

## THE BUILDING OF THE ZITZIKAMMA GORGES ROAD AND THE RELOCATION OF CONVICT STAFF

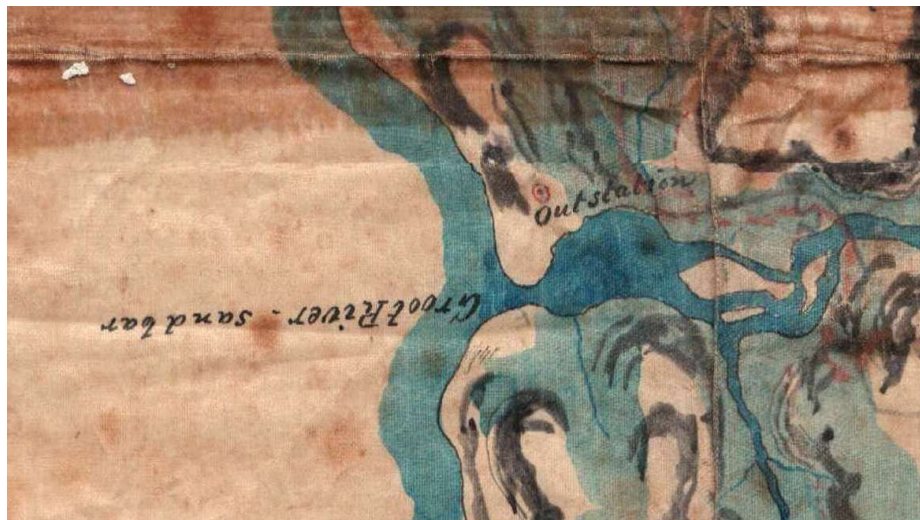
In order to obtain an indication of when the passes along the Zitzikamma Gorges Road were practically complete (put into use) various records have been sourced to measure the activity levels at the Blaauw Krantz Main Convict Station and the other two outstations, as official manning figures were not readily available. However, the Plettenberg Bay Anglican Church records kept by the Revd E Gibbs were most useful in determining supervisory staffing levels and names of the supervisory residents.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch Church 'Dooop' records, if they still exist, have not been consulted. The schedules below provide an incomplete list of the names of the men and their roles in the Convict Outpost supervisory community, many of whom clearly lived there with their families. The childbirth information has been used to measure the movement of convict personnel between the various Convict Outstations working on the Zitzikamma Gorges Road. Other contemporary records were also consulted. The result of this investigation is summarised below:

### A. Supervisory staff at the Groot River Convict Outstation

No records could be found in Church Baptismal records.

We do know, however, that settler Henry Share [*recorded as Hen[d]rick Shears by the Crown Lands Commission of 1881*] was evicted in April 1881 by the Department of Lands from a remaining wooden 'plank' cottage which he had occupied at Groot River, presumably built by the PWD, to make way for Forester Mortimer Lloyd. This would indicate that the supervisory staff had moved from Groot River by this time indicating that this outstation had been wound down, except possibly for a few men for 'snagging' purposes.

In 1883 the Forestry Department also took over two kitchen buildings and a stable building left standing. We can conclude that the Groot River Pass was practically complete by 1881.



The Convict Outstation at Groot River

<sup>1</sup>Much information was obtained from: <https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-1942-23580-73144-74?cc=1468076&wc=SFV4-82N:44975801,44975802,49282901,49282902> Baptisms 1848-1903 of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope, George, Knysna, (Knysna Chapel, Plettenberg Bay. Revd. Edwin Gibbs, "The Knysna, at the outstations of that Parish or within the district thereof"

Note in the drawing extract by Thomas Bain on the previous page that Bain had proposed in 1886 that the Groot River Convict Outstation would be built in the clearing where the three immigrant locations were laid out in 1881 and not where the De Vasselot Camping Site is located today.

