

JOHANNESBURG



HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Newsletter No 24

December 2019

Dear Members,

As the year draws to a close we reflect on some good achievements in 2019. We are a remarkably active organization because we have team leadership with dollops of energy, fire, discipline and enthusiasm. JHF continues to represent citizens and civic interests across a range of heritage concerns; heritage is one prism to engage with the social and environmental issues that beset our city- such as rotten buildings or preserving trees or looking at streetscapes. We work in school education, conservation, blue plaques, tours, town planning activities and liaison with the Provincial Heritage Foundation of Gauteng. We fund raise, we represent heritage, we build networks, we value partnerships. We are always affable, nice people but we are tough fighters when we need to be when we oppose those undesirable rough riders keener on demolition than conservation. We encourage people to celebrate heritage with blue plaques; we document info on the city's evolution and spread an awareness of the extraordinary legacy of the city,

I am delighted we have attracted a few more members this year though also sad we have lost old members through migration or the passing of time. We are keen to promote partnerships with residents associations and with other bodies with tangential interest in heritage or history. We currently have 325 members - help us to enrol more. Both Lower Houghton and Upper Houghton Residents Associations are now RA members.

Our Partners and links in Heritage work are important to us - we thank Hillbrow Outreach, Johannesburg Inner City Tourism Association, the Rand Club, Johannesburg Urban Forest Alliance, City Parks, City Heritage, the Heritage Association of South Africa and the Heritage Portal for their support and joining us in spreading the heritage message.

Taking on the Heritage Fight with the JHF.

We often receive letters at the core of which is a complaint about some aspect of heritage neglect or offence. All too often the correspondent asks us "what is JHF doing about xxx?". I am always ready to turn that question around – to a "No - what are your suggestions for a solution. Can you join in activism?".

INCORPORATING PARKTOWN & WESTCLIFF HERITAGE TRUST

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I believe that at the core of heritage success is a fighting spirit combined with detailed research and a well-reasoned answer, to engage and extend everyone's interest in heritage.

Heritage and History - a view from Van Onselen

I think we have to keep on making the case of heritage – again and again and again because heritage is all too often seen as an easy and anodyne substitute for the writing of critical history. Charles Van Onselen's new book, *The Night Trains* (Jonathan Ball – 2019), about the history of train journeys and experiences of millions of Mozambique migrant mining labourers and the Witwatersrand Mining Industry, makes the point that there is a lot of moral posturing about “our heritage” and that heritage too often appeals to the heart whereas history appeals to the mind. This raises debate and questions received wisdom. My response to Charles is: No, heritage is about working with history to preserve the fragments and remnants of the past so that the historian has the raw material to interpret. Of course heritage means different things to different people, but I think to dismiss heritage practitioners as “heritage-peddlers” trading in their own versions of the past does a disservice to a body such as the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation. Heritage too has to appeal to the mind in its efforts to recover the archive, preserve the bricks and mortar, grasp past architecture and to use heritage as another dimension to open up historical interpretation. There is more to heritage than moral posturing or appealing to the emotions; heritage can be a route into history. Incidentally, *The Night Trains* is an excellent work of history. I strongly recommend this new book as probes questions about moral responsibility for man's inhumanity to man in South Africa's past through that an organized migrant labour regime.

Blue Plaques

The Blue Plaque campaign continues. Blue Plaques are a marker of Heritage and a trigger for history. They are highlighters to lead the curious visitor into probing history and perhaps even challenging our words bites. We have done well with several new blue plaques installed both before and after the Heritage Weekend. The latest Blue Plaques are at Jeppe Girls High School and at the Doornfontein Synagogue. A blue plaque can be challenged and changed – Alkis Doucakis' research found errors in the old blue plaque for the Greek Orthodox cathedral and two new blue plaque has been installed. We don't often lose blue plaques but the new blue plaque on Munro drive, installed in October has been stolen. This is depressing and we shall have to address the steps that can be taken to counteract such vandalism. However we lose relatively few plaques to destruction. At the moment we are pulling together a comprehensive record of photographs, location and wording of blue plaques so that our record is complete. We are not beaten! New blue plaques are being planned for a targeted 20 homes in Lower Houghton (a project with the Lower Houghton Residents Association), and blue plaques for Sacred Heart College and the Waterfall NG Kerk of Newlands have been approved.

