CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

Stories of the South Peninsula

Historical research, stories and heritage tourism opportunities in the South Peninsula

SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

The peninsula from Cape Point Nature Reserve

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Background

The primary objective of this project was to prepare a series of 'story packages' providing the content for historical interpretive stories of the 'far' South Peninsula. Stories cover the geographical area of Chapman's Peak southwards to include Imhoff, Ocean View, Masiphumelele, Kommetjie, Witsand, Misty Cliffs and Scarborough, Plateau Road, Cape Point, Smitswinkel Bay to Miller's Point, Boulders, Simon's Town, Red Hill, Glencairn and Fish Hoek to Muizenberg.

The purposes for which these stories are to be told are threefold, namely to support tourism development; to stimulate local interest; and to promote appropriate and sustainable protection of heritage resources through education, stimulation of interest and appropriate knowledge.

To this end, the linking of historical stories and tourism development requires an approach to story-telling that goes beyond the mere recording of historic events. The use of accessible language has been a focus. Moreover, it requires an approach that both recognises the iconic, picture-postcard image of parts of Cape Town (to which tourists are drawn initially), but extends it further to address the particular genius loci that is Cape Town's 'Deep South', in all its complexity and coloured by memory, ambivalences and contradictory experiences. We believe there is a need to balance the more conventional approach, which selects people or events deemed worthy of commemoration (for example, the Battle of Muizenberg) to tell the story of places, by interweaving popular memory and culture into these recordings (for example, the rich Muslim culture that existed in Simon's Town before the removal under the Group Areas Act).

Thus, these are stories, familiar and unfamiliar, that link intangible heritage with (largely) material forms and are about real-life characters and events that have shaped our past. The tone of these stories is conversational in order to engage local residents and tourists alike, and can be utilised in story-telling mode (by tour guides for example) or to fulfil on-site interpretive requirements.

Stories have been selected to balance historical themes from prehistory, through pre-colonial to colonial settlement, apartheid and democratic South Africa. The history of Cape Town's South Peninsula has been very ably and comprehensively recorded by many of its residents, and we wish to acknowledge and give thanks to all those cited as references.

Referencing

The stories are intended for popular consumption. Therefore, the traditionally detailed referencing that would be expected of historical research was not regarded as appropriate in this instance, although full accuracy in terms of content and referencing has been sought. All references utilised have been listed. In respect of images, reference sources have been provided, which are open-source as far as possible.

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(K. Dugmore Ström)

The far south Cape Peninsula has a spatial finiteness that can fix the area perfectly in the imagination as a 'territory'. And legends have a way of fixing themselves to such territories. Add the romance of cultures meeting and mingling, high-mast ships, the derring-do of harbour life, mountains with fertile uplands, impassable roads, caves and coves, and tales are almost ready-made by the ingredients at hand.

One such story is that, up until the arrival of the Dutch, the South Peninsula and, with it, False Bay, was the chiefdom of a local prince. His name, according to legend, was Prince Dhouw. Dutch soldiers engaged Dhouw and his people in battle – the extent and location of the skirmishes are not known, but in South Peninsula local legend, they have attained the name of 'the Hottentot wars'. First-hand colonial sources record battles between Dutch soldiers and South Peninsula natives near Cape Point in 1659.[39] The tragic result of these battles for Dhouw and his followers still needs to be ratified by historic sources, but makes for an interesting tale; it is told that Prince Dhouw, surpassed in battle, ceded, or rather sold, his chiefdom to the Dutch, presumably to the Dutch East India Company. Prince Dhouw's price was apparently a mere 33 Dutch gulden.[40]

The unhappy, foolish prince, we are left to think! Whether he agreed to this sale or understood the terms will never be known. And whether he actually ever conceived of himself as a chief or prince, or was given that status to upgrade the status of the tale and, thus, the sale, is also not known. An important aspect of the 'legend of Chief-Prince Dhouw' is that one needs to look outwards from the deep South Peninsula towards the far, far borders of South Africa to feel the full repercussion of the story. For the Cape Khoikhoi as a nation, the legend of the 'sale of the south' ties into a system of loss that was fought through many battles of attrition. Against their wishes, they became part of the fabric of society in many far-flung places thousands of miles into the interior. Meanwhile, the Khoikhoi families who remained in the South Peninsula against the odds, once ruled by chiefs whom they knew in person, became subjects instead of kings and queens who ruled over the waves – the Dutch royals and, later, the British royals ruled Southern Africa and her southernmost tip by remote control.

