Digitisation of Robben Island’s Sporting Legacy
Dr Ivan Meyer  
Western Cape Minister Of Cultural Affairs and Sport

The Robben Island sport records reveal that sport was successful even in that potentially hostile environment because it was taken seriously. This can be seen in the following: 1) it was organised around structures such as clubs, federations and leagues; 2) each of these structures had a constitution which defined the purpose of the institution, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the various office bearers; 3) an effective administrative system was put in place; 4) record-keeping was meticulous (as can be seen, for example, in the minutes of meetings); and 5) leaders were held accountable.

What is remarkable is that the prisoners managed to achieve this within the context of the hard and often brutal conditions that they found themselves in, and in the absence of the infrastructure and resources that are so freely available to present day sports organisations.

The Digitisation of Robben Island’s Sporting Legacy project makes these learnings available to a broader audience in a format which is not constrained by time or space. It provides an electronic platform for the promotion of this aspect of our sport heritage which, until now, the majority of our citizens have not been able to access.

The Western Cape Government believes that our heritage, including our Robben Island heritage, must be taken into the future by providing electronic access to key records from anywhere in the world. The provincial Archives Service, which preserves and provides access to archival material, digitised more than 198 173 images from 870 records of the Slave Office known as “Opgaafrollen” in the 2011/12 financial year. Furthermore, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport’s Heritage Resource Management Unit is participating in a Wikipedia competition which allows people to upload photographs of significant monuments all over the world.

The Digitisation of Robben Island’s Sporting Legacy project reconfirms that sport builds character, enhances leadership, strengthens values and creates a basis for social inclusion.
Late in late December 2009 I received an invitation from the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport in my capacity as chairperson of the Western Cape Sport Council to visit Robben Island. At that time, all the countries participating in the Commonwealth Games to be held in India later in 2010 were holding parades for the Games baton to move through their communities. The baton moved through various communities in Cape Town before going to Robben Island. There we heard that the Island’s sport records were kept by the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, and I undertook a visit to the Centre the following week.

During my visit to Robben Island on 10 January 2010 with the Commonwealth Baton Parade, I bought the book More Than Just a Game. This deepened my understanding of the importance of sport on Robben Island, who the various role players were, and the effect that sport had on their lives. In recognition of his important role in preserving the sporting records of Robben Island, we honoured Prof. Sedick Isaacs by giving him a Sports Legend Award. It was clear that a great many people could benefit from being able to access this national treasure electronically. Mr Brent Walters, Head of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, agreed to make funding available for the Digitisation of Robben Island’s Sporting Legacy project. We are proud to be able to announce the fruit of this labour, and I believe that this electronic collection of valuable historic documents will enhance research in sport and emphasise the importance of sport in South African society.

Adv. Lyndon Bouah
Chief Director of Sport and Recreation
Western Cape Government
Robben Island Legacy Project

Respice prospice, is the motto of University of the Western Cape, it means that you have to look backward in order to look forward - or, in other words, if you don't know where you come from, you don't know where you are going.

In the same way the Robben Island Legacy Project is able to do something that is much needed in South Africa today. It shows us a way.

As we much too often still concentrate on the painful part of our heritage, what pulls us down, what, we perceive, divides us as South African, and why we in our daily lives still live and work in isolation and socialize mostly in our own circles and often suffer from a lack of trust, lack of care and a lack of healing our past and present wounds.

The Legacy project shows us the importance of looking back to Robben Island not only as a place of suffering but also as a place of triumph of the human spirit, body and soul. For many it has been a place of learning about democracy, of discussion, of exchange of ideas and of striving for human rights and respect for ethnic, cultural and religious diversity.

And what not many know, it highlights the role sport played in this unique journey to freedom and democracy. Unknown to the majority of South Africans, on Robben Island, during Apartheid, sport was a vehicle to unite people, to stress and promote values of respect and fair play, to show integrity, dignity, respect for the opponent and triumph as a team.

The role of sport and in particular football played in the lives of the Robben Island prisoners can hardly be estimated today. In the 60s and 70s for example many post-apartheid leaders of South Africa were instrumental in the creation of Robben Island’s Makana Football Association. 1972 also saw the first Summer Games on Robben Island unnoticed to the rest of the world, but part of our history and celebrating their 40th anniversary this year. From latest sources, only made accessible through this research project, which facilitated the digitisation of notes, some even written on toilet paper in the absence of anything else and away from the watching eyes of the warden, we know that their participation in sport helped the prisoners to stay strong, to take back some control over their lives, to retain their identities, develop a sense of community, and strengthen values and character for all involved.

Looking at heritage month, Robben Island is a true National Treasure today, through human pain and the victory of human spirit, body and soul over an inhuman system it is a place which brings people together. It has been in the past and it is today.

The role that sport played on the island is a reflection of that as it shows our common heritage, shows that there is more that unites us than divides us and show us that sport can bring out the best in us and can assist us in a powerful way to overcome hardship by believing in what is right, what is good, what is structured, what is true and what is fair.
Today it can be an example for our youth, for young students, for leaders of tomorrow.

