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## Time travel, Bain's Kloof pass in 1853

### Facts

#### The Cape Colony in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, mountain passes and Bain's Kloof Pass

The Cape became a British colony in 1806. Boer settlers started to travel inland looking for new land. Tens of thousands of slaves from East Asia, India and other parts of Africa had the last centuries been brought into the Cape Colony to work for the white men on their farms. Also many of the indigenous people, the Khoi and San, worked as slaves. The country was very much segregated. In 1834/ 38 slavery was abolished but most of slaves continued to work on the farms, but now as labourers.

There was a big need for better communication through the mountains. The colonial secretary John Montagu set up a Central Roads Board with Charles Mitchell as Superintendent of Works. In 1847 Andrew G Bain was appointed Inspector of Roads for Western Cape. More passes were now built over the mountains with the use of convict labour. In 1848 Mitchell's pass (Moestert's Hoek) was finished and the next work was a road over the mountains from Wellington to Breede River Valley. Andrew G Bain became in charge of the work, starting in February 1849.

The Bain's Kloof Pass was built by convicts, about 300 convicts at the same time guarded by 20 armed constables. The convicts lived in wooden barracks along the road. The first convict station was at the Neck and the second at Wolvenkloof. It was a strict organization with one chain gang and one road gang. The convicts also worked as cooks, cleaners and sick attendants. Every day, the work of the convicts was judged and noted in a note book. Good behaviour and hard work could lead to remission of the sentence. The work was, under AG Bain, lead by Superintendent Jonathan Short and the Wolvenkloof convict station was led by Andrew's son, Thomas Bain. There were also a chaplain, a surgeon, a blacksmith and Overseers.

After more than four years of hard work the pass was opened in September 1853 with a four-day opening ceremony. Wolvenkloof was as a major opening site, with a newly built tollhouse.



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## Scenario, The convict station at Wolvenkloof, Tweede toll, the day before the opening of Bain's Kloof pass in 1853

Tomorrow the pass over the mountains is going to be officially opened. The pass has the name of the man who is in charge of the work, Andrew G. Bain. Hundreds of convicts have worked on the road, from sunrise to sunset. Now their work is finished.

Tomorrow all the celebrities are coming through the pass and in the afternoon they will arrive at Wolvenkloof. The Bridge at Wolvenkloof is going to be named after the new Chairman of the Central Roads Board, P.B. Borchers. The ceremony has to be grand to show the greatness of England and their fantastic engineers.

The preparations for the opening have been going on for weeks. Functionaries from the neighbouring area have arrived at Wolvenkloof, to get all things ready. The grounds must be neat and clean, the decorations have to be done in a beautiful and extraordinary way.

The convicts still have their station at Wolvenkloof. Of course they (especially the road gang) are doing their part to make everything all right for the day of the opening.

Superintendent Jonathan Short is responsible for the running of the convict stations. Both Andrew Bain and his son Thomas Bain have left the station at Wolvenkloof to join the invited guests in Wellington and go with them through the pass. Superintendent Short is the person responsible for the last preparations.

The situation is rather tense at Wolvenkloof. There are expectations but also anxiety. Some of the convicts expect remission of their sentence because they have behaved well. They hope to get a positive answer from the Governor tomorrow. Maybe they even will be released? And there are a lot of discussions about this new road and what better communication could mean for all the people of the Cape Colony. To build a road and to build a future.

### Key questions

To build a road together, to build a country together.

- The future of the country.  
A/ Communication. What do these better roads mean for the country, bringing people closer to each other. More chances to meet? Better communication between people?  
B/ It was 15 years ago since the abolition of slavery. What has happened? Has it been better? Why are the slaves still workers and servants? Do we want to change that? How?
- My own future. What do I want to do with my life, now that I'm soon released (the convicts) or now that I'm not a slave any more? What will be my duties, my profession? Together with others? What is my personal responsibility?