39 Bekker (1987) p 22.

40 In 1672, Governor Albert von Breugel concluded a contract with Dhouw. Domisse & Westby-Nunn (2002).

The settlers who came to Southern Africa to live under the extended wing of their royal Dutch and British rulers saw themselves, until history started to rethink itself, as sensible, brave explorer types. The warring of the Dutch and, later, the British with each other and with locals in South Africa has manifested itself in many ways on the South Peninsula over the generations. The 1795 Battle (or non-battle) of Muizenberg, where the British wrested from the Dutch control of the Cape for their own king, was a tragi-drama without a clear winner.

The Battle of Muizenberg gave the British entry to Africa from the south, via the South Peninsula, and that is the start of a very big story, including lust for bright gold and diamonds, those most kingly of symbols. For the peninsula, connectedness with British royalty continued as part of the story of Simon's Town right up until 1957, many long years after South Africa was no longer a British colony. When South Africa became independent of the United Kingdom in 1910, Simon's Town remained an outpost of Great Britain, a so-called "Royal Navy dockyard", and stories of visitors with aristocratic connections, or claiming to have those connections, long gave the small, sleepy settlement more newsworthy cachet than other, simpler fishing and recreational villages along the False Bay coast. The village retains a fascination for British families with naval backgrounds to this day.

1886 British empire map. The empire was still to expand after this mapping, particularly northwards into Africa.

During the 19th century, the world's seaways were, to a large extent, the British empire's seaways, and the Royal Navy was kept in prime form to look after the sea-highways that kept the empire connected. The South Peninsula's strategic geographic position meant that it was also a highly strategic military position. The relationship of Simon's Town to the Royal Navy made it the biggest and busiest town on the peninsula. The South Peninsula has long been largely independent of the greater Cape Town area, with links to sea trade fostering this independence: Naval ships travelling into South Africa from England used Simon's Town as their port, mostly bypassing Table Bay entirely. In the years of the 19th century, the sea route between Port Elizabeth and Simon's Town was busier than the Cape Town-Simon's Town route, as naval and commercial vessels plied back and forth, supplying the eastern frontier zone. In recent decades, the South Peninsula is less independent of greater Cape Town. But there are still many who live 'down south' who rarely venture out of their almost island-like existence.

British naval protection of the world's seaways protected trade from piracy, but also helped to ensure that the nations along the routes stayed loyal to Great Britain and did not threaten the empire, or the 'Commonwealth', as it was later fashioned. Tariffs were paid to the Royal Navy as dues for assistance with making sure that trade ran smoothly. Globally, the Royal Navy bases kept connections with each other, and supplies from one port (food, timber, iron, ropes, etc.) were easily transported per ship from port to port. The global fleet of the Navy was enormous and equipped with well-trained naval forces as well as foot soldiers. 'Gunboat diplomacy' meant that coastal cities lived in the knowledge that a lethal fleet of ships could rapidly be deployed to cut off links to the trade routes. The dockyard at Simon's Town was first and foremost a military concern, and remains one to this day. For most of the 19th century, the ongoing wars on the Cape Colony's eastern frontier meant that troop movements in and out of South Africa were regular. Ominously, the troop ship that sailed the route between Simon's Town and Port Elizabeth was named Styx. And, of course, traffic of troops and prisoners was swelled during the years of the Anglo-Boer War, and again in the two World Wars.