ICESSD feels privileged and very proud to be able to partner in this important research project with the Department for Cultural Affairs and Sport and the Mayibuye Centre and hopes that it stimulates more research primarily amongst young South African but also researchers from the continent and beyond.

Sport is a reflection of any society’s success stories and its miseries, its socio-economic challenges and its values. As the Robben Island Legacy Project shows us, how we organize and transform South African sport going forward need not be constrained as a reflection of what is. For sport to be transformative, for sport to bring peace within and between individuals and communities, the sport programmes we create must be a reflection of where we want to go, of who we want to be, as people and as a nation. The decision remains up to us.

Prof. Marion Keim  
Director, ICESSD  
University of the Western Cape  
20 September 2012
INTERVIEW WITH PROF. SEDICK ISAACS ON
31 AUGUST 2012
by Charlene Roderick and Jarryd Fredericks

C: Could you please give us a bit of your background. How did you get involved with the movement and how did you find yourself on Robben Island during the apartheid era.

S: Well during those times in the early 60’s there was a change of mental attitude of those who were fighting against or resisting the government. It became clear that after almost 50 years peaceful talking, persuasion and negotiation were not going to work. Transition into a more violent form of protest was actually needed. I got swept up in that phase and with my background in chemistry, I had a good knowledge of explosive chemistry, the teaching of handling of explosives was a prime task for me and that won me over. Of course I was very active in the 60s, the PAC was the most active organisation with huge demonstrations at parliament and that was extremely impressive, and I thought well that is the organisation of the future.

C: Tell us a bit about your time on Robben Island?

S: Well my time on Robben Island had various phases. When I got there it was a very rough place. The warders were all white or should say they were all apartheid supporters, they were all Nationalists and to them we were their enemies and treated as such, which made the situation in prison extremely violent. Various aspects of our lives were not well, like our food was given on racial lines and also on sexist lines although we didn’t know that, we were all males. If you’re a white female, you get an A diet and so it goes down the scale. I was classified as a coloured male, therefore I was given D Diet and then E Diet was black females and F Diet the lowest on the scale was black males. Now for that we were given porridge in the morning (mielie meal really) and often there were pink streaks in the mielie meal which were worms that once lived in the porridge. So the food aspect was bad and the health aspect was bad. They did not allow good study facilities, even though the regulation said prisoners will be encouraged to study. So that was a rough phase. But as things went on and international aid started coming in and the only liberal Member of Parliament, Helen Suzman, started to listen to us, things started improving for us physically. But there was still the mental stress and strain prison gave us. So those were the two different phases. Okay there was a third phase when the new’76, ’77 (riots) came along by that time the prison was tamed. And for them it was easy.

C: How would you describe sport on the island?

S: Well sport on the island didn’t take off right away. Saturdays we were able to walk around and not do any work, we requested having some recreational sport as a form of exercise. Authorities brought in a huge roller which had to be pushed up and down to flatten an area. This inadvertently led to the creation of a level soccer area but without any other equipment. We petitioned the International Red Cross to sponsor a soccer ball. We started kicking the ball in the cell initially and were eventually allowed to play soccer outside on this field over the weekend. We structured it into clubs and formed an association and that is how our soccer started.
C: And then you mentioned you started an organisation called the Sports Recreation Committee and how was it formalised?

S: Yes, it started in 1969. The first sporting body was the Makana Football Association (MFA) and various clubs were formed. Youngsters who were good at playing soccer gravitated to the same club and there were also clubs formed along organisational differences, even though they proclaimed to be open to all. We disregarded this and had no concerns with political affiliations. The result being that the clubs with the fittest, youngest and most skilled members won every league and every knock out game. So those were some of the problems we had with sport on the island.

C: You obviously had to ask the commanding officer permission to get other codes of sport so how did that work?

S: Well, we negotiated for that, the first other sport we got was Rugby because Rugby is an Afrikaners sport and they were very quick to give us permission for that. But we had to change the rules of it because it can be a very rough sport. And the other which we brought in was Athletics. But that was a once a year event. With other forms of activity we brought in Volleyball. I had never heard of Volleyball in my life and I'm sure half of us never heard of it. But there was a book about the rules of Volleyball. I made 16 hand written copies and sent a copy to each cell informing them of the rules of Volleyball and so the game was played intermittently with soccer over the weekend. American style Basketball failed to grab their fancy as they said it looked like netball, which is a girl’s game. The other sport which I also brought in was Tennis (lawn tennis). Croquet which is played on level ground and is it’s an older type of sport did not take off either and Cricket required an extensive field and was therefore not a viable option that (in a nutshell) was the type of sporting activities we had.

C: Can you tell us how the first Summer Games came about?

S: Well Tony Suze, Indres Naidoo and I thought it would be good to have a grand end of the year event and we thought athletics would be a good sport to have. I wrote a letter to the Commanding Officer and asked him for permission and he said this isn’t a holiday resort you can’t have Athletics on the island. The official decline was followed up with several further requests and we eventually persuaded them allow us to make use of the prison sporting equipment, eg shot put and discus and we started what became an annual event. I still have some of the letters were we petitioned for it at the Mayibuye Centre.

