

TIME TRAVEL, OLD PRISON IN PIETERMARITZBURG 1910

Goals

- To draw attention and awareness of the local history, history from bottom to the top
- To showcase that through hard experience we can end up good community builders and service providers
- To demonstrate social cohesion

Scenario, the Prison in Pietermaritzburg 31 May 1910

It is 31 May 1910 at Pietermaritzburg Prison. In town the White people celebrate the new South African Union. But the Zulus are concerned. They have no say in the Union. They have lost everything. They were defeated in the Rebellion of 1906, and also lost all power and influence. The leaders were put on trial and sentenced to many years in prison. Even the King is imprisoned after an unfair trial a couple of years ago. Many Zulus have given up. They talk about 'the ruin of Zululand'.

The prison is overcrowded. There are hardened criminals that have committed homicide, assault or rape, but also petty criminals sentenced for thefts or drunkenness, first offenders, juveniles and females. Some have been convicted for broken the pass laws or the Master and Servants law. And there are still a few rebels from the up rise 1906. King Dinuzulu is accommodated in parts of the female block. Although the Natal Government has stripped him off his positions as induna and chief, he is still the King and the hope for many. Some people have demanded his release in order to rebuild the confidence and pride of the Zulus. Others say that the first Prime Minister of the new Union of South Africa, General Louis Botha, is a friend of Dinuzulu. But why isn't he doing anything?

There are many complaints from the prisoners: vermin in the blankets, too little and often cold food, ill treatment, open buckets as toilets, too hard work. The medical inspection has been delayed for several days. Is it not going to happen even today?

The authorities say that the prisoners are not punished enough. Will the lash be used again today? Some are afraid it might happen.

Every day is the same for the prisoners: breakfast, exercises, hard labour, lunch, and more work. This applies for the men in the male section, for the women in the female unit, and for the juveniles. And the warders and guards can, as always, be unpredictable and undisciplined. They will beat and punish if they see any sign of disobedience. But they can also be bribed. Some of the prisoners are allowed to receive visitors, some not.

Today there are rumours in the air. There seems to be something going on with King Dinuzulu. A few of the King's family members and the Colensos have arrived and want to visit him. Harriette Colenso has worked hard to get the King released. Will she ever succeed?

Both warders and prisoners can feel the tension. What is happening? It's only the King himself that seem to be calm and relaxed. But in the morning there is no time for speculations, it's time to start the hard labour of the day. The Chief Warder organizes the work and the matron for the female prisoners: stone work, wood work, textile work, washing and mending clothes, gardening, brooming, preparing the meal. The warders hope that there will be no gang fights today. But this is hard to tell. Both prisoners and visitors are frustrated and irritated of an unfair treatment. Will it ever change?

Key Questions

- The Zulus. What will happen to the Zulu tribe? Lost everything. Can we ever rise again? Can Dinuzulu unite the Zulus?

- Justice? Was it a fair trial against King Dinuzulu? Can we call that justice?
- South African Union. Who benefits from the new Union? Who are united in this nation?

Roles

Everybody keep their age and gender.

Most of the participants play the role of male and female prisoners.

Family of King Dinuzulu

Harriette Colenso and others in the Colenso family

Doctor

Chief Warden and prison warders/guards. For females: Matron and warders

Activities

- Wash clothes (females)
- Mending clothes (females)
- Gardening (females)
- Preparing food (females) – tea/ coffee, bread, soup
- Clean and sweep (females and males)
- Medical care by a doctor (males and females)
- Carpentry (males) – kit-boxes
- Stone work (males)
- Chopping wood (males)
- Exercising (males)
- Visitor's activities: Make gifts/ beads for Dinuzulu's release; write notes; meet prisoners

Time plan

11.15 Welcome, scenario, dress up,

11.45 Initiation (in one male group and one female group, E-block plus visitors)
Activities (males and female prisoners, visitors)

12.30 Dinuzulu is exercised. Prisoners and visitors get excited (wants to pay tribute). Warders in action

12.45 Midday meal – 8 oz for blacks, 12 oz for whites (Extra food for good behaviour). Small gang fights

13.15 Chief Warden. New suit to Dinuzulu. He is celebrated by the prisoners and visitors. Pay tribute to him, gifts. Warders confused
Other prisoners: Rewards: Remission because of good behaviour, loan of books. Solitary confinement

13.30 Ending/ back to the cells

Target groups

- Learners: Grade 10-12
- Community members and leaders
- University students
- Researchers.

