is underway and this will be included in the conservation plan.

**d) Visitor/tourism pressures**

As with development pressures, all visitor and tourism pressures are regulated and monitored by environmental impact audits, as required by the integrated environmental management approach adopted by the Robben Island Museum Council, as one of the four core objectives of its management plan. (Also refer to Appendix F on the environmental impact assessment for increased visitor numbers)

**e) Number of inhabitants on the property, buffer zone**

All inhabitants of Robben Island are members of staff of Robben Island museum, the Department of Public Works and Portnet, (the institution responsible for lighthouses in South Africa), or Sealink (the company responsible for the official ferries serving Robben Island). The number of inhabitants on Robben Island are controlled by a housing and accommodation policy. There are currently 124 permanent residents on Robben Island, including Robben Island Museum, Department of Public Works staff.



## **6. MONITORING**

### **a) Key indication for measuring the state of conservation**

#### Cultural and Built Environment

Refer to the report on the present state of conservation, section 3 (d). The state of conservation will be monitored on an annual basis using the report in section 3(d) as a benchmark. Wear and tear by visitors, particularly to the prison complex, will be monitored on a more regular basis.

#### Natural environment.

Studies relating to the status of the birdlife on the Island have been carried out over a number of years, the details are contained in Appendix C entitled AThe Wildlife of Robben Island≡ and AThe Birdlife of Robben Island.≡ This report also contains records of marine life in the protected zone.

Records of land-based mammals (buck etc) are contained within various reports compiled by the Department of Correctional Services, the most recent records dating from 1995.

These reports can act as a benchmark for monitoring future numbers of bird, mammal and marine species.

**b) Administrative arrangements for monitoring property**

The monitoring of the State of conservation will be linked to the Integrated Environmental management process that has been adopted by the Robben Island Museum.

A program of ongoing monitoring of both the built as well as the natural environment will be established and this will form part of the on-going management program of the authority. (The Museum). An audit of the Island will be initiated during the course of 1998, this audit will include the state of conservation report of all built structures as well as the current status and numbers of bird and animal life presently on the Island. Marine life such as seals, shellfish will also require inclusion in this program. This audit will form the baseline from which the state of conservation may be managed in the future.

Cultural Environment

Monitoring of the cultural environment of the Island will be carried out on an annual basis by the Museum as part of its maintenance program. The state of conservation report can serve as baseline information against which the condition of the various buildings and structures can be measured. It is suggested that the format of the report of the state of conservation be used when making an annual assessment. This assessment would be undertaken in consultation with the National Monuments Council and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, which is also responsible for the management of cultural resources in terms of the Environment Conservation Act, and recommendations regarding remedial action or restoration work would be compiled jointly by both parties and would be undertaken under their joint supervision.

(Refer to section 3 (d))

Natural Environment

The Sea Fisheries Research Institute (part of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism) has an established program for the ongoing monitoring of bird and marine life (Refer again to Annexure C) This program is based upon a series of fortnightly or monthly inspections of the birdlife, land-based mammals and marine life found on the Island and in the buffer zone.. Behavioural traits, breeding numbers and patterns, reproductive success, survival, feeding habits and migratory patterns are all monitored and form part of a long term program established by this

Department. This program is run independently but with the full approval of the Museum authorities.

**c) Results of previous reporting exercises**

No previous system existed for reporting on the state of conservation on the Island. Routine maintenance work was carried out by the Department of Correctional Services on the buildings in the village and on the prison building itself. During the last five years of their occupation of Robben Island the Department reduced its maintenance schedule dramatically and when the Robben Island Museum took over the island in 1997 it became evident that a full audit of all buildings would be required in order to ascertain the requirements for maintenance, repair or restoration. This audit will form part of the conservation plan to be initiated this year.

The historic lighthouse was maintained, although not always using appropriate materials, by Portnet, the institution responsible for the lighthouse and apart from minor repair work requires very little maintenance work.

## **7. DOCUMENTATION**

- a) Photographs, slides and video entitled >The Story of Robben Island=:

Refer to Appendix E for photographs and slides

- b) Copies of property management plans and extracts of other plans relevant to the property**

Relevant legislation is listed below and is contained in Appendix A.

National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969

Cultural Institutions Act No 29 of 1969

Environment Conservation Act No 73 of 1989 and attendant regulations Government Gazette No 18261 Notice No 1182 dated 5 September 1997

Sea Shore Act No 21 of 1935

## C) Bibliography

Below please refer to a selected bibliography on Robben Island. The works detailed below are considered to be the definitive sources of reference. An extensive archive of documentation on the Island exists at the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, in Cape Town. These archives hold a vast store of documents relating to particularly to the anti apartheid struggle and cover much of the recent history of the prison on Robben Island. The archive contains *inter alia* personal papers of many of the political prisoners, video footage of interviews and events relating to the personalities held there, publications and artefacts from the period during which the political prisoners were held there. The contents may be accessed via a database held at the Mayibuye Centre.

The Cape Archives, in Roeland Street, Cape Town, contains many valuable historic documents relating to Robben Island, including a selection of early maps and photographs, as does the South African Library in the Company Gardens in Cape Town. The Cape Archives is also the repository for the records of the Department of Correctional Services during their occupation of Robben Island.

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**d) Address where inventory, records and archives are held.**

The Robben Island Museum

Robben Island

Western Cape

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The National Monuments Council

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Private Bag X2

Roggebaai

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ROBBEN ISLAND  
NOMINATION FILE:  
WORLD HERITAGE SITE STATUS

Amendment to text updated March 1999

Text amended in sections 2 a,b &c; section 3 b, c &d  
and  
Additional Appendix F

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Legislation**

- \* National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969 (as amended)
- \* Cultural Institutions Act No 29 of 1969 (as amended)
- \* Environment Conservation Act No 73 of 1989 (as amended)
- \* Regulations relating to the Environment Conservation Act No 73, Schedules 1 and 2
- \* Sea-Shore Act No 21 of 1935 (as amended)

### **Appendix B: Integrated Environmental Management System**

- \* Document of the System as developed for Robben Island

### **Appendix C: Survey and Catalogue**

- \* Conservation Survey of Robben Island  
Compiled for the National Monuments Council by Patricia Riley, 1993
- \* Operation Sea Eagle, a survey of the shipwrecks around Robben Island by Drs B Wertz and Dr J Deacon

### **Appendix D: Surveys of the Fauna on the Island**

- \* The Wildlife of Robben Island, Dr Rob Crawford, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town
- \* The Birdlife of Robben Island, Dr Rob Crawford, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town

### **Appendix E: Visual material relating to Robben Island**

- \* Historic maps and photographs
- \* Contemporary photographs and slides
- \* Video entitled "The Storey of Robben Island"
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### **Appendix F: Additional information relating to the built environment**

- \* Robben Island: Survey of the Built Environment, Lucien le Grange and Nicholas Baumann & Revel Fox & Partners

**1. SPECIFIC LOCATION**

**a) Country**

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**b) State, Province or Region**

WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE

**c) Name of Property**

ROBBEN ISLAND (referred hereafter as "The Island")

**d) Exact location on map an indication of geographical location coordinates**

18 22" East 33 48" South

**e) Maps and/or plans**

See attached maps

1: 50 000 ref. 3318CD CAPE TOWN 1993

1 : 250 000 ref 3318 CAPE TOWN 1994

**f) Area of property proposed for inscription**

475 hectares with an area of one nautical mile around the Island which serves as a buffer zone.

## **2. JUSTIFICATION FOR INSCRIPTION**

### **a) Statement of Significance**

'Robben Island - from incarceration to liberation.

From the punishment of the body to the freedom of the spirit' Robben Island is a place of great symbolic value and is directly associated with ideas, beliefs as well as events that are of eminent universal significance. With its history of banishment, imprisonment and suffering it has come to symbolise, not only for South Africans or the African continent, but also for the entire world, the miracle of the triumph of the human spirit over enormous hardship and adversity.

Of the many roles that Robben Island has assumed over the past four hundred years, it primarily served as a place of banishment and isolation. Throughout documented South African history, the Island has been associated with incarceration, pain and the subjugation of the human spirit. During the periods of Dutch and English occupation of the region, the Island was used as a place of imprisonment for those who opposed colonial rule. With the early banishment of Khoisan leaders, Malaysian Muslim religious figures and Xhosa chiefs to the Island, its role as a symbol of resistance against oppression was established. The Island's more recent ability to function as a crucible for the consolidation of the anti-apartheid movement bears further testimony to the symbolic value of the place.

However, out of these conditions of extreme hardship, pain and suffering has arisen a spirit of hope and tolerance that has, in the words of President Nelson Mandela, turned this island into a world-wide icon of the universality of human rights, of hope, peace and reconciliation. Another famous prisoner, Walter Sisulu, has written ' The name Robben Island is inextricably linked to the struggle against colonialism, for freedom, democracy and peace in South Africa. Robben Island's notorious history as the 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 by another.'

It is this condition of duality - of suffering and hope, of resistance and tolerance - embodied within the spirit, history and cultural landscape of Robben Island, that underscores the site's significance and imbues it with special symbolic value.



Robben Island offers to a world struggling under social injustices and intolerance, the example of the indomitable nature of the human spirit.

## b) Possible comparative analysis

Robben Island has a long and comprehensive history. The earliest records either alluding to or mentioning Robben Island are dated from the late fifteenth century when Portuguese navigators first travelled around the Cape of Good Hope (known then as the Cape of Storms). Yet to be confirmed is the possibility of Stone age hunter gatherers wandering along its shores when in glacial times the island was still linked to the mainland.

In the course of the seventeenth century Robben Island served as a larder or pantry for sailors passing on the long route to the East to trade in spices and slaves. Later it became a place of banishment where various highly placed persons opposed to the various colonial regimes were detained. In the nineteenth century the lepers and mentally ill were sent to Robben Island to remove them from 'normal' members of society and still later the prison was established, first for common law prisoners and then for the political prisoners of the second half of the twentieth century.

Comparisons between Robben Island and other sites are not easily drawn, due to the unique degree of significance described in section (a). Two approaches to the comparative analysis have been adopted: the first to compare Robben Island with other islands that have served similar purposes in the past and that have a cultural heritage that reflects the various periods of occupation (criteria iii) and secondly to compare Robben Island with other sites that have unique symbolic significance in a universal context. (Criteria vi)

Devil's Island, off the coast of French Guyana, was used by the French as a high security prison for their most infamous criminals from 1852 until 1946, a period of just under one hundred years. The island, together with two others, Royale and Saint-Joseph Islands, comprised a penal settlement so harshly run and with such an unhealthy climate, that many prisoners died and few managed to escape. Devil's Island became known as a place from which there was no return.

One of the most famous inhabitants of Devils Island was the French officer Alfred Dreyfuss, who was incarcerated there between 1895 and 1899. A victim of political intrigue and anti-semitism, Dreyfuss had been accused of betraying military secrets to the Germans, he was tried and sent to the penal colony on Devil's Island until 1906. After a series of investigations and public support from such eminent personalities as Emile Zola, who published his famous *J'Accuse* letter on the front page of the newspaper *L'Aurore*, Dreyfus was finally pronounced innocent of

all his alleged crimes and was reinstated as a major in the French Army.

Although comparisons may be drawn between the Dreyfuss case and the experience of the political prisoners on Robben Island the ultimate message of Devil's Island is not that of a triumph of the human spirit and the sending of a message of peace and reconciliation for the future. It also differs dramatically in that the Robben Island prisoners were not merely passive observers of their fate but were fully instrumental in participating in the ultimate transformation of their circumstances.

Goree Island, situated off the West Coast of Senegal, was developed as a centre for the expanding trade in African slaves. For more than two hundred years during the slave trade Goree Island was a slave-holding warehouse, trading in African men, women and children. The unfortunates were imprisoned within the holding warehouses on the island until they could be shipped across the Atlantic Ocean via the dehumanising Middle Passage. Tens of thousands of Africans left the island and were sold into slavery in South America, the Caribbean and North America.

Goree Island has come to symbolise to many a place of pilgrimage, (similar in many ways to that of Robben Island), to mourn and remember those family ancestors who were sold into slavery. One of the main focus points of the island is the "Door of No Return", which has become a sort of "Wailing Wall" for many descendants of the slaves. The Slave House, a French colonial building at the water's edge is a reminder to visitors of the manner in which African families were literally torn apart and sent to many parts of the world. This place, which for many encapsulates the tragic and inhuman attitude of one group to another, may in many respects be considered to parallel the symbolism of the main prison on Robben Island.

Alcatraz Island, a rocky outcrop just off the coast of San Francisco in the United States of America, has always enjoyed notoriety as one of the world's most famous island prisons. Opening in the late nineteenth century, it was finally closed in 1963 and is now used as a prison museum. In its heyday Alcatraz housed some of America's worst common law criminals.

While similar in purpose, these island prisons have no message of hope to offer the world. The inhabitants have not been transformed by their experiences into great leaders and statesmen who have overcome adversity and gone on to promote democracy, freedom and human rights in a transformed society. As a symbol

of liberty comparisons between Robben Island and other sites offering spiritual meanings must be sought.

In the United States of America two sites may serve as useful comparisons, the Statue of Liberty, off New York City, and Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

The Statue of Liberty was a gift from the French on the centenary of American Independence. Standing at the entrance of New York harbour she welcomes refugees from many parts of the world, and has come to symbolise the spirit of freedom offered to those unfortunate enough to have had to flee from oppression, poverty and religious intolerance in the countries of their birth. Both visitors and Americans alike have come to view the Statue of Liberty as the quintessential icon of freedom in a democratic society. (World Heritage Site, criteria (i) and (vi) 1984)

Independence Hall in Philadelphia (World Heritage Site criteria (vi) 1979), has been declared as a World Heritage Site in celebration of the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution that were signed there in 1776 and 1787 respectively. The universal principles set out in these two documents continue to guide lawmakers all over the world and set out the fundamental principles which guide the American system of justice.

Robben Island differs significantly from these two sites in that the significance of the island transcends a narrow nationalism that, it could be argued, applies to the examples from the USA, and appeals to the broader spread of humanity in a similar manner to that of Auschwitz.

Auschwitz, in Poland (chosen as a World Heritage Site under criteria (vi) 1979) one of the most infamous of the German concentration camps of the Second World War, has been preserved as a reminder of man's inhumanity to humankind and to serve as a lesson of intolerance and oppression in its worst form. As a museum illustrating this cruelty and injustice similarities to the recent prison period of Robben Island can be drawn.

Robben Island has served many purposes, a pantry, a prison but most significantly a symbol of freedom from oppression and a triumph of the human spirit. As such it is unique and may only be compared in part with the examples above. Whilst experiencing many differing occupancies and being used for several different purposes it is the one example that has shown that humankind may rise triumphantly from overwhelming injustices and still show a true desire for reconciliation and understanding to those who have

served such cruelties upon them. The message of peace and reconciliation that has originated from Robben Island in recent times is a truly unique one and makes the symbol of Robben Island stand alone as an example and is of universal value.

**c) Authenticity**

For the purpose of the Robben Island nomination file it is important to define authenticity in the African context, and most particularly in the context of Robben Island and the way that it is perceived both as a national monument and national icon of peace, democracy and reconciliation. The legacy of hundreds of years of colonial rule in the sub-continent has emphasised the concept of authenticity relating to structures erected by colonial powers and has, to a greater extent, disregarded the intangible heritage so important to Africa. These sites, that are associated with traditions and events, have acquired significance over centuries and rarely bear any physical imprint or structure that serves as a marker to identify the place. Thus to date, most of the acknowledged heritage sites are linked to colonial notions of value and the places associated with the intangible remain unacknowledged.

The concepts of authenticity contained within the Nara Document form the basis upon which the authenticity of Robben Island as a World Heritage Site is argued. The assessment and judgement of authenticity is particularly focussed upon the “spirit and feeling”<sup>1</sup> conveyed by the places and spaces that have formed the physical expression or focus of the experience of the prisoners in their journey from “incarceration to liberation”. The experience of oppression finally transformed into the present day miracle of the triumph of the human spirit is demonstrated in the physical fabric of the site and the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed, the wardens and the prisoners, may clearly be understood when viewing the various prison buildings and the manner in which these buildings and places have been interpreted.

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<sup>1</sup>

1. Nara Document on Authenticity, Paragraph 13

In terms of the values embodied in the statement of significance for Robben Island, it is important that the physical manifestation of the cultural heritage is consistent with the sources of information relating to the specific site.<sup>2</sup> (Where this information is not available either in written records or from oral history sources the site has remained unchanged from the condition it was when the prison was closed in 1996) Particular emphasis in this regard has been taken when interpreting the sites of the old Gaol and Prison, a process which is still underway. Similarly the opportunity of interpreting the intangible heritage of Robben Island offers the new occupiers of the island, the Robben Island Museum, with a challenge that is presently under debate.