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## Roles

Convicts  
Functionaries  
Servant of Andrew Bain  
Other servants  
Constable wives  
Superintendent Jonathan Short  
Chaplain, Rev. W.D. Fleischer  
Dr F.W Muntingh  
Chief Constable  
Overseers  
Blacksmith

## Time plan

07.30 Preparation at the site  
09.15 Learners arrive, Introduction  
09.25 Changing of clothes  
09.45 Presentation of characters. Rules. Ceremony  
10.00 Morning session with the Reverend Fleischer - song, scripture reading, prayer.  
Superintendent Jonathan Short gives the orders for the day.  
10.15 Activities  
11.00 Coffee and bread  
11.30 More activities  
12.40 Lunch. Judgement and comments of the work by Jonathan Short  
Song, dance  
13.30 End  
Reflection  
14.15 Learners depart

## Activities

- Preparation of coffee and roosterkoek Females
- Preparation of food – stew and rice Females
- Washing and mending clothes Females
- Decorating the arch (indigenous plants, banners, the motto) Females
- Cleaning of the area (raking, sweeping, cutting, digging) Convicts, the road gang
- Masonry stone work, (chop, drill) Convicts
- Blacksmith work Convicts
- Wood work, making washing pegs Convicts
- Guarding the convicts Constable
- Doctor's reception

October 16, 2006

Ebbe Westergren, Kalmar County Museum, Sweden  
Ansie van Vuuren, Wellington museum, South Africa

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## Role cards

Jonathan Short

Reverend W.D. Fleischer

Sick attendant/ doctor

Chief constable

Overseer?

Convicts (8)

Servant of Andrew Bain

Functionaries

Servants

Constable wives?

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### **Chaplain Reverend W.D. Fleischer**

You are a minister in the Anglican Church in Wellington. But you are also the chaplain of the convict stations at Bain's kloof. You go to the main convict station once or twice a week for literacy classes and religious instruction. You have seen the improvement of the prisoners. Many have learnt to read and write and the moral have been a lot better all the time. This is much because of your work, you believe. You are a very committed person and engaged in each convict.

You lead the morning prayer and during the day you talk to the people at the station. You talk about moral issues, the importance of being an honest, hardworking and obedient person. You walk up to each convict and wish him God's blessing for the future. You bless the meal.

### **Doctor F.W. Muntingh**

You have a private practice in Wellington. You are in charge of the hospital at the Wolvenkloof convict station with 12 wooden bedsteads and sick attendants (convicts) working for you.

You also inspect the barracks and the cells and write a weekly report to the Colonial Office.

Many of the days there are light injuries like wounds, broken bones or fingers. But there are also diseases like lumbago, catarrh, diarrhoea, rheumatism, lung inflammation. There have also been some deaths in dysentery and also three accidents during work.

Your work as a doctor at the stations is almost finished. Tomorrow you are going to write your last report.

Those convicts and functionaries who have a disease or who get hurt during the day come to your reception. You give the medicine or apply a bandage. At the meal you give a short report about the present health situation at the station.

### **Chief constable**

You have been Constable at the Bain's kloof for three years and the Chief Constable the last year.

Your wife (see her role card) and two children also live at the station. Your responsibility is to organize the guarding of the convicts and to see that no one escapes. There have been a couple of escapes but most convicts have been brought back.

You are a very strict and determined person. You give orders to the convicts what to do and you won't accept any disobedience. If anyone tries to escape he will be shot on the spot, you tell them.

Your wife is not quite happy with the life at the station. It has been too long and too boring, she says. So now you are maybe more attracted to one of Bain's daughters.

### **Functionaries, two sisters, Klara Salomon**

You are two sisters almost like twins. You are always together and have the same opinions. One could start a sentence and the other would fill in.

Both of you are former slaves, origin Asia. You were freed 15 years ago but you still work at the same farm, close to Ceres. You think that not much has changed since the abolition of slaves. You work from sunrise to sunset and get very little paid. When is the society going to be more equal?