18 September 2012

Pietermaritzburg Time Travel Group; Trinity Tshisevhe

Ebbe Westergren, Kalmar Läns Museum/Bridging Ages

Mark Coghlan PhD, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Museum Service

Facts, the Old Prison in Pietermaritzburg

The prison at Burger Street in Pietermaritzburg was built in 1862, replacing the Voortrekker Prison on the Market Square. The building housed both male and female prisoners as well as juveniles. The original cell block was built from a combination of redbrick and sandstone.

The cookhouse was constructed in 1872. A dining hall was never built. Instead, in all weathers inmates experienced 'open air dining' in an area of clearly marked white lines. Former prisoners that have been interviewed remember the 'open air dining room' as a common area for gang fights.

The execution block with gallows and torture rooms was constructed in 1934. Other buildings were added at a later date.

The number of political detainees increased dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s, persons arrested for actions against the Apartheid Government. Most of these prisoners were detained without being charged. The political prisoners were housed in the execution block, and were strictly segregated from other prisoners. There was a fear that they would spread "revolutionary ideas" to others.

When the blocks of the prison were originally built, the cells were designed to house prisoners individually. However, as inmate numbers increased, it became common for each cell to accommodate between 10 and 12 prisoners, who slept on mats as there were no beds. Each cell had 2 buckets - one for water and one for a toilet. The prison housed up to 1 800 inmates.

A number of political prisoners have been imprisoned here such as King Dinuzulu, Kasturba Gandhi (wife of Mahatma Gandhi), John Langalibalele Dube (first president of the ANC from 1912 to 1917) (not confirmed), Harry Gwala, Peter Brown, Alan Paton, Penuel Maduna, Nelson Mandela (not confirmed) and, Zeph Kheswa.

The prison was closed in 1987 due to over-crowding. In 1991 the old prison was handed over to a group of churches, working together under the name of Project Gateway.

Zululand and King Dinuzulu kaCetschwayo

Dinuzulu kaCetschwayo was born in 1868 and became King of the Zulus in 1884 after the death of his father Cetshwayo. He defeated his rival Zibhebhu with the help of the Boers. Zululand was annexed by Britain as the Colony of Zululand in May 1887 and in 1897 was incorporated into Natal. When the British annexed Zululand Dinuzulu was furious and rebelled against the British and what was a mission for land ended in an insurrection against the British. In June 1888 Dinuzulu led the Usuthu uprising against the British, and after this incident, many of a similar nature followed. Dinuzulu was defeated in battles at Ceza Mountain, Ivuna and Hlopekshulu during June and July, and in November surrendered to the British. He was convicted of high treason and in 1890 was exiled to the island of St. Helena for seven years. When he returned to Zululand he tried to unite and restore the status and prestige of the Zulu people, despite the fact that he was 'demoted' from King to an ordinary induna.

In the years following the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 White employers in Natal had difficulty recruiting Black farm workers because of increased competition from the gold mines of the Witwatersrand. In 1905 the colonial authorities in Natal and Zululand introduced a £1 poll tax in addition to the existing hut tax to force Black men to enter the labour market. Many Zulus all over Zululand and in the Colony of Natal proper refused to pay the tax, and this led to armed resistance in several regions in 1906 (the Bhambatha Rebellion/Uprising). The Natal Government introduced martial law which meant that they could rule by military force. One of the chiefs who resisted the introduction and collection of the new tax was Bhambatha kaMancinza. He fled north to consult King Dinuzulu, who gave tacit support to Bhambatha and invited him and his family to stay at the Royal homestead.

Between 3 000 and 4 000 Zulus were killed during the revolt. More than 7 000 were imprisoned. Some were sent to St Helena, and a further 4 000 flogged.

On 9 December 1907 Dinuzulu was arrested and accused of giving orders to Bhambatha to start the Rebellion and was put on trial for treason. He steadfastly protested his innocence and was found guilty on only a handful of the 23 charges brought against him. One of these few charges was high treason. In March 1909 he was sentenced to four years imprisonment and a fine of £100. A short time later, in May 1910 Prime Minister Louis Botha of the new Union of South Africa ordered the release of Dinuzulu and granted him a farm in the Transvaal where he died in 1913.