The Island may be conceived as comprising several distinct components falling under the umbrella of cultural heritage; these being the built environment, with its allied structures, constructed (and demolished) over a period of some 350 years, and the cultural landscape - transformed by the inhabitants of the Island over that same period and including sites and places of cultural significance.

In terms of the built environment the structures upon the Island have undergone transformation by the inhabitants from earliest times. Structures and buildings erected by the Dutch were reused by the British or demolished to make way for later newer buildings more appropriate to their needs and requirements, Similarly structures and buildings constructed by the British were reused and altered by later occupants. During this century additional structures were been added to the layering process when the military installations and the prison buildings were constructed.

This constant layering and over layering is the overriding and consistent factor influencing our understanding of the cultural heritage of Robben Island and testifying to the historic and symbolic power of the site. The evidence of this layering, rather than a frozen, fully 'authentic' snapshot of a particular era, captures for posterity the archive of events on the island demonstrating a singular and unique power and significance in itself. In establishing the new Museum, this attitude has been continued with the utilisation of existing facilities to accommodate newer functions relating to the requirements of the Institution. What remains constant throughout these new developments and indeed throughout the history of the built environment on the Island is the approach to restoration of structures, through

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2. Nara, Paragraph 9

*minimal intervention*, with only the necessary repairs being effected to ensure the stability of the buildings. In instances where more substantial interventions may be required this has either been delayed, awaiting a full and detailed investigation into the historical accuracy and appropriateness of the proposals (as initiated in the specialist study entitled “Robben Island: A Survey of the Built Environment” attached as appendix to this dossier) or the outcome of Environmental Impact Assessments which may well inform the desirability or otherwise of effecting such alterations.

The presentation of the cultural heritage on Robben Island is largely influenced by the “closeness” of the historical experience, which in itself is unusual in terms of a world heritage site nomination. The decision to make minimal intervention in the built fabric found upon the Island reinforces this closeness, the nearness of history in this context, the healing of recent wounds and the impact of the experience on visitors to the place, many of whom experienced it under very different circumstances.

The concept of “pilgrimage”

The concept of the presentation of Robben Island Museum as a site of pilgrimage is evident in the experience offered to visitors who are taken on a voyage of discovery illustrating the hardships experienced by the prisoners. It culminates in a visit to the main prison, which physically embodies the final triumph of the human spirit over oppression and insurmountable odds.

The pilgrimage begins with an exhibition entitled *30 Minutes*, situated within the old visitors section, adjacent to the harbour, which creatively depicts the experiences of both visitors and prisoners for the brief half an hour permitted for official visits. This section of the pilgrimage forms the introduction to the concept of incarceration to liberation - the overall theme of Robben Island today.

Perhaps it is at the site of the Old Gaol, now semi-ruined and derelict, that the most severe forms of physical punishment and hardship can be portrayed to the visitor. Prior to, and during, the construction of the main prison, both common law and political prisoners were held at this facility and subjected to the most brutal forms of treatment. The stories of prisoners held here during these early days are testimony to the circumstances that prevailed in the early sixties. Here, at the beginning of the journey telling the story of the Island, the message of abandonment and terror remains clearly evident.



The high security prison has become the focus of the museum experience and the use of the building and displays contained within the various sections illustrate the differing experiences of the groupings of prisoners held there. The authenticity of that experience is demonstrated by the space and contents of each section. For example , “B Section”, the wing where the political prisoners were held during the sixties and seventies, has been maintained in a state at which those prisoners experienced it during this period. The entrance area and B Block itself have been painted and furnished according to circumstances that were in existence during the sixties, finished upon the advice of former inhabitants of that wing. The process of cleaning and maintaining this polished environment was an integral part of the prisoner’s experience and is clearly one of the memories held strongly by the inmates. In contrast to B Block, are other parts of the prison complex, which by means of creative interpretation such as the use of sound tapes of the prisoners themselves explaining the manner in which they transformed their incarceration into a school for learning and critical debate and in the course of interaction with the warders, came to change their attitudes in a positive way.

Other sections contain exhibits of photographs, furniture and objects which were used by the prisoners. The reinterpretation of the prison to house a series of museum displays and exhibitions serves to illustrate and amplify the relationship between the spirit and feeling of its inhabitants and the final triumph of the human spirit over overwhelming odds, that the Island now symbolises.

The message of authenticity that is integral to Robben Island is the conveyance of the many varieties of experience by the inhabitants of the place. The sites and buildings tell a story over time that may be related back to the messages and emotions experienced by the occupants culminating in the final triumph of the human spirit over enormous hardship and adversity.

## **d) Criteria under which the inscription is proposed**

Robben Island meets criteria (iii) and (vi) for cultural sites in terms of the World Heritage Convention.

### **Criteria iii**

Robben Island has a well documented history that dates back from 1488 according to written sources, although occupancy by Stone Age inhabitants may well be possible, due to the early link of the island to the South African mainland. This will be confirmed by the archaeological investigation which has been initiated and is presently at an exploratory stage.

The physical remains of the long history of banishment, imprisonment and human suffering are well documented and are visible through the memories of residents who are still living as well as in written and graphic sources. The structures on Robben island date from the earliest occupation by the Dutch colonists, the English occupation with its churches and institutions built to house the lepers and mentally ill, as well as the residential buildings, the military installations of the Second World War, and finally the structures associated with the more recent occupancy by the prison. These structures represent a period of unbroken human habitation from the mid end of the 1600s until the present day.

The criterion of symbolic value is today embodied in the various cultural landscapes that exist on the Island. These 'landscapes' include the 'landscape' of prisoners, the 'landscape' of the infirm, the military 'landscape' and the cultivated 'landscape.

These buildings and structures contained within these landscapes represent evidence of a society that played a significant role in the development of the southern African region and its links to the 'civilised' worlds of Europe and the East. This society has long since disappeared and the remnants on Robben Island, being typical examples of their time, are the only remaining examples still in existence. The more recent buildings are unique in that they represent a time in history that has gained universal symbolism while the residents (the ex political prisoners) are still alive. The closeness of this history makes Robben Island and its associated prison structures unique in the international context.

### **Criteria vi**

Robben Island is of outstanding universal value for the following

reasons.

**'Robben island is a vital part of South Africa's collective heritage.'**

**How do we reflect the fact that the people of South Africa as a whole, together with the international community, turned one of the world's most notorious symbols of the resistance of oppression into a world-wide icon of the universality of human rights, of hope, peace and reconciliation.'**

**PRESIDENT NELSON MANDELA  
Heritage Day, 24 September 1997  
Robben Island**

Robben Island has come to represent an outstanding example of a symbol representing the physical embodiment of the triumph of the human spirit over enormous adversity and hardship. The role of Robben Island in the transformation of an oppressed society has come to symbolise the rebirth of democracy in South Africa, a country which has come to be viewed as a unique example of transformation in a world troubled by political uncertainty.

### **3. DESCRIPTION**

#### **a) Description of property**

Robben Island is a low lying rocky outcrop positioned strategically at the entrance to Table Bay and the City of Cape Town, some 9,3 kilometres north of the mainland. Covering an area of some 475 hectares it measures roughly 3,4 km. In length and 1,8km in width. Originally part of the mainland it formed the pinnacle of an ancient, now submerged mountain that was linked by a saddle to the mountain known as the Blaauwberg. (Blue Mountain). Geologically it is composed of a lower strata of Malmesbury shale topped by a thick limestone and calcrete deposit covered by sand and shell fragments. The geology of the place provides several of the Island's outstanding landmarks, the shale being evident in the earliest quarry on the Island, "Jan se Gat", which provided the slate used by the Dutch colonists in much of the early building work in Cape Town, while the limestone provided the material used on many of the roads on the Island and which was excavated, as part of a forced labour program, by many of the political prisoners held on the Island.

The rock formations on Robben Island are similar to those of the mainland with the exception of the stratification, which is virtually horizontal or gently undulating in the Island context. Topographically the entire island is low-lying, with the highest point being some 24 metres above sea level and known as "Minto's Hill", named after a nineteenth century Surgeon Superintendent of the General Infirmary situated on the Island. The historic lighthouse, one of the architectural highlights of Robben Island, is situated strategically upon the summit of the hill and still serves as an integral part of the signalling system for Table Bay harbour.

As is the case for the Cape Peninsula area of the Western Cape, the climatic conditions on the Island are Mediterranean, with hot dry summers and rainfall occurring in the winter. Climatic conditions are however, more extreme than on the mainland, with stronger winds experienced and a colder and drier winter than Cape Town and its inland environs. The extreme winter gales and tides that batter the north western shores of Robben Island render it inhospitable along that part of the coast and the buildings and village have been established on the more sheltered eastern and southern shores. Murray's Bay Harbour serving all shipping arriving from the mainland, is situated on the eastern shore in the lee of the weather and extreme tidal ranges. The climatic conditions experienced in the Cape winters, combined with the rocky shores, (both visible and submerged) along all but one small section of the coast just south of Murray's Bay harbour, have lead to the many shipwrecks that lie in the waters off Robben Island. There are an estimated 22 ships that are believed to have sunk of this inhospitable coastline, 10 of which were

British, 3 Dutch and 3 American. These wrecks are protected in terms of the National Monuments Act and access to them is restricted by both the National Monuments Council and the Robben Island Museum. A survey of these wrecks was carried out in a joint operation between the NMC and the South African Navy in 1992, code named Operation Sea Eagle, and the findings documented. (Appendix C)

The natural environment of Robben Island has undergone considerable change since the original occupation by man in the seventeenth century. The original landscape has been affected by its use both as a place of settlement and as a larder and hence both the flora and fauna now prevalent on the Island are largely elements introduced over a period of some four hundred years of human habitation. The European Rabbit, for example, was introduced in the period of Jan van Riebeeck (c 1652) and have co-existed with indigenous fauna for more than 300 years. Studies of the flora and fauna of the Island have been undertaken by Cape Nature Conservation (the Chief Directorate of Cape Nature Conservation).

The Cape Nature Conservation Report on the Vegetation of Robben Island (1986) states:

“Adamson (1934) indicates that the island was largely without trees and shrubs in 1933, except for the alien trees which were planted near the buildings on the island, the shrubs having decreased or largely disappeared as a result of past land practices such as intensive grazing by sheep (since 1601), goats and rabbits and as a result of chopping for firewood.”

The original indigenous vegetation is typically that of the “strandveld” type commonly found on the mainland of the west coast of the western Cape Province from the Cape Point area to the Olifants River several hundred kilometres to the north. Alien plant species such as Rooikrans, Manitoa and Eucalyptus were imported by settlers and are now manifest in the landscape, as are the various types of animal now found there. Much of this more recent vegetation forms sheltering and nesting areas for the rich variety of birdlife found on the Island. Historical records indicate that a vast number of pelicans and ducks lived in breeding colonies on Robben Island, these have since disappeared. Sheep, cattle, bird species such as pheasant and ostrich, rabbits and deer have been introduced for various purposes during recent colonial times replacing the fauna indigenous to the Island, which included penguins, seals and reptiles such as tortoises and mole snakes. It is interesting to note that the Bontebok introduced to the island this century are believed to be pure and therefore provide an important gene pool for this rare subspecies.

The penguins and seals were hunted extensively by early travellers to the

Cape in the times when the Island was used as a larder and to this day seals have not returned to the shores of Robben island.

Robben Island is an important breeding area for sea-birds, which include the African Penguin, Bank Cormorants, Crowned Cormorants and Hartlaub's Gulls, which are endemic to southern Africa. (African Penguins and Bank Cormorants are classified as vulnerable species in terms of the IUCN gradings). It has South Africa's second largest colony of African Penguins, and in recent years the largest colonies of Crowned Cormorants, Hartlaub's Gull and the discrete southern population of Swift Tern. Robben Island also has a substantial population of African Oystercatchers. It also has an increasingly important heronry.

A marine reserve exists in the one nautical mile protected area around the Island and a rich variety of marine life breeds in these waters; shellfish such as crayfish, (lobster), and abalone (perlemoen) enjoy protection in the reserve.

#### Settlement patterns

Unlike most inhabited islands, settlement of Robben Island has always been characterised by discontinuity. As each different set of users has come and gone - nearly always interspersed with periods of abandonment and neglect - completely different groups of people have been involved in activities on the Island on a short-term basis. Only between 1846 and 1931 is there evidence of more than one generation of a few families employed serving the needs of the patients hospitalised on Robben Island; these families never enjoyed security of tenure or the option to purchase land. It is very few inhabitants who have chosen to stay voluntarily on the Island, (the early Khoi residents led by Autshumao, who acted as interpreter to the Dutch settlers, appear to have been the first and last to do so), and all inhabitants have either been compelled to endure their occupation or have been employed in some capacity as minders. Paradoxically, it seems as if many of the above were reluctant to leave when the time to do so arose.

Since the Island has always been independent of any local authority, decisions and activities relating to physical development and planning have occurred on an ad-hoc basis, most probably determined by the requirements of the current user, with some assistance and funding from the State.

Permanent settlement has always been limited upon Robben Island, largely due to the lack of fresh potable water. Water obtained from boreholes or wells sunk on the Island is brackish and unsuitable for drinking purposes. Historically drinking water had to be collected from rainwater and stored for use and there are indications that the limited underground water supply

has decreased since the earliest 17th century. Early settlers were reported to have developed extensive gardens where everything supposedly grew better than on the mainland and the Company (Dutch East India Company) kept a vegetable garden for passing ships. More recently a desalination plant offered a limited facility for deriving suitable quality water and during the occupation of the Island by the prison water was carried across from the mainland on one of the supply vessels and stored in the reservoir situated near the lighthouse on Minto's Hill.

Largely because of the prevailing wind (and possibly because of a desire to remain in sight of the mainland) settlement has always taken place on the eastern side of Robben Island. In the Dutch period it occurred in the central portion above what is now Murray's Bay and northwards from that point. During the British period and after development took place almost exclusively to the south-east where the present village is now located. Boundary Road is said to have formed the barrier between the staff and patients of the institutions housed there. The World War Two batteries to the north and south of the Island cannot be considered to form part of the ordinary settlement pattern. Considering that the village development was undertaken on a somewhat ad-hoc basis, it appears remarkably orderly but it is possible that some demolitions have occurred to accommodate a road system that developed at a later stage.

The remainder of the Island is largely undeveloped with a perimeter road encircling it and an airstrip positioned in the centre.

### Chronology of human habitation

The earliest indications of human habitation are suggested to be the stone (slate ) quarry on the south of the island and the lime quarry in the centre, both worked during the period of Jan van Riebeeck (mid 1600). By the late 1600's there was evidence of buildings to accommodate many slaves and some 30 to 50 soldiers, gardens behind them, a large lime burner and a flag flying from the signal hill, now Minto's Hill. By 1777 an annotated panorama by Gordon indicates a bigger settlement at the northern end of the Island in the area now known as Murrays Bay. A building referred to as the "posthouder's huis", (Postholders House) was flanked by long low buildings housing "bannediten" (convicts) on the left and various utility buildings such as a smithy on the right. The soldiers were accommodated in a line of small houses with vegetable gardens to the north of this and the slave gardens were situated some distance further away. No recognisable remains of these early structures are visible and archaeological investigations will further inform the Museum as to the precise position of this early settlement.

Whaling activities during the early 1800's lead to the occupation of the Postholder's House by John Murray and in 1806-1808 a new settlement

was built at the southern end of the Island to accommodate the British prison. In 1833 this settlement housed the Commandant, officer's and soldier's barracks, overseer's houses, a bakery, butchery and smithy, workshops and prison accommodation for over 200 prisoners. During the 1840's a church, doctor's residence and parsonage were added. The lighthouse on Minto's Hill was built in 1864 and again in the 1890's there was an increase in building activity to house the lepers placed in isolation on the Island. This settlement remains in an extended form today and is known as the "village", which houses the infrastructure of the Museum with its offices, meeting and conference venues, community facilities, shop and hall.

Halfway between the village and Murray's Bay harbour is a little stone church, referred to as the 'Leper Church', but more correctly named as the Church of the Good Shepard. The church was built in 1895 to the design of the well known architect Sir Herbert Baker and was used only by the male lepers. The church is positioned on the only portion of land not owned by the State and is the property of the Church of the Province of South Africa. Although not presently in use there are plans to attend to urgent repair work and investigate the possibilities of bringing back traditional worship to this charming little building. Surrounding the church property are the leper graves, half visible between the rampant growth of the encroaching vegetation.

Extensive building activity again took place between 1939 and 1940 when the existing harbour at Murrays Bay was constructed together with the military fortifications built for the Second World War and which include gun emplacements, underground magazines, observation towers, garrison quarters and two coastal batteries.

