The Castle of Good Hope

Cape Town A guide to the history of The Castle of Good Hope, including interesting information, illustrations, photos and a timeline.

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The Castle of Good Hope

Over the centuries six different flags have flown over the Castle, yet in all that time not a single shot has ever been fired in anger at it or from it.



The Gateway and Bell Tower added (1682-1684) by Simon entrance replaced the original one on the sea-facing curtain vall hetween Buuren and

ommissioner van Goens. This laden with spices. In 1503 Antonio de Saldanha put in at Table Bay and climbed Table Mountain to get his bearings. While doing so, he made a discovery that would change the course of southern African history: nere was abundant fresh water, a key requirement for a halfway station to

break the long voyage to the East. Three factors, however, allowed the Dutch to gain a strong foothold at the Cape. Firstly, the Portuguese avoided the Cape after an incident in which 64 of their men were killed by the local inhabitants. Secondly, when Portugal became virtually a province of Spain, she suffered at the hands of Spain's

enemies, especially the English and the Dutch. Thirdly, an attempt to claim the Cape for England was not supported by the king. The way was therefore clear for the Dutch to increase their trade with the East, stopping frequently In 1602 they had established the Dutch East India Company (VOC) which was

a combination of many traders working together to share financial risk and resources. The VOC subsequently grew into a powerful international



cross-wall which runs from

The first fort built at the

The need

for a castle

In 1664 war broke

out between England

and the Netherlands,

threatening the VOC trade

route. The VOC sent instructions

to Zacharias Wagenaer, who had

succeeded Van Riebeeck at the Cape,

to build a bigger and more comprehensive

defence structure. Isbrand Goske and his master

builder, Peter Dombaer, arrived in Cape Town to

undertake its construction. Goske brought with him

up-to-date plans for a modern castle and defence line that

could withstand an attack from the superior tactics, weaponry

and firepower that had evolved during the Renaissance in Europe.

These advances had rendered the design and structure of the original

The design of this new castle was associated with the renowned French

fortress engineer, Sebastien Vauban. Menno, Baron van Coehoorn, a Dutch

artillerist and military engineer, was also associated with the final design, a

key feature of which was the introduction of tapering outer walls, extremely

1649 decided that it would establish a formal refreshment station at the Cape, on the recommendation of Leendert anzen. This was considered a good investment and Jan van Riebeeck was commissioned

Two days after setting foot on the shores of Table Bay, Commander van Riebeeck started work on the Fort de Goede Hoop which was situated on the shoreline on the site of the present-day Parade



than the bastions on the seaward side, allowing gunners from these positions to shoot over the seaward bastions.



With the expansion of world trade by the European powers in the 1500s, trade routes were vital to economic power. The main trade route to the East used to be overland, but in 1453 Constantinople was captured by the Turks which effectively closed off this trade passage. Other routes east had

The dominant European seafaring The Ravelin was added in 1697 nation at that time was Portugal, so ust after the new entrance and Bell the Portuguese needed to find a way Tower were moved to this position. o the East by sea. After they had The idea behind the Ravelin was the made many voyages down the west concept of 'defence in depth'. The coast of Africa, sailing further each entrance road angles right which ime, Bartholomeu Dias rounded the does not allow an enemy a direct Cape in 1488, and in 1498 Vasco da shot at the entrance gate. Gama finally succeeded in making the voyage to the East and came back

was very poor: the outer walls collapsed more then once under heavy rains. For several years it served its primary function as a provision station and, luckily, no major attack by the local Khoi-na or a foreign power threatened its existence. An accurate model of this fort can be seen today in the Military Museum in Block E.