It seems strange that the woman in whose name most of the enormous British empire was conquered and managed, Queen Victoria, never travelled her realm. By 1860, the Cape had been British for half a century, but not even a member of the Queen's household had ever visited, let alone the Queen herself. In 1860, however, Governor George Grey set about remedying the lack of royal attention for her Southern African subjects. Queen Victoria's young son, Prince Alfred, arrived at the Cape via the Simon's Town dockyard. Grey's biographer, William Rees,[41] claimed: "Sir George knew that the presence of the Sailor Prince in their midst would not only give great pleasure to the colonists, but would also greatly strengthen their loyalty by adding warm personal attachment to their lawful obedience." This would almost certainly not have been the general feeling amongst the Xhosa of the eastern frontier, the Prince's next stop. He set off from Simon's Town to Port Elizabeth to view his queenly mother's realms in the districts known as Albany and Kaffraria. There, local amaXhosa had progressively been forced by Governor Grey into a series of areas known as 'locations'. While visiting the Eastern Cape, Prince Alfred was not taken to meet with Xhosa Sarhili (Kreli) of the Gcalekas. At the time of Alfred's visit, Sarhili was still operating as a bona fide leader, although his actions by that time had become highly circumscribed through many years of war and compromising negotiation. By contrast, Governor Grey did organise for another Xhosa chief, Sandile, the meet the young English prince. Sandile travelled with

41 Rees & Rees (1892).

the prince on the return boat journey from the Eastern Cape, expressing surprise at the English prince's on-board duties, and apparently commenting that the prince's involvement with the humdrum of life aboard was perhaps a reason underpinning the great power of the British as a nation. Although Sandile was by then a dethroned royal, stripped of all authority, while a guest of Prince Alfred, Sandile was treated as a native born royal. For Sandile, the happiest part of his visit to Cape Town was the opportunity to meet with his two daughters at their school on the slopes of Devil's Peak, Zonnebloem College.[42] Schooling Xhosas and other Cape natives in adherence to British conventions was, at the time, official colonial policy.

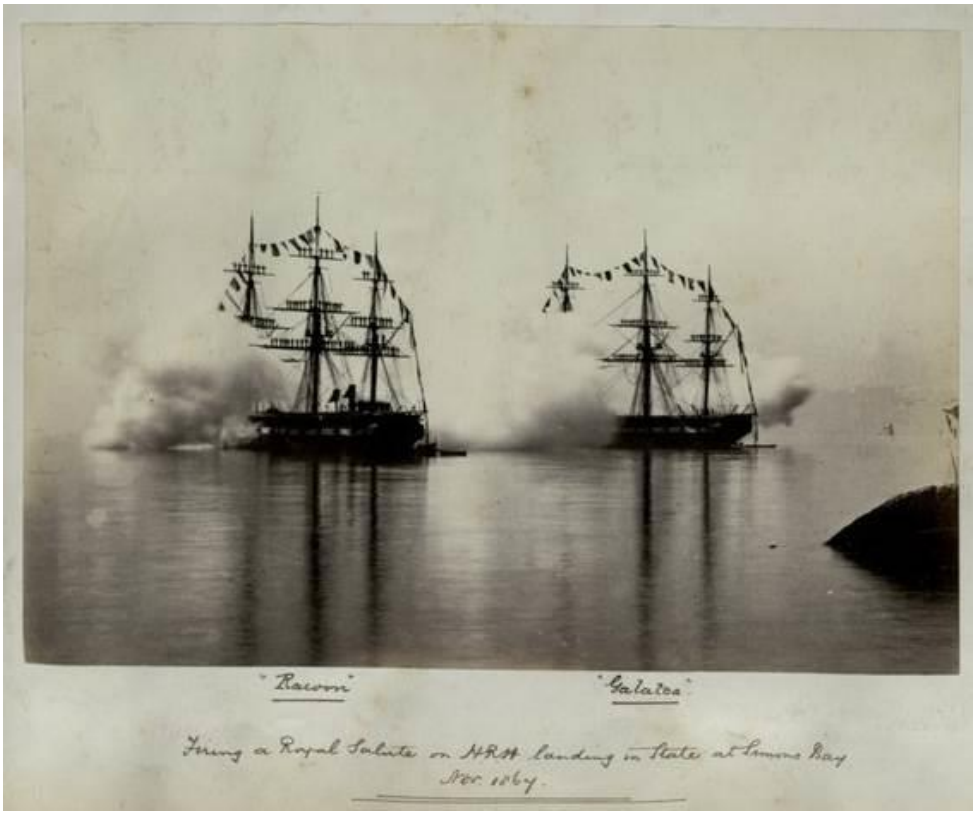
Only 16 years old at the time of his first royal tour, young Prince Alfred was feted around the colony, climbing mountains, taking long horse rides, and generally being royally entertained. According to one biographer, Alfred was quiet by nature, and not overly fond of the duties, the pomp-and-ceremony side of the duties of a 'minor royal', defined for him by his stay-at-home Regent mother. The prince went on from the Cape to Australia, and visited both colonies again in 1867 and 1868.