The final chapter in building history occurred during 1960 when the Department of Correctional services took control of Robben Island and started construction on the maximum security and ordinary criminal prison facilities together with expanded staff facilities.



## **b) History and development**

Robben Island is often simply called 'The Island', a name which encapsulates not only its importance among islands, but also its deep significance for all who know the story of South Africa. In its variegated landscape, its historic patchwork of buildings and its monumental symbolism, Robben Island signifies both the oppressive continuities of South Africa's past and the happy disjuncture of its democratic present. In an international context, it also provides a tangible symbol of success in the struggle towards equal human rights for all people. Just as one man, Nelson Mandela, endured years of imprisonment on Robben Island to become President of his country, so can all people take hope for their own future. Mandela's experience, and the experiences of other anti-Apartheid prisoners on the Island, poignantly illustrate the triumph of the human spirit over adversity.

Robben Island's significant place in the world today is forged out of a long history of human habitation and use, in which the symbols of oppression and struggle against such oppression have been laid down repeatedly alongside each other. For the purposes of this report its history can be divided into five phases, culminating in its conversion into the Robben Island Museum in 1997. The historical phases are: (i) occasional settlement before 1652 (ii) use as a colonial prison, 1657-1921 (iii) use as a colonial hospital, 1846-1931 (iv) use as a naval base, 1939-1959 and (v) use as a apartheid prison, 1961-1996.

### **The Pre-colonial Past: occasional settlement before 1652**

— In the days of extensive sea traffic between Europe and the East, the Cape Peninsula and its satellite Robben Island fell roughly midway between the beginning and end of the difficult journey. Between the first documented landing on the Island in 1498 and 1652, the year in which the Dutch East India Company (DEIC), a trading company in the Netherlands, first established a settlement at what they called the Cape of Good Hope, Robben Island's natural resources helped to sustain a variety of European sailors on these trade routes. The first Europeans to land on Robben Island were probably members of Vasco da Gama's fleet in 1498, who stopped to seek shelter and supplies. Because the Island is actually the summit of an ancient, now submerged mountain, linked by an undersea saddle to the Blouberg coast of Table Bay, it is of course possible that even before the first Europeans rounded the Cape, indigenous Khoisan from the Cape mainland had made use of Robben Island's natural resources, perhaps when lower sea-levels offered easier access to the Island. During the 1630s, we know for certain that a group of Khoi under the leadership of Autshumato lived intermittently on the Island for about eight years.

The Island played an important role in sustaining sailors on the trade routes between Europe and the East. Not only did it offer plentiful food (seal meat and penguin eggs), grazing and (brackish) water near a relatively safe natural landing place, but it also offered relative security from indigenous retaliation against sailors' rougher methods of acquiring supplies on the mainland and a safe place to leave mail. The presence of Robben Island thus made Table Bay a more attractive place for European settlement than other bays along the coast. In 1652 the DEIC sent Jan van Riebeeck and a group of followers to establish a refreshment station in Table Bay, in order to supply passing ships with medical supplies, food and water. Robben Island was instrumental in the survival of the DEIC settlement during the initial lean years of its existence after 1652, providing emergency supplies of food for the Dutch and offering a safe grazing place for some of their livestock. Signal fires on the Island also gave those in Cape Town adequate warning of ships' arrivals, helping to protect the DEIC settlement against their European competitors. Stone and lime from the Island were used for building.

#### Place of Banishment: Robben Island as a colonial prison, 1657-1921

Robben Island was used as a secure prison for opponents of the DEIC at the Cape and in the East Indies, helping the DEIC to establish better political and economic control over these areas. Robben Island's role as a prison, however, was initially subordinate to its value in supplying raw materials and communications necessary for the survival of the station and the DEIC ships it supplied. Under British rule in the nineteenth century the imprisonment of important indigenous leaders on the Island helped the British to cement their military victories against indigenous peoples on the expanding Eastern and Northern frontiers of the colony. The long history of using political and ordinary criminal prisoners to work at various public and commercial projects on Robben Island is a vital link in the broader story of the widespread use of prison labour in South Africa.

During the first century and a half of European travel around the tip of Africa, the odd mutineer sailor or hapless convict had been abandoned on the Island, or had fled there from the mainland. The first Robben Island prisoners in the colonial period were slaves and prisoners of war from the East Indies sent there in 1657 to cut stone for the building of the settlement in Cape Town. Later, prisoners also burned shells for lime, lit the signal fires and tended the Company's sheep on the Island. A commander of the Island station commented some years later,

“the island makes a very good penitentiary where a rogue, after

one or two years' work in carrying shells, begins to sing very small."

In the ensuing years, some prisoners attempted to escape, or rebel against the poor treatment they received on the Island, but few were fortunate enough to improve their lot.

Robben Island was also, as historian Nigel Penn has said, "one of the crucibles for the consolidation [of Islam] in Southern Africa". After 1722 many political and religious leaders from the East Indies were banished to Robben Island by the DEIC. Today a Muslim shrine or *karamat* on the Island (built in the 1960s on the site of an earlier shrine) honours the memory of these men, especially Sheikh Madura (d.1754) and Hadji Matarim (d.1745). Two other Muslim prisoners from Robben Island were particularly influential in encouraging the growth of Islam at the Cape. Said Aloerie (Tuan Said) became the first official imam (priest) in Cape Town after his release from the Island in 1761. The first chief imam at the Cape was Tuan Guru, who wrote a book on Islamic jurisprudence while imprisoned on the Island between 1780 and 1793.

Under British rule after 1795, Robben Island continued to be used as a prison, mainly for men. Only a tenth of the prisoners on Robben Island were women, and all of them were transferred to a Cape Town gaol in 1835. Most of the prisoners were employed in fish-curing, whaling, stonemasonry or lime-burning work on the Island. Political prisoners on Robben Island at this time included the Khoisan leader David Stuurman, later banished to New South Wales, and the famous Xhosa prophet Makanna, who drowned while attempting to escape in 1820. Even after the closure of the main prison in 1846 and the establishment of a hospital in its place, Robben Island still accommodated both ordinary criminals (who worked in the hospitals after 1866) and political prisoners. Many Eastern and Northern Cape leaders, such as the Xhosa chief Maqoma and the Korana leader Piet Rooy, were banished to Robben Island in the 1850s and 1870s respectively. The Hlubi chief from Natal, Langelibalele, was imprisoned on the Island from 1874-75. The imprisonment of these important indigenous leaders on the Island helped the British to cement their military victories against indigenous peoples on the expanding frontiers of the colony during the nineteenth century.

Place of Exclusion: Robben Island as a colonial hospital, 1846-1931

— In 1846 a General Infirmary was established on Robben Island to cater for three specific categories of the sick poor in the colony: the insane, the chronically ill and the leprosy. At this time, both in the Cape and

elsewhere, hospitals were patronised mainly by the desperate, poor and dying. The Robben Island hospitals admitted the least able of this group: patients from mainland hospitals considered incurable, dangerous and unable to work. The Robben Island hospitals thus smoothed the work of hospitals and gaols on the mainland, and removed from the streets those people whom middle-class Cape Town found most threatening to their social order. The social and medical profile of the Robben Island patient made the General Infirmary more of a place of exclusion for those who weighed heavily on the hands of government than a place of healing.

In the 1850s the Robben Island Asylum became the first South African institution to adopt the curatively-oriented 'moral management' system of treating the insane developed in Britain. More middle-class white patients were admitted to the asylum in the 1860s, and greater attempts were made to separate patients by gender, class and then racial designations. Wards in the chronic sick hospital and the leper hospital were also racially segregated by the 1870s and 1890s. Racial segregation was thought by many officials, hospital staff and white patients to be a necessary step towards creating ideal medical and social conditions in the hospital. Robben Island provided an example of racial segregation which many other Cape institutions followed in the 1890s. As more Cape asylums were built, however, some were reserved for rich white clients, and others, like Robben Island, for poor, black and violent patients. The Robben Island Asylum finally closed in 1921. In 1892, the chronic sick hospital was removed from the Island to make way for an expanded leper section. At this time Robben Island was the only leper hospital in the colony and it was swamped in 1892 by the unexpectedly large number of lepers, black and white, who were compulsorily segregated under the Leprosy Repression Act. When other leper hospitals were built in the course of that decade, Robben Island housed the majority of the patients (over 1000 at any one time) and was specifically used to detain re-institutionalised escapees or patients who protested in other ways against their incarceration in mainland hospitals. The leper hospital was closed in 1931 because of rising costs and decreasing case loads.

Protector of the Bay: Robben Island as a naval base, 1939-1959

Robben Island's sentinel position in the mouth of Table Bay which had made it an ideal signalling site for the DEIC in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries assumed considerable importance during the Second World War. During this war (1939-1945), South Africa was on the side of the Allied Powers, and sent troops to Europe and North Africa. Robben Island became its first point of defence against an attack in Table Bay. Although the feared invasion of South Africa by the Axis

powers never materialised, Robben Island's new institutions performed an important training function for the South African military and helped administer a large degaussing range which reduced the chance of ships being sunk by magnetic mines.

By the mid-1930s, Robben Island was empty of patients and prisoners. There had been some discussion about turning it into a holiday resort, but the impending war intervened. It was declared 'reserved for military purposes' in 1936, equipped with harbour facilities and artillery in 1939 (much of which still remains on the Island) and taken over by the South African Permanent Garrison Artillery at the beginning of war. The three batteries of 9.2" guns in Simonstown, Llandudno and on Robben Island comprised the main armament defences of the Cape Peninsula. A degaussing range was set up near Murray's Harbour in 1941, designed to neutralise the magnetic attraction of the hulls to magnetic mines. Over 4,000 ships passed through the range during the war. Robben Island was also central to the operation of the submarine detection cables laid from the Island to the mainland in the middle of the war.

During this period Robben Island was a major training centre for military personnel, accommodating training for Coastal Artillery recruits, for black gunners on anti-aircraft and coastal batteries, for women Artillery Specialists (of the Women's Auxiliary Army Service or WAAS) and for members of the Women's Auxiliary Naval service (SWANS). After 1951, the South African Marine Corps and then the South African Navy took control of the Island until it was claimed by the Prisons Department as a maximum security prison in 1959.

Protector of Apartheid: Robben Island as an apartheid prison, 1961-1996

Having been devoid of prisoners for nearly half a century, Robben Island accepted the first of its next batch of unwilling residents in 1961. It was used as a maximum-security prison for both ordinary criminals and political prisoners under the apartheid government which had come into power in 1948 and relinquished its hold on the country in 1994. Only black men were chosen for incarceration on the Island. The first wave of political prisoners was sent to the Island in 1962, and the last ones were transferred from the Island in 1991. The last ordinary prisoners left the Island on the prison's closure in 1996. The Island's isolation and the cruelty of its prison staff, particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s, made it the most dreaded prison in the country. While conditions improved during the course of the 1970s and 1980s, it remained the most inhospitable outpost of apartheid. As Oliver Tambo commented in 1980, "The tragedy of Africa, in racial and political terms, [has been] concentrated in the southern tip of the continent in

South Africa, Namibia and, in a special sense, Robben Island.”

This period of the Island’s history is not only the most vivid in current public memory, the best represented in material and oral archives, but it is also the period most easily contrasted to the events in South Africa after 1994. It is in this period that we can see most clearly how the Island symbolises the triumph of the human spirit over oppression and adversity. Five, ten, or even twenty years before the first democratic election in 1994, many of South Africa’s political leadership, mostly members of the ruling African National Congress and the smaller but vibrant Pan Africanist Congress, were imprisoned on Robben Island. Ironically, their very incarceration in an apartheid prison protected them from security force assassinations, because the apartheid government feared the adverse publicity that would result from deaths of their high-profile opponents in prison.

Today, many of these men are political leaders in the new democratic government. The life stories of the Robben Island prisoners who helped to lead South Africa into democracy, symbolise the broader movement towards a culture of human rights in the country. Many Robben Islanders suffered physically and mentally from the harsh conditions of prison life and isolation from their families and friends. But while imprisonment brought frustration and difficulty, it also offered prisoners the chance to challenge prison restrictions, to share and debate political dreams and differences with each other across political and generational boundaries. Freedom provided the opportunity to apply the political and humanitarian principles, hard-fought and finely honed on Robben Island, in the broader national arena. In these ways did Robben Island act as the crucible of the moral and political cornerstones of the new South Africa.

A key figure in the history of Robben Island is democratic South Africa’s first president, Nelson Mandela. Born in 1918, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela became active in anti-Apartheid work through his membership of the African National Congress. He was arrested by the Nationalist South African government in the 1950s, unsuccessfully tried with other activists in the Treason Trial, and arrested again in 1962. After spending a short time as a prisoner on Robben Island, he was recalled to face another trial, the Rivonia Trial. Sentenced to life imprisonment for sabotage and conspiracy against the state, Mandela returned to Robben Island as prisoner 488/64 in 1964. He was transferred from the Island prison to a mainland prison in 1982 and finally released from prison altogether eight years later, on 11 February 1990. He said in his autobiography that he saw prison as a ‘microcosm of the struggle [against Apartheid] as a whole. We would fight inside as we had fought outside [just] on different terms.’ While their

counterparts engaged in opposition politics outside the prison, the prisoners fought for their rights to study, to receive mail and visitors, and to play sport within it.

Conditions in the old prison until 1963, and indeed for the next decade in the new prison were terrible. This can be illustrated by the story of Johnson Mlambo, a member of Poqo, the armed wing of the Pan Africanist Congress, who was sent to Robben Island in 1963 on a charge of sabotage. As an African prisoner he was not allowed to wear long trousers, socks or underwear. Indian and coloured prisoners were given socks, shoes and jerseys, and a different (and better) prison diet. Visits and letters were limited; sleeping and ablution facilities were extremely primitive. The lights were never switched off. Prisoners were forced to undergo humiliating body searches and to perform hard manual labour on the Island roads and in its quarries. Ill from exhaustion one day, Mlambo was buried up to the neck in the sand and forced to endure one of the warders' urinating on his head. On other occasions he, like many other prisoners, was physically assaulted by the warders. External pressure from organisations like the United Nations, the Red Cross and Amnesty International, political pressure from people like Helen Suzman within the country, and complaints from prisoners gradually resulted in better conditions in the prison. Organising their complaints through grievance committees, prisoners sought to present a united and powerful front to the authorities. They also made a concerted effort to befriend the harshest warders, seeking thereby to soften their attitudes and to educate them. When negotiations failed, prisoners tried hunger strikes. As Suzman pointed out, the fact that the prisoners were strong, united, organised and well-informed made their resistance more effective.

This pressure on the authorities resulted in an improvement in general living conditions and prisoners were gradually also allowed more study and recreation privileges during the 1970s and 1980s. Robben Island became the 'university' of the anti-Apartheid struggle as prisoners educated themselves, each other and their warders. Some of authorities. Elias Motsoaledi, a Rivonia triallist, was one of those who sought to challenge the prison environment in a different way. He grew grapes, peaches, tomatoes and flowers from carefully salvaged pips and seeds, providing fellow prisoners with a taste of beauty and hope. Prisoners also helped to keep themselves strong, both mentally and physically, by organising team sports, sporting events and competitions among themselves. These activities were important for other reasons too, as Indres Naidoo explained in 1982:

"Before, our enemy had been physical cruelty, now it was boredom, isolation, the psychological decay of an endlessly unproductive and confined existence; so the [mini-Olympic] Games [and

other recreational activities] were an important way of getting ourselves mobilized, using our inner resources to smash the routine and monotonous futility of prison life.”

In the 1980s, the prisoners' Recreation Committee sought to bridge generational and political gaps between prisoners in two of the sections by appealing to the authorities for permission to undertake joint recreational activities, such as soccer and rugby games, and the watching of videos. Imprisonment on Robben Island thus provided anti-Apartheid activists with more than just a period of forced isolation from society: it provided an opportunity to form a community which fought for its collective rights, and strengthened its members emotionally, politically, physically and intellectually.