At the same time as the fort was being built and subsequently maintained, the Company's Garden was planted to fulfil the primary goal of the endeavour – to supply passing ships with fresh produce.

mouth of the Salt River. These defences

along the Liesbeeck were to protect

livestock and grazing land. By 1672

the little settlement had over 200

Jan van Riebeeck left for Batavia in 1662, leaving behind the fort he had built and a defensive line of smaller forts along the Liesbeeck River and two small forts at the

Acre building. His choice of

design was the novel square

with two-gun bastions at each

corner. These bastions were

the same shape as the ones

he four bastions of this

original fort were named after

the ships that brought Van

Riebeeck's party to the Cape:

Oliphant, Rijger, Drommedaris

and Walvisch. The outer walls

were constructed using sods,

clay, and brushwork. Timber

and brick were used on

interior structures. The fort was

surrounded by a moat, which

was fed by the Varsche River.

As a defensive structure it

seen on the Castle today.

top. This revolutionary design made the cannon balls ricochet off the wall whereas a right-angle hit would weaken the wall far faster. Breaching the wall (by means of concentrated fire and explosive charges placed in the weakened area) became extremely difficult owing to the thickness of the wall and the nature of the tapering design, which did not easily collapse under its own weight. The other feature of this revolutionary design was the extensive defensive positions outside the main wall, based on the premise of defence in depth. This system allowed defenders to enfilade or fire into the

a pentagon with, at each of its corners, a bastion containing its own gunpowder bastions would cover all fields of fire,

even right up to the base of the curtain walls between bastions. Each bastion was given the name of one of the official titles of the Prince of Orange, these being Leerdam, Oranje, Buuren, Catzenellenbogen and Nassau. The average distance from bastion to bastion was 180 m; the average height of the curtain

The first of Isbrand Goske's jobs was to find a suitable site for the new castle. His first thought was to build around the old fort and demolish it once the new castle had been built. This idea was rejected as the functioning of the fort would be affected too much. His other concern was that the position of the old fort was so close to Signal Hill that an enemy that gained its heights could

Ravelin is defensive emplacement outside a larger fort but differs from a redoubt as it is

not enclosed and is open in the rear.

rain down hell on it.

If he placed the fort too

far east it would be vulnerable

to the heights of Devil's Peak. The

present site of the Castle is one that probably

made the best of a bad situation. It is about 230 m

south-east of the old fort, close to fresh water and anchorage,

placed around Cape Town as seen on the map on the next page.

and within firing range of the town. The defensive system at the Cape

was subsequently improved over time by means of many defensive structures



This corner of the Inner Court was first developed by Simon The Castle was designed in the shape of van der Stel in about 1690 with a flower garden and exotic and indigenous trees which surrounded a small circular pool. His son, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, enlarged the pool to its present size. magazine. Cannon positions atop these The pool was demolished in 1860 and restored in 1984.

> cleared of bush and levelled. Hendrik Lacus did all the measuring and the taking of levels. Foundations were started with the concentration of work on Leerdam Bastion. Foundations were 5 m wide, and a depth of 3.5 m was required to reach bedrock. While the digging was taking place, the stone for the foundations was being cut out of Signal Hill in large blocks; it was then broken up and transported by cart to the Castle. Blue slate used for the walls and shells used in making mortar were obtained from Robben Island. (The

The workforce needed for the biggest building project of its time in the Cape was first sourced from soldiers not on military duty. Slaves and a few Khoi-



he main structure of the Castle was started in 1665 and formally declared complete in 1679 after periods of varying building intensity, the sense of urgency or lack of it influenced by the tate of alliances and treaties between nations in Europe.

Most of the materials needed for the Castle were found locally, the bulk of the raw material being stone and mortar. Materials that could not be procured at the Cape were brought in from Europe. These were more specialised materials ke the klompjes (little yellowish or red bricks used as ballast in VOC ships) that can be seen at the main entrance gate. Wood was obtained locally at Hout Bay

After the location of the Castle had been settled upon, the area had to be

mortar consisted of one part lime from shells mixed with one part clay.)

na where also roped into the project. As the urgency to finish the project



it seems to have stuck for this balcony or porch. It was referred to as the puije by those who built and first used it. Its creation is attributed to Anton Anreith and Louis Michel Thibault.

to 300 people worked on the Castle.