The Queen, who never visited her colony of the Cape of Good Hope. This is the earliest known photograph of Queen Victoria, taken in 1844/5, with her eldest daughter, Victoria.

Prince Alfred, second son of Queen Victoria, in 1868, during his Australian tour.

42 Mostert (1992).

Quiet in person though the prince himself may have been, royal visits to the Cape were an opportunity for the governor, as representative of the broader empire, to impress the colonists with an impression of the wonders and merits that being part of the British empire bestowed on them. Starting with the impressive smoke and thunder of a royal salute fired aboard his ship as he docked at Simon's Town, Prince Alfred's two succeeding visits were the occasion for public spectacle on as grand a scale as the locals could afford. As the prince journeyed from Simon's Town to Cape Town in 1860, "flags waved from every spire and staffs streamed from windows and balconies, or floated out in the breeze in long lines of brilliant colour overhead. Thousands of expectant faces in Cape Town turned towards the road from Simon's Bay. Thousands of throats grew hoarse with cheering as the open carriage with its grey horses drew near, and the round, boyish face of their royal visitor beamed with gratification at their enthusiastic welcome". Interestingly, Rees, writing in 1892, was at pains to describe the integrated, cosmopolitan nature of the population of Cape Town – perhaps to stress that all in the colony were pleased to be subjects of this far-off royal family. Rees wrote: "Such a mingling of races, colours, creeds, languages and dress is not often seen as the streets of Cape Town contained that day. Still less frequently does such a cosmopolitan gathering display such unanimous feeling. Boers, English, Germans, Fingoes, Zulus, and Kafirs all united in welcoming their Queen's son, and in expressing their love for their Governor."



Firing a royal salute on HRH during Prince Alfred's landing in state at Simon's Bay, November 1867.

By contrast, another royal's journey through the Simon's Town harbour was a low-key, anxious affair. The Zulu King Cetewayo travelled via Simon's Town both to and from Great Britain in the years 1882 and 1883, after the Zulu nation was defeated at war in 1879 at the Battle of Ulundi. Ulundi (Zulu for 'high place') was torched. Cetewayo became a British prisoner, moved to and fro between various prisons. Defeated Zululand did not peacefully settle under its new British rulers, instead falling into chaos. The British decided that the way out of the dilemma they had created was to restore Cetewayo as a puppet king. As part of this proposal to reinstate him, the authorities thought that exposing Cetewayo to British power at its source would overawe the Zulu king and make him more amenable to his role. Thus, two royals who had ruled the Zulus, one from afar and one in person, met in London.

Zulu King Cetewayo, King of the Zulu Nation, in 1875.

Through an interpreter, the Queen told Cetewayo that she "recognised in him a great warrior, who had fought against us, but rejoiced we were now friends". After some further commonplaces, the interview terminated, and Cetewayo and his two Zulu attendants departed, raising their right hands in a Zulu royal salute. Afterwards, when a London reporter asked Cetewayo his opinion of the Queen, he reportedly said: "She is born to rule men, she is like me. We are both rulers. She was very kind to me and I will always think of her." He would have little time for that. There was civil war in his kingdom on his return; he had to flee to British protection in a small section of his former kingdom, which he termed an 'armpit'. There, he died, apparently of a heart condition, in 1884.[43] Cetewayo, also sometimes spelled 'Cetshwayo', died at age 58. His political wisdom and strength in war had restored the power and stature of the beleaguered Zulu nation during his demanding reign from 1872 to 1879.