The Europeans still have the wealth of the country. You raise your voice many times, also at the meal, and give your opinion. You say that nothing has changed. After 15 years of freedom it is still the same. It's not equal, the Europeans are still the masters and you are almost like slaves, still.

Both of you are married. Your older children want to leave and find better lives somewhere else.

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### **Functionaries, two sisters, Klaressa Salomon**

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### **Two khoi functionaries, Alida Apollos**

You are two khoi sisters from the area. Your ancestors have been living here for centuries. You live in a "kraal" village with your husbands, children, grandmother, a cousin and two younger brothers. Ten years ago your family and other from the village moved up in the mountains to live a life of your own. The only thing you want to do is to live a peaceful life, raise your cattle without to many disturbances from the white settlers.

You are happy women who likes to sing. Actually you are singing most of the time and you want the others to sing along with you.

### **Two khoi functionaries, Catryn Apollos**

You are two khoi sisters from the area. Your ancestors have been living here for centuries. You live in a "kraal" village with your husbands, children, grandmother, a cousin and two younger brothers. Ten years ago your family and other from the village moved up in the mountains to live a life of your own. The only thing you want to do is to live a peaceful life, raise your cattle without to many disturbances from the white settlers.

You are happy women who likes to sing. Actually you are singing most of the time and you want the others to sing along with you.

### **Functionary, Tracey**

You are a servant at the Delta farm owned by Daniel Brink? Your ancestors have been working at the Delta farm for ages. One of your best friends is the daughter of Candaza van den Kaap. Actually you are going to visit the daughter and her very old mother at a farm in Tulbagh tomorrow. That is why you are in the area and you take the chance to earn a little bit of money working with the preparation of the opening.

You are a talkative person and like to share your memories and the stories from the Delta farm. You even have a short speech at the meal, mentioning Candaza. "Won't that never happen again," you underline many times. You have a dream to get land at Pniel mission.

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### **Two servants of Mr Borcherd's, Adriana Heyns**

You are former slaves that has worked your way up. Now you are servants of Mr Borcherd's. You arrived a little bit earlier to help in the preparation because you are very good at making decorations. You like your master and thinks he is a great man. You talk about the fantastic road and the improvement of communication. You know that the bridge is going to be named after Mr Borcherd and you are very proud of that. You even know a little bit of his speech because you've heard him practising. Now and then you make quotations from his speech.

### **Two servants of Mr Borcherd's, Sabina Cupido**

You are former slaves that has worked your way up. Now you are servants of Mr Borcherd's. You arrived a little bit earlier to help in the preparation because you are very good at making decorations. You like your master and thinks he is a great man. You talk about the fantastic road and the improvement of communication. You know that the bridge is going to be named after Mr Borcherd and you are very proud of that. You even know a little bit of his speech because you've heard him practising. Now and then you make quotations from his speech.

### **Functionaries, two servants from a farm, Yamar Petrus**

You are the servants at a farm close to Bain's kloof. You have brought food, vegetables and bread to the convict stations for five years. So you have seen how the work has progressed. You talk about the fantastic engineers. And the improvement of communication. And you are very good at cooking and will help preparing the meal. You believe in the future and your dreams are that all free people will work together for a better country. Maybe you make a short speech about that at the meal.

### **Functionaries, two servants from a farm, Susanna Heskwa**

You are the servants at a farm close to Bain's kloof. You have brought food, vegetables and bread to the convict stations for five years. So you have seen how the work has progressed. You talk about the fantastic engineers. And the improvement of communication. And you are very good at cooking and will help preparing the meal. You believe in the future and your dreams are that all free people will work together for a better country. Maybe you make a short speech about that at the meal.

### **Functionary, Spatie Roman**

You are a servant from Wellington. This is your chance to get away from your strict father who wants you to marry some young man that you disapprove of. Today you try to get connections for a job somewhere else. You ask the other women over and over if they know any master who needs a servant. And what about their own masters? Are they nice? You ask if the others believe in equality between the sexes and between people of different colour. You yourself have that as a vision for the future.