Work of the Joint Plans Committees

Much of JHF work happens behind the scenes. Our three joint plans committees are the custodians and active sentinels of heritage in the city. Led by Alex Parker (East), Wynand

Dreyer (West) and William Gaul (Central), the joint plans committees have the support of architects, planners, conservationists and heritage people to drive their activities. Our object is to persuade planners, developers and home owners as well as architects to work with our strong teams to ensure that changes to the fabric of our landscapes, cityscapes, suburbs and our buildings are heritage sensitive and follow the legal processes to achieve the best possible outcomes. Reports of their work are presented to the Board of Management. It is this way that we ensure that JHF keeps many fingers on many heritage pulses around the city of Johannesburg. I wish to thank our three chairmen and their teams and a very warm thank you to Alex Parker, who was the founding Chair of the Johannesburg East Plans committee. Alex has resigned from that position and we wish success in her decision to focus on her career.

Education and the Schools' programme

This portfolio is managed by Brenda Adam. Brenda reported that 9 paying schools generated an income, mainly for the 'Then and Now' Tour at HFC for younger children. In addition generous donors enabled 25 fully sponsored tours to be run during 2019. Three tours to Museum Africa using the Jim Joel grant were successfully organized. A grand from Barrow's construction fully sponsored tours of Northwards and a Heritage walk for the Johannesburg Girl's Prep and Mayfair Convent. We thank our sponsors and donors.

Tour Leader Training

David Forrest and Luanne Grant assisted by Dave Gurney have ran a successful tour leader training programme in 2019 for JHF. The following people completed the course and have joined JHF: Giuliana Bland, Hansje Botes, Janet Coetzee, Karen Curry, David Fleminger, Melinda Hardisty, Paula Kernan, Jennifer Schafer, Louise Standley, and Cathie van Rooyen and Michelle Woodrow. Dave Gurney commented "I believe that the success of this course was the dual 'classroom' lectures combined with the practical tours. On these tours both the positives as well as the mistakes tour guides make were pointed out and this both helps the trainees (as well as the guides) and makes the course far more interesting and enjoyable". A final wrap up meeting on the 26th October, introduced the recently graduated tour leaders to other senior tour leaders in JHF. Ian Botha, Operations Coordinator of NSA Global Security Consultants gave a talk on security awareness-running tours and living in Joburg. Brett and I talked about the JHF and the structuring of tours. Wonderful new ideas are emerging for new tours in 2020. Tour leader meetings with a focus on training will be arranged quarterly in 2020. Thank you David Forrest, Luanne Grant and Dave Gurney for this successful project. I welcome our new JHF tour leaders and thank our long standing tour leaders. Leading a tour educates, informs, entertains and is a learning experience about a place or an event; it's rewarding; we give knowledge, share an experience and make new friends and contribute to a key pillar of JHF work.



Work of the Research Centre

Our research centre continues to operate in the hands of a capable team led by Flo Bird. One reason why our tours are so informative is that the tours are backed by research undertaken at the Centre – the research by Sarah Welham enriched the Primrose Cemetery Tour. Diana Steele, Sarah Welham, Mary Boyease and Flo Bird spent an afternoon researching the old buildings of Roodepoort. The architectural Firm GLH made a generous donation of a large number of journals, Architect and Builder, Architectural Digest, Floors and Walls amongst others. This extends the information we document on new buildings in Rosebank and Sandton.

Digitization

An all-woman team, Ayanda Mbowana, Stacey Jirivengwa, Merle Ruff and led by Diana Steele have digitised and indexed almost 40,000 items from the Foundation's files. This is an ongoing project as more and more items are constantly being added to our archives. We are assisted by Alan Chinery and recently Robyn Hunter who volunteer their time mapping and indexing for us. An application to the National Lottery is being prepared by Merle and will be submitted early in 2020. The funding (should we be successful) will be used to obtain software which will make our digital collection searchable on the Internet, as well as continuing to update the collection.

Friends of the Cemeteries



Starting in 2018 the Friends of the Cemeteries of Johannesburg group, led by Sarah Welham is a new, energetic and enterprising project that involves working as a team to garden, clean and restore graves in the cemeteries of Johannesburg.

There has been a particular focus on Braamfontein and Brixton. The group is growing in numbers, cohesion and enthusiasm. The story I like best is that of Gillian who found (and had the chance to attend to) her great-grandmother's grave in Braamfontein cemetery. The cemetery visits offer a couple of hours of exercise, sunshine and fresh air making a difference in our city.

Well done Sarah and team!

