

HISTORICAL KING WILLIAM'S TOWN AND ZWELITSHA

Short Summary of King William's Town history

The town was founded by Sir Benjamin D'Urban, governor of the Cape Colony, after the War of Hintsas (1834-1835). King William's Town was established as the capital of the Province Queen Adelaide, stretching between the Kei and Keiskamma Rivers. D'Urban's scheme did not succeed however, and the territory was handed back to the Xhosa in 1836.

During the course of the War of the Axe (1846-1847) the town was re-established by the new governor, Sir Harry Smith. From this date King William's Town slowly grew and prospered as the administrative, military, economic and educational centre of British Kaffraria. The province was incorporated into the Cape Province in 1866.

King William's Town: tourist attractions

Grey Hospital, cnr Eales & Lonsdale Road

This National monument was built between 1856 and 1859 for the black population of British Kaffraria. The imposing bell tower and double storey wings were designed by E. Pilkington. The building boasted piped water and a novel ventilation system. The timber for the large entrance door is said to have been recovered from the wreck of the "Lady Kennaway".

Old Methodist Church (Missionary Museum), Berkeley Street

The neo-Gothic building now housing the Missionary Museum (a satellite of the Amathole Museum) was built in 1855 as a Wesleyan Chapel and was subsequently used by the Baptist congregation. When semi-derelict it was bought by Historical Homes of S.A., restored and converted into a museum in 1973. It was proclaimed a National Monument in 1975. The displays include the Albion press which was used by the Rev John Appleyard to print the first complete Xhosa bible at Mount Coke Mission, outside King William's Town.

Old Methodist Manse, Berkeley Street

This double-storey manse, adjacent to the old Methodist Church, was erected in approximately 1855. The wooden balcony, stretching from one side of the facade to the other, was a later addition. It has been renovated recently to accommodate *The Potter's House*, a Christian fellowship. It was declared a National Monument in 1975.

British Kaffrarian Savings Bank, corner of Taylor Street and Maclean Square

Built in 1908, this architecturally interesting and well-preserved building portrays the architecture of the turn of the century. It received National Monument status in 1975.

Lonsdale Chambers, Taylor Street

This double-storey building with its classical features was completed in 1924. It is named after J.F. Lonsdale, a founder member and later secretary of the British Kaffrarian Savings Bank. It was proclaimed as a National Monument in 1979.

The Residency, c/ o Reserve Road & Prince Alfred Square

It was erected in about 1846 on the spot where the dwelling-house of Rev John Brownlee stood after his arrival in 1826 as missionary of the London Missionary Society. The original dwelling was twice gutted by fire. Government House, as it was later known as, accommodated many visitors including governors and Prince Alfred (1860). It served as the residence of successive magistrates and was proclaimed a National Monument in 1977.

Old Station building, Alexandra Road

This stone building was officially opened as a railway station in 1877. Until the construction of the present station in 1933, trains were required to enter King William's Town in reverse and then exit along the same route to link up with the main line. It has been used as a school and for offices. The entrance originally had a square gable with an inscription "EL & QR". It was declared a National Monument in 1979.

Officer's House, 5 Hood Street

This mid-nineteenth century national monument was built by an officer along the lines of a 'typical English farm house'. The house was originally thatched. Aspects of interest are the neo-Gothic windows and the Victorian wooden balcony.

Old Post Office and Magistrate's Court building, Alexandra Road

These public buildings of rubble-stonework were completed in 1877 and accommodated various Government departments. They include an imposing clock tower and memorial to the Rev John Brownlee. The old Post Office section now houses the Xhosa Gallery of the Amathole Museum. It was declared a National Monument in 1980.

Synagogue, Berkeley Street

This predominantly neo-Gothic building dates from the 1850's and was used for several decades as the Wesleyan school house, with a bell tower over the front entrance. The first council meeting in King William's Town was held here, due to the fact that it was one of the largest halls in the Old Town at the time. In 1908 the building was converted into a synagogue. It was proclaimed as a National Monument in 1980. In the late 1980's the Synagogue was closed and it is used today by a local Christian fellowship.