One personal story which helps to illustrate the triumph of the human spirit over adversity at Robben Island is that of Wilton Mkwayi. Wilton was an ANC activist from Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape who was involved in the organisation of Umkhonto weSizwe, the armed wing of the banned ANC. He was in love with Ireen Mhlongo, a nurse working in a Soweto hospital. After being on the run from the authorities for some months after the Rivonia arrests, Wilton was arrested. After his conviction he was sent to the Robben Island prison in 1964, before he had a chance to marry Ireen. But Wilton did not give up his dream: every year he made an application to marry her from prison, and every year for 23 years he was refused on the grounds that prisoners were not allowed to get married. During this time their relationship was conducted via letters (censored and limited in number), or through the visitors' grille (contact visits were later permitted). Finally, in 1987, the prison authorities relented, and the two were married with quiet dignity in Pollsmoor Prison on the mainland. By this time Mkwayi was 64 and his bride 62. As a special concession, the pair were allowed to spend three hours together after the ceremony – the longest time they had spent together in 24 years. On his return to the Island, Mkwayi celebrated with the other prisoners, but his happiness did not last as Ireen died of cancer the following year, and President P.W. Botha refused permission for him to attend the funeral. It was only after Mkwayi's release a year later that he could erect a tombstone at her grave. In spite of a lifetime of struggle against political and personal oppression Mkwayi was able to find love again – with British nurse Patricia Long, whom he married in 1996.

Robben Island has played a crucial role in the life stories of anti-apartheid heroes who are now key political figures, such as Nelson Mandela, but also in the lives of those who are now dead, such as Robert Sobukwe, and those unsung activists and former prisoners who are still alive, but not in the public eye. Its history also embraces the memories of the large number of family members, fund-raisers such as the International Defence and Aid Fund, lawyers and other loyal supporters of the prisoners during their time of incarceration on the



Island. The former apartheid officials and prison staff, too, have a contribution to offer in documenting the role of the Island in South Africa's past. These stories contribute to the complex web of meaning which surrounds the Island today and makes it the most important but also the most contested site of political symbolism in South Africa. Robben Island's momentous role in some of the most critical events of South African history since 1498 has emerged out of the often overlapping ways in which it has been used and the ways in which it has been remembered. Its new role as a Museum after 1997 represents a significant break with past uses, but simultaneously helps to protect and reconstruct our memories of the Island through the role it now plays in tourism, reconciliation and education in the country.

**c) Form and date of most recent records of property**

The Island has not yet been fully documented by the new Institution the Robben Island Museum, established in 1997. A full scale investigation of the built environment and archaeology is presently underway (as well as various other studies relating to the environment in general).

The current records available are as follows:

Conservation Survey of Robben Island compiled for the National  
Monuments  
Council by Patricia  
Riley, 1993  
(Appendix  
C)

“Operation Sea-Eagle” (A survey of the shipwrecks of Robben Island) Drs B Wertz in collaboration with the National Monuments Council and the South African Navy. 1992

Robben Island: Survey of the Built Environment by Lucien le Grange Architects & Urban Planners and Nicholas Baumann & Revel Fox & Partners Architects & Urban Planners 1998 (Compiled as part of the IEM Process - specialist study) (Appendix F)

Records dealing with the natural environment include the following:

The Wildlife of Robben Island by Dr Rob Crawford, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town (Appendix D)

The Birdlife of Robben Island by Dr Rob Little, Department of Sea Fisheries, Cape Town (Appendix D)

#### **d) Present state of conservation**

The buildings and structures on the Island are varied in the degree to which they have been conserved over the years. The buildings used by the Department of Correctional Services have been regularly maintained by the Department of Public Works and a program was established to restore some of the historic buildings, (under the supervision of the National Monuments Council). These buildings are the old Dutch Reformed Church, the Guesthouse, formerly the Old Residency and the Old Parsonage adjoining it. Very little routine work was however, carried out during the last few years of the island by the Department, hence there exists a need to carry out basic repairs and maintenance to most of the buildings.

The military installations have remained untended since their abandonment in the early 1950's and will require restoration as part of the upgrading process in the Integrated Environmental Management programme. This restoration will be carried out with advice from the experts on military history, who are fully involved with the Museum authorities. A 'military route' will form one of the specialised tours and it is envisaged that these structures will be included in this tour.

The buildings controlled by Portnet, the organisation charged with the responsibility of lighthouse installations, have maintained the historic lighthouse as well as the small modern houses serving the personnel; some additional minor work will be undertaken this year.

As discussed in the chapter dealing with authenticity, many of the buildings have served several purposes since their construction during previous centuries. The layers that have been added to these structures have not been removed and in many cases will remain as an illustration of varying occupancies and uses throughout the history of Robben Island. The condition of many of the structures requires maintenance, in some instances minimal repairs and repainting to the correct colour specifications. Some of the earlier buildings, particularly those that used to house the insane, may in future, be restored under the supervision of the National Monuments Council to illustrate the conditions under which these unfortunates survived their occupation on the island. A final decision on this issue will be taken once the Conservation Plan for Robben Island has been completed.

Services are one of the areas that require considerable attention,

in particular the road surfaces, water supply and sewage. These are currently in the process of upgrading and all work is being undertaken in accordance with the IEM process with full Environmental Impact Assessments being undertaken for all applications.

**Methodology:**

The state of conservation has been established and the results set out below. The map has been divided into sectors as in the Conservation Survey of Robben Island undertaken by Patricia Riley in 1993. Buildings and structures have been marked up on the maps and numbered for ease of cross reference. Each sector has been numbered and the sites within the sector similarly numbered. Brief explanatory notes relating to each structure have been added relating to the present state of the site or structure. This system will be used in future monitoring exercises. (Refer also to section 6 of the nomination file.)

Where many of the buildings are similar in nature, for example the contemporary houses built for the prison staff in the 1960's, these have been grouped together as the comments relate equally to all structures within the group. Significant landscape features have been identified and included in the report in a similar manner.

## **STATE OF CONSERVATION: ROBBEN ISLAND**

### **MAP 1**

- 1.1 Disused stone quarry reopened and worked by the political prisoners after the abandonment of the "Van Riebeeck" quarry to the south. Sea wall later constructed from earth and laid with stones by the prisoners to provide protection from the elements and to prevent tidal flooding.

High exposure to storm tides causing erosion and partial disintegration of the structure. Linked originally to the maximum security prison by a 1km, 2m deep trench, later replaced by an enclosed wire corridor. The quarry itself was fenced on three sides to secure the area. Guard towers and the security fencing of the tunnel and at the quarry are no longer extant.

Highly significant as an integral component of the 'landscape of prisoners' and in terms of its ability to demonstrate an attitude towards punishment. Restoration of sea wall and possible recreation of link to prison according to National Monuments Council requirements.

### **MAP 2**

- 2.1 Old stone (granite) quarry. Utilised between 1961 and 1974 where the political prisoners were sent on work parties. Indicated on the Sels map of 1794 which could indicate that the quarry was in existence at the time of the Dutch East India Company occupation. Abandoned.
- 2.2 Cornelia Battery, World War II fortifications including concrete pill boxes, a command post, 2 gun emplacements with stores and underground magazines, a bunker and a store. All structures have been abandoned since the end of the War and require maintenance and require to form part of the proposed military history route on Robben Island. Significant as an integral part of the 'military landscape'. Condition: derelict.

### **MAP 3**

- 3.1 Shooting Range - impressive random stone wall behind moving target trench - machinery very rusty. Shooting ridges are still visible, there is no imminent threat to the structure. Condition: abandoned.
- 3.2 Disused shooting range clubhouse, light maintenance required. Condition: fair/poor.

- 3.3 Spring and tidal pool also known as the leper's pool as it is said that the female lepers were permitted to bathe there. The pool is in a ruined state although it still holds water. This structure may require stabilisation after severe winter storms. Abandoned.
- 3.4 Runway for small aircraft constructed as part of the fortification of the Island during the Second World War. The runway requires extensive and expensive maintenance and is now only used for helicopter landings. Condition: poor.

#### **MAP 4**

- 4.1 - 4.3 World War II structures serving the Cornelia Battery including a small arms magazine, stores and offices. The buildings are derelict and require maintenance and repair. Significant as part of the military landscape and proposed to form part of the military route. Condition: poor.

- 4.4 The old prison, "die Ou Tronk" later adapted to accommodate the trade training centre for the Department of Correctional Services.

The old prison originally consisted of fourteen different buildings some of which are extant. It had a holding capacity of some five hundred inmates. None of the communal cells had toilets or running water. Ablution facilities were provided in two separate blocks. Some of the buildings were constructed of brick. The walls of several of the communal cells, the administration block and the kitchen were prefabricated. Three separate sections accommodated prisoners with different classifications. Isolation cells and a small hospital formed part of the complex.

Highly significant in terms of its role in the 'landscape of prisoners' It accommodated the first political prisoners sent to the Island in 1962, mostly members of the PAC and Poqo. Nelson Mandela was also briefly imprisoned in the old prison prior to the Rivonia trial. The Rivonia trialists were held in the isolation cells for a short while after the trial prior to their relocation to Section B of the new maximum security prison which was under construction.

During 1963 and 1964 the prison was vastly overcrowded with sixty to seventy prisoners in each cell. Common law prisoners were mixed with political prisoners and some of the worst excesses of the prison experience occurred in this complex. The prison was closed down when the new maximum prison and the Zinc Tronk (zinc jail) was opened in 1964. Parts of the prison were demolished but other sections were retained and later adapted as a training centre.

Highly significant, as an integral component of the 'landscape of prisoners' and in terms of its ability to demonstrate an attitude to punishment which sought to break the human spirit. Its material remains symbolizes human suffering and the fortitude and endurance of the political prisoners that prevailed.

The condition of the buildings is generally poor. The complex should be the subject of a detailed conservation study to establish the extent and condition of the original structures and an appropriate strategy for conservation.

4.5 Old degaussing station from World War II, derelict. Significant in terms of its role as part of the military landscape. Condition: poor.

4.6 Stores, post 1961, requires light maintenance. Condition: fair.

4.7 Visiting facilities for prisoners, c1964

Significant element of the "landscape of prisoners" in terms of attitudes towards punishment and the manipulation of political prisoners contact with the outside world.

The complex is presently used as an introductory facility for visitors to the Robben Island Museum. Condition: good.

4.8 - 4.9 Murray's Harbour. Constructed originally in 1940 as an integral part of the Island's fortification system during the Second World War. Enlarged in 1956/7 and later in 1987/88.

The working harbour includes arrival and administrative buildings, a small shop and restroom facilities.

The site is significant in terms of its being the first point of contact with the Island for arriving prisoners and its relationship with the maximum security prison immediately to the west. The site also has archaeological significance as the original Dutch East Indian Company outpost was located within the precinct.

4.10 - 4.13 The Maximum Security Prison

The prison is the core component of the "landscape of prisoners" and one of four prisons utilised on the Island between 1960 and 1996, the others being the old prison, 4.4., the zinc prison and the common law prison.

The complex retains its integrity and is the subject of an intensive study regarding its use and presentation to the public.

It is highly significant in terms of its symbolic role, epitomizing the role of Island as a place of banishment and isolation, of suffering

and hope, of resistance and tolerance and the eventual triumph of the human spirit over enormous hardship and adversity.

The prison was built in a series of phases from 1963 and reflects the changing attitude towards punishment and the role of the Island as an echo of political changes over time in the broader national context.

It was constructed using common law and political prisoner labour.

Design capacity was for approximately 650 prisoners. The seven cell blocks were given alphabetical designations from A to G. Sections A, B and C consisted of single, solitary or isolation cells built around three sides of a courtyard. The rest comprised communal cells, each accommodating approximately sixty prisoners.

Section B, comprising thirty cells located on both sides of a corridor running the length of the prison wing, accommodated the Rivonia trialists and others. Each cell measures approximately 2m x 2m.

Initially inmates were allowed no furniture and slept on mats on the floor. In 1977 beds were provided with a small stool and table. None of the cells had toilet facilities.

Significant personalities of the country's political and intellectual leadership, including President Nelson Mandela, were incarcerated in this wing.

The influx of prisoners after the Soweto riots of 1976 resulted in physical changes to the prison including the insertion of high walls to increase security and isolation. Later additions included recreational facilities, largely a result of pressure exercised from outside agencies including the International Red Cross. Helen Suzman was also active in maintaining international and national attention focused on the Island.

Namibian prisoners were kept in complete isolation with no contact with the South African political prisoners for the first four years. They were initially incarcerated in a section of the zinc prison and then transferred to a separate wing of the new maximum security prison. Toivo ya Toivo was held with the high security prisoners in Section B of the new prison.

The physical condition of the prison is fair to good. Rusting metal work needs attention.



The zinc tronk (prison) was located at the rear north west wing of the maximum security prison, on the site now occupied by the sportsfields. The prison was partly constructed of brick but predominantly comprised corrugated iron sheeting attached to a wooden frame set on a concrete base. It consisted on three separate sections accommodating common law prisoners, ANC and PAC and Namibian prisoners (SWAPO). A small section of the prison was also used as a prison hospital until the hospital wing of the new prison was completed.

The prison was demolished in 1974.

- 4.15 Kramat, used regularly by the local Muslim population, good condition. This building was constructed over the 1745 grave of the prophet Hadje Mattarm. Condition: good.
- 4.16 Lime Quarry, abandoned.

The site is a highly significant component of the "landscape of prisoners" in terms of the ability to demonstrate the role of hard labour in the attempt to crush the spirit of the political prisoners and the use of the site as a forum for political debate and education.

It is one of the largest of at least nine quarries that have existed on the Island over time. The quality of the lime was not adequate for building purposes and was used mostly for surfacing the roads on the Island.

Prisoners from Section B initially worked in isolation in the stone quarry in the north west. They were later transferred to the lime quarry where they laboured in all weather conditions and the glare of the sun off the white walls and the lime dust caused permanent eye damage. Hard labour in the quarry lasted for thirteen years and was suspended in 1997.

Conditions in the quarry were a source of constant struggle between the political prisoners and the warders. The cessation of quarrying activities in 1977 and a range of small incremental victories were the result of a sustained campaign by the prisoners and the International Red Cross and individuals such as Helen Suzman. The quarry was thus an arena for the conduct of the struggle and also a place of reconciliation where mutual respect developed between warden and prisoners.

The duality which contributes to the symbolic value of the island of suffering and hope, of resistance and tolerance is embodied in the cultural landscape of the lime quarry.

The harsh dramatic physical quality of the quarry is being threatened by the infestation of alien vegetation and intervention is required to retain its symbolic significance.

#### **MAP 5**

- 5.1 Radar Station with tower, of concrete construction. Light maintenance required. No longer in use. Condition: poor.
- 5.2 Disused building-light maintenance required. Condition: fair.
- 5.3 Ruins - nothing left standing other than marker posts.
- 5.4 Ruins - nothing left standing other than marker posts.
- 5.5 Below ground bunker with metal shutter flaps, the swivels for the guns remain. Condition: derelict.

#### **MAP 6**

6.1 - 6.3 Maximum security prison, as for 4.10 - 4.13.

6.4 World War II blockhouse. Condition: derelict.

6.5 Stores, disused. Condition: poor.

6.6 Graveyard of the lepers.

Highly significant component of the leper colony period, 'the landscape of the infirm' c1846 to 1931. The forceful incarceration of leprosy patients on the Island and the attitude of isolation and banishment reinforced the role of the Island as a dumping ground for what were perceived to be social misfits. The separation of the races, sexes and different classes of patients further reinforced the central idea of separation, both from the mainland and between different groups of people on the Island.

A very small portion of the graveyard which extends up to the maximum security prison has been cleared. Much of it is overgrown and headstones are being damaged. Extensive clearing and repair is required. Condition: poor.

6.7 Stores, these buildings were erected during World War II for the SANF sub-depot Robben Island (SWANS), and they were popularly known as HMSAS Cement. Condition: fair generally.

6.8 - 6.9 Disused building and brickworks.

6.10 Robert Sobukwe House

The Robert Sobukwe House is located adjacent to the quarantine

station for dogs, erected near Murray's Bay in 1893, with twenty eight kennels and special staff quarters. From 1963 Robert Sobukwe was held here in solitary confinement for a period of 6 years.

Highly significant in terms of the attitude to separation and banishment of political prisoners and the implications of the General Law Amendment Bill which specifically introduced the Sobukwe clause which enabled Robert Sobukwe to be detained without trial after his initial sentence had expired.

The isolation and separation of Robert Sobukwe from the rest of the political prisoners epitomised the symbolic role of the Island as a place of banishment and the different forms this sense of isolation took. He had no direct contact with any other prisoners on the Island and was never allowed to participate in the sport or cultural activities which were organised by the prisoners.

6.11 Living quarters for Department of Correctional Services personnel.  
Condition: fair.

6.12 - 6.16 World War II bunker and blockhouse, now abandoned.  
Condition: derelict.

6.13 Ruined structure, only foundations and concrete slab remain.

6.14 Church of the Good Shepherd (Leper Church). Structurally sound, requires maintenance of roof and joinery urgently. Unused at present, the Church of the Province (the owner) has undertaken to complete a full restoration to the requirements of the National Monuments Council. Condition: fair/poor.

6.15 Medium Security Prison

Used exclusively to accommodate common law prisoners after 1974 when they were moved out of the maximum security prison and zinc prison.