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### **Functionary, Saronie Jacobs**

You are a very shy woman and afraid of this whole thing. You have spent the whole life at home being very subordinate to your parents. You are always obedient and sort of a grey little mouse that is mostly unobserved. But you have one big talent, to arrange flowers beautifully and that's why you are here. The Reverend has asked you to help with the decoration of the Triumphal Arch. So you help with the decorations but you also talk to the Reverend a lot, trying to get near him all the time. You really look up to him.

### **Functionary, Dorenda Samson**

You are a servant from a farm close to Ceres. You talk a lot about the need for better communication. Now your master can sell his vegetables even in Cape Town.

Unfortunately you will cut yourself today so you have to go to the doctor.

You also talk about people now having a better chance to meet. And when people from different traditions and different colours of their skin meet they will learn to know each other. You have a positive view of the future, all people in southern Africa, hottentotts, bushmen, black, Asians and Europeans, building up a country together. Maybe you even make a short speech about this at the meal.

### **Functionary, former slave from Madagascar, April**

You are a former slave brought to the Cape Colony from Madagascar. You have so many bad memories from being a slave in the Cape Colony that you want to go back to the country you left 30 years ago. You are dreaming of meeting your relatives once again. And you doubt that things will approve in the Cape region.

You need money for the trip back, that's why you work with the preparations at Bain's kloof pass. But you have rheumatism so you take the chance to go to the doctor today.

### **Functionary, father from Madagascar, November**

Your father was brought as a slave from Madagascar to the Cape Colony together with..... You have heard their stories of being a slave and these stories are awful. You are determined to make a better life for yourself and are looking for a decent job. Actually you like to go to Cape Town and ask people all the time if they know anything about this big city. Another dream is to go back to the country where your father came from.

### **Two functionaries, Amilia Pieters**

You are two servants coming from a neighbouring farm coming to work with the preparation of the opening. You are very good at flower decorations, painting and making arches for grand occasions. It is the first time you are at the station so you are a little bit afraid of the convicts and want to be as far from them as possible.

You both like to sing and dance. You sing most of the time you work and try to make the others sing along. At the meal you ask if you can perform a dance together.

You realize the need for better communication between people. The society must be more equal, you say. 15 years ago the abolition of slavery and what has happened? Too little! You are disappointed.

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### **Two functionaries, Rachel Manas**

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You both like to sing and dance. You sing most of the time you work and try to make the others sing along. At the meal you ask if you can perform a dance together.

You realize the need for better communication between people. The society must be more equal, you say. 15 years ago the abolition of slavery and what has happened? Too little! You are disappointed.

### **Two functionaries, house servants, Doortje Arends**

You are house servants at one of the farms in the neighbourhood and have brought bread and food to the convict station many times. Your master told you to help in the preparations of the opening ceremony of the road.

You really hope that the road will lead to better living conditions and to more communication between people. But you don't trust the British. They have abolished slavery but you still work as slaves. One of you makes a speech at the coffee break about better living conditions for servants and labourers. But you also say that the road might lead to better communication and more products from Cape Town.

### **Two functionaries, house servants, Sophia Adams**

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### **Two functionaries, descendants of sonqua, Caatje Isaac**

You are labourers at one of the farms in the neighbourhood. You are descendants of the sonqua (san) and are very proud of that. You still know some of the old dances and old songs and will lead a sonqua dance at the meal. And you know all about medicine plants and will even help the doctor in his practice.

But you have no hope for the future. The sonqua tradition will disappear you say many times.

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### **Two functionaries, descendants of sonqua, Leonora Ontong**

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But you have no hope for the future. The sonqua tradition will disappear you say many times.

### **Functionary, traveller, Regina Carel**

You just passed through and took the chance to earn some money in helping with the opening ceremony. You are from Cape Town and heading north. You talk loud and clear about life in the city. But you are a curious person and want to see something else. You look for a job as a servant or labourer at a farm further north and you ask the others if they know of a good farm.

