

Sheikh Nurul Mubeen

Of the three prominent *Auliyah* buried on the hills facing the Atlantic seaboard, the one nearest to Oudekraal, appears to be the better known.

The man buried there is Sheikh Noorul Mubeen. His grave is reached by ascending the 99 steps leading to it from Victoria Road up the mountain slope. The tomb, a simple, recently renovated building, stands beside a stream. On the other side of this stream is another set of steps leading to another grave higher up. Some believe the wife of Sheikh Noorul Mubeen lies buried here while others believe it is one of his followers. This grave too is afforded the respects of a holy personage.

Sheikh Noorul Mubeen was apparently banished to the Cape in 1716 and incarcerated on Robben Island. According to a popular legend he escaped from Robben Island by unknown means and came to make his home in this desolate spot. Soon he made contact with the slaves on the estates in this area, teaching them, mainly at night, the religion of Islam. When he died, he was buried on the site where he had most frequently read his prayers. After a time, a wood and iron structure was erected around the grave, acting as the first tomb.

In a second legend, it is claimed that he swam from Robben Island, across the Atlantic Ocean and made good his escape. His tired body was discovered by slave fishermen. They nursed him to health and hid him on the mountain side, providing him with all his requirements. The fishermen soon discovered he was a holy man and started to take lessons from him. Sheikh Noorul Mubeen became their Imam and counselled them in their moments of difficulties.

His mountainside refuge, aside from allowing him to easily detect danger, gave him a magnificent vantage point from which he could see the towering peaks of the Twelve Apostles and the quiet dignity of Lions Head.

An alternative version is that he did not swim, but walked, across the Atlantic Ocean from Robben Island to the mainland. A present day legend tells of a spirit on horseback from Robben Island who still comes to take lessons from his teacher. He is seen, so they say, at about midday on a white horse coming across the ocean from Robben Island.

Those who visit the grave of Sheikh Noorul Mubeen find there a quiet serenity, an ideal spot for meditation, away from the rigours of urban life.

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