South African Union

The Union of South Africa came into being on 31 May 1910 with the unification of the previously separate colonies (including the two former Boer Republics) of the Cape, Natal, Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. It was founded as a dominion of the British Empire.

Prison facts, Pietermaritzburg prison 1910

Some of the offenses for which one was imprisoned in the PMB prison: Culpable homicide (seven years hard labour); assault with intent to commit rape (10 years hard labour and 25 lashes); rape (four years hard labour and 25 lashes). Those convicted of murder were sentenced to death and for attempted murder and common assault there was hard labour and lashes. There were many other offenses, such as theft and breaking jail rules. Some were prisoners from the Rebellion of 1906, but most of these were released in 1907 and 1908. Others had broken the Pass Laws and the Masters and Servants Law. There were also prisoners awaiting trial. Race classification: Whites, Natives and Indians.

There were also juveniles in the prison but not held with the adults. For the White prisoners there was one person per cell, for the Blacks and other races three or more. The prison was meant to hold 250-300 inmates in 1910 but there was twice those numbers. A horse-drawn prison van brings the prisoners from the courthouse to the prison. There was one exercise yard for all the prisoners.

There were three different methods of imprisonment: (1) Solitary confinement: the inmate eats, sleeps, works and exercises alone. (2) The Congregate system: the inmates eat and sleep in the cells and work together in gangs. (3) Separate system: here we eat and sleep alone but work in a group. Corporal punishment (lashes) was common. The prisons was commanded by a keeper of jails (chief warden), and then there were warders and guards (White, Indian and Black), and a matron and female warders for the female prisoners. In 1907 the female quarters, built of wood and iron, was prepared to accommodate King, Dinuzulu. The warders and guards come from the Police.

The most famous prisoner in 1910 was King Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo. The Government had charged Dinuzulu with 23 offences, but only managed to convict him on a few of those. Dinuzulu had several friends, among them the ladies of the Colenso family, Anglican missionaries. Harriette Colenso was an advocate of the Zulus and often visited prisoners. On 12 March 1909 the Zulu newspaper, *Ilanga lase Natal*, appealed to the Governor, Sir Mathew Nathan, for his release. One of his sons was killed while he was in prison.

Some Zulu leaders, such as Chief Mkungo from the Eshowe district, were pleased that Dinuzulu was imprisoned. The first Prime Minister of the new Union of South Africa, General Louis Botha, was a friend of Dinuzulu.

When a prisoner was released he was given a new suit of clothes and a certificate of good conduct if his behaviour had been good.

Work for male prisoners: carpentry (such as making wheelbarrows and kit-boxes for the Police), chopping wood, cutting and breaking stone, and making uniforms and mail-bags. There was also cleaning and sweeping, jail fatigue and whitewashing. Female prisoners: washing clothes and mending of clothes. Some worked on road works or in Government departments and at the official residences of the magistrates. There were rewards for 'good behaviour: shorter sentences, extra food, and the loan of books.

Many prisoners suffered from diseases and the medical care was not reliable. There were often complaints for poor medical care but most of them were dismissed. Prisoners died from diarrhoea and tumours. When King Dinuzulu became ill in 1908 he was moved to Grey's Hospital. For executions the wooden gallows was used.

The prisoners were washed in a huge communal bath. The White prisoners bathed twice a week and the Blacks once.

Food rations were small: maize-meal porridge, bread and sometimes beef, mutton, potatoes and vegetables. Tea was sometimes replaced by coffee or cocoa. There was also soup and black sugar issued. The Black prisoners received less rations than the White prisoners. They ate outside in long rows in the courtyard where white lines were painted. Sometimes there was gang violence during these mealtimes. Breakfast was at 05h15 (maize-meal porridge, sometime hot and sometime cold, with sugar). The midday meal was at 12h45 and dinner at 17h00.