The Town Hall, Maclean Street

The foundation stone was laid in 1866 and the building was officially opened the following year. During the Frontier War of 1877-78 it was used as the headquarters of the Civil Defence Force. Large scale alterations were made from 1899 to 1902; and it was officially re-opened in 1904. The impressive sloping stage is a reminder of a bygone era. The Town Hall received National Monument status in 1980.

The Victorian Drill Hall, Queens Road

This typical Victorian building with its neo-classical features was designed and built to commemorate Queen Victoria's sixtieth birthday. It still retains its military air and is now used by the Amatola Commando. The Drill Hall is a proclaimed National Monument.

Sutton House, Dale College, Queens Road

The corner-stone of Sutton House was laid by the Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Henry Bartle-Frere, in 1877. The building was officially opened in December 1878 and is named after the Rev J.G. Sutton, Headmaster of Dale College (1890-1912). It was proclaimed as a National Monument in 1980. In 1996 Sutton House was sold to local developers and now accommodates a shopping centre.

Old Military Commissariat Store, Military Reserve

This large stone building, a declared National Monument, was completed in 1849, shortly before the outbreak of the Frontier War of 1850-53. It was used in times of both war and peace to store supplies. It was originally L-shaped but the wing nearest the road was demolished.

Old Powder Magazine, Military Reserve

The magazine buildings and surrounding wall represent one of the oldest and best preserved examples of its kind in South Africa. From the stonework it is obvious that the magazine was constructed in two stages, probably between 1852 and 1862 and between 1864 and 1875. Unfortunately the masonry joints have been repointed in an uncharacteristic manner while under renovation. Magazines consist of square stone buildings with a brick barrel-vaulted ceiling. Flat roofs are of pitch-covered cement. Much of the ammunition used by soldiers of the British Regiment in the Frontier Wars was stored here. It received National Monument status in 1981.

Eardley-Wilmot Gun, Military Reserve (opposite entrance)

This bronze muzzle-loading gun was cast at the Royal Gun Factory at Woolwich in 1859. F.M. Eardley-Wilmot was the Superintendent of the factory between 1855-1859, hence his name appears on the gun. The carriage is not contemporary with the ordnance and dates to post-1870. It was probably used at the battle of Umzintzani by the Graham's Town (*sic*) Volunteer Horse Artillery, who probably brought it to King William's Town when the regiment disbanded in 1895. It was subsequently displayed in front of the Officers' Mess in the Military Reserve and placed by Excelsior School (now the King Campus of Lovedale FET College) in its present location.

Brownlee Mission Congregational Church, beyond the Military Reserve on the National Road to Stutterheim

The Rev John Brownlee established the Buffalo Mission Station at present-day King William's Town in 1826. In about 1847 he was forced by the military authorities to move his mission where this church was built in 1860. The church is a National Monument.

Dale College Primary School, Albert Road

This fine red brick building was designed by Sir Herbert Baker. Completed in 1908, the building was officially opened by Dr Thomas Muir, Superintendent of Education of the Cape Colony. It received National Monument status in 1982.

Old Officers Mess, Military Reserve

The Officers' Mess, a declared National Monument, dates from the early 1850's. In the heart of the Military Reserve, it served the military until the Reserve was abandoned in the 1920's. In 1925 it became the residence of the principal of Excelsior School. It is now part of the King Campus of Lovedale FET College. Although it has since undergone extensive reconstruction the historic core of the original building is still extant. Corrugated iron was placed over the original thatched roof and gables were added to the front.

Fort Metz, Military Reserve

A stone cairn and National Monuments Council plaque were erected at this spot to mark the site of this small earthen redoubt. The stone blockhouse was nicknamed 'Fort Metz' and was one of the outlying defenses of the Military Reserve. It was demolished in the 1970's.

Old Public Library, cnr of Alexandra and Albert Roads

This delightful Victorian public building was erected largely as a result of the efforts of Thomas Daines, pharmacist at the Grey Hospital. Originally completed in 1877, the building became part of the Amathole Museum in 1967 and is known as the Daines Wing, housing a 19th century local history display. It is a declared National Monument.