### **Two wives of constables, Juliana Roman**

You are the wife of one of the constables. He is off duty now. You have surprisingly said that you are willing to help with the preparations of the opening ceremony. You have been here many years and are really bored. That's why you don't mind doing some practical work.

You have met some of the functionaries before when they brought food to the station, but you still think that you are a little bit better than these servants, bushmen and hottentots. You also mention that, even at the meal.

Actually you want to leave the station as soon as possible. You don't feel well so you go to the doctor during the day.

### **Two wives of constables, Dina Filander**

You are the wife of one of the constables. He is off duty now. You have surprisingly said that you are willing to help with the preparations of the opening ceremony. You have been here many years and are really bored. That's why you don't mind doing some practical work.

You have met some of the functionaries before when they brought food to the station but you still think that you are a little bit better than these servants, bushmen and hottentots. You also mentioned that, even at the meal.

Actually you want to leave the station as soon as possible.

You don't feel well so you have to go to the doctor.

### **Wife of the chief constable**

You are the wife of the chief constable. You have been living at the main convict station for three years. You are tired of the life at the station. It is too primitive for you, the same food every day and very little to do. You are bored and want to leave as soon as possible. You say this very quiet in the beginning but raise your voice a lot in the end.

Last year you tried to smuggle alcohol but got caught.

You talk freely about the life at the station and about Mr Bain and his son. You adore your husband and believe that his job is very important for the rehabilitation of the convicts. But not all the convicts, especially not the bushmen and hottentots are grateful enough.

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### **Wife of one of the constables**

You are the wife of one of the constables. He is off duty now.

You are a close friend to the chief constable's wife and you are a little bit envious of her because her husband, and not yours, became chief constable last year. You talk a lot about the convicts and their rehabilitation. You make clear that the bushmen and hottentotts are lazy people, careless and indolent and it takes longer to train them and make them disciplined and obedient.

You also talk about the great engineers. But now you want to leave the station as soon as possible.

You are coughing a lot during the day so you have to go to the doctor.

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### **Convict nr 1674 Hermanus Fester**

In the documents it is said that you are a “bastard, labourer, live in Hottentotts Holland, yellow complexion, offence theft, first sentence two years, no religion, can’t read or write, a wife Anna resides Cape Flats”

You had to serve your sentence at Bain’s kloof. You didn’t like it from the beginning and especially not the strict rules. But you got accustomed to it, you learnt to read and write. You’ve become almost a Christian because of the scripture reading and prayers every morning.

You have behaved well. You are one of those convicts who are hoping to be released tomorrow and get the blue jacket. You are anxiously waiting for the answer from the Governer and to see your wife again, after two years. If the answer is not positive, you will be quite mad.

Unfortunately you hurt yourself in the arm today and have to go to the doctor.

### **Convict nr 1647 Dirk Claasen**

From the documents: “bastard slave, labourer, native place Slang River, George. Assault with intent to commit rape. First conviction, sentence seven years, married, wife Auvova.”

You were a tough guy when you came to Bain’s kloof five years ago. You have been at the Kloof from the very beginning. You have taken part in building all parts of the broad. You started in the chain gang but two years ago you were removed to the road gang. You’ve had many punishments because of bad behaviour, obedience, swearing and so on (one time 25 lashes). But you have improved. Tomorrow you hope to be released by the order of the Governer and get the blue jacket. You make the constable responsible for the decision of the Governer. If there won’t be an answer from the Governer you will smash and assault the Constable, you say that to him now and then.

### **Convict nr 663 Windfogle Stuurman**

From the documents: “a Hottentott, private soldier, labourer and wagon driver, from Groot River near Colesberg, dark. Offence: desertion and making away with regimental necessaries, second offence, 7 years, no religion, can’t read or write, single father living in George.”

You were imprisoned at Robben Island for many years. You were happy to come to Bain’s kloof because you believe in better roads and better communication. And you are a wagon driver.