Until then common law prisoners were mixed with political prisoners in the maximum security and used as a means of breaking the spirit and solidarity of the political prisoners.

When in 1991, the political prisoners were released, common law prisoners were again accommodated in the maximum security prison. Until 1993 approximately seven hundred common law prisoners were incarcerated in this building.

Significant component of the "landscape of prisoners" in terms of its role as one of the remaining prisons on the Island.

Unutilised at present and maintenance required. There is the possibility that early historic fabric is contained within the structure and archaeological investigation is required. Condition: fair.

6.17 - 6.18 Pumphouses, general maintenance.

6.19 Refer to 4.16.

6.20-6.21 Chicken run and greenhouses, disused.

Condition: poor. Significant in terms of the cultivated landscape and the extent to which this reflects the changing role and use of the Island over time.

From the early 1830 concerns about the use of low lying bushes for fuel and the overgrazing of the pastures, particularly by large flocks of sheep and rabbits which were introduced by van Riebeeck resulted in the planting of trees to attempt to stabilise the driftsand. In 1892 some 26 000 trees were planted on the Island. In the same year shooting rights on the Island were granted to A Ohlsson who fenced off a portion to the south west and planted wattle and shrubs over an extension area.

Efforts to green the Island with various programmes of tree and grass planting continued into the twentieth century. In 1907, convicts were used to plant thousands of trees supplied from mainland nurseries. Special outdoor enclosures were constructed where trees and hedges were planted to control the driftsand.

During the second World War extensive efforts were made to plant trees around the two main batteries to provide camouflage. Because of its isolation the Island has lately been used by the agricultural college at Stellenbosch as an isolated breeding yard to maintain pure strains of the African Yellow Honey bee.

The cultivated landscape is significant in reflecting the changing nature of the Island. Cultivated stands are being threatened by the spread of alien and invasive vegetation and intervention is required.

## MAP 7

7.1 - 7.4 Military installation including gun emplacements, shelters and stores. The group identified as 7.4 have dense planting on top of the concrete roof slabs. Historically significant. The metal fittings are not as badly corroded as those in the bunkers and pill boxes on the coast. All structures require maintenance and some restoration. Condition: derelict.

## **MAP 8**

8.1 Pumphouse, filtration plant and reservoir, the facility will be replaced during the services upgrade. Structures require light maintenance. Condition: fair.

8.2 Transport Division, group of buildings used by the works division. Light maintenance required. Condition: fair.

8.3 - 8.4 Refer to 6.15.

8.5 - 8.9 Staff houses, (post 1961). Condition: good.

8.10 Office building (post 1961). Condition: good.

8.11 - 8.23 Staff houses (post 1961). Condition: good

8.24 46 Beach Road. Historical cottages dating from the late nineteenth century. Insensitive additions. Require further investigation in terms of role with the General Infirmary e.g. to establish whether they were the accommodation for private white patients. Condition: good.

8.25 - 8.26 Sports facilities including clubhouse and field, tennis courts. Condition: fair.

8.27 Sick Bay (post 1961). Condition: fair.

8.28 Staff Club House, formerly Medical Superintendents House, c1846. Considerable significance within the landscape of the infirm as marking the transfer from Military Command to General Infirmary. Although both the exterior and interior have been extensively remodelled sufficient original fabric and documentary evidence warrants consideration for restoration. Condition: fair.

8.29 Old Power Station - industrial building. Condition: poor.

8.30 Post Office, constructed 1941. Condition: good.

8.31a Part of old Female Asylum dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Of considerable significance within the 'landscape of the infirm' in terms of its historical role of accommodating the mentally disabled and the attitudes of banishment and separation of the sexes.

Possibility of restoring to original. Condition: fair.

8.31b-d Post 1961 building serving various functions. Condition: fair.

8.31e Part of the old Female Asylum dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Of considerable significance within the 'landscape of the infirm' in terms of its historical role of accommodating the mentally disabled and the attitudes of banishment and separation of the sexes.

Significant landmark quality negatively impacted by prefabricated sheds to the south.

Requires considerable maintenance including a new roof, painting, and the cleaning of stonework. Could be considered for restoration to original state. Condition: poor.

8.32 'John Craig Hall', post 1961. Condition: good.

8.33 Rectory, Anglican Parsonage, c.1845

Of considerable historic significance in terms of the role of the church within the General Infirmary. Extensively remodelled with parapets to the front and sides. Interior almost intact. One of the earliest structures on the Island and should be considered for restoration. Condition: good.

8.35 Assistant Medical Officers House, c.1894

Of considerable historic significance in terms of its role within the General Infirmary. In relatively good condition and should be considered for restoration.

8.36 Anglican Church c.1841

Of considerable historic and aesthetic significance. Designed by Sir John Bell, constructed with convict labour and the first religious building on the Island.

Maintenance required, including the removal of unsuitable exterior paint finish and replacement with lime-based finish. Condition: good.

8.37 Portion of old Male Insane Asylum c.1846

Significant component of the "landscape of the infirm". Requires light maintenance and possible restoration to original stone finish. Condition fair/good.

8.38 Shop, includes early historic structure.

Further archaeological investigation of fabric required. Condition: fair.

8.39 Old Pharmacy c.1894

Significant component of the General Infirmary period. Condition: fair.

8.40 - 8.74 Modern buildings (housing), constructed between 1940 - 1980. All in good condition.

8.75 34 Church Street, historic building, requires light maintenance - currently being replastered internally. Condition: good.

8.77 Swimming pool, in use. Condition: fair.

8.78 - Structures connected with World War II collectively known as the Robben Island

8.89 Battery. Highly significant component of the military landscape. Now abandoned, their condition ranges from fair to poor.

## MAP 9

9.1 'Varney's Fort'

Second World War structure. The structure allegedly built by Varney is in the immediate vicinity. He was a male mental patient who constructed a stone circular wall "for his own protection" in case the Island was "attacked". He made lime for the "engineers" on the Island and was not subject to the normal discipline. Evidence of his activities featured in the 1861 Commission of Inquiry. The structure is abandoned. Condition: derelict.

9.2 - 9.5/6 World War II bunkers, abandoned. These structures are highly visible and require restoration. Condition derelict.

9.3 World War II SWANS Barracks now abandoned, highly visible and require restoration. Condition: derelict.

9.4 'Varneys Lime Works', simple pebble deflation, requires restoration. Condition: derelict.

## MAP 10

10.1 World War I Battery Observation point.

Highly significant component of the military landscape. Concrete-bag finish; metal and fair-concrete spalling. General maintenance required. Abandoned and used for radio, TV masts. Condition:

derelict.

- 10.2 Lighthouse, designed by John Scott Tucker, foundation stone laid 23 January 1862. Constructed using local stone on Minto Hill, the highest point on the Island and on the same location where van Riebeeck had lit signal fires to serve as a navigational aid and signalling system. The lighthouse has operated for the last one hundred and thirty years and it thus represents the only continuous and permanent activity on the Island over this period.

Highly significant in terms of the symbolic role of the Island as "beacon of hope". Excellent potential for full restoration including the removal of oil-based paints. Condition: fair/good.

- 10.3 - 10.4 Modern buildings used for housing staff. Condition: fair.

- 10.5 Personnel Graveyard (c.1858 - 1923)

Historically significant component of the General Infirmary period. The staff of the Infirmary and their families lie buried here.

The site requires clearing and repair to headstone and the dry stone walling that surrounds the graveyard. Condition: derelict.

- 10.5a Timber Celtic Cross

- 10.6 Primary School, previously Library and Billiard Room c.1894.

The core section possibly the original lime house illustrated on the 1846 drawing. Also previously a ward for the chronically sick.

Highly significant in historic terms and the layering which reflects different stages of the Island's history.

- 10.7 Store, modern structure. Condition: fair.

- 10.8 Faure Jetty, reinforced concrete pier, built 1896.

Historically significant. The structure is highly visible. The concrete is in a poor condition and requires restoration. Condition: poor.

- 10.9 The Residency c. 1895; now the Island Guest House.

Victorian stone dwelling with corrugated iron roof and timber verandah. The building is historically significant in terms of its role in accommodating the Commissioner for the Island from 1895.

Inappropriate recreation of octagonal tower in 1989 and interior refitting should be reconsidered. Condition: good.



- 10.9b Dutch Reformed Parsonage, similar in appearance to 10.9a but possibly earlier. Recently renovated and linked to 10.9a as part of guest house. Condition: good.
- 10.10- 10.24 Residential buildings, modern currently undergoing routine maintenance. Condition: good.
- 10.25 Modern buildings accommodating a pumphouse and the Pub, originally the site of the slaughterhouse. Light maintenance required. Condition: good.
- 10.26 World War II barracks, abandoned. Condition: derelict.
- 10.27 Van Riebeeck Slate quarry.

Probably the oldest worked site on the Island. Established at the time of Van Riebeeck and extensively mined by the Dutch for stone used in building works on the mainland. The quarry remained in use, intermittently, for approximately three hundred and twenty years. It was finally closed in 1963. Historically of considerable significance. Dutch graffiti in the vicinity is also of historic significance and requires protective intervention.

e) **Policies and programmes related to the presentation and promotion of the property**

In the eighteen months that the Robben Island Museum has been established a vigorous media campaign has been embarked upon to publicize the new Museum and it's status a national monument and conservation showcase both nationally and internationally.

A strategic planning process was implemented by the Interim Management authority of the Robben Island Museum in 1997. The draft development and management plan emanating from this process will soon be finalised and submitted to the new Robben Island Council for approval. Deriving from the vision and mission of the new Museum, the new Robben Island Museum Development Plan will be based on the following criteria and principles:

- \* economic sustainability and cost efficiency: taking into account the development of partnerships with outside stakeholders, which benefit previously marginalised communities
- \* environmental sustainability: taking into account natural environmental conditions, possible impact on the health of the Island's inhabitants and visitors and the maximum environmental friendliness
- \* the historical significance of all resources: this includes the tangible and intangible historical values of the broader natural and cultural history of Robben Island
- \* current and future multi-purpose use of resources: taking

into account the Island's status as a national monument and consequent limit on development of new structures, but the adaptation and restoration/renovation of existing buildings, structures and sites for museum activities

Following the values of an integrated environmental management system, the Robben Island Museum emphasizes the equal consideration of all the above principles and factors in all its development initiatives. The Museum will always strive towards finding an adequate balance of the above factors in any development initiative, by employing thorough research methods in the planning exercise. These will be adequately presented in a public participation exercise to promote the values of transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, in terms of the issues and criteria presented in the section on authenticity earlier in the document it is intended that any proposed development should have minimal intervention upon the existing historical environment but be in line with the concept of a dynamic layering and over layering in a dynamic manner which is the hallmark of the Robben Island experience.

These principles are to be founded upon sound financial management systems based upon the subsidy received from the State as well as independent income generation. Accounting and control systems approved by both the State and private sector have been established and will be audited by both internal and external auditors on an annual basis.

#### Specific Development Areas

##### Programmes to promote the Cultural and Natural Heritage

These specific programmes will focus upon the cultural and natural heritage of Robben Island and ways in which the Museum can present, conserve and further research these aspects.

Robben Island has a rich and diverse history stretching back several thousand years, the last 500 years of which have been well documented. These resources will be used and managed by the Robben Island Museum in an holistic and integrated manner but with special significance being placed upon the recent past and the universal symbolism of the Island as a symbol of "the triumph of the human spirit" over tremendous hardship and adversity.

Areas in the historical development of Robben Island that will also receive special attention and which will be the focus of exhibitions and displays include the following:

- \* Shipwrecks and the early European and colonial influence upon South Africa in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries as the modern global economy emerged
- \* the indigenous peoples (the Khoi Khoi, including historical personalities such as Autshumato and Krotoa)
- \* Slavery and links with the African and world slave route
- \* The influence of Islam both on the Cape and specifically the construction of the five holy shrines or Kramats, one of which is situated on Robben Island and which forms part of what is known in this country as the “Holy Circle of Islam”
- \* The anti colonial struggles of the nineteenth century
- \* Industry and life on Robben Island, with special emphasis upon the whaling activities, the development of the quarries and the tram-line
- \* The medical history of South Africa focussing on the lepers and the insane held on Robben Island
- \* World War II
- \* The Island as an internationally notorious political prison post-1960 (when the anti-apartheid freedom fighters were first brought to Robben Island)

The development of the cultural landscape as a result of these layers of human habitation upon Robben Island will also be considered when developing these initiatives.

The conservation and utilisation of Robben Island's natural resources will take into account the following:

- \* the harvesting and sustainable management of the natural resources including marine resources such as line-fish, abalone, rock lobster and seaweed
- \* the cultivation of terrestrial vegetation such as wood, herbs and vegetables by hydroponic methods
- \* the conservation and management of terrestrial fauna such as antelope and ostriches as well as the bird life on the Island

## Final Development Programme and Phased Implementation

It is envisaged that a complete document detailing the Development Programme will be finalised by the end of March 1999 (the end of the current financial year). The phased implementation of the Development Programme will occur over the next five to seven years. The phasing of the various stages of the Plan will be closely linked to and informed by the Integrated Environmental Management System and will include such aspects of the Programme as indicated below:

### Education

The use planning exercise will take into account educational activities and programmes which will be integrated with tours and heritage interpretation. Educational activities (using appropriate technologies) will include international conferences and fora, seminars and workshops, specialist programmes for a variety of audiences and cultural programmes.

### Transport

The investigation of provision for a variety of vehicles (environmentally appropriate) for the use of staff, residents and visitors to the Island. These could include bicycles, mini-busses for the shuttling of visitors including VIPs, special groups, researchers and disabled visitors, a limited number of medium sized buses for tours by day and overnight tourists and school groups, the development of a tram-line along a historically determined route, and walking routes.

### Accommodation

A future use planning exercise will take into account the following planned activities. Self catering facilities for the general public, a corporate precinct operated on a time-share basis, a youth centre, conference facilities, and facilities for staff, overnight visitors and researchers.

Other identified activities include the provision and establishment of shops and catering facilities, fund raising and sponsorship, the provision of permanent conference facilities and the upgrading and ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure and services on the Island.

### Mainland Facilities

It is important that the Robben Island Museum develops its existing facilities on the mainland and establishes satellite

information and display centres to serve those visitors unable to visit Robben Island itself. The concept of travelling exhibitions will also be considered as many South Africans are unable to visit Cape Town. Various administrative activities relating to the Museum are also housed on the mainland.

For this purpose several zones on the mainland have been identified and will form part of the phased development and implementation of the project. These include:

1. The formalisation of links with the Mayibuye Centre, which serves as a national repository for documentation relating to the anti-apartheid struggle and which contains many valuable documents created by the political prisoners held on the Island. The Centre is presently housed at the University of the Western Cape.
2. The Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, where the embarkation offices and ferry departure points are situated. The development of the proposed "Gateway Centre" will also be situated here.
3. Community outreach facilities and programmes. (Such as Cowley House in District Six, Cape Town, which housed many of the families visiting the political prisoners held on Robben Island).

#### **4. MANAGEMENT**

##### **a) Ownership**

The Island is owned by two Institutions, the State owns the large portion (99%) of the Island and the nautical mile surrounding it. A small area situated to the north of the village, containing the Church of the Good Shepherd is owned by the Church of the Province of South Africa.

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## **b) Legal status**

The Island is both a declared national monument and a declared cultural institution in terms of government statutes.

The National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969 as amended identifies and protects the Island as a nationally significant heritage resource and affords it the highest level of protection for such resources in the country. The National Monuments Council is the agency responsible for the implementation of the National Monuments Act, any proposal involving any changes whatsoever to a national monument must receive approval from the National Monuments Council. The buffer zone of one nautical mile around Robben Island is also included in the protection offered by this Act.

The current National Monuments Act will be replaced in the near future with a new Heritage Bill, which is in draft stage at present. This new Act will significantly alter the manner in which heritage resources are managed; the intention of this Bill is to effect management of such resources at the most appropriate level of government for such resources e.g. many heritage resources are of local importance and will be managed by the local authority, similarly provincial authorities will manage sites and places of provincial significance and the national body will be responsible for national "heritage sites". As Robben Island is one of South Africa's most important heritage sites it will enjoy protection as the national level and continue to be managed by the new national heritage authority.

The Cultural Institutions Act No 29 of 1969 establishes the criteria by which such Institutions are created and managed. In the case of Robben Island the Museum is run by a Director and a management committee within the parameters of this Act. The Act sets out the responsibilities of the management of the Museum and the duties of the Robben Island Council. Aspects such as the auditing of financial affairs are also covered in the Cultural Institutions Act.

(Refer also to Appendix A: National Monuments Act and Cultural Institutions Act.)