Research notes from Mark Coghlan:

- 1903-04: List of visitors to 'Native prisoners' in PMB Gaol between 1 November 1903 and 31 October 1904. (See photocopy)
- Undated: List of 'Native' offenders, with age, offence, and nature of corporal punishment.
- 1904: Alleged ill-treatment of inmates in PMB Central Gaol. Arthur Reynolds, who served a two-year two-month sentence, offered the following evidence: Prevalence of disease (for example: vermin in blankets and bed-clothes that are seldom aired); inadequate and delayed medical inspections (especially for new inmates) and poor general care. Note on the washing of an incoming White prisoner during the winter by throwing buckets of cold water over him while he was standing on a concrete floor in a bathroom open to the elements. The man, in for a petty offence (drunkenness) died. Another case of medical neglect concerned an Indian prisoner in for a four-year sentence, who died from diarrhea. Another prisoner (White) in a serious medical condition was forced to labour in the stone-yard. A 'Native' prisoner, with a serious tumour on his leg, also died in custody after being treated as an outpatient instead of being admitted to hospital, and also being forced to work in the stone-yard while in this condition. Medical complaints were often dismissed or treated in a cursory fashion. He also commented on the alleged abuse of White prisoners by 'Native' warders. Reynolds also asserted that food was inadequate, due, he says, to a kitchen that was too small. He says that Black prisoners are entitled to 8 ounces of raw maize meal that then had to be cooked. White inmates were given 12 ounces but in either case the dishes provided were too small to hold the ration. The rations also provided for 8 ounces of beef three times a week and 12 ounces of mutton. One pound (0.4 kg) of potatoes was issued, along with an unspecified quantity of vegetables. White and 'Native' prisoners received soup twice a week but it was watery. The black sugar had sand added! According to Reynolds the prison hospital diet was even worse.
- 1904: Prison Reform Committee evidence. Race classification in prisons: White, 'Natives' and Indians, with a suggested fourth for Coloureds. Difficult to keep races apart when confined in the same building. Diet varies according to race. Need for classification according to nature of offence: juveniles, first offenders, petty criminals and hardened criminals. For juveniles reformatories were proposed as well as 'birching' (corporal punishment). There were also offenders against pre-Apartheid legislation such as the Native Code, Pass Laws, and the Masters and Servants Law. Suggestion that 'Natives' convicted of minor offences should be put to work on public works (e.g.: roads) instead of being sent to gaol. (This is where Travelling Gaols or Gaol Camps come in.) Further skilled occupations (but which it was suggested be restricted to Whites): carpentry (wheelbarrows and kit-boxes for the Police) and tailoring: making uniforms for Police and 'colonial office boys', as well as mail-bags for the Post Office. Good behaviour, with the incentive of remission of sentence, encouraged efficient discipline. There was also the incentive of privileges such as extra items on the diet and the loan of books. There were doubts about the punitive and/or reformatory effect of imprisonment. The Reform Committee encouraged a single cell system that would prove a greater punishment and prevent immorality. However, it was expensive. Diet: Porridge (usually cold) sometimes substituted with bread. Enamel dishes. Tea was occasionally substituted with coffee or cocoa. Gaol gardens, especially for the use of 'Native' and Indian female prisoners, was recommended. For women there was also washing and mending of clothes. There would have been a Matron and female warders. Sanitation: Closed commodes was suggested instead of open buckets. At PMB the sewerage ran into the garden at the back of the gaol. Venereal disease was prevalent. There were no maternity facilities.
- 1904: Prison Reform Committee evidence. Hard labour. Varied from 'rubbing one stone against another to provide a substitute for white-wash, chopping wood, leisurely turning the handle of a mealie mill while another prisoner...holds the sack, to such really hard work as is involved in the handling of heavy blocks of concrete (the last-named referring to harbor works in Durban for Durban prison inmates)'. Flogging (or lashes): Evidence was conflicting. It was, for example, seen as brutal.