Old Natural History Museum Building, 3 Albert Road

This National Monument was completed in 1898 to house the collections of the King William's Town Naturalist Society which had been founded in 1884. It now contains part of the well-known Shortridge Mammal Collection and is the home of Huberta, the famous wandering hippo.

Old Military Hospital, Oak Street

These buildings were partially completed as early as 1849 and the present ones date from about 1875. Part of the complex was occupied by the first Conservator of Forests in the Eastern Cape Conservancy, Joseph Storr Lister, from c 1890 until 1905.

Royal Engineers Mess, Oak Street.

This substantial stone building was erected in c 1862 and considerably altered over the years. It does however, retain some of its 19th century atmosphere.

Old Smithy, Oak Street

The square, stone smithy, part of the military complex in King William's Town, was built in what was originally the grounds of the Rev John Brownlee's Buffalo Mission. An aspect worth noting is the ventilated roof, built to allow the escape of warm air from inside the building.

Deeds Office Building, cnr of Alexandra and Queens Roads

The blue-stone national monument was completed in 1933 and was sympathetically designed to blend in with its historic surroundings. The Deeds Office dates back to 1858 when it was established to exercise control over British Kaffraria and was originally housed in the adjacent Magistrate's Court.

Holy Trinity Church and ring wall, Prince Alfred Square

The foundation stone was laid in 1850 and the local military were responsible for the initial construction of the foundation and walls. With the outbreak of the Eighth Frontier War in 1850 the building operations were postponed and the building was completed in 1856 by local builders. The tower was added in 1932. It received National Monument status in 1986.

The Sun Building, cnr of Alexandra Road and Cathcart Street.

Built in 1904 to house the Sun Insurance Company, this impressive two-storey building was originally sandstone coloured and has distinct touches of Art Nouveau. It now contains lawyer's offices and a local bank group. This national monument displays beautifully engraved glass panels with the sun emblem as well as the shiny copper sun at the entrance, which reminds the visitor of the building's origins. It was declared a National Monument in 1988.

Military Reserve boundary stones

On the pavement opposite the Missionary Museum can be found an upright stone with the engraved letters 'BO'. This 'Board of Ordnance' stone marked the boundary of the Military Reserve and is one of three such stones still in existence in the town.

Fitzpatrick Court, Durban Street

This large building was constructed c. 1862 as the private residence of Judge J. C. Fitzpatrick, first judge of the Supreme Court in British Kaffraria and father of Sir Percy Fitzpatrick. After Judge Fitzpatrick's transfer from British Kaffraria it was used as the premises of the Collegiate school for girls, the forerunner of today's Kaffrarian High School. It is now a block of flats.

German Settler Monument

This commemorates the arrival of the British German Legionaries of 1857 and the German (civilian) Settlers of 1858/ 9. The pillar feature represents the Brandenburg Gate, a feature of the once-walled city of Berlin. The water represents the sea and the names of the ships which transported the immigrants out, are inscribed around the pond. On the west wall behind the 'Brandenburg gate' are listed the settlements to which the immigrants were sent. The central feature of the monument is a drift stone on a plinth of local granite, a gift from the German government who shipped out the stone to South Africa and saw to its delivery to King William's Town.

Edward Street Cemetery

This was the first cemetery in King William's Town and was used from 1848 to 1864. The open piece of ground on the far side of the cemetery marks the spot where casualties of the Cattle Killing were buried in mass graves in 1857. The present layout of the cemetery dates from the early 1970s when it was extensively refurbished after falling into an advance state of deterioration.

War Memorial, cnr of Queens and Alexandra Roads.

This blue-stone memorial with bronze figures was erected to the memory of the men of the town and district who were killed during the First World War (1914-1918). Plaques were later added to include the area's victims of the 1939-1945 war. The list includes the names of six members of the South African Native Labour Corps who lost their lives in the *SS Mendi* disaster in the English Channel in 1917.