43 Queen and King Cetewayo's quotes from www.pbs.org/empires/victoria/history/scramble.html.

Main Road, Simon's Town in 1867 – more or less as Prince Alfred and, later, Cetewayo would have seen it. Before the discovery of diamonds, Simon's Town and other South Peninsula towns (and greater Cape Town itself) were pretty but not hugely prosperous places. Municipal rates were low and spending on public projects such as street building was not extensive. Note the sandy embankment on the seaward side of Main Road.

The British royals had further visits to Simon's Town in the 20th century. In 1901, Main Road thronged with those out to see the spectacle when the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall led a royal procession through the town. The British government hoped that this manifestation of British pomp and power would arouse pro-British feelings, as the Anglo-Boer War still ravaged the land. The South Peninsula was particularly affected by this war, as the role of holding prisoners of war was allocated to Simon's Town.

SIMON'S TOWN MUSEUM

The royal procession of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York through Simon's Town in 1901. Note the triumphal arch in the background, under which the parade passed. It was traditional for the residents of Simon's Town to erect triumphal arches around the town on all ceremonial occasions.

The British royals continued to send emissaries to South Africa every few years during the first half of the 20th century, even after South Africa became more independent of the United Kingdom in 1910. Amongst others, Simon's Town feted Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1925, a decade before his famous (or infamous) 1936 abdication.

A British royal visit of which the timing now has landmark significance in South African political and social terms occurred in 1947. The 1948 governmental elections in South Africa marked a turning point in local history. Due to laws limiting franchise, few people of coloured and Asian descent were able to vote, while no Africans at all could vote. A strong alliance of politicians played on white voters' emergent fears of the maturing politics of all those they considered to be 'non-white' or 'non-European'. The result of the election

had devastating consequences for the second half of the 20th century in South Africa, ushering in the infamous political system known as apartheid.

Thus, the royal visit of 1947 more or less marked the beginning of the end of the South Peninsula's years as a cosmopolitan society. Life had not been perfect under the laws of the empire nor under the extension of those laws during the Union of South Africa from 1910 to 1948, during which South Africa continued to be a dominion ruled by the British monarchy. The empire had not been kind to many of her subjects, with many racial policies in South Africa having their roots in the 'British' 19th century. However, somehow, stuck out and away on their own, the South Peninsula's people had developed their own brand of tolerance for each other, and every race and creed made the towns of the South Peninsula their home. In 1947, the children of generations of sea-faring progenitors, from every continent on the globe, were out to enjoy the spectacle of a royal visit, regardless of whether or not they felt any twinges of allegiance to their Queen. With World War II having only recently ended, in May 1945, communities worldwide were still in the mood for celebration. But very soon after this royal visit, the social world of the South Peninsula was to be turned upside down. Just three years later, the Group Areas Act was enacted.

Curtseying for the royals, Simon's Town – with Amlay House in the background.

The jubilation that the town could share on the occasion of the royal visit, all dressed up to the nines to have a day off work and enjoy a public display, free of the ominous pressures of the war years, would soon turn to discord and despair. As Mr Amlay, of Amlay House in Simon's Town explained: "We went out to meet the Royals as people, not as British citizens, but first and foremost as ourselves."[44] Amlay himself has been deeply affected by his family's move from their home of many generations. Apartheid fundamentally undermined this sense of self that Amlay described – he sees new hope in the children of the new democratic age. It took until 1994 for democracy to arrive; democracy has offered the possibility for a process of healing to slowly take hold.

Children are the focus of a South African Navy project that heralded the new ways of thinking ushered in by South Africa's democratic coming of age. Initiated by the Navy in 1996, Izivunguvungu offers a unique combination of sailing and music projects for the benefit of the youth from disadvantaged communities. The general development and educational progress is also prioritised in cooperation with the schools, guardians and community workers.

44 Mr Amlay, in discussion with Karin Ström and Cindy Postlethwayt at Amlay House, May 2014.

Commencing in Grade 4 or 5, the aims include ensuring skills development appropriate to at least the level of an accomplished amateur.[45] Izivunguvungu works with the False Bay Colleges Organisation to help students enrol for courses that can lead to secure employment.