- 1904: Prison Reform Committee. The prison system was linked to the Police. However, the standard of guards was not high. The Chief Warder was also overburdened by administration work.
- 1904: Prison Reform Committee. Discharge. Suggested support to the Salvation Army that took care of many ex-inmates. It also suggested that each discharged prisoner be given a new suit of clothes and a certificate of good conduct, if applicable. Awaiting trial prisoners. It was suggested that the numbers be limited by fixing bail at a minimum.
- 1904-05: Adults and juveniles appeared to be held in same prison but not together. Cells: Whites-one per cell; Other races-three or more. Open buckets for latrine use. Inmates out in open for most of the day. Mortality rate c1901-04: 2.5/1 000 (compared to 0.41/1 000 in British prisons).
- 1904-05: Gaol mortality rates. PMB Central Gaol: 1904 (17 illness and 4 executions) 1905 (21 illness and 6 executions).
- 1904-05: Ablutions. There appears to have been a large communal bath that took 16 hours to fill. White prisoners bathed 2x a week and Blacks once, in the used water.
- 1904-05: overcrowding. Gaol built to hold 250-300 but held twice that number.
- 1905: The cost of goods supplied to prisons in Natal, including Pietermaritzburg. (See photocopy)
- 1905: Transport. Suggested acquisition of a horse-drawn prison-van to convey prisoners from court to prison. Horses to be provided by Fire Department.
- 1905: There was some concern that in several country gaols 'it is the custom to leave all cell keys as well as the main gate key in the charge of native warders at night'. This practice was considered unsafe. It is not certain whether this situation included Pietermaritzburg Gaol.
- 1905: Statistics pertaining to the prevalence of corporal punishment (lashes) in the context of the Central Gaol, Pietermaritzburg. (See photocopy)
- 1905: An inventory of offenses and attendant punishment pertaining to Indian offenders. (See photocopy)
- 1905: Prison reform Commission, Natal. Evidence of Sidney Holmes covering food, discipline, general treatment and sanitation. Although this evidence refers to Durban Prison, it could be used, as modified, in this TT at Pietermaritzburg Prison. (See photocopy)
- 1906: Prison Reform Commission Report, 28 May 1906. Gaols placed under control of Police in July 1894. Police supplied most of warders and gaolers. The Commission suggested greater leniency with regard to payment of fines, as well as greater use of the lash. It was also suggested that bail conditions be relaxed. The intention was to keep people out of prison. There was also emphasis on the rehabilitation of prisoners, especially upon release. The Commission looked at the trio of imprisonment intentions: retribution, deterrence and reformation.
- 1906: Three methods of confinement: (1) Complete solitary (inmate eats, sleeps, works and exercises alone) (2) Congregate System (cell inmates eat and sleep in cell and work together in gangs) (3) Separate System (a combination of Solitary and Congregate Systems (inmate eats and sleeps alone but works in a group, and reportedly applicable to Whites only).
- 1906: Gaolers and labour. Gaolers came from ranks of Police. There was a poor return from prisoners' labour, especially when under 'Native' guards.
- 1906: It was proposed that an Industrial Prison for Whites be built and 'portable prisons' for Black prisoners be budgeted for.
- 1906: Separation of long- and short-term prisoners; hardened from petty offenders.
- 1906: Rebel prisoners. These would probably have been released by 1910, but could still be included. They were guarded by indunas.
- 1906: Exercise facilities. 'In Pietermaritzburg, with its separate blocks of cells, permitting segregation of the classes, there is but one yard for all the males confined therein.'
- 1906: Work. Stone-breaking within wired partitions, industrial work, carpentry and tailoring (mentioned as applying to Indians and Blacks but we could apply it to all), and horticulture (gardens) are mentioned. (See photocopied list of items manufactured in HM prisons in England and Wales. This list was presumably used as a guide to what prisoners in Natal could be ordered to make.)

