

## The Capture Site 50 years on - a small part of Madiba's legacy

August 4th 2012

*By Stuart Pennington*

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*Photo: Brendan Grealy*

For a few days the world media will focus again on our country and the remarkable legacy of Nelson

Mandela, arguably the world's most famous icon.

Up until now a fairly ordinary looking plinth on the side of the R103 near Howick in KZN is all that there is to signify this historical event (the old national road between Johannesburg and Durban in the 50's and early 60's, now part of the esteemed KZN Midlands Meander)

It reads:

#### TSIAMELO

This monument was erected by  
the people of Howick to  
commemorate the site of arrest of  
President Nelson R. Mandela  
on 5th August 1962.  
The plaque was unveiled by  
the President of the Republic of  
South Africa on occasion of  
receiving honorary citizenship on  
12th December 1996

#### **How all this will change on August 4th 2012**

- \* President Zuma will unveil the new sculpture
- \* The new conference centre will be opened in an environment rich with significance
- \* The Nelson Mandela Exhibition Hall will be opened to the public
- \* The Truth Cafe will become one of the most unique restaurant facilities in South Africa
- \* The Truth Store will become a bookshop devoted to the history of South Africa
- \* The Umpumelelo Bead Artists will have their magnificent artwork on display

"Essentially the monument site has been neglected for years, but it will now become a world-class site and destination for tourists, SA citizens and, in particular, school children" says Christopher Till, Director of the Apartheid Museum who with the Nelson Mandela Foundation is planning and supervising the new development with the assistance of the Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs the uMngeni Municipality and Amafa ( the Kzn Heritage Council)

"In many respects Madiba's capture was a turning point in his political life. It wasn't the first time he was arrested but it was his first "capture" in the sense that he had gone underground (detail of the capture below) and was involved in the mobilisation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military arm of the ANC".

"My plan is to make this venue into a multi-functional facility. The second phase will see the construction of a new museum /visitor centre. We hope to be able to offer day trips, conferences, meals, shopping and arts and crafts, but above all a unique insight into Madiba's life and the struggle stories specifically related to Kwazulu Natal.

"While the restaurant and the conference centre are a few 100 metres off the road, visitors will be immediately greeted by an extraordinary sculpture by South African artist Marco Cianfanelli comprising 50 poles between 6m and 10m high standing in the landscape. Only when you stand in a particular spot will the face of Madiba appear" Chris explains.

"We have converted a large shed into an exhibition hall which will temporarily house the Mandela Exhibition that I have taken around the world, dealing with the themes of "Character, Comrade, Leader, Prisoner, Negotiator and Statesman". The exhibition will give visitors a deep sense of Mandela's life, how his character was shaped by his rural upbringing, his move to Johannesburg, his studying at the University of the Witwatersrand, his leadership of the Youth League, his anti-apartheid activities, the treason trial, his capture, Robben Island, loss of family, his freedom, and finally his Presidency".

"Visitors can also enjoy breakfast and lunch at the Truth Café with menu items such as "Prison lunch", "Freedom lunch", Chris says with a twinkle in his eye. "The Truth Store will contain artefacts and memorabilia and, in particular, an opportunity to watch the Umpumelelo bead artists at work".

"We are also developing a conferencing (and wedding) facility which will have the added value of:

- \* Talks on Madiba's life history
- \* A guided tour of the exhibition
- \* Presentations on South Africa's growing global presence and competitiveness

And finally we want to host as many school tours as we can on the Mandela legacy," he concludes.

The site has an awesome perspective of the rolling Midlands topography with the Drakensburg in the background. I was so excited to discover it. I can't think of any capture sites where the "captured" have become truly celebrated individuals.

I refreshed my memory of the night of the capture on 5th August 1962 when Madiba was journeying down the R103 with Cecil Williams, a white theatre director and member of the MK, posing as his chauffeur. When Sergeant Vorster of the Pietermaritzburg police stopped him and produced an arrest warrant, Madiba said his name as David Motsamayi. Madiba recalls, "He nodded and in a very proper way, asked me a few questions. I parried these without giving him much information."