The laying of the foundation stone in Leerdam Bastion by Commander Wagenaer on 2 January 1666 was a big occasion in the small settlement. It was celebrated on site with a feast of two oxen, six sheep and much fanfare.

Catzenellenbogen had been completed. At this stage, the

old fort was demolished except for the stone building or Kat which was still used for administration.



Strictly speaking, the name 'Kat Balcony' is incorrectly used;

escalated, incentives for the soldiers were put in place, free burghers brought in to help with the transporting of material, and, at one stage, a proclamation was made that anyone passing the Castle, male or female, regardless of rank. had to carry baskets of soil to help excavate the moat. At any given time 200

The Castle was not built by laying the foundation for the whole castle and then building the bastions and curtain walls up at the same time. Leerdam was the first bastion to be worked on; when it had been built up to the required height, its curtain walls were then constructed. Catzenellenbogen and its curtain walls were then brought up to the required height. Oranje and the curtain wall that would connect it to Nassau went the same route. Finally Nassau and then Buuren, the last of the bastions, were built up to the required height. By 1674 Leerdam, Buuren and

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Commander Simon van der Stel took up his position in 1680 and housed himself in the quarters between Leerdam and Oranje. His first

In 1678 an entrance called the Waterpoort (the present-day entrance to the

Military Museum) was constructed on the sea side of the Castle. At this time,

the main road to town ran in front of the Castle. A small V-shaped ravelin

curtain walls of the Castle.

Monogram of the Dutch the sea.

East India Company

its founding charter

government in 1602.

from the Dutch

(VOC) which received

was placed in front of the Waterpoort to protect the entrance; in

1860 this site was replaced by the Imhoff Battery which overlooked

Leerdam and Oranje, which are on the land side of the Castle, were

built higher than their counterparts so as to allow the ability to fire

over them to protect the seaward approach. Single- and double-

storey utility buildings were erected along the sides of the inner

In 1679 the Castle was declared finished and the bastions were

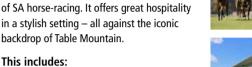
named. Sadly, the man who had watched over the later part of this

project, Governor Johan Bax van Herenthals, died in 1678, never to

occupy the castle in which he had taken such an interest.







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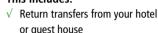
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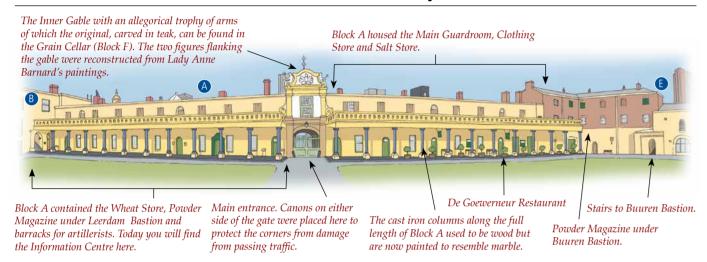
The Outer Court viewed from the Inner Archway towards the Entrance Gate

South African soldiers.

Also found here are the All important

Memorial dedicated to made from here.

Castle Well and a WWI proclamations were



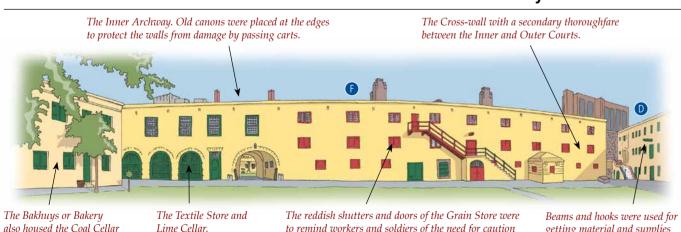
The Inner Court viewed from the Inner Archway

Block D contained the Oil Cellar, Iron Store, Merchandise Store, Block C contained the Medicine Store, Clerk's Lodging, The Dolphin Pool was restored Apothecary, Sally Port, Dispenser's Store and Carpenter's Store. Laboratory, Bombardier's Room, new Blacksmith's Shop, to its former glory after being new Wainwright's Shop and the new Cooper's Shop. uncovered in 1981 The Torture Chamber was a place for The Bakhuys or The Sally Port is a small opening to the Stairs to The Dark Hole or Donker Gat is a outside of the Castle from which troops Nassau Bakery which dungeon that was originally used to extracting confessions as required could sally forth or flee suddenly from Bastion.