The SA Navy of today undertakes social responsibility projects, knowing that social stability is one of the underpinnings of the armoury of successfully protecting South Africa's democracy. So too has the role of royalty changed, with today's British royalty having serious working programmes aimed at supporting various important social causes. Keeping the idea of 'Brand UK' alive as ambassadors for their people is also a royal role. Thus, the British royals of today still show an interest in their former Royal Navy dockyard. The most recent official visit by a British royal to the South Peninsula was in 2012. The Queen's daughter, Princess Anne, called in at Simon's Town on a three-day tour of South Africa. Putting on the jive to entertain her was the Izivunguvungu children's brass band. Princess Anne's visit was part of a year of celebrations to commemorate the diamond jubilee of Queen Elizabeth's reign during 2012. Once again, after many decades, children of the south were out in force to impress a royal visitor – children can never resist a princess.

The Izivunguvungu music project does not wait for royals or other high-brow folk to create opportunities for putting on performances, however: The band keeps very busy performing for their own community, in broader Cape Town, and at the annual Knysna festival, and they have even toured Europe. Annually, they join the Navy in reviving the joyous pageantry that was once principally associated with forces of arms and royalty: They play an important part providing stirring music and a brass parade for the annual Simon's Town festivals, one a Navy festival in March, and the other a Spring festival in September.

Through Izivunguvungu, the South African Navy's former director of music, Cdr Mike Oldham, and his music-loving band members have brought musical education to many schools where previously there was none due to apartheid's minimal education offering. Starting up with only high hopes and a limited number of second-hand instruments, the programme continues to grow in strength. The focus on working together as a group to provide a great sound with their brass band means that kids learn not just about music, but about democracy in action.

45 www.izivungu.co.za.

PHIRI, A.B. AND MATJILA, A.B.

Children from the Izivunguvungu brass band playing for Princess Anne, Simon's Town, 2012.

PHIRI, A.B. AND MATJILA, A.B.

Princess Anne inspecting the guard of honour. On the arrival of the cavalcade, Her Royal Highness gracefully disembarked and was smartly greeted by Rear Admirals (JG) Koos Louw and Guy Jamieson.

Today, any visitor to Simon's Town will, to some extent, be revisiting the town's colonial and naval past – it is built into the place, in the streets and buildings, and deeply entwined in the soul of the town. Contemporary historians, economists and ordinary citizens will always be divided in opinion as to the relative benefits and detriments of the 'royal' age of the past, and its passing.

Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her 21st birthday whilst on tour of South Africa in 1947. In her speech, she spoke of the empire as a "great family", saying: "If we all go forward together with an unwavering faith, a high courage, and a quiet heart, we shall be able to make of this ancient commonwealth, which we all love so dearly, an even grander thing – more free, more prosperous, more happy and a more powerful influence for good in the world – than it has been in the greatest days of our forefathers ... To accomplish that we must give nothing less than the whole of ourselves. There is a motto which has been borne by many of my ancestors – a noble motto, 'I serve'."[46]

In many ways, the empire failed to serve those it promised to protect as citizens. Yet, the young Princess Elizabeth, in calling the empire a "great family", was giving voice to the concerns of her age: how to establish harmony in a world tore apart by the recent war, and how to establish healthy relationships, 'family' relationships, between nations. New voices were needed to answer those questions. In 1948, South Africa entered what are now known as 'the struggle years'. It was to take 46 years until Nelson Mandela, himself of royal Xhosa lineage, was to become president, which he called a victory not for himself, but for the people of South Africa. Mandela started to establish a new identity for South Africa in the global landscape, saying: "Where globalisation means, as it so often does, that the rich and powerful now have new means to further enrich and empower themselves at the cost of the poorer and weaker, we have a responsibility to protest in the name of universal freedom."[47] Mandela's nation-building work continues on all fronts, with projects like Simon's Town's Izivunguvungu providing inspiration.

46 https://www.royal.gov.uk/ImagesandBroadcasts/Historic.

47 http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/n/nelson_mandela.html#Y7e84jFTds89VWKk.99.

Acknowledgements and disclaimer

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