C: When you started the Summer Games, did you envision that it would be an annual event

S: Well we did envision it will be every year, yes.
C: When we look at the different documents, we see a lot of planning and coordination went into it. And how did you manage that given the restrictive nature of prison.

S: Stephen Tshwete was the chairman and I was the secretary and we took turns to go and negotiate because it was very tiring, going down to the head of prison and saying we want this and we want that, and he argued with us. Stephen would come back and say I'm sick and tired of all this negotiating now, it’s your turn. And then I’d go down and negotiate and so it went on until we ultimately got what we needed. But the prizes were the source of the biggest negotiation. We said we wanted prizes, first prize would be a packet of biscuits, second prize I think was a packet of dried fruit and the third prize some sweets. We argued a lot about that due to the diet restrictions and eventually obtained permission to buy the prizes. A list was drawn with all the events and also contained the names of all financial contributors and they kept a strict watch over the amount of stock purchased.

C: For the kits, you would have to find money and then you present financial reports at the Executive Committee Annually. How did that work and what was the motivation behind you going to such lengths in running it?

S: Well the community was very sensitive to the use of money. There was a time when Stephen Tshwete and I were accused of misappropriation of funds or even fraud. What happened was the International Red Cross gave us R50 which was lot of money that time. Prison authorities came along and said due to the financial year end drawing closer the funds had to be spent immediately otherwise it would be considered as unspent funds so a quick decision was taken by Stephen and myself to buy a couple of jerseys, soccer and tennis balls. This was all done without consultation with the community and ultimately became the source of why we were accused of misappropriation and fraud. We had to address the whole community in the hall and they appointed a one man commission to investigate this. Once it was explained by the one man commission it was accepted as valid and it was then that we were exonerated

C: How were the resources made available? So if you purchased a kit, who kept it? It was read that kits moved around from team to team, how did that work?

S: Kits belong to the club and they owned it. Sometimes they played what is called selected sides made up from people from different clubs. These selected sides hired the kit from one of the clubs and used it for that particular match. But if you used the kit you had to wash it yourself before returning it to the club.

C: How did the purchasing of equipment work?

S: A list had to be drawn of all equipment needs and a corresponding list of financial contributions. These were kept for reconciliation purposes. We had to ask every club what they needed and bring all their orders and requirements together into one record. Each club had to cover the costs for its own equipment and where possible cover the shortfall in other sporting codes. So it was quite a performance with quite a bit of bookkeeping to get those things in total running order.
C: Coming back to the Summer Games, how do you think it affected the morale of the prisoners?

S: The morale, it helped the morale tremendously. Remember there were prizes that were given out to the first prize, second prize and third prize but at the end of the day it was all pooled together and divided equally amongst everybody.

C: Did you find that people worked together from across the political fields and age groups. How did that work? How did that happen? And how did you approach it to overcome those challenges?

S: Well we asked people to think of themselves as a member of the community and not as a member of an organisation. So of course they had a choice, they had special times when they were members of organisations, especially on Sunday late afternoons. Its also a psychological fact that when people are under threat they tend to lose their differences and react as a unit, but once the threat goes away then people split up again.

C: That was quite interesting but there is one thing Jarryd, Kelly and I was curious about when we were going through the documents, the Jewish Wrestling. We were trying to work out why it was titled Jewish Wrestling because it looks very similar to arm wrestling rules.

S: Yes, in fact I came across it in a library book where it was described as Jewish Wrestling and I don’t know whether it was the correct term for it.

C: Records show that you had referees. Tell us more about the rules, where it came from and how it was developed as well as their training.

S: The Referees Association. We applied FIFA rules: Bought a copy from Logan’s Sport or was it Lemkus? There was also another copy in the library of which we made further copies for distribution. The training referees had to study and write a test as well as do some practical refereeing. These were evaluated by expert referees who in turn gave them a type of a clearance to become a referee.

C: What were the challenges of doing that kind of training with people in a prison environment?

S: Well in a prison environment you have people of different ages and you had to be very diplomatic in your teaching and communication methods as older people demanded more respect from the youngsters which made the task semi difficult to achieve.

C: Expand on the level of expertise in First Aiders and how they were trained. Am I correct in saying if a player was injured a report had to be given of the incident.

S: By that time we had access to the state library services and we were able to get books from there and yes a report had to be submitted about all injuries.
C: How did people develop skill? Were there books available?

S: Yeah in the library, people were studying accounts and bookkeeping. And even at university level so it wasn’t too difficult for them.

C: How would you describe the sort of hierarchy of the organisations on the island?

S: There was not supposed to be any hierarchy. Because every organisation was proud of its own policies and own principles and so on. There was therefore no hierarchy.

C: How did the structures work? Was there one specific organisation that communicated with the Officer Commanding?

S: No it was all a joint effort; the committees were made up of members of different organisations and were completely neutral. If you were a member of a committee you served the community and nothing else.

C: How would teams share the fields? It was obviously limited as you had rugby and you had soccer?

S: Yes, it wasn’t shared amongst clubs. It was shared amongst associations. It was shared amongst Rugby and amongst Soccer.

C: How did they co-ordinate that?

S: Well it was decided that on certain days we will have Rugby and on certain days we would have Soccer. This was communicated to both bodies and fixtures were arranged accordingly.