- 1907: The visit of the Governor, Sir Mathew Nathan, to the Central Gaol, Pietermaritzburg, 24 September 1907. This is an important document. Especially significant is the note that at this time there were no female prisoners, and the female part of the gaol was being prepared for Dinuzulu and his guards. Perhaps female prisoners could still be accommodated in the TT. (See photocopy)
- 1908: This reference is to a request, with relevance to Dinuzulu, for a special ward at Grey's Hospital to be set aside for prison use.
- 1908: Maritzburg Gaol statistics as at 5 February 1908: Details of race groups and numbers, plus occupations. (See photocopy)
- 1909: Discharge details. If date of discharge was Christmas Day then prisoner was released the previous day. With Sundays and public holidays it was the same day.
- 1910: Prison staffing. See photocopied list of the authorized establishment for 1910/11, including superintendents and warders.
- 1910: Work. The supply of free prison labour to Government departments and premises, as well as magistrate's official residences. Prison labour also supplied, at a cost, to Railways and harbors premises and other purposes. (See photocopy for details)
- 1910: It was the opinion of the Natal colonial authorities that imprisonment 'under existing conditions' (presumably even with the hard labour that was often included) was not sufficient punishment or a serious enough deterrent to crime. NB; It was for this reason that magistrates often imposed flogging (lashes) as an alternative sentence.
- 1910: Examples of some crimes and the sentences that pertained: culpable homicide (seven years hard labour); assault with intent to commit rape (10 years hard labour and 25 lashes); rape (four years hard labour and 25 lashes).
- 1911: Clothing. There is mention of duck jackets and trousers. In 1906 mention is made of a smock and trousers, with waistbelts (two suits per man) for prisoners, warders and guards (Black as far as can be ascertained) wore a white uniform (two suits), and White warders and guards wore khaki drill (two suits each). (See photocopy: 'Estimate of initial expenses at temporary gaol Fort Napier') (1906).

Prisoner eating arrangements (for Black inmates), as recorded on Project Gateway information board:

- After collecting their rations Black prisoners were required to squat, crushed up together, in rows along white line painted in the courtyard. This location and activity was a scene for gang violence if warders could be distracted.
- Cell graffiti could also be looked at.
- The early gallows, a semi-permanent wooden structure. Should this detail be included?

More research notes from Mark Coghlan:

- 1907-1908: 'Native rebel convicts' released from PMB and other prisons.
- 1908: The response of the uSuthu leadership to Dinuzulu's sentence and imprisonment. The names, especially, could be used. There is also an application for indunas to manage the uSuthu homestead. (See photocopies)
- 1908: In August 1908 a special ward of Grey's Hospital was set aside for Dinuzulu. We can therefore also conclude that he suffered from health problems that can be brought into the scenario. On this occasion he developed a severe nose bleed and was indeed transferred to Grey's.
- 1909: On 17 April the Natal Government stripped Dinuzulu of his positions of induna and chief. In July his salary was suspended. See letter from the Secretary of State, London, to the Governor of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, dated 7 April 1909.
- 1909: The Dinuzulu Defence Fund. Comment on the fact that Government failed to secure conviction on most charges against Dinuzulu. One that stuck was high treason for sheltering Bhambatha and one other Rebellion leader, but in particular their families, for which 4-year sentence was imposed, to run from 9 December 1907. The figure of £2 400 raised, as reported in an undated letter to *The Times* of London, could be mentioned.
- 1909: Collaboration? Chief Mkungo, residing in the Eshowe Division, sought to send a deputation to thank Government for the sentence imposed on Dinuzulu. (See photocopy) The Mandlakazi, who had a long history of enmity with Dinuzulu's uSuthu, were also pleased.
- 1909: A letter appeared in the Zulu newspaper, *Ilanga lase Natal*, appealing to the Governor of Natal, Sir Mathew Nathan, for mercy in the Dinuzulu case ('Your child Dinuzulu...'). The writers refer to themselves as 'your dogs'. Governor Nathan requested to have 'compassion, forgiveness, tenderheartedness, good nature, sympathy and pardon...' (See photocopy)
- 1909: August 1909 and JS Marwick, a labour agent, records interviewing Dinuzulu 'at the Central Goal', therefore definitely placing Dinuzulu in the proposed TT scenario. (See photocopy)
- 1910: It was suggested in a report dated 6 December 1909 that Dinuzulu would be home with the uSuthu by Christmas.
- 1910: The office of the Secretary for Native Affairs initially denied that Dinuzulu was due to be released. (See photocopy)
- 1910: 16 June 1910. Official notification of release of Dinuzulu from custody with effect from 31 May 1910 (the day that the Union of South Africa came into being) and his relocation to the Transvaal (farm *Uitkyk*) with salary of £500. (See photocopy)
- 1911: Names and details of wives and attendants sent up to join Dinuzulu after his release from custody. Perhaps some of these names could be used for characters in the TT. (See photocopy)
- 1911: Details regarding Dinuzulu's effects that he took with him into 'exile' on the farm *Uitkyk (Uitkyk)* in the Transvaal. He could have had some of these possessions in prison with him (?). The balance would presumably have remained at his uSuthu homestead. (See lists in file.)