**c) Protective measures and means of implementing them**

The National Monuments Act, detailed above and in Appendix A, offers protection to the Island together with its natural and cultural assets as well as the one nautical mile buffer zone surrounding it. The intertidal zone also enjoys protection from the Sea Shore Act No 21 of 1935, which protects and controls the use and ownership of the strip of beach between the high and low water marks. (Appendix A)

No alteration, restoration, repair, maintenance, demolition work or any other change, to any part of Robben Island, however minor, may be undertaken without the necessary permission from the National Monuments Council. This takes the form of a legal permit of approval, which is issued upon receipt of a formal application for such alteration. The applications are considered by a committee constituted by the National Monuments Council and comprising experts in various fields of cultural conservation.

In the case of Robben Island, with its attendant environmental protections, (of which cultural resources play a part thereof in terms of the Environment Conservation Act No 73 of 1989-Appendix A), certain listed activities specified in Section 21, Schedule 1 and 2 of this Act requiring Environmental Impact Assessments, must be undertaken. A complete set of documentation is required for each application accompanied by a full motivation. These listed activities include water supply facilities and reservoirs, sewage treatment plants and related infrastructure as well as roads. Various changes in land use also require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

**d) Agency with management authority**

The Robben Island Museum, established in accordance with a decision by the Cabinet of the South African Parliament, is the authority responsible for the day to day management and conservation of the Island. The Director, appointed by the Robben Island Museum Council, is the individual directly responsible:

Professor Andre Odendaal (The Director)

Robben Island Museum

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It is important to note for further clarification that in terms of a decision by the South African Parliament to ratify the World Heritage Convention in June 1997 and later confirmed by the World Heritage Centre the responsibility for the co-ordination of the Convention is the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism

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**e) Level at which management authority is exercised**

The Director of the Robben Island Museum is responsible for the management of the Museum and related activities. He reports to the Robben Island Council, a body of 18 persons nominated by public process and selected by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology to form the governing body of the Museum. (In terms of the Cultural Institutions Act). The Council is tasked with issues such as policy development and financial issues and is not involved in the day-to-day management of the Museum. The Robben Island Council is comprised of equal numbers of ex political prisoners and specialists with relevant expertise such as historians, conservationists, lawyers, environmentalists etc.

The Director is also supported by a team of managers who are responsible for various aspects of the Museum, including Estates and Services, Heritage, Human Resources, Tours and Media as well as Financial Management.

**f) Agreed plans related to property**

The future development of Robben Island will proceed in accordance with the development framework laid out in the Cabinet recommendations of 4 September 1996 as well as the report of the Future of Robben Island Committee informed by an extensive public participation process in which approximately 200 proposals were received.

The Cabinet recommendations were that:

“Robben Island should be developed as a World Heritage Site, National Monument and National Museum, which can become a cultural and conservation showcase for the new South African democracy, while at the same time maximising the economic, tourism and educational potential of the island, and so encouraging that multi-purpose usage.

The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology should become the new controlling authority, taking over from the Department of Correctional Services on 1 January 1997.

The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, in terms of the Cultural Institutions Act should name Robben Island a Declared Cultural Institution and appoint a governing Council and Director.

With regard to the Museum functions above, Robben Island should be run as a site museum, where the total environment is preserved in an integrated way, in line with modern international conservation approaches, and that the ex-political prison be converted into a Museum of the Freedom Struggle in South Africa.

The Robben Island Museum should be conceptualised and built upon three pillars: Robben Island as the core; administrative facilities and a complementary site on the mainland; and a national and international function, designed both to promote international co-operation and to connect directly to broader transformation processes in South African society, for example by reinforcing and giving direction to the plethora of other legacy projects being proposed countrywide to deal with the struggle for and the establishment of democracy in South Africa.

In order to equip the new Robben Island Museum in an expeditious and cost effective way, the Minister should request the University of the Western Cape to agree to the incorporation of

the Mayibuye Centre and the non-profit-initiated Robben Island Gateway project in the new Robben Island Institution.

After taking control on 1 January 1997, the new controlling authority should initiate a systematic and broadly participative planning process, facilitated by a suitably qualified agency, for the long term development and multi-purpose use of Robben island.

The special history of Robben Island be taken into account during the planning and development process, amongst others via the inclusion of ex-political prisoners and a representative from the President's Office on the Council of the new Declared Cultural Institution, as well as through arrangements which can contribute to the socio-upliftment of ex-prisoners.

The new controlling authority should make special efforts to generate income independently of State funds, inter alia by establishing a Robben Island Trust, with President Mandela as patron-in-chief and a panel of distinguished South African and international trustees.

The redevelopment of Robben Island should be phased.”

The Robben Island Museum, operating as a living or site museum, aims to develop the Island as a national and international heritage and conservation project for the new millennium. In managing it's resources and activities, the museum strives to maintain the unique symbolism of the Island, to nurture creativity and innovation, and to contribute to socio-economic development, the transformation of South African Society and the enrichment of humanity.

In interpreting its vision, the Robben Island Museum constantly focuses on the following core essences:

- \* the political and universal symbolism of Robben Island
- \* the cultural and natural heritage and resources of Robben Island
- \* Robben Island as a platform for critical debate and lifelong learning
- \* Robben Island as an institution which ensures economic sustainability and development

**g) Sources and levels of finance**

Robben Island Museum is funded by the State through the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. The infrastructure and buildings on the Island are funded by the Department of Public Works. The Robben Island Museum also accrues an income through overseas donor funding from agencies such as NORAD and SIDA, sponsorships from the South African private sector and fees and profits made through the running of the tours and sales from the shops and restaurant on Robben Island. Project income for 1998/9 includes:

**INCOME SOURCE**( S A Government and funds generated directly by the Museum)

**AMOUNT**(in S A Rands, US Dollars in brackets)

Ferry Service income:	6,000,000	(\$1.165mil)
Mess/Restaurant Sales	100,000	(\$19 417.00)
Shop Sales:	2,000,000	(\$388 350.00)
Guest House Sales	100,00	(\$19 417.00)
Administration	50,000	(\$9 708.00)
Post Office Sales	100,000	(\$19 417.00)
State Subsidy	24,298,000	(\$4,72mil)
Interest on Investments	1,000,000	(\$194 174.00)
Media Core Sales	15,000	(\$2 912.00)
Petrol Sales	20,000	( 3 883.00)
Rentals: Hall, Conference	20,000	(\$ 3 883.00)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33,703,000</b>	<b>(\$6,54mil)</b>

An additional financial grant has been allocated to Robben Island by Norway to fund the development of an Integrated Environmental Management System and the preparation of the nomination for World Heritage Site Status. This aid package amounts to 3 million Norwegian Kroner (approximately R 1,95 Million, depending on fluctuating rate of exchange) The Department of Public Works has made an amount of R 11 million (\$ 2,13mil.) available from State emergency funds for the upgrading of the infrastructure on Robben Island.

**h) Sources and expertise and training in conservation and management techniques**

In order to run the Museum and manage Robben Island as a national monument successfully various skills have been identified as being necessary within the staffing structure of the Museum. These include managerial and financial skills, experience in the management of the cultural and natural environments as well as specific conservation skills relating to the built environment, the natural environment, and curatorial duties. Any shortcomings existing at present will be addressed by specialist consultants who have, as part of their brief, the requirement to develop capacity by training the staff of the Robben Island Museum in the required skills.

The Robben Island Museum has developed relationships with various local and international conservation training and professional bodies.

An agreement with ICCROM has been reached whereby the Robben Island Museum will send a number of its staff for training in conservation methods and techniques. This will occur at the ICCROM headquarters in Rome.

The Robben Island Museum has and is continually increasing its contacts with world-renowned museums and training institutes, such as the Smithsonian Institute, Amistad Research Centre, Paul Getty Institute, ICOMOS (International), the Commission on Preservation and Access (USA), the International Federation of Film Archives and other conservation institutions.

The Robben Island Museum is an institutional member of the South African Chapter of ICOMOS, which ensures that any training opportunities are made available. The Museum is also a member of SAMA, the South African Museums Association School for Conservation, which also offers training opportunities in the field of specialist techniques relating in particular to the conservation of historic building materials.

Although formal training in conservation has not until now been offered at a tertiary level the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg is in the process of formulating a masters degree in heritage management, and the Robben Island Museum itself, together with the University of the Western Cape and the University of Cape Town, has developed a post graduate degree in heritage training to assist disadvantaged students to enter the sphere of heritage resource management.

A management policy to develop a special programme to train the artisans and workman employed by the Department of Public Works on Robben Island will also be initiated this year. This will

ensure that maintenance work done to the buildings on Robben Island is done correctly and with the due consideration necessary for historic buildings and structures. This programme will be structured by the National Monuments Council in collaboration with the national Department of Public Works.

In the field of Environmental Education, budgetary allocations have been set aside for the training of staff in environmental management techniques. Several of the South African Universities offer post graduate degrees in this field, including the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.



## **I) Visitor facilities and statistics**

Because Robben Island is protected by both heritage and environmental conservation measures, the number of visitors to and inhabitants on the Island is strictly controlled. Environmental Impact Assessments, in line with the national environmental legislation, are part of the management plan which necessitates that impact assessments of each prospective development is carried out.

The maximum number of visitors currently permitted on the Island has been determined by an environmental impact assessment carried out during 1997 prior to the promulgation of the regulations attendant to the Environment Conservation Act (referred to in Section 4 c). This exercise was undertaken to ascertain the carrying capacity of Robben Island and resulted in a recommendation that the Island could take 1 200 visitors per day upon condition that the service infrastructure was upgraded. The impact of the increase in visitor numbers will be monitored on an on-going basis and the results of this preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment will be audited in the first phase of the Integrated Environmental System in the process of development at present.

**j) Property management plan and statement of objectives**

Robben Island is managed according to a Property Management Agreement between the Robben Island Museum, the National Monuments Council and the Department of Public Works. This agreement, which is in the process of being established, will set out detailed maintenance schedules relating to the structures, buildings and services upon the Island, as well as the natural landscape in which these are found. ( Issues such as limited vegetation clearing, which may be necessary, will fall under this category) This management procedure will be finalised at the end of October, simultaneously with the first phase of the environmental management system discussed below.

An integrated environmental management approach, which includes an environmental policy, environmental management plan and environmental management systems is currently being developed for Robben Island to ensure that the negative impact of all future development is minimised. This has been funded by a grant from Norway. The environmental management procedure is recommended by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and involves public participation and the mitigation of any negative impact on both the natural and cultural environments. The Environmental Management System will be developed in a series of phases with the first phase consisting of the complete draft scheduled for completion in October 1998. The entire process will be completed by the end of December 2000. More details of this process are contained in **Appendix B**.

**k) Staffing levels (Professional, technical and maintenance)**

The staffing complement of the museum is detailed in the organogram and table below.

The Department of Public Works permanently employs approximately 30 people, who are involved in maintenance and repair work on Robben Island. The maintenance and renovation standards used are guided by the National Monuments Council guidelines and permits, as well as Robben Island Museum policy documents. (Any restoration work will be carried out by specialist independent contractors, who will be appointed by public tender and approved by the Robben Island Museum and the National Monuments Council.)

The Public Works staff comprise labourers and artisans who are controlled by works foremen; additional management skills are offered by the staff based in the (local) Western Cape office of the Department of Public Works, from which all maintenance work is co-ordinated.

## **5. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY**

### **a) Development pressures**

Future developments on Robben Island are strictly controlled by the National Monuments Council Act and the Environment Conservation Act. All future developments need to take into account the National Monument's Council guidelines, in relation to the buildings and archaeological resources on the Island. Environmental regulations legislated by the Environmental Conservation Act ensure that no development of potential significant negative impact can be undertaken, without permits from the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

Robben Island is protected from any developmental pressures from the mainland precisely because it is an Island. As the entire island is a museum there are no outside pressures for commercial development. However, any major developments on the neighbouring mainland which may affect the environment of Robben Island are also regulated by the Environment Conservation Act.

Robben Island Museum employs two security companies for the protection of the Island's movable and immovable assets, on a 24-hour basis. The whole Island is patrolled. Strict measures are enforced regarding access control and movement of workers as well as residents on the Island. As a result of one nautical mile around the Island included as a National Monument, patrols at sea form part of the security functions.

## **b) Environmental pressures**

Robben Island Museum staff are trained in various emergency strategies, designed to manage any potential environmental pressures. These are:

- \* Explosion/bomb-blast management strategies
- \* Contingency plans for ferry emergency situations
- \* Contingency plans for shipping disasters along the coast

The impact of visitors on the island is strictly controlled; all visitors are accompanied by guides as part of a formal tour, most of which are conducted (at present) in busses. Opportunities for walking are limited and visitors are informed on the sensitivity of the island environment on their arrival and given printed information on appropriate 'behaviour' while visiting.

There is also a contingency plan for managing any potential nuclear outfalls from the nuclear power station of Koeberg Nuclear Power Station, which is situated on the West Coast, within a 16km safety-zone radius from Robben Island. Robben Island forms part of the Koeberg and Environs Developmental Committee which shares the responsibility of activating and controlling appropriate emergency services.

**c) Natural disaster and preparedness**

Robben Island staff are trained in the following strategies to manage several natural disasters which may occur on the Island or in the surrounding environment:

- \* fire management contingency plans
- \* Coastal oil spill contingency plans
- \* Shipwrecks

**Erosion**

A danger of erosion due to exceptionally high seas exists along, in particular, the northern coastline. Repair work to the sea wall of the quarry on this coastline is presently underway under the supervision of the National Monuments Council and a specialist professional team. Constant monitoring after winter storms will ensure that damage is kept to a minimum along the coast.

The existing roads on Robben Island are subjected to a higher volume of traffic than during previous occupancies. A policy for the maintenance and repair of the road services is underway and this will be included in the conservation plan.

**d) Visitor/tourism pressures**

As with development pressures, all visitor and tourism pressures are regulated and monitored by environmental impact audits, as required by the integrated environmental management approach adopted by the Robben Island Museum Council, as one of the four core objectives of its management plan. (Also refer to Appendix F on the environmental impact assessment for increased visitor numbers)



**e) Number of inhabitants on the property, buffer zone**

All inhabitants of Robben Island are members of staff of Robben Island museum, the Department of Public Works and Portnet, (the institution responsible for lighthouses in South Africa), or Sealink (the company responsible for the official ferries serving Robben Island). The number of inhabitants on Robben Island are controlled by a housing and accommodation policy. There are currently 124 permanent residents on Robben Island, including Robben Island Museum, Department of Public Works staff.

## **6. MONITORING**

### **a) Key indication for measuring the state of conservation**

#### Cultural and Built Environment

Refer to the report on the present state of conservation, section 3 (d). The state of conservation will be monitored on an annual basis using the report in section 3(d) as a benchmark. Wear and tear by visitors, particularly to the prison complex, will be monitored on a more regular basis.

#### Natural environment.

Studies relating to the status of the birdlife on the Island have been carried out over a number of years, the details are contained in Appendix C entitled "The Wildlife of Robben Island" and "The Birdlife of Robben Island." This report also contains records of marine life in the protected zone.

Records of land-based mammals (buck etc) are contained within various reports compiled by the Department of Correctional Services, the most recent records dating from 1995.

These reports can act as a benchmark for monitoring future numbers of bird, mammal and marine species.

**b) Administrative arrangements for monitoring property**

The monitoring of the State of conservation will be linked to the Integrated Environmental management process that has been adopted by the Robben Island Museum.

A program of ongoing monitoring of both the built as well as the natural environment will be established and this will form part of the on-going management program of the authority. (The Museum). An audit of the Island will be initiated during the course of 1998, this audit will include the state of conservation report of all built structures as well as the current status and numbers of bird and animal life presently on the Island. Marine life such as seals, shellfish will also require inclusion in this program. This audit will form the baseline from which the state of conservation may be managed in the future.

Cultural Environment

Monitoring of the cultural environment of the Island will be carried out on an annual basis by the Museum as part of its maintenance program. The state of conservation report can serve as baseline information against which the condition of the various buildings and structures can be measured. It is suggested that the format of the report of the state of conservation be used when making an annual assessment. This assessment would be undertaken in consultation with the National Monuments Council and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, which is also responsible for the management of cultural resources in terms of the Environment Conservation Act, and recommendations regarding remedial action or restoration work would be compiled jointly by both parties and would be undertaken under their joint supervision.

(Refer to section 3 (d))

Natural Environment

The Sea Fisheries Research Institute (part of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism) has an established program for the ongoing monitoring of bird and marine life (Refer again to Annexure C) This program is based upon a series of fortnightly or monthly inspections of the birdlife, land-based mammals and marine life found on the Island and in the buffer zone.. Behavioural traits, breeding numbers and patterns, reproductive success, survival, feeding habits and migratory patterns are all monitored and form part of a long term program established by this

Department. This program is run independently but with the full approval of the Museum authorities.