C: Who do you think were the key people involved in the development of sport on the Island? And can you describe the roles they played on the island?

S: Mioseneke, Indres Naidoo , Solomon Mabuse and Stephen Tswete but Its difficult to recall offhand .Well Stephen Tshwete was a rugby enthusiast, he was the chairman of the Rugby Association and I was the secretary on the board as it goes and, Indress Naidoo and Motseneke were involved in Soccer. Athletics was Tswete, Indres, Tony Suze and I. In lawn Tennis it was Phillip Silwana and I, and in Volleyball it was again Tony Suze and I.

C: At a later stage we saw that there was some sort of indoor games that was also played, chess, checker, draughts, dominoes and carom.

S: Yes it was always played but on a competitive basis it was introduced into the Athletic games purely because we wanted as many activities as we possibly could have in order to purchase as many packets of biscuits and sweets as we possibly could.
C: There was a game called ‘late for work’, what was it about exactly?

S: It was how quickly you can get dressed.

C: How were disputes handled?

S: All sporting codes had their separate dispute and misconduct committees.

C: Who sat on these committees?

S: Some inmates had a judicial approach toward life and they would be approached to serve on these committees but they would be democratically voted into it.

C: What do you think made the football association so successful in running soccer and sport within such an environment? The prison wasn’t the easiest of environments I would imagine. How did they manage to make it so successful?

S: It was very systematic and organised. Careful planning went into working out the constitution, how the constitution will function as well as how it would impact prisoners. Incorporating rules of the game with the above made for the success that it was.

C: So what skills do you think you gained from your experience in sport on the island?

S: Organising and organisational skills. I later became the head of the department of informatics at UCT and I think that the skill which I learnt there, especially negotiations helped me a lot in that particular job.

C: And for some of the key players how do you think it also contributed to their development when you look at some of your colleagues that were with you on the island?

S: Well the only person I know was in public service is Stephen Tswete and I think the way in which he dealt with his portfolio was in a very systematic manner. He became ‘Mr Fix It’.

C: We found documents written right up onto pieces of toilet paper. Some at the back of your UNISA exam papers and things like that. Please explain what the process of getting stationery on the island was. What did you go through to get it?

S: Most students donated to their clubs and the clubs donated to the MFA. C: If a prisoner maybe did something that the wardens weren’t happy with would they remove your sport or limit your ability to part take?

S: Yes, they would. With me, I wound up in solitary confinement cells. So that’s how they limit you in sport and all other things. Some of the heads of prison tried to control us by saying that if you don’t work hard enough in the quarry there would be no sport for you over the weekend. We countered this by arguing that we did not play sport with conditions attached to it as it was never introduced to us in this manner.
C: So you had to still fight to keep it even though you had access to it. Did the Summer Games allow for cohesion amongst the prisoners and the wardens? Did sport improve relationships between prisoners and the wardens?

S: Yes, I saw that, especially with Rugby. They were all Rugby players and they came and watched our Rugby. They would try and advise us about how to pass the ball, but the problem was of course that the prison authorities would remove warders that got too close to us. So they were transferred to another place on the island or they were taken away from the island. Wardens were also monitored to avoid relationships being formed.

C: So the challenge of dealing with the wardens and maybe the Officer Commanding to get the sport was a unifying one.

S: It was unifying; the fact that sport was being threatened was always a unifying thing.

C: Do you think that sport on the island allowed for alliances that maybe would never have come to be.

S: Yes. We had some clubs that had a policy: there are no organisational preferences, anyone can join the club. And I think that helped a lot in forming alliances

C: Can you remember some of the clubs that were like that?

S: Well Manong specifically had a statement in their constitution and other clubs didn’t worry much about it because it was accepted that it will be like an unspoken rule.

C: I don’t know if you’ve seen the movie ‘More than Just a Game’?

S: Yes

C: What were your thoughts about the movie “More than Just a Game and about this information being shared to such a wide spectrum?

S: Well I’m in it. I thought it was a good to have a movie made and the effort that went into it for me was also very educative

C: How did being involved in sport help you cope and how did you transfer the skill and the experiences on the island?

S: Well in the work situation where I went to I was hoping that the person who took over my job would have learnt a bit of organisation from me.
C: And your involvement in sports since your release?

S: Stephen Tswete asked me to if I don’t want to join the department of Sport. I said to Steve, I like watching Rugby and Soccer and other sports, if I come to your department I might find out all the nonsense that takes places behind the scenes and I might not like it any more. So please, I’m not interested. But when he became Minister of Police he came again and I couldn’t refuse him. He wanted me to look at a specific IT fraud. But unfortunately he died.

C: So Prof what was the impact of sport on the island, personally for you?

S: Well I think it broadened my perspective, not only sport but the cultural activities we had there. The art exhibition, the music, the choir exhibitions, and sport all added to broaden my understanding and my perspective of the world.

C: Can you maybe tell us a bit more about the cultural aspects?