**B. Supervisory staff at the Blaauw Krantz Main Convict Outstation.**

The English Church Baptismal Register and other records reveal that the following supervisory personnel were resident at the Blaauw Krantz Outstation (Main Outstation) at least during the periods shown below:

Name	Role	Station/ Year(s) found
Honorius Maynier Dreyer	Superintendent of Convicts	Blaauw Krantz 1882 -1884
Robert Bromley	Surveyor/ Inspector	Blaauw Krantz 1883 - 1884
Dr Wooley	Medical Officer	Blaauw Krantz 1880 - 1881
John Villet	Constable	Blaauw Krantz 1880
Frederick Hooper	Constable	Blaauw Krantz 1881
Lodewick Spence	Constable	Zitzikamma 1881
Richard Matson	Overseer	Zitzikamma 1881
James Clingen	Overseer	Blaauw Krantz 1881 - 1883

In 1884 Robert Bromley took over the cottage of the Superintendent of Convicts after he had relocated to the Storms River Outstation.

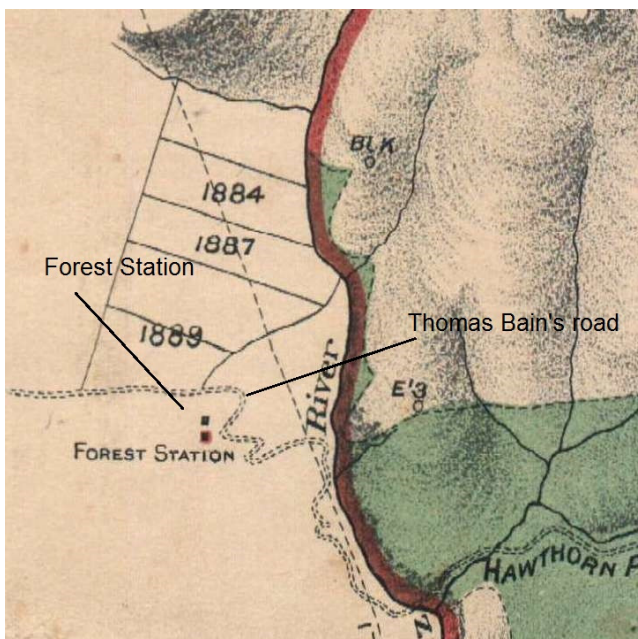
After the Blaauw Krantz Outstation was wound down the Forestry Department occupied some the remaining PWD cottages.

Mortimer Lloyd, a forester, took occupation of a cottage there in 1884.

DFO James Rawbone took occupation of a cottage there in 1886. As a matter of fact Rawbone's only son George was born at the Blaauw Krantz Convict Station on 14 March 1886.

Rawbone resigned from the Forestry Department in 1887.

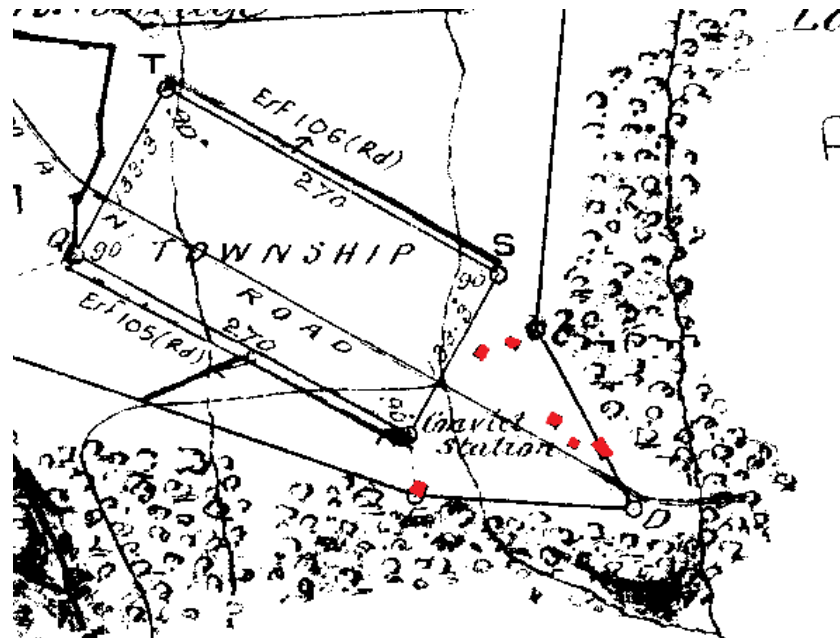
We can conclude that the Blaauw Krantz Pass was essentially complete by 1884.