The Inner Court viewed towards the Inner Archway

store ammunition and gunpowder,

but due to dampness it became



also housed the Coal Cellar

to remind workers and soldiers of the need for caution regarding fire: no smoking was permitted in this area.

getting material and supplies to the upper floors.

was rebuilt on its

original foundations

Dolphin Pool and

Inner Court.

Peacock Room and

Banqueting Hall.

contribution to structural change was the repositioning of the main gate to between Leerdam and Buuren as he found the old entrance, being so close to the sea, was not functioning well: at times, in big storms, waves would flood the courtyard.

This new gate, completed in 1684, is one of the gems of the Castle. It comprised an octagonal bell tower made from klompjes with a bell which has the inscription in Latin: 'With the blessing of the Lord of earth, exalted on high, Claudius Fremy made me in Amsterdam in the year 1697.' The gate is made of stone and the pediment bears a lion and crown. The lion holds seven arrows symbolising the seven provinces of the United Netherlands. Under this is a row showing the coats of arms of the VOC chambers, from left to right: Horn, Delft, Amsterdam, Middelburg, Rotterdam and Enkhuizen. These are flanked by the VOC monogram.

A ravelin was constructed as an outer entrance in front of the new gate. The design of this ravelin forces the road into the Castle at a right angle. This approach to the main gate meant that an attacking force could not shoot directly at the gate.

Commissioner van Rheede, on visiting the Cape in 1685, recommended that a cross-wall (or Kat – a Dutch term for a transverse wall built for fortification purposes) be built, which would divide the strike area of enemy missiles if the Castle ever came under attack. Buildings went up on either side of the wall. The new administration centre was placed on the side of the Outer Bailey. The entrance to this building was through the beautiful Kat Balcony. The right side of Block F became the centre of social life and

hospitality for the who's who of the settlement and important visitors to the Cape. On the left side of the inner archway were the quarters of the Deputy Governor or Secunde. On the Inner Bailey side of the cross-wall, Van der Stel built a cellar for storing grain. The garrison commander had his quarters in Block B under the Captain's Tower which was used by sentries on duty.

In 1705 Willem Adriaan, son of Simon van der Stel, built the bakery, creating a secluded area which became the site of his beautiful pool known as the Dolphin Pool. (This was an enlargement of his father's 1690 circular pool.) This area fell into disrepair during the British Occupation and the pool was filled in in the 1860s. Only in 1987 was it restored to its former glory.

From 1672 outer defences and forts were planned and built around the Cape Peninsula to complete the defensive system: 123 years later in 1795 there

In 1795 the Dutch lost the Battle of Muizenberg to the British and signed a treaty at Rustenburg (in present-day Rondebosch). The Castle was taken over by the British forces without a shot being fired there. Because of the weakness of the Dutch defensive system, more forts were added – the most significant being the King's Blockhouse on the edge of Mowbray Ridge on Devil's Peak.

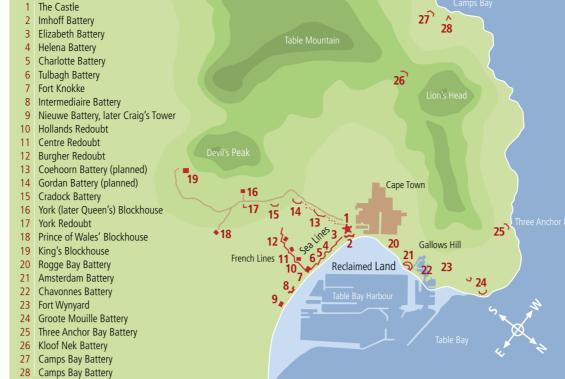
In 1803 the British left the Cape in accordance with the terms of the Peace of Amiens and the new Netherlands, known as the Batavian Republic, took possession of the Castle.