Fort Murray, Old Fort Murray Road

Originally established at Mount Coke in 1835, it was refounded in the vicinity during 1846-47. The fort's main function was to guard the King William's Town/ East London road. It is associated with a variety of historical characters, such as Col John Maclean (Chief Commissioner of British Kaffraria), who lived just outside the fort from 1848-1862. Members of the British German Legion were housed at the fort in 1857 and the two prophetesses Nonquawuse and Nonkosi were detained there for some time after the Cattle Killing Movement. It was abandoned in 1867 and was proclaimed a National Monument in 1977.

Children's Cemetery, Dimbaza

In 1967 seventy families were relocated to the area subsequently named Dimbaza - meaning a place where rubbish is dumped. They came from as far away as Middelburg and the Karoo. Due to the harsh living conditions hundreds of children died of malnutrition, tuberculosis and preventable diseases such as measles. Whereas other towns are built around a civic square, a town hall or shops, Dimbaza's centre is the children's cemetery containing many unmarked graves.

In the 1970s over 20 factories were established in Dimbaza following the international outrage that the children's cemetery provoked. Taking advantage of the Ciskei's extensive tax rebates and high financial inducements the factories, mostly foreign-owned, were built in an attempt to transform Dimbaza into a showcase of industrial opportunity. When the incentives and subsidies were removed in the 1990's however, many of the factories closed down or moved elsewhere.

Nompendulo High School Memorial, Zone 10, Zwelitsha

The politics of resistance to the South African and Ciskei governments were ever-present in Zwelitsha. Student protests and uprisings, underground political organisations and horrifying

moments of police brutality were ingrained into the life of the town.

On 23 July 1985 a protest meeting was held at Nompandolo High School to enforce a democratically elected student body. Student demands were drafted and handed over to the school principal. He did not cooperate, refused to address the students and called the police. They demanded immediate dispersal, but the students refused and after the use of teargas and assault pandemonium broke out. Many students were subsequently arrested. Fleeing scholars attempted to cross the Buffalo River, adjacent to the school, and in the process at least three students drowned. A memorial commemorating the school tragedy, was unveiled on 23 July 2000 on the school grounds by Rev M. Stofile, Premier of the Eastern Cape.

Steve Biko's House, Tyamzashe Street (Ginsberg)

The house of the prominent Black Consciousness leader, Bantu Stephen Biko (1946-1977) was proclaimed a National Monument in 1997. Biko lived in Ginsberg from the age of four until his death in 1977. Biko symbolised the philosophy of black self respect and the call; to black people to raise themselves by their own efforts. His philosophy played a mayor role in shaping black politics in South Africa.

Steve Biko's grave, Garden of Remembrance (Ginsberg)

Steve Biko died on 12 September 1977 from police torture and assault in detention. The circumstances resulting in his death still beg a complete explanation. He was buried on 17 September in Ginsberg after services were held at the Victoria Grounds in King William's Town. Biko's funeral was attended by an estimated 17 000 people.

On 12 September 1997, a bust of the fallen hero was unveiled and the Steve Biko Garden of Remembrance was officially opened by former president, Mr Nelson Mandela.

Graves of the Bisho Massacre, Ginsberg and the Bisho Stadium

On 7 September 1992 about 40 000 ANC- Alliance members led by SA Communist Party officials marched on Bisho, then capital of the Ciskei homeland, to occupy the town and force the Ciskei ruler, Brigadier Oupa Gqozo, from power. Ciskeian troops opened fire after a section of the crowd broke through a razor wire barricade. Twenty-nine people subsequently died and many were wounded.

A memorial, situated on the road between King and Bisho just opposite the stadium, has been erected. Most of the fallen were buried in the new Ginsberg cemetery.

Griffiths and Victoria Mxenge's grave, at Rayi village on the N2 between King William's Town and Peddie

The anti-apartheid activists and human rights lawyers, Griffiths and Victoria Mxenge are buried outside King William's Town. They were married in 1964 and moved to Durban. Their lives were much affected by frequent bannings, detentions and imprisonment, but they both handled many high-profile and political cases. They were both assassinated by security force hit squads in 1981 and 1985, respectively.

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