**c) Results of previous reporting exercises**

No previous system existed for reporting on the state of conservation on the Island. Routine maintenance work was carried out by the Department of Correctional Services on the buildings in the village and on the prison building itself. During the last five years of their occupation of Robben Island the Department reduced its maintenance schedule dramatically and when the Robben Island Museum took over the island in 1997 it became evident that a full audit of all buildings would be required in order to ascertain the requirements for maintenance, repair or restoration. This audit will form part of the conservation plan to be initiated this year.

The historic lighthouse was maintained, although not always using appropriate materials, by Portnet, the institution responsible for the lighthouse and apart from minor repair work requires very little maintenance work.

## **7. DOCUMENTATION**

- a) Photographs, slides and video entitled 'The Story of Robben Island':

Refer to Appendix E for photographs and slides

- b) Copies of property management plans and extracts of other plans relevant to the property**

Relevant legislation is listed below and is contained in Appendix A.

National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969

Cultural Institutions Act No 29 of 1969

Environment Conservation Act No 73 of 1989 and attendant regulations Government Gazette No 18261 Notice No 1182 dated 5 September 1997

Sea Shore Act No 21 of 1935

## C) Bibliography

Below please refer to a selected bibliography on Robben Island. The works detailed below are considered to be the definitive sources of reference. An extensive archive of documentation on the Island exists at the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, in Cape Town. These archives hold a vast store of documents relating to particularly to the anti apartheid struggle and cover much of the recent history of the prison on Robben Island. The archive contains *inter alia* personal papers of many of the political prisoners, video footage of interviews and events relating to the personalities held there, publications and artefacts from the period during which the political prisoners were held there. The contents may be accessed via a database held at the Mayibuye Centre.

The Cape Archives, in Roeland Street, Cape Town, contains many valuable historic documents relating to Robben Island, including a selection of early maps and photographs, as does the South African Library in the Company Gardens in Cape Town. The Cape Archives is also the repository for the records of the Department of Correctional Services during their occupation of Robben Island.

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**d) Address where inventory, records and archives are held.**

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## Robben Island (South Africa)

No 916

### Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Robben Island
<i>Location</i>	Western Cape Province
<i>State Party</i>	Republic of South Africa
<i>Date</i>	30 June 1998

### Justification by State Party

*Robben Island – from incarceration to liberation, from the punishment of the body to the freedom of the spirit.*

Robben Island has a well documented history that dates back to 1488 according to written sources, although occupancy by early Stone Age inhabitants may well be possible, owing to the early link with the South African mainland. This is to be confirmed by archaeological excavation.

The physical remains of the long history of banishment, imprisonment, and human suffering are well documented and are visible through the memories of both residents who are still living as well as in written and graphic sources. The structures on Robben Island date from the earliest occupation by the Dutch colonists, the English occupation with its churches and institutions built to house lepers and the mentally ill, as well as the military installations of World War II, and finally the structures associated with the more recent occupancy by the prison. These structures represent a period of unbroken human habitation from the second half of the 17th century to the present day.

These buildings and structures represent evidence of a society that played a significant role in the development of the southern African region and its links to the “civilized” worlds of Europe and the east. This society has long since disappeared and the remnants on Robben Island, being typical examples of their time, are the only remaining examples still in existence. The more recent buildings are unique in that they represent a time in history that has gained universal symbolism while the residents (the former political prisoners) are still alive. The closeness of this history makes Robben Island and its associated prison structures unique in this international context.

#### Criterion iii

Robben Island is of universal value for the following reasons. “Robben Island is a vital part of South Africa’s collective heritage. How do we reflect the fact that the people of South Africa as a whole, together with the international community, turned one of the world’s most notorious symbols of the resistance of oppression into a world-wide

icon of the universality of human rights, of hope, peace, and reconciliation?” (President Nelson Mandela, Heritage Day, 24 September 1997, Robben Island).

Robben Island has come to represent an outstanding example of a symbol representing the physical embodiment of the triumph of the human spirit over enormous adversity and hardship. The role of Robben Island in the transformation of an oppressed society has come to symbolize the rebirth of democracy in South Africa, a country which has come to be viewed as a unique example of transformation in a world troubled by political uncertainty.

#### Criterion vi

### Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

### History and Description

#### History

It is possible that Robben Island (often known simply as “The Island”) was occupied by humans before the arrival of the Europeans, since it is the summit of a submerged mountain, linked by an undersea saddle to the coast of Table Bay.

The Cape Peninsula, with Robben Island, fell halfway on sea voyages between Europe and the Orient. The first Europeans to land there were probably members of Vasco de Gama’s fleet, who stopped there in 1498 in search of shelter and supplies. They were followed by a growing number of European ships in the next two centuries, since it offered food, drinkable water, and security from attack by the indigenous people of the Cape.

The Dutch East India Company (VOC) first became aware of the potential of the Cape of Good Hope in the mid 17th century, and in 1657 Jan van Riebeeck set up a colony there, formed of VOC officials and free burghers. They were joined in 1688 by French Huguenots following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV. The colonists began a vigorous policy of enslavement of the indigenous peoples and brought them there from other parts of Africa; the population was also augmented with Muslims deported from the East Indies and elsewhere in the Orient.

The potential of Robben Island as a prison was quickly realized by van Riebeeck. First, slaves and prisoners of war were sent there, to cut stone and burn seashells for lime for building the settlement of Cape Town, and they were joined later by others – convicted VOC soldiers and sailors, disaffected Khoisan indigenous people from the mainland, and political and religious (Moslem) leaders from the East Indies.

When the Cape was captured by the British from the Dutch in 1795 and again in 1806, they continued to use the Island as a prison, for military prisoners (mostly white), political prisoners, and criminals (mostly black). A tenth of the prisoners were women, but they were transferred in 1835 to a Cape Town prison. The Island prison was closed in 1846 and a General Infirmary was established, to receive chronically sick, insane, and lepers and relieve pressure on mainland hospitals. (However, the Island was still used on occasion by

the British as a secure place of exile for important political prisoners.) The management of the General Infirmary and the care it provided for its patients (who were racially segregated from the 1860s) were of a low order, and the establishment on the mainland of specialized hospitals for the mentally disturbed and the chronically sick, catering for middle-class patients, resulted in Robben Island becoming the main leper colony in the Cape, with over a thousand inmates. This was finally to close in 1931.

Plans to turn the Island into a holiday resort foundered with the approach of World War II, and it was declared to be “reserved for military purposes” in 1936. It became the first point of defence against an attack on Table Bay, equipped with harbour facilities and heavy coastal artillery. After the war it continued in use for training, and in 1951 was taken over by the South African Marine Corps and then the South African Navy.

In 1959 the Island was claimed by the Prisons Department as a maximum security prison for political prisoners sentenced by the Apartheid regime, as well as ordinary criminals, all of them black. The first criminals landed there in 1961, and in the next year they were followed by the first political prisoners. Many were to be sent there in the years that followed, mostly leaders of the African National Congress and Pan African Congress; the most celebrated of the prisoners on Robben Island was Nelson Mandela, who was incarcerated there for some twenty years. During the 1960s and early 1970s the isolation of the Island and the notoriously cruel regime of its staff made it the most feared prison in South Africa. The last political prisoners left the island in 1991 and the prison closed down finally in 1996, and since that time it has been developed as a museum.

#### *Description*

Robben Island is a low-lying rocky outcrop covering 475ha and situated 9.3km north of the mainland. It has a Mediterranean climate, and is exposed to violent winter gales and tides that make its northern and western sides virtually uninhabitable. There is, not surprisingly, a number of historic shipwrecks along this inhospitable coast.

Settlement has concentrated on the southern and eastern coasts of the island. It is characterized by discontinuity, resulting from its episodic history. A determining factor has been the lack of drinking water; that from boreholes is brackish and so rainwater has been collected for drinking.

The earliest features of human occupation are the abandoned quarries for slate (on the south of the island) and limestone (in the centre), which date from the mid 17th century. Limestone is still quarried occasionally for road metalling on the island. No remains survive of the groups of buildings erected in the late 1600s at the northern end of the island, known only from contemporary drawings.

In 1806-8 a new settlement was built at the southern end of the island to accommodate the British prison. This is the nucleus of the existing administrative area, known as “The Village,” which houses the Museum with offices, meeting rooms, community facilities, shop, etc. Some of the buildings, such as the clubhouse (formerly the Medical Superintendent’s House) of 1840 and the former Anglican parsonage (1846), have retained some good contemporary detailing inside and outside. The Anglican Church, built with convict labour in 1841, is an early example of Cape Gothic style, plastered and painted white on the exterior. It has a

plain interior with a balcony of teak, which was also used for the altar, pulpit, pews, and roof structure.

The small lighthouse on Minto’s Hill in the southern part of the island was built in 1864. It is an 18m high round-section masonry tower with a fine cast-iron circular staircase linking the internal floors and the lantern.

Between the village and the harbour slightly to the north known as Murray’s Bay there is the small Church of the Good Shepherd (generally known as the Lepers Church), built by the lepers themselves in 1895 to the designs of the distinguished architect Sir Herbert Baker. It is all that remains of the male leper hospital demolished in 1931. It is at present not in use but there are plans to carry out urgent repair work and reconsecrate it for services. Surrounding it are leper graves, now half hidden in the grass.

The present harbour at Murray’s Bay was built during World War II, along with extensive fortifications and other military structures, including gun emplacements, underground magazines, observation towers, barracks, and coastal batteries. The military structures here, like those in other parts of the island, are now derelict, as is the airstrip in the centre of the island.

Just to the north of the maximum security prison is the Kramat, a monument built in 1967 on the site where Hadjie Mattarm, a Muslim holy man exiled by the VOC from the East Indies to Robben Island in 1744, was buried. He died in 1755 and his tomb became a place of pilgrimage for the Muslim community of the Cape. It is a simple domed building built in slate from the island.

Construction of the maximum security prison of the Apartheid period began in the 1960s. The buildings are stark and functional, constructed of stone from the island. Outside the main enclosure there are service, storage, and reception buildings.

### **Management and Protection**

#### *Legal status*

The Island is a national monument as defined in the National Monuments Act (No 28 of 1969). Interventions of any kind on national monuments require authorization by the National Monuments Council.

The Cultural Institutions Act (No 29 of 1969) establishes the criteria by which such institutions are created and managed. Robben Island is a declared cultural institution under this statute.

Under the terms of the Environmental Conservation Act (No 73 of 1989), certain infrastructural activities and changes in land use on the island require environmental impact assessments to be carried out.

#### *Management*

The entire Island and all the properties on it are state property, with the exception of the Church of the Good Shepherd and a small area round it, which belongs to the Church of the Province of South Africa. The state also owns a buffer zone consisting of the waters 1 nautical mile around the Island.

The Robben Island Council, established under the provisions of the Cultural Institutions Act, consists of eighteen people

appointed by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology; half the members are former political prisoners and half specialists with relevant expertise. It is responsible for policy development and financial issues.

On-site management and conservation are delegated to the Director of the Robben Island Museum. The future development of the Island will be in accordance with the development framework laid out in the Cabinet recommendations of 4 September 1996. This provided for the Island to be “run as a site museum, where the total environment is preserved in an integrated way, in line with modern international conservation approaches ... and the ex-political prison be converted into a Museum of the Freedom Struggle in South Africa.” The Council was required “to initiate a systematic and broadly participative planning process, facilitated by a suitably qualified agency, for the long-term development and multi-purpose use of Robben Island.”

The Island is managed according to a Property Management Agreement between the Museum, the National Monuments Council, and the Department of Public Works. It sets out detailed maintenance schedules relating to the man-made heritage and the natural environment.

An integrated environmental management approach, including an environmental policy, environmental management plan, and environmental management systems, is currently being developed, with the aid of a grant from the Government of Norway. It is to be developed in a series of phases; the first phase, completion of the draft system, is now in place and the entire process will be completed by the end of 2000.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### *Conservation history*

Systematic conservation of the Island as an element of cultural heritage has only begun during the present decade. Before that time, structures were dismantled or allowed to decay into ruins as successive phases in the use of the Island came to an end. Now that it has become a museum, systematic conservation will be implemented under the agreements and plans listed in the preceding section.

### *Authenticity*

Precisely because it has followed an historical trajectory that has involved several changes of use without conscious conservation efforts directed at preservation, the authenticity of the Island is total.

## **Evaluation**

### *Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Robben Island in February 1999.

### *Qualities*

The symbolic value of Robben Island lies in its sombre history, as a prison and a hospital for unfortunates who were sequestered as being socially undesirable. This came to an end in the 1990s when the inhumane Apartheid regime was rejected by the South African people and the political

prisoners who had been incarcerated on the Island received their freedom after many years.

### *Comparative analysis*

It is difficult to find an exact parallel for Robben Island among the penitentiary islands of the period of European colonization. Norfolk Island off the coast of Australia was used for criminals transported from Britain in the 19th century, and Devil’s Island off the coast of French Guyana served a similar purpose, whilst the island of Alcatraz in San Francisco Bay is the archetypal convict island, but none of these filled the political role of Robben Island under Dutch and British colonial rule, and in particular in the later 20th century (the imprisonment of Alfred Dreyfus on Devil’s Island was an isolated political act). The early history of St Helena as a stop-off point for ships travelling between Europe and the Orient paralleled that of the Island, but it was only once used to house a political prisoner, albeit one of the most illustrious.

### *ICOMOS comments*

The ICOMOS mission report commented on the state of conservation of certain structures that were referred to only summarily in the nomination dossier.

The Old Jail, which is one of the most important landmarks in the recent history of Robben Island, known to the prisoners as the “hell hole,” is scarcely mentioned in the dossier. It appears to have been completely neglected and is an a dilapidated state.

In the New Jail, the A and C Sections are both in a very bad state of repair, with badly cracked walls, collapsing ceilings, and corroded metalwork. This is accordance with the stated policy of maintaining “the exact state as it was found when transfer from the Department of Correctional Services to the newly established Robben Island Museum took place.” The intended “air of abandonment and hopelessness” has without doubt been achieved, but without some conservation interventions the decay can only continue, with the result that the entire structures will eventually collapse.

So far as the B Section, where the leading political prisoners were confined, is concerned, it is stated that it “should be presented as it was during the height of its occupation by South Africa’s most famous political prisoners.” It is arguable that this is in fact not the case, since certain changes made after the departure of the political prisoners, such as repainting in colour of walls originally in “prison grey.” It is understood that this section was originally U-shaped in plan, but sections of the walls have been blocked, giving a different appearance.

## **Brief description**

Robben Island was used at various times between the 17th century and the 20th century as a prison, a hospital for socially unacceptable groups, and a military base. Its buildings, and in particular those of the late 20th century maximum security prison for political prisoners, testify to the way in which democracy and freedom triumphed over oppression and racialism.

**Recommendation**

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria iii and vi*:

*Criterion iii* The buildings of Robben Island bear eloquent testimony to its sombre history.

*Criterion vi* Robben Island and its prison buildings symbolize the triumph of the human spirit, of freedom, and of democracy over oppression.

ICOMOS, September 1999

## Robben Island (Afrique du Sud)

No 916

### Identification

<i>Bien proposé</i>	Robben Island
<i>Lieu</i>	Province du Cap ouest
<i>Etat partie</i>	République d'Afrique du Sud
<i>Date</i>	30 juin 1998

### Justification émanant de l'Etat partie

*Robben Island – de l’incarcération à la libération, de la souffrance du corps à la liberté de l’esprit.*

Robben Island possède une histoire bien documentée qui selon les sources écrites remontent à 1488. Qu'elle ait été occupée par des hommes de l'Age de la pierre à cause de sa proximité des côtes du continent africain reste à confirmer par des fouilles archéologiques.