In 1806, because of European politics, the British returned and fought the Battle of Blaauwberg. As a result of their victory, the Castle was again occupied by the British. The most significant structural addition to the Castle made by the British was the raising of all the walls with reddish brickwork in 1830. The British also whitewashed the internal Castle walls. During restoration of the Castle in the '70s and '80s, the colour was returned to the yellow you see today, as this reduces glare and heat. To improve the defensive system, the British added several up-to-date forts such as Fort Wynyard (near the V&A Waterfront) which was used until the end of WWII.

By 1811 the sun was setting on the into the Dark Hole. The Castle as a defensive structure, owing floor of the Dark Hole was to advances in military technology. once made out of peach pips The final blow was the relocation of embedded in clay. Originally government to what is now the Slave gunpowder was stored here, Lodge in Adderley Street.

Attacks on the Castle and its near demise

Up to 1850, no shot was fired in anger from or towards the Castle. The danger to the Castle was from within. The British War Department, which was in control of the Castle, tried to sell the Castle to the colonial government. When this idea was rejected there was serious talk of demolishing the Castle and using the ground for the ever-growing town. However, more pressing political issues of the day put these thoughts on the back burner.

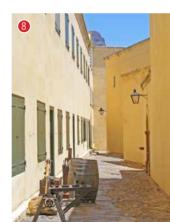


The second shot was fired in 1886 by the Cape Prime Minister, Sir Gordon Sprigg, who recommended the levelling of the Castle and its replacement with modern barracks. This notion was fought off by the Afrikaner Bond party.

The final assault was made by Cecil Rhodes who wanted part of the Castle demolished to make way for railway lines. His argument was that only a small part of the Castle would be sacrificed. Mrs Marie Koopmans-de Wet's rebuff to Rhodes was: 'Tell Mr Rhodes that his nose is only a little point on his face, but let him cut it off and then look in the glass.' (Visit Koopmans-de Wet House in Strand Street to see her gracious home.) The Castle was saved but the Imhoff Battery was lost to a new road.

In 1910 the Union of South Africa was created: when the Union Defence Force was established in 1912 the Castle became the headquarters of No. 1 Military District of 15 districts that made up the UDF. In 1922 the Castle was finally transferred to the South African government. During WWII the Castle was used extensively by many units of the Defence Force, from local guard units to highly secret installations such as the 'filter' room manned mainly by women and Special Signals Services. It was also the home of the Combined Operational Room.

project as the Castle had become an important tourist attraction. Plans were



A small alleyway found behind the Bakery in the Inner Bailey, houses the Bombardier's Room at its entrance, then the New Blacksmith's Shop, the New Wainwright's Shop and the New Cooper's Shop.

The Castle – a home to many

The Castle was a melting pot of people from all over the world – soldiers, slaves, civilians, European, Asian and African. Many passed through like shadows but some left their mark, generating stories that give life and soul to this stone fort. Simon van der Stel, the commander of the Cape from 1680, established the

New life for the Castle



the redigging of the moat and connecting it to its original water source, and rebuilding the Bakery and the Dolphin Pool. All the upper walkways had to be dug up and waterproofed, and the slate replaced with blue slate similar to the orginal slate. Major work was done on the Clock Tower and the inner gable was remodelled with the addition of the two flanking figures lost over time. Many hidden rooms were discovered and frescoes brought to light during the restoration, which lasted till 1993.

British Occupation.

returning the

Castle to the

Batavian Republic

(a French vassal).