S: Well one of the cultural aspects that impressed me a lot was the choir. Shuming Tutu, Bolise and Kanleka formed a choir: an 80 men choir. They bought the script, the score and got people to volunteer as well as persuaded people to be part of the choir. And they produced Handel’s Messiah. I have never heard the magnificence of that song, of that piece, prior to the performance I bought 2 CDs of Handel’s Messiah and they’re not as good as the ones that were produced there. There were art exhibitions and art competitions, where Mark Solomon and I were the judges.

C: I know you had a record club and a film club, how did that work, how was the music played. How did you arrange movies being played?

S: The records were played over the intercom, but the warden was given a definite programme of which record to play and what time and so on, it was played in sequence. And the film club was quite a different thing. We said we wanted to borrow films from the wardens since they watched a film once a week. After some discussion, they agreed to give us their films after it had been censored. Because they said there might be undesirable films and what struck me as the most interesting was the move ‘Moses and the Ten Commandments’. The movie depicted an argument against authorities and Moses being the main objector found himself having to move. They thought that it was not a good film for us.

C: What was the process for submitting a movie playlist?

S: For the films, we had no choice, whatever they chose we could watch

C: And everybody could go and watch the film?

S: Yes

C: Where was the screening of the movies done?

S: There was a hall
C: And the records?

S: The record were played once a week

C: How would you describe the Summer Games in relation to looking at the Olympic Spirit?

S: Well we thought that we wanted to create an Olympic Spirit there and we borrowed the 5 rings but then I thought we should also bring in a teaching process. So I brought in orienteering and drawing from the shape of the rings taught people how to use a compass - this of course prepared them in the event of them having to go off as a guerrilla, they could operate a compass.

C: That was clever thinking and the warders did not suspect a thing?

S: No

C: Were there any other instances where you were using sport as a cover for training people in other things.

S: It’s probably the one I remember most clearly

C: When you look at sporting organisations today what do you think they could learn from how you ran things on the island?

S: Not knowing the problems they currently face it is difficult to say but I would think that there would be lots we could teach them.

C: That’s great. I think the same thing. I think that even an organisation that is starting something up can learn something from you how you handled things. If you have to leave a message for somebody you know who is looking at the Sports Recreation Committee documents what you would advise them to think about or keep in the back of their minds when they are looking through this collection.

S: I think the most important thing is for people that organise sport to be aware of the needs of every single individual there. To make a decision that will satisfy everybody to negotiate if you want a decision to go well. To always develop and work on your negotiating skills. It is also important to remember just because you are the chief or the presidents and above the rest you still serve the public or the sporting body.

C: And how do you feel about the collection being used or being exhibited and people actually studying it?

S: Well I think its good; there are things which I can also learn out of it
C: And what do you think about the possibility of all those documents from the Island being digitised?

S: I actually think that it's wonderful because material, paper material especially with acid content, destructs. Of course digitised documents must be refreshed periodically but refreshing is easy.

C: Is there anything in particular that you would like to ask us or you would like to share that I might have missed about the collection or about the island?

S: Noting I can think of at the moment

C: Thank you for your time Prof Isaacs we really appreciate it, it has been really insightful.
Robben Island prisoners breaking stones in the prison courtyard.
SPORT ON ROBBEN ISLAND

An interaction with the Sports Recreation Committee Collection
by Charlene Roderick and Jarryd Fredericks

1. Robben Island General Recreational Committee Archive

The Robben Island General Recreational Committee Archive, MCH-64 is housed at the Mayibuye Center at UWC and contains material that dates as far back as 1966. The collection comprises of a total of 83 boxes of material, notes and reports. The information can be divided into three main categories the first is the sports activities and organisations related to sport on Robben Island; second are materials related to recreation and entertainment and the last category is educational. Participation in all these activities were considered to be privileges afforded to the prisoners on Robben Island.

Within the Robben Island prisoner community sport flourished despite the harsh conditions the prisoners were exposed to and their sport organisations faced. The Constitution of the Sports Recreation Committee forms one of the first documents in the collection. Together with the original organisational chart (MCH64-1.1.1a-b), from 1969 it reflects the structure of the organisation. These and many other documents stored in the 83 boxes give an in-depth insight of the efforts of prisoners to organise and participate in sport and recreational activities on Robben Island from 1966 to 1994.

2. The Aim of the Robben Island Legacy Project

The aim of the Robben Island Legacy Project is to digitise the historical papers housed at the Mayibuye Archive that relate to sport within the Sports Recreation Committee Documents. This requires that 45 boxes of historical papers with an average of 200 items per box be sorted according to a catalogue and then assigned accession numbers.

2.1. The Capturing Process

Each document had to be assigned an accession number. The document was then scanned which in itself posed challenges in that pages varied in sizes and often were larger than an A4 size and not always in the best of condition due to the effects of time. Once scanned the papers were assigned metadata which is a time intensive process. The scanned documents and metadata were then transferred onto the database to create a digital library using the UNESCO endorsed Greenstone software which is open source. The digital library will allow users to search using a single word or a combination of words to find relevant information within the collection and across other collections that will be captured.
2.2 Themes

It was during the assigning of the metadata that themes emerged which could be explored in more detail. As it is that during this stage the document is analysed to determine title, keywords, authors, date, relationship to any other document, type of document and the condition of the document. Just from the boxes that have been captured to date one is able to identify that there are multiple organisations with clear rules, codes of conduct and policies that were applied by the organisations on Robben Island related to sport and recreation. Themes include: Inter organisation relations, sport generating alliances, financial systems, dispute management, training of members, administration skills of those running the Association, Interactions with the officer Commanding, Value systems of prisoners, Disciplined approach, Team issues, Challenges of the Association, Camaraderie through sport.