Sergeant Vorster seemed a bit irritated and then said,

"Ag, you're Nelson Mandela, and this is Cecil Williams, and you are under arrest!"

What a great piece of history to be able to relive at the capture site!

For further info visit [www.thecapturesite.co.za](http://www.thecapturesite.co.za) or contact

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We are also planning a four day mountain bike ride in the area in the first week of September to celebrate this legacy, a large part of it will be on the road travelled by Madiba

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**The Capture &ndash; extract from "The Long Walk to Freedom", 1994, Macdonald Purnell.**

"I wore my chauffeur's white dust-coat and sat next to Cecil as he drove. We often took turns behind the wheel. It was a clear, cool day and I revelled in the beauty of the Natal countryside; even in winter, Natal remains green. How that I was returning to Johannesburg I would have some time to see Winnie and the children. I had often wished that Winnie could share with me the wonders of Africa, but the best I could do was to tell her what I had seen and done.

Once we left the industrial precincts of Durban, we moved through hills that offered majestic views of the surrounding valleys and the blue-black waters of the Indian Ocean. Durban is the principal port of for the country's main industrial area, and the highway that leads to Johannesburg runs parallel to the railway line for a great distance. I went from contemplating the natural beauty to ruminating on the fact that the railway line, being so close to the highway, offered a convenient place for sabotage. I made a note of this in the small notebook I always carried with me.

Cecil and I were engrossed in discussions of sabotage plans as we passed through Howick, twenty miles northwest of Pietermaritzburg. At Cedara, a small town just past Howick, I noticed a Ford V-8 filled with white men shoot past us on the right. I instinctively turned round to look behind and I saw two more cars filled with white men. Suddenly, in front of us, the Ford was signalling to us to stop. I know in that instant that my life on the run was over; my seventeen months of "freedom" were about to end.

As Cecil slowed down, he turned to me and said, "Who are these men?" I did not answer because we both knew very well who they were. They had chosen their hiding-spot well; to the left of us was a steep wooded bank they could have forced us into had we tried to elude them. I was in the left-hand passenger seat, and for a moment I thought about jumping out and making an escape into the woods, but I would have been shot in a matter of seconds.

When our car stopped, a tall slender man with a stern expression came directly over to the window on the passenger side. He was unshaven and it appeared that he had not slept in quite a while. I immediately assumed he had been waiting for us for several days. In a calm voice, he introduced himself as Sergeant Vorster of the Pietermaritzburg police and produced an arrest warrant. He asked me to identify myself. I told him my name was David Motsamayi. He nodded, and then, in a very proper way, he asked me a few questions about where I had been and where I was going. I parried these without giving him much information. He seemed a bit irritated and then he said, "Ag, you're Nelson Mandela, and this is Cecil Williams, and you are under arrest!"

He informed us that a police major from the other car would accompany us back to Pietermaritzburg. The police were not yet so vigilant in those days, and Sergeant Vorster did not bother searching me. I had my loaded revolver, and again I thought of escape, but I would have been greatly outnumbered. I secretly put the revolver &ndash; and my notebook &ndash; in the upholstery between my seat and Cecil's. For some reason, the police never found the gun or the small notebook, which was fortunate, for many more people would have been arrested if they had.

At the police station I was let into Sergeant Vorster's office, where I saw a number of officers, one of whom was Warrant Officer Truter, who had testified in the Treason Trial. Truter had made a favourable impression on the accused because he had accurately explained the policy of the ANC, and had not exaggerated or lied. We greeted each other in a friendly way.

I had still not admitted to anything other than the name David Motsamayi, and Truter said to me, "Nelson,

why do you keep up this farce? You know I know who you are. We all know who you are." I told him simply that I had given a name, and that was the name I was standing by. I asked for a lawyer and was curtly refused. I then declined to make a statement.

Cecil and I were locked in separate cells. I now had time to ruminate on my situation. I had always known that arrest was a possibility, but even freedom fighters practise denial, and in my cell that night I realized I was not prepared for the reality of capture and confinement. I was upset and agitated. Someone had tipped the police off about my whereabouts; they had known I was in Durban and that I would be returning to Johannesburg".