You are proud of the work you have done in the road building, all the constructions. You think that Andrew Bain and the engineers are very skilled.

Tomorrow you hope to be released and get the blue jacket. And then you can go back to your work as a wagon driver.

### **Convict nr 1786 Ferdinand Boesak**

From the documents: “Hottentot, Private soldier, born Witte River beyond Graaff Reinet, complexion light brown, desertion, making away with regimental necessaries, 14 years”

You don’t like the military and not the discipline at the convict station. You don’t want to bow for your master and lick them in the ass. You want to be on your own. You tried to escape last year but were caught by another prisoner. You hate the whole thing. You say (silent to the other convicts) that Andrew Bain is like a big oxen with a reddish face.

But you have learnt at least one thing at the convict station and that is to make a good meal. Maybe that could even be your way of living when you will be released in a couple of years.

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### **Convict nr 1806 George Hill**

From the documents: “Englishmen, labourer, Private in 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment, born in Hull, England, scar on nose, desertion and making away with regimental necessaries, first offence, 7 years, single, parents reside in Hull.”

You are an adventurer and came to the Cape Colony ten years ago looking for the adventure. You have travelled around the whole of southern Africa. You have been into many fights and taking part in wars and clashes. After four years you joined the British army. But you could not get accustomed to the military discipline and deserted. You don't like the work and discipline in Bain's kloof either. But you want to get away as soon as possible. You talk silent to the other convicts about an attempt to escape, maybe tomorrow when everybody is concentrating on the grand opening.

### **Convict nr 1808 Cobus**

From the documents: “N African slave, labourer, born Paarl, farm Lemoenkoof, soft black curly hair, complexion brown. Offence assault with intent to commit a rape, first offence, sentence four years. No religion, can't read or write, no family.”

You are a former slave, freed 15 years ago. But you did not get accustomed to the life as a free labourer. You believe that the society is still the same and your life has not get any better. But the life at Bain's kloof has changed your opinions. You have learnt to read and write, you are now a skilled stone worker. So when you are released, hopefully tomorrow, you hope to get a job as a mason. You make some comments on your views of the society to everyone, at the meal. You really hope that not only you but also the society has changed in a more equal way. You ask the others if this is true. You don't know because you have been in prison for many years.

### **Convict nr 1704 Hans Platje**

From the documents: “Mother bushgirl, father Hottentott, private soldier, labourer, native place Cederburg. Desertion, first offence, sentence 7 years, wife resides near Grahamstown.

You have had really hard troubles to get accustomed to the strict rules, first in the military and then at the convict station. You like to be a free man and hate being imprisoned. You talk secretly to another convict, George Hill, of escaping. Just before the meal you run away but will be captured by the river.

### **Convict nr 1676 Frederick Santjies**

From the documents: “labourer, Klapmuts, offence theft, first offence, three years, wife in Swellendam.”

You made a foolish thing by stealing food from a local farmer in Klapmuts three years ago. You got caught and have regretted yourself all the time since. Before you worked as a labourer on the farms in Klapmuts. At the convict station you have learnt a lot about road work and maybe that will be your profession in the future. You are really longing for your family.

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### **Convict nr 1800 John Andries**

From the documents: “Bastard Hottentott, labourer and soldier, born on a farm in Worcester, offence sheep theft and desertion, 14 years.”

As a koi you had dreams of having your own sheep just like it was for the koi people a hundred years ago. But the dreams ended very sudden when you were caught stealing the sheep. After some years in prison you went into the army. But that was not the life for you so you deserted. You still have the dreams of the old times with kraals and having sheep and cattle. You hate the convict station. Maybe the only chance to be free is to escape?

### **Convict nr 1815 Richard Burrell**

From the documents: “Englishman, labourer and shepherd, offence assault, three months.”

You are a tough guy and have been into many fights. Two months ago you were in a fight in Wellington and beat another man hard. You have just come to the convict station and ask the other convicts what life is like here.

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