The location of the Convict Outstation at Blaauw Krantz River

### C. Supervisory staff at the Storms River Outstation

As before, various records have been sourced in order to measure the activity levels of the Storms River Outstations. Official manning figures were not readily available but Church records were most useful in determining staffing levels and names of non-convict residents.<sup>2</sup>



Survey drawing showing location of Convict Station buildings<sup>3</sup>

The schedule below provides an incomplete list of the names of the men and their roles in the community, many of whom lived there with their families:

Name	Role	Station/ Year(s) found
Honorius Maynier Dreyer	Superintendent of Convicts	Storms River 1884 – 1887
Robert Bromley	Surveyor/ Inspector	Storms River 1886
Olaf Anderson	Constable	Storms River 1884 - 1885
Lodewick Spence	Constable	Storms River 1884
James Clingen	Constable	Storms River 1885 - 1887
John Bollack	Constable	Storms River 1886
Thomas Sullivan	Constable	Storms River 1886
William CJ Pitcher	Constable	Storms River 1886
George Tait	Constable	Storms River 1886
Frederick Hooper	Overseer	Storms River 1883 - 1886
John Villet	Overseer	Storms River 1884 - 1887

<sup>2</sup> Information obtained from:

<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-1942-23580-73144-74?cc=1468076&wc=SFV4-82N:44975801,44975802,49282901,49282902> Baptisms 1848-1903 of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope, George, Knysna, (Knysna Chapel, Plettenberg Bay. Revd. Edwin Gibbs, "The Knysna, at the outstations of that Parish or within the district thereof"

<sup>3</sup> SGO 1317/1886

As is evident from the above, the last record is dated 1887 and by this time the Storms River Outstation would have been vacated, with the possible exception of a few finishing trades and maintenance staff.

From a comparison of the roles played at Blaauw Krantz and Storms River one can readily assume that an Overseer was a Constable, and vice versa. A further analysis of these statistics confirms that the Storms River Convict Station was gaining momentum by 1883.

An examination of the Anglican Church records for the Storms River Convict Station<sup>4</sup> indicates a sizeable presence of supervisory & operational staff, with their families, stationed at Storms River during 1884 to 1887.

As mentioned before, Robert Bromley, the Registered Government Surveyor<sup>5</sup> was employed by the Public Works Department during the building of the new road. He and his wife Florence, had their six week old twins John & Constance Frances baptised whilst living at the Storms River Outstation. This took place on Sunday 11 April 1886, with Thomas & Georgina Bain as sponsors for John, and James and Rosalie Rawbone (now 8 months pregnant) as sponsors for Constance Frances, a role we would call God-parents today.<sup>6</sup> The twins had been born at Storms River two months earlier, on 24 February 1886.

The Plettenberg Bay priest the Revd. Edwin Gibbs, officiated at the baptism. He died five years later in 1891 after serving the Plettenberg Bay and District community for 21 years.<sup>7</sup>



The Revd E Gibbs

By 1887 most of the convicts and road building staff had moved on. The finishing tasks on the Zitzikamma Passes Road were complete. As the convicts relocated, so did the management staff and the better of these staff buildings that had been left behind were offered for use by the Forestry Department as accommodation for locally stationed forestry staff.

This included cottages remaining at Groot River and the Blaauw Krantz River that had been vacated earlier.

The present SANParks Forestry buildings are situated where the Convict Outstation stood.

Note the location of a small school (shown as a Red Box) on the extract of the Survey Drawing, shown south of today's Darnell Street, near where the SANParks offices are situated.

### **(c) Philip Caveney 2018**

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<sup>4</sup> Baptismal Register of St. Peter's Church, Plettenberg Bay

<sup>5</sup> Georgina Lister: *My father had laid out the road through the Tsitzikama district, and Bob (Bromley) was the engineer in charge of construction. Bromley at that time held an appointment as District Road Engineer.*

<sup>6</sup> Baptismal Register of St. Peter's Church, Plettenberg Bay.

<sup>7</sup> Photograph G2488 Millwood Mouse Museum.