

ROBBEN ISLAND SPORTS LEGACY PROJECT

At a time when despair and adversity threatened to overwhelm prisoners on Robben Island, sport became instrumental in forging good relationships between inmates. The prisoners produced a unique collection of records that cover the history of sport on Robben Island from 1966 to 1991. This collection is now housed at the University of the Western Cape-Robben Island Museum Mayibuye Archives.

Robben Island is normally associated with hardship, pain and suffering but these records show another side of prison life. They show a contrasting picture of vibrant sporting activities and a high level of social interaction between prisoners.

For many political prisoners, sport provided a sense of normality, hope and strength which made their incarceration more endurable. These artefacts also bear witness to the unifying nature of sport and the high standards, principles and values which have come to be associated with political prisoners on Robben Island.

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS) has recognised the importance of this collection and the need to preserve it for posterity. DCAS and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Sport Science and Development (ICSSD) initiated the project and collaborated with Robben Island Museum to implement the digitisation of the collection. The initial phase of this project started early in 2012 and two thirds of the artefacts have now been preserved in a digital format.

This initiative brought together a multi-disciplinary team of people consisting of academics, graduates, students, museum practitioners, sports scientists and government officials to achieve the common goal of preserving an important aspect of Robben Island's sporting culture. The project will provide improved access to a wider audience. It is hoped that this will encourage further interdisciplinary study of the collection as well as bring about increased public interest. The project partners believe that the Robben Island Sports Legacy Project will serve as an inspiration for individuals, organisations and structures interested in sport and the potential of sport to bring people together.



Western Cape
Government
Cultural Affairs and Sport

BETTER TOGETHER.