Sa longue histoire, marquée par le bannissement, l'emprisonnement et la souffrance humaine, est abondamment décrite et rapportée tant par des sources écrites et des documents iconographiques que par le témoignage direct des anciens prisonniers. On doit les constructions présentes sur l'île aux premiers colons néerlandais, les colons anglais ayant construit les églises, la léproserie, l'asile pour les malades mentaux ainsi que les installations militaires de la Seconde Guerre mondiale et enfin les bâtiments de la prison qui témoignent de la dernière occupation de l'île. Les structures et les bâtiments de l'île représentent une période d'occupation continue depuis la deuxième moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours. Elles témoignent d'une société qui a joué un rôle important dans le développement du sud de l'Afrique et de ses rapports avec les mondes "civilisés" d'Europe et d'Asie. Cette société a disparu depuis longtemps et les vestiges de Robben Island, typiques de leurs époques respectives, sont les seuls exemples encore existants. Les bâtiments les plus récents sont exceptionnels en ce qu'ils représentent une époque de l'histoire qui revêt une symbolique universelle alors même que ceux qui y résidaient – les anciens prisonniers politiques – sont encore vivants. La proximité de cette histoire fait de Robben Island et de sa prison un lieu exceptionnel dans l'actuel contexte international. **Critère iii**

Robben Island a une valeur universelle pour les raisons suivantes : « Robben Island est une part vitale du patrimoine collectif de l'Afrique du sud. Songez que le peuple d'Afrique du Sud dans son entier, associé à l'aide de la communauté internationale, a transformé

l'un des symboles les plus connus au monde de résistance à l'oppression en une image internationale de l'universalité des droits de l'homme, de l'espoir, de la paix et de la réconciliation ? » (le Président Nelson Mandela, Journée du Patrimoine, 24 septembre 1997, Robben Island).

Robben Island symbolise le triomphe de l'esprit humain sur ce qu'on peut imaginer de plus douloureux et de plus inhumain. L'île pénitentiaire est devenue le symbole de la résistance à l'oppression, le symbole de la renaissance de la démocratie en Afrique du Sud, un exemple unique dans ce monde où règne l'incertitude politique. **Critère vi**

### Catégorie de bien

En termes de catégories de biens culturels, telles qu'elles sont définies à l'article premier de la Convention du Patrimoine mondial de 1972, le bien proposé pour inscription est un *site*.

### Histoire et description

#### *Histoire*

Robben Island, qu'on appelle souvent simplement l'île, a pu être occupée par des hommes avant l'arrivée des Européens, car c'est le sommet d'une montagne submergée reliée par une dorsale sous-marine à la baie de la Table.

La péninsule du Cap, avec Robben Island, se trouvait à mi-chemin sur la route maritime entre l'Europe et l'Orient. Les premiers européens à débarquer ici furent probablement les membres de l'équipage de Vasco de Gama, en 1498, à la recherche d'un abri et de ravitaillement. Au cours des deux siècles suivants, un nombre croissant de vaisseaux européens mouillèrent là car cette halte leur offrait à la fois de la nourriture, de l'eau potable et une protection contre les attaques des populations indigènes du Cap.

La Compagnie néerlandaise des Indes orientales fut la première à prendre conscience du potentiel du Cap de Bonne Espérance au milieu du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, et en 1657 Jan van Riebeeck y fonda une colonie, constituée de membres de la Compagnie des Indes et de citoyens libres (free burghers). Ils furent rejoints en 1688 par des Huguenots français chassés par la révocation de l'Edit de Nantes signée par Louis XIV. Les colons réduisirent à l'esclavage les peuples indigènes et d'autres Africains venus d'autres parties d'Afrique ; la population des esclaves fut complétée par la déportation de musulmans de l'Inde Orientale et d'autres pays d'Orient.

Van Riebeeck donna rapidement à l'île sa destinée pénitentiaire. Ce sont d'abord les esclaves et les prisonniers de guerre qui y furent envoyés pour casser des pierres et brûler des coquillages pour produire la chaux qui servait à la construction de la ville du Cap. Ils furent bientôt rejoints par d'autres – marins et soldats de la Compagnie condamnés, indigènes Khoisan révoltés,

chefs politiques et religieux musulmans des Indes orientales.

Lorsque le Cap fut pris aux Néerlandais par les Britanniques en 1795 et à nouveau en 1806, l'île continua de recevoir des prisonniers militaires (des Blancs essentiellement), politiques et de droit commun (surtout des Noirs). La prison des femmes (un dixième de la population carcérale) fut transférée au Cap en 1835. La prison de l'île fut fermée en 1846 et une infirmerie générale installée à la place pour recevoir les malades chroniques, les malades mentaux, les lépreux et ainsi, alléger la pression sur les hôpitaux du continent. (L'île fut cependant utilisée occasionnellement par les Britanniques comme un lieu d'exil pour les prisonniers politiques importants). La gestion de l'infirmerie générale et les soins apportés aux patients (qui subirent la ségrégation raciale à partir de 1860) étaient médiocres. Avec l'installation sur le continent d'hôpitaux spécialisés pour les malades mentaux et les malades chroniques, et la prise en charge des patients appartenant aux classes moyennes, il ne resta plus sur l'île que les lépreux. Robben Island devint la principale léproserie du Cap, avec plus de mille pensionnaires. Cet établissement finit par fermer en 1931.

Le projet de transformation de l'île en un lieu de villégiature ne vit pas le jour et à l'approche de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, elle fut déclarée « réserve militaire » en 1936. Elle devint un avant-poste de défense de la baie de la Table, équipée d'un port et d'une artillerie lourde. Après la guerre, elle continua d'être utilisée comme camp d'entraînement et, en 1951, elle fut réquisitionnée par les fusiliers marins puis par la Marine d'Afrique du Sud.

En 1959 l'île fut reprise par l'administration pénitentiaire pour servir de prison de haute sécurité pour les prisonniers politiques condamnés par le régime de l'Apartheid, ainsi que pour les condamnés de droit commun, tous des Noirs. Les premiers prisonniers de droit commun sont arrivés en 1961, suivis par les prisonniers politiques l'année d'après. Beaucoup y furent envoyés par la suite, surtout des dirigeants du Congrès national africain et du Congrès Pan Africain ; Le plus célèbre des prisonniers de Robben Island fut Nelson Mandela, incarcéré dans cette prison pendant près de vingt ans. Pendant les années 1960 et le début des années 1970, l'isolement de l'île et le régime notoirement cruel instauré par le personnel en fit la prison la plus redoutée d'Afrique du Sud. Le dernier prisonnier politique quitta l'île en 1991 et la prison ferma enfin en 1996. Depuis lors, elle a été transformée en musée.

#### *Description*

Robben Island est un rocher affleurant en haute mer, d'une superficie de 475ha, à 9,3km au nord du continent. De climat méditerranéen, ses côtes nord et ouest sont battues par les tempêtes d'hiver et exposées aux marées qui en font des lieux quasiment inhabitables. Rien de surprenant qu'un certain nombre de naufrages se soient produits sur cette côte inhospitalière.

Les constructions sont donc concentrées sur les côtes sud et est. Leur dispersion et leur manque d'homogénéité reflètent l'histoire à caractère épisodique de l'île. Le manque d'eau potable est un facteur déterminant. L'eau des puits est saumâtre et l'eau de pluie est collectée pour subvenir aux besoins.

Les premières manifestations de l'activité humaine sont les carrières d'ardoise aujourd'hui abandonnées (au sud de l'île) et de pierre calcaire (au centre), qui remontent au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. La pierre calcaire est encore exploitée occasionnellement pour l'empierrement des routes de l'île. Il ne reste rien des bâtiments érigés vers 1600 à l'extrémité nord de l'île, que l'on ne connaît que par des dessins de l'époque.

En 1806-1808 un nouveau groupe de bâtiments a été construit par les Britanniques à l'extrémité sud de l'île pour servir de prison. C'est le noyau de la zone administrative existante que l'on nomme « le village » et qui abrite le musée avec ses bureaux, ses salles de réunion, ses équipements publics, ses boutiques, etc. Certains des bâtiments, comme le club (ancienne maison du médecin chef) de 1840 et l'ancien presbytère anglican (1846), conservent encore des aspects contemporains intéressants à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur. L'église anglicane, construite par les prisonniers en 1841, est un des premiers exemples de style gothique qui s'est développé au Cap avec ses façades en stuc et blanchie à la chaux. Elle a un intérieur simple avec un balcon en tek, bois également utilisé pour l'autel, le pupitre, les bancs et la charpente.

Le petit phare édifié au sommet de la colline de Minto dans la partie sud de l'île a été construit en 1864. C'est un édifice en maçonnerie de 18m de haut, de section ronde avec un bel escalier en fonte qui permet d'accéder aux étages et grimpe en colimaçon jusqu'à la lanterne.

Entre le village et le port, légèrement au nord, dans la baie de Murray, la petite église du Bon Pasteur (que l'on appelle généralement l'église des lépreux) a été construite par les lépreux eux-mêmes en 1895, selon les plans de l'excellent architecte Sir Herbert Baker. Il ne reste rien d'autre de la léproserie des hommes, démolie en 1931. L'église n'est actuellement pas utilisée, mais il est prévu d'effectuer des travaux de réparation d'urgence et de la consacrer à nouveau afin d'y célébrer la messe. Autour de l'église se trouvent des tombes de lépreux, aujourd'hui à moitié enfouies dans les herbes.

Le port actuel de la baie de Murray a été construit pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale en même temps que les fortifications et les défenses militaires comprenant des batteries, des entrepôts souterrains, des postes d'observation, des baraquements et des batteries côtières. Les structures militaires à cet endroit comme ailleurs sur l'île sont en ruine, de même que la piste d'atterrissage au centre de l'île.

Au nord de la prison de haute sécurité se trouve le Kramat, un monument érigé en 1967 à la mémoire du saint homme musulman Hadjie Mattarm, relégué sur Robben Island en 1744 par la Compagnie néerlandaise des Indes orientales. Il mourut en 1755 et sa tombe devint un lieu de pèlerinage pour la communauté



musulmane du Cap. C'est un édifice simple en ardoise de l'île et surmonté d'un dôme.

La construction de la prison de haute sécurité utilisée par le régime de l'Apartheid a commencé vers 1960. Les bâtiments sont solides et fonctionnels, construits en pierre de l'île. Hors de l'enceinte principale se trouvent les bâtiments de service, de stockage et administratifs.

## **Gestion et protection**

### *Statut juridique*

L'île est un monument national au titre de la loi sur les monuments nationaux (No 28 de 1969). Toute intervention sur un monument national requiert l'autorisation du Conseil des monuments nationaux.

La loi sur les institutions culturelles (No 29 de 1969) définit les critères selon lesquels de telles institutions sont créées et gérées. Robben Island est déclarée institution culturelle.

Aux termes de la loi sur la conservation de l'environnement (No 73 de 1989), certains travaux d'infrastructure et les modifications de l'utilisation des sols de l'île requièrent une étude d'impact sur l'environnement.

### *Gestion*

L'île entière et tous les biens qui s'y trouvent appartiennent à l'Etat, à l'exception de l'église du Bon Pasteur et du terrain qui l'entoure, qui appartiennent à l'église de la Province d'Afrique du Sud. L'Etat possède aussi la zone tampon de un mille nautique autour de l'île.

Le Conseil de Robben Island, créé dans le cadre de la Loi sur les institutions culturelles, est constitué de dix huit personnes nommées par le ministre des Arts, de la Culture, des Sciences et de la Technologie. Ses membres sont par moitié d'anciens prisonniers politiques et des spécialistes de diverses formations ayant trait à la mission du Conseil. Ce dernier est responsable de l'établissement de la politique générale et des questions financières.

La gestion du site et la conservation sont confiées au directeur du Musée de Robben Island. Le développement futur de l'île sera réalisé dans le cadre de la politique de développement définie par les recommandations du Cabinet du 4 septembre 1996. L'île sera "gérée comme un musée, son environnement totalement protégé, selon les règles de conservation internationales ... et l'ancienne prison politique sera transformée en Musée de la lutte pour la Liberté en Afrique du Sud". On a demandé au Conseil "d'entreprendre une politique systématique et largement participative, avec l'aide d'une agence composée d'un personnel compétent, afin de concevoir une politique globale de développement à long terme et d'utilisation de Robben Island".

L'île est gérée dans le cadre du Contrat de gestion de biens passé entre le musée, le Conseil des monuments nationaux et le ministère des Travaux publics. Il définit

des procédures d'entretien détaillées relatives au patrimoine dû à l'homme et à l'environnement naturel.

Une gestion environnementale globale est mise en place, qui prévoit une politique, un plan de gestion et des systèmes de gestion environnementaux, et ce avec l'aide financière du gouvernement de Norvège. Elle doit se dérouler selon une série de phases, la première en cours étant la conception d'une première ébauche de plan, la totalité du projet devant être terminée à la fin de l'an 2000.

## **Conservation et authenticité**

### *Historique de la conservation*

La conservation systématique de l'île en tant qu'élément du patrimoine culturel n'a commencé que ces dix dernières années. Avant cela, les structures étaient démantelées ou laissées à l'abandon à mesure que cessaient les utilisations successives de l'île. Celle-ci étant devenue un musée, sa conservation systématique sera mise en œuvre dans le cadre des contrats et plans mentionnés au chapitre précédent.

### *Authenticité*

Du fait que l'histoire de l'île a suivi une trajectoire qui comporte plusieurs changements d'orientation qui n'ont pas entraîné d'efforts conscients de conservation, l'authenticité de l'île est entière.

## **Evaluation**

### *Action de l'ICOMOS*

Une mission d'expertise de l'ICOMOS a visité Robben Island en février 1999.

### *Caractéristiques*

La valeur symbolique de Robben Island réside dans sa sombre histoire de pénitencier et d'hôpital pour les malheureux privés de liberté parce que socialement indésirables. Cela a pris fin vers 1990, au moment où le régime inhumain de l'Apartheid a été rejeté par le peuple d'Afrique du Sud. Les prisonniers politiques qui avaient été incarcérés sur l'île ont enfin été libérés après de nombreuses années d'emprisonnement.

### *Analyse comparative*

Il est difficile de trouver un exemple parallèle semblable à Robben Island parmi les îles pénitentiaires datant de la période de colonisation européenne. L'île de Norfolk au large de la côte australienne était utilisée pour des condamnés déportés de Grande Bretagne au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, et l'île du Diable, au large de la côte de la Guyane française, eut les mêmes fonctions, tandis que l'île d'Alcatraz dans la baie de San Francisco est l'archétype de l'île prison, mais aucune n'a rempli le rôle de prison politique qu'a eu Robben Island sous la loi coloniale néerlandaise puis britannique, et en particulier à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle (la déportation

d'Alfred Dreyfus à l'île du Diable fut un acte politique isolé). L'histoire de l'île de Sainte Héléne qui commença d'abord par être une halte pour les navires faisant route entre l'Europe et l'Orient, est semblable à celle de Robben Island, mais elle ne fut utilisée qu'une seule fois pour héberger un prisonnier politique, fut-il l'un des plus illustres prisonniers.

#### *Observations de l'ICOMOS*

La mission de l'ICOMOS transmet ses observations sur l'état de conservation de certaines structures qui n'ont été que brièvement mentionnées dans le dossier de proposition d'inscription.

L'ancienne prison, qui est l'un des bâtiments les plus significatifs de l'histoire récente de l'île, que les prisonniers appelaient le « trou de l'enfer », est à peine mentionnée dans le dossier. Il apparaît qu'elle a été totalement abandonnée et qu'elle est dans un état de délabrement avancé.

Dans la nouvelle prison, les bâtiments A et C sont tous les deux en très mauvais état. Les murs sont lézardés, les plafonds crevés et les parties métalliques corrodées. Ceci est en conformité avec la politique de « maintien des lieux en l'état, c'est à dire tels qu'ils ont été trouvés au moment de leur transfert du Service de l'application des peines au tout nouveau musée de Robben Island. ». "L'effet (voulu) d'abandon et de désespoir" est indéniablement réussi, mais sans une intervention minimum de conservation, le processus de délabrement ne peut que se poursuivre, ce qui fait que les structures dans leur ensemble risquent de s'effondrer.

Quant au bâtiment B, où les prisonniers politiques de premier plan étaient enfermés, il est stipulé qu'il "doit être présenté tel qu'il était au moment où il a été le plus utilisé pour les prisonniers politiques les plus connus d'Afrique du Sud". On peut arguer du fait que ce n'est pas le cas, étant donné qu'après le départ des prisonniers quelques modifications ont été apportées, par exemple les murs qui étaient à l'origine « gris prison » ont été repeints en couleur. De plus, ce bâtiment était à l'origine en U, mais certaines parties des murs ayant été cloisonnées, l'aspect extérieur s'en est trouvé modifié.

#### **Brève description**

Robben Island a été utilisée à différentes époques entre le XVII<sup>e</sup> et le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle comme prison, hôpital pour les malades socialement indésirables et base militaire. Ses bâtiments, et en particulier ceux du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, la prison à haute sécurité pour les prisonniers politiques, témoignent du triomphe de la démocratie et de la liberté sur l'oppression et le racisme.

#### **Recommandation**

Que ce bien soit inscrit sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial sur la base des *critères iii et vi* :

*Critère iii* Les bâtiments de Robben Island témoignent de manière éloquente des heures sombres de son histoire.

*Critère vi* Robben Island et sa prison symbolisent le triomphe de l'esprit humain, de la liberté et de la démocratie sur l'oppression.

ICOMOS, septembre 1999