2.3 Sport and Recreation Organisations and Codes

Organisations on the island included the well-known Makana Football Association (henceforth referred to as MFA); the Robben Island Amateur Athletics Association (referred to from this point on as the RIAAA), the Draughts, Checkers, Chess and Carom (DCC&C), Referees Union, The First Aid Unit, The Protest and Misconduct Committee, the Rugby Board, The Film, The Record Club to name a few.

Through the process various codes of sport were identified which include soccer, rugby, chess, draughts, carom, checkers, boxing, volleyball, lawn tennis, table tennis as well as athletics. The athletics can be analysed further in terms of sporting codes or as annual special events. The RIAAA hosted an annual event, the Summer Games with the permission of the Officer Commanding which embodies the values of fair play, teamwork and is a living testament of the spirited nature of the prisoners on the island.

There was a very disciplined approach to the development of skills in that the training and adhering of sport rules were done according to an excellent standard. The prisoners made use of their knowledge and the prison library where books on rules for soccer and the volleyball rules were copied by hand and distributed to others within the prison. The books also played an essential role in the development of the training material for the first aid unit.

2.4 Skills, Values and Processes

The importance of negotiating skills become apparent when one looks deeper into how the prisoners interacted with the Wardens and Officer Commanding to gain access to sport and recreation material and facilities to grow the types of sport played and to host special events like the Summer Games.

Organisation and administrative skills as well as the values of the prisoners can be seen through the various organisations and individual soccer clubs constitutions and founding statements. With draft constitutions and final constitutions available one is able to see how a community reached a consensus about what their club stood for. The draft constitution for the Sports Recreation Committee for example has the organisations name as the “Robben Island Recreational and Cultural Committee” but refers to itself as the Recreational Committee. (MCH64-1.1.2a).
The draft and final constitutions also indicated the roles and responsibilities of office bearers Chairman, Sectary, Treasurer, and 4 ordinary committee members. The constitution included a description of all the duties for the individuals’ offices that make up the executive body.

The aims and objectives of the Recreational Committee included:

- The inculcation of the spirit of sportsmanship and co-operation amongst the prisoners of Robben Island
- Serving as a liaison between the Prison Authorities and all recreation and cultural clubs and associations within the mandated framework of the Sport Recreation Committee.
- Providing guiding principles for dealing with possible complaints and disputes with the Prison Authority
- Providing assistance in drawing up of all sporting programmes.
- Serving as an Arbitration Committee for any cultural or recreation association, club, organisation or of any of its members.

The MFA showed the practical application of the skills again and again through the way they ran the football league and how they handled their finances, embodying all the requirements one would have for a current day organisation. Detailed lists of donations, expenditures, and purchases can all be tracked. MFA T had an executive body that was democratically elected. All meeting of this committee and annual general meetings are minuted. At the annual general meeting a chairman’s report, a financial report would be presented and and the gathering would address whatever else was on the agenda for the meeting. Motions were made and seconded and voted on before being implemented. The details one is able to track is impressive, it includes issues going from a player to the association and from there to the Protest and Misconduct Committee and the back and forth between all the parties concerned and how it is resolved by going through the agreed and respected processes.

Training and adhering of sport rules were done according to an excellent standard. The prisoners made use of their knowledge and the prison library where books on rules for soccer and the volleyball rules were copied by hand and distributed to others within the prison. The books also played an essential role in the development of the training material for the first aid unit.

3. Research opportunities including case studies of famous prisoners and sportsmen on Robben Island

Documents penned include authors like Sedick Isaacs, Tokyo Sexwale, Indres Naidoo, M Ngubeni, A Chiloane, H Ntshangana, MS Mabuse, L Natlo, M Molfe, H Ntshanyana, Brander, Naiicker, Henge, P Silwana.

The Archives provide us today with the unique opportunity of researching the individuals and their contribution not just in the context of sport on the island but as a whole toward the anti-apartheid struggle.
For example the interview conducted with Prof Sedick Isaacs as a result of interacting with the collection adds another dimension in creating a fuller understanding of the prisoners’ experiences on the island but also of the role of sport during the apartheid era, on Robben Island and sport in our current times. Interviews with the members of the executive committees and members of clubs and organisation surrounding this collection in itself could be a unique study to understand the experiences gained through sport and what these interactions through sport developed for people involved.

There are many themes and angles from which this collection could be analysed.

We have not assigned metadata to all the boxes yet and there are so many themes that one is able to identify as potential research projects in their own right. Whether one is in the field of law, social sciences, computer science or management there are many topics to be explored. Possible avenues include in law- the constitutions, sports laws, misconduct; Social sciences- the various human interactions between various prisoners, the warders; Computer science-digitisation of the documents; and Anatomy - development and treating of injuries. Management – Special Events, organisational structure to mention a few.