Occupation. The Battle

Francis II, the last Holy Roman

beautiful town of Stellenbosch and, after leaving

the Castle, he established Groot Constantia – one

Another person who lived at the Castle and made

an outstanding contribution to life at the Cape

was Lady Anne Barnard. She arrived in 1797 as the

wife of the colonial secretary and acted as official

hostess for the governor. In this role she held

elegant parties which played an important part

in the social life of the colony, not least because

she encouraged contact between the Dutch and

the English. She travelled widely and provided a

valuable picture of daily life at the time through

her diaries, sketches and paintings – these were

even of indirect assistance with the renovations

two centuries later. The uniform worn by Castle

guards today is based on her illustrations of a

An unwilling guest was Cetshwayo, King of the

Zulus. After a great victory at Isandlwana in 1879

and then a defeat at his home at Ulundi, he was

exiled to the Castle with his wives. His prison

was the area used by the Military Museum today.

However, the usual place for prisoners was the

Provost Cells in Catzenellenbogen Bastion. Some

interesting graffiti and drawings can be seen on the

Pieter Kolbe, appointed as the first official

astronomer at the Cape, arrived from Germany in 1705, and set up his observatory in Buuren Bastion.

coloured' soldier in 1800.

doors of these cells.

Anton Anreith was a German sculptor and woodcarver who did a great deal of

work at the Cape, to which he brought the German Rococo style. He worked

closely with military engineer and architect Louis Michel Thibault (as shown

on the Kat Balcony) and also created the lions on the path to the Gateway at

the Castle. He had his workshop in the Castle, and ran the first art school in

Ghosts have long been part of the fabric of the Castle, from one which rang the

bell in the tower to the cheerful ghosts of Lady Anne Barnard and her guests

who are heard before there is suddenly silence once more. Another is a two-

same day Noodt, relaxing in his chair, fell asleep, never to wake.

metre tall figure which steps off the rampart and vanishes. Then there is the

ghost of Governor Pieter Noodt, who walks the Castle corridors at night.

He was a cruel and hated ruler who sentenced many men to death. In

1729 one of these unfortunate men, about to die, cursed Noodt: that

One of the most loved characters that made the Castle his home was

a shipwrecked poodle named Schiffer who was adopted by the soldiers.

What made him so loved for over 20 years was that he saved many soldiers

from being punished for sleeping on guard duty. He made it his duty to walk

about 20 paces in front of the night patrol; if he came across a sentry that

he thought was asleep, a bark and a jump would put him back on his feet.

years of his life he did this duty completely blind.

Exhibitions, displays and ceremonies

What is even more remarkable about Schiffer is that for the last two or three

The key ceremony plays out daily in the morning and at noon. The morning

ceremony at 10 am (for the convenience of visitors) entails the gate key be-

ing fetched under escort from the governor's quarters. It is taken to the

main gate; the wicket gate (a small personnel door within the main gate) is opened and, if all is well, the bell is rung, the main gate is opened

and the sentries take up their positions. A little bronze cannon is fired

in the Outer Bailey. The key is then returned to the governor's quarters.

The noon ceremony is similiar but

in reverse: this time the bell in the

tower rings 12 times and the little

bronze cannon is again fired in the

The Castle houses part of the

Iziko William Fehr Collection

which includes furniture, paint-

ings and ceramics, chiefly from

the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries. The Granary provides

exhibition space for ceramics,

from those created in earliest

times through to modern pieces.

From time to time temporary

exhibitions are also mounted in

In 2012 the controversial decision

was made to end a long-standing

Outer Bailey.

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Cape Town on Foot by Ursula Stevens

Thanks to Shelley Brown for editorial input.

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Key Ceremony: Monday-Saturday (10h00 &12h00)

The Castle of Good Hope is closed to the public on

Christmas Day (25 Dec) and New Year's Day (01 Jan).

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Heard the Old Men Say by Lawrence G. Green

The Castle of Good Hope from 1666 by B. Johnson Barker

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View of the Inner Gable, showing the iron pillars (painted to

look like marble) which replaced the original wooden pillars. The

remodelled sculpted figures can be seen on either side of the gable.

In the Footsteps of Lady Anne Barnard by Jose Burman

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transferred to the South African

is declared a National Monument.

1936 The Castle 1975 Extensive renovations begin.

The Lodging for the Captain. The morning vertical sundial is seen

on the wall. The Captain's Tower was used as a lookout. It is the

only one remaining of several that were built.

the Castle.