To gain a better understanding of sport and Robben Island it is highly recommended to explore the documents housed at the UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archive in particular the Sports Recreation Committee documents. These historical papers provide insight into how sport was on this island. They pay tribute to the human spirit that while in prison our prisoners sought to keep their humanity alive despite the harshness of their environment they were in.

The Information in this document is based on the MCH64- The General Recreation Committee Archive and an interview conducted with Prof S Isaacs August 2012.
SPORT AND RECREATION UNIT
SAT. 1977-10-22
MORNING: RUGBY PICK SIDES
AFTERNOON: SOCCER PICK SIDES

HEAD OF PRISON
DIRECTORATE

32.5.1

GEVANGENIS
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ISLAND
ROBBEN ISLAND LEGACY PROJECT ESSAY
by Charlene Roderick, Kelly Herborn and Jarryd Fredericks

Introduction

After having agreed to get involved with a DCAS- ICESD sport legacy project which was looking for student assistants on February 1st 2012, we as sport and recreation students had begun what was simply a job – digitising the Robben Island Sport Recreation Committee Collection. We did not know really what to expect other than specific tasks associated with the job, which was to sort, scan and create a database of the documents in this collection.

Our preconceived notion of what Robben Island was would be changed through this amazing interaction with the documents from this collection. Previously we considered Robben Island in a single dimension as the place where political prisoners were kept, a place that was designed by the Apartheid government as a control mechanism for those who sought to change or disrupt the agenda of the then government. What we have come to learn in the months at the Mayibuye archives is perhaps how naïve and unaware we were of what life was like during those times, and we have gained a respect and love for the history and truths found amongst the documents we have worked with. The truths of this island are far more complex and represent a rich history of our culture and the hopes and ability of people to overcome even in the midst of adversity.

While this collection is primarily focused on the sports, recreation activities prisoners were allowed to engage in, it provides insights that cannot be found in books alone. By reading through the actual letters of correspondence, matching reports, donations lists, etc. you are able to get a perspectives from various authors. The state of the documents in itself reflects the hardship and tenacity of those who wrote them – some being on toilet paper, others on backs of envelopes, on the back of UNISA exam papers to name a few. Through reading correspondence over an issue you can see how different parties felt and how they resolved issues and worked together. You are able to get a glimpse of the lives of the prisoners, and of what kind of were some of the challenges they faced on a daily basis. Yet despite those challenges they were able to develop a sporting culture.

The members took pride in their teams and this can be seen in how the teams would decide on their team colours and explain their significance in the club constitutions as well as the time taken to design and create a team badge which serves as an example of the high standards of the individuals on Robben Island.

Soccer was the primary sport but there were many other sports that the prisoners engaged in from lawn tennis to chess and checkers, there was something that appealed to everyone. Not only did the culture of sport thrive but it also developed as a well structured multi-level organisation with various clubs and sub-committees that worked alongside each other.
The level of organisation and structure can be evidenced in documents like organograms and clearly designated roles of the various members, clubs and executive committee. The standards and drive for excellence can be seen in the training of referees, first aiders, the way in which sporting code rules were distributed and adhered to and, the manner in which the various executive committees conducted themselves.

The organisation had a financial system that showed how money came in and how it was spent; accountability was shown through the reports presented at the Annual General Meetings. Going through the documents you find many donation lists, balance sheets, detailed accounts of transactions.

Through the correspondence of the island prisoners you can see the clearly designated communication channels and protocols that were observed in how the different clubs and organisations worked together sharing resources. The high moral values of the individuals are reflected when disputes arose but was handled in a respectful and dignified manner, even when the emotions behind the matter ran high. In some cases you can go through various years and track a specific issue and how it was dealt with by the parties concerned. If I were to use one word to describe the collection it would be ‘treasure’. Treasure because in these documents lies a significant part of our heritage, the untold truths about our heroes and a testament to the spirit of man and the spirit of sport that unites man. It speaks to the values that are at the very heart of this country, it provides us with lessons and insight in how we conduct ourselves, and how we run our organisations within the sporting community.

Working with this collection has been an absolute privilege, we have learned so much about our country and its legacy that you cannot help but to be changed and see things with a better perspective and a richer appreciation.

**The Summer Games of 1972**

2012 marks the 40th anniversary of the 1972 Summer Games held on Robben Island.

In 1972 when the world was preparing for the 1972 Olympic Games, in Munich, the prisoners of Robben Island exemplified the Spirit of Sport as they prepared for their own games. While the Island was meant to keep the prisoners isolated, sport once again crossed all the boundaries, the prisoners of Robben Island planned and executed a well organised event with minimal resources.

The first challenge to having the Summer Games would be getting the permission to have them as all things had to be approved by the Officer Commanding. There is a certificate resolution that acknowledges the support given by the Officer Commanding in allowing the games and associated activates to arrange it from the organising members.

The documents related to these games reveal the sporting excellence of the prisoners. There are documents that show the planning of months in advance, rules that would be used and how events would be judged. The detailed schedules...
and co-ordination between referees, sporting officials, teams and first aid can all be seen in how diligently the organisers worked in preparing for the games. Prizes and certificates were planned ahead of time and there was a prizing giving ceremony to mark the event. Time was taken to ensure that there was an even distribution of athletes so as to create a fair playing field for all. The games catered for all ages with many sub-classes for more senior players as well as a variety of events from the spoon-and-potatoes race to the 80 metres Veterans Race.

The games are also reflective of how universal the language of sport is, it shows how sport can overcome many barriers - our differences, whether it is race, political affiliation, religion and etc. sport is universal, it was then and it is now. The games and all sport within the prison allowed for cohesion amongst the prisoners and the authorities, in that the prisoners needed the permission of the officer commanding to have such events taking place.

The Summer Games of 1972 on Robben Island remind us of the values that we think of when we think about the Olympic spirit, the values of fairness, integrity, excellence, unity, the very same qualities we see in our Olympics and which we see embodied in the Robben Island Summer Games. The Robben Island Summer Games of 1972 remind us of the extraordinary legacy that we have as South Africans - despite numerous challenges we are able to rise and to meet any challenge with grace and excellence, united in all that we do.

The Makana Football Association

In 2007 the Makana Football Association (henceforth referred to as MFA), was recognised as an honorary member of FIFA. This is a tribute to the level of professionalism with which it conducted its affairs from 1966 to 1990 on Robben Island. Reading through the documents, one is able understand that there was a clear structure in place that included sub-committees like the Referees Union, the Protest and Misconduct Committee and, First Aid. Finances were collected and allocated for things like kits and first aid supplies. When looking through this collection one finds donation lists and the allocation of the money received. It is also very evident through this collection that there was a clear and intentional structure within the association creating an organisational structure that is reflective of the high standards required for a successful organisation.

The association set standards where referees were trained and wrote examinations, these were marked and attendance of classes were monitored. The referees submitted reports of the match and any issues arising were addressed in a professional manner by the MFA. The efficiency and level of respect comes through when dealing with problems which arose for example if an apology was needed it was given not just to the individuals involved but to the respective clubs and the governing body as well. There are examples of the First Aid training given to the First Aiders, which shows anatomical drawings explaining injuries and how they should be treated. If a player sustained an injury, there was a report that would clear or not clear him for play, with detail to when and what injury was sustained, and when the player will be ready for play again.

The documents within this collection show the real life stories, the simple truths of
life that are about the people on the island that were imprisoned, fathers, brothers, sons and how they overcame. It was most humbling to read about a request for a second television for all the prisoners over the holiday period, which the prisoners would pay for but their request was declined; or the fact that something like a pencil or sheet of paper had to be granted, something we just walk into any shop now and can get, they were denied; or the endearing letter of the gentleman who left his trumpet behind so that others may reap the benefit of the joy it could bring. The speed and efficiency with which the prisoners involved in sport dealt with issues arising, disputes about matches is amazing. These issues were treated with fairness and professionalism by all concerned, the players, referees, club administrators and MFA representatives, which embodies the values of fair play and the true spirit of sport.

Conclusion

There are so many documents which touched us and made history alive on a daily basis as we worked and read. We have learnt so much more than facts, we have been privileged to discover a hidden treasure here at UWC, at the UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye archives. The archives host not just the collection we worked on but also other collections which we were able to get a glimpse of during our time here. Here at UWC we are privileged to be able to go through the actual documents that give insight into the values, skills, humanity and character of the prisoners. We were also afforded the opportunity to visit the island and gain a deeper understanding of how the events were read about in the documents had unfolded. After reading and seeing what the cost was for the freedom and liberties we have today, you can’t help to leave Mayibuye with a sense of patriotism about what our country achieved and how it continues to rise up to the challenges it faces.
Background information to the establishment of UWC RIM Mayibuye archive and Robben Island collections unit

The University of the Western Cape (UWC) - Robben Island Museum (RIM) Mayibuye Archive was originally known as the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture, was established at the UWC in 1992. The core collection of the Mayibuye Archive includes material that was collected during the years of exile by the London-based International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF). Following the unbanning of the anti-apartheid organisations and literature in 1990, the collection was relocated to South Africa to form the initial deposit of the Archive. Other collections were added as people and organisations became aware of this important historical resource.

The Centre soon established itself as a pioneering project, and managed to build a large multi-media collection on apartheid and the struggle.

In September 1996, the Cabinet of SA decided to establish the RIM as the first official heritage institution of the new democracy and recommended that the IDAF/Mayibuye collections be incorporated into the Museum. The Mayibuye Archive was officially incorporated into RIM in 2000 after UWC and RIM Signed a Memorandum of Understanding.

The Mayibuye Archive has numerous collections categorised according to media format – Audio Visual, Historical Papers/Books, Photographic, Art and Artefacts. The Archive continues to receive collections and remains a crucial source of information for all researcher international and local exploring the history of the struggle of apartheid with information being used in wide range of publications and documentaries.

It has been a privilege to collaborate with Interdisciplinary Centre of Excellence for Sport Science Development (ICESSD) and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS) in this project and we wish to extend our appreciation not just for us but on behalf of the future generations that will benefit from such a project. With thanks to these parties for coming to the fore with funding that allowed this project to be realized.

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University of Western Cape