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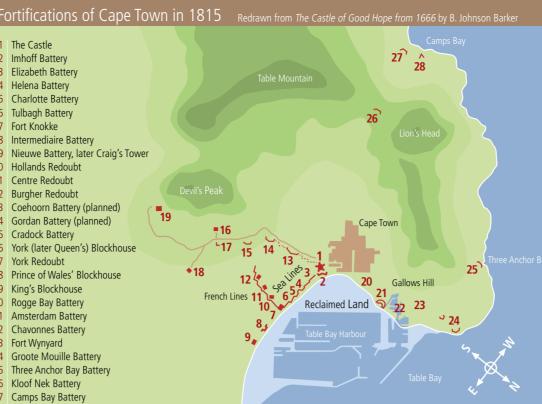
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Restoration of the Castle

Years of military use and neglect were the reason for a grand restoration

drawn up in 1975; 30 years and R32 million later, the Castle had been restored, not to its former glory, but to reflect the many periods it had gone through. The Kat Balcony was restored to its most elegant time of the 1780s and the Military Museum to the 1870s. The best and most interesting items from all the periods were combined

The big projects undertaken were

The most common cannon at the

Castle was known as a 'gun'. It is a smooth-bore muzzleloader. Note the red brickwork added during the

tradition of flying all the previous flags of occupation: only the new South African flag is now on display.

1803 The British 1806 The Second British leave the Cape,

of Blaauwberg is fought. The Castle is once again in British hands.

the Castle.

government.

to the Castle

Bill Gates

1994 The New South Africa: a new flag flies over

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Timeline

the Castle.



1498 Vasco da Gama sails de Saldanha around the Cape to the East and back. Table Mountain.

second in command. The residence contained a

kitchen, a living and dining floor and sleeping

Gallery is found here.

quarters at the top. The entrance to the Good Hope

1503 Antonio 1615 The English East India Company puts in at Table establishes a Bay and climbs settlement at the Cape but it was short-lived.



under Dutch law. The inverted

horseshoe on the door suggested

one's luck had run out.

1665 Under the guidance of Isbrand Goske work starts on a new castle. It is formally declared complete in 1679.

1682 Under the

command of Simon van der Stel the entrance to the Castle is moved its present positi Castle is moved to its present position.

The Torture Chamber with

a short passage leading

but due to dampness, it

visiting the Cape, recommends that a Cross-wall be built.

1685 Commissioner

van Rheede, on

British win the Battle of Muizenberg and take control of the Castle.

the Netherlands, revolution

Occupation. The

The French occupy Utrecht in

Napoleon Bonaparte

begins making preparations to invade England

Emperor, abdicates, thus ending

Company (BBC) is formed.

of the United

founds Microsoft in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

is inaugurated as South Africa's first black president.

Nelson Mandela

Other historical events in that year Christopher Columbus becomes the first European Vinci starts

to discover the island of work on the Mona Lisa.

Leonardo da

takes Osaka Castle in Japan, beginning 250

Shogun Tokugawa

off Dover, between Lt-Admiral Maarten Harpertszoon Tromp's 42 Dutch ships and 21 English ships divided into two squadrons, one commanded by Robert Blake and the other by Nehemiah Bourne.

First Anglo-Dutch War: the opening battle is fought

recorded as dying of the plague in the Great Plague of London. Two-thirds of Londoners leave the city, but over 68,000 die that year.

Margaret Porteous is the first person

River, Louisiana, Robert de la La Louisiane for France.

At the mouth of the Mississippi

Fontainebleau and declares Salle buries an engraved plate and Protestantism illegal, thus depriving a cross, claiming the territory as Huguenots of civil rights. Some *Huguenots later move to the Cape.*

Louis XIV issues the Edict of

proclaimed.

breaks out in Amsterdam and the Batavian Republic is

the Holy Roman Empire after about 1000 years.

The British Broadcasting King George V

Kingdom dies.