The Wilds Project

Cape Town may have Kirstenbosch but Johannesburg has the Wilds! It is a unique and magnificent green oasis to find your soul and grow close to your maker. Johannesburg Heritage supports the project managed by James Delaney working in close collaboration with the Johannesburg City Park's Department to revitalise and restore the Wilds as a beautiful nature retreat in the heart of the city. At present the specific big project is the restoration of the Green houses. James is leading a crowd funding initiative to raise funds to extend resources for doing so much more in The Wilds. I think it is a heritage project that speaks to so many people. James writes: "Just to let you know I've kicked off the crowdfunding process – it's quite fun as you can watch the total rising on the website... <https://www.thundafund.com/project/thewilds2020>

Rand Steam Laundries

Who can forget the long and arduous fight over the destruction of industrial heritage building on the site; Rand Steam laundries had a remarkable rebirth as a new shopping centre and has won an award for the best new Retail development of 2019.

St John the Divine Anglican Church in Belgravia

This was our major restoration and conservation project of 2018 and 2019. Unfortunately when the job was nearing completion wood borers were discovered in the high roof timbers. We are grateful to Colin Barrow who came to our rescue; Colin brought in mobile scaffolding and treated the roof timbers against wood borer. Thank you- Colin. We are disappointed at the zero communication from the Anglican Church as to their future plans to ensure that the church comes alive with a congregation and spiritual leadership.

The Observatory Ridge

The Ridge presents heritage with some headaches as it is inaccessible to visitors but attracts the vandals and criminals. There are stunning views from the top of the ridge to north and south. The Anglo Boer War Indian Memorial is a remote, early evocative Johannesburg Memorial. An Indian Naval Regiment has approached the Rand Regiments Memorial Trust regarding moving this memorial to Saxonwold. A team from the JHF has also met with the representatives of the NRF and the Astronomical Society to discuss a plan and project to save the old Herbert Baker designed original Meteorological building, opened by Milner in 1905 on the top of the ridge. It has some beautiful architectural features but the scientific community at the Observatory node need to sponsor an HIA and come up with a clear plan for its future occupation and use. We have great hopes that this will become a project of 2020.

The Rand Club Shops



Did you know that that the venerable Rand Club once had shops on the ground floor Fox Street frontage? The Rand Club is now planning to reinstate the shops for to achieve security and income. The principal concern has been that the shop fittings of the new shops are sensitive to heritage. The project is being managed by Brian McKechnie and Flo Bird from the JHF.

The photo above dates from 1936.

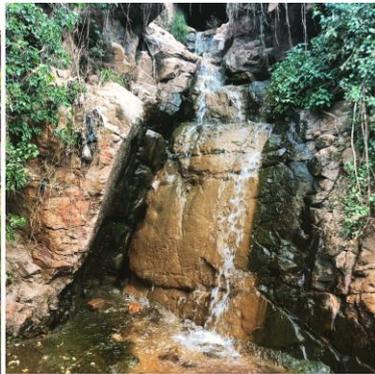
Our Fourth Quarter Programme has offered a rich and diverse range of tours.

A Visit to the Art Auction House, Strauss the Co. It kicked off on 2nd November, our group in post rugby world cup celebratory mood, with a visit to Strauss and Company in Houghton to for a private viewing accompanied by a talk by Wilhelm Van Rensburg on their auction sale collection on the theme of Pierneef, Preller and Paris. Here was the opportunity to see works by South African artists who had sojourned in Paris – it is not often that an exhibition of art works (in anticipation of a sale comes up for auction).

Rand Club Market and Tour on the same day there was also an artisan market, book fair and tours at the Rand Club. The Rand Club dining room was buzzing with a real Joburg feel – a superior gentleman's market in the room that has seen many a Johannesburg celebratory occasion. Rugby world cup TV viewing then took over and everyone had to multi task.

Primrose Cemetery Tour on 9th November, led S J De Klerk and Clare Van Zweiten. This cemetery is the second oldest on the Witwatersrand and contains the mortal remains of 544 Imperial Soldiers who perished in the South African War, including the grave of Colonel Benson, famed for unexpectedly and successfully attacking Boer commandos in Mpumalanga. The tour explored how Captain Nolte, a well-known East Rand attorney and rugby player, was treacherously shot and killed at Treurfontein, (now Coligny), during the 1914 Afrikaner Rebellion, the graves of miners who suffered the agonising effects of miners' phthisis, the grave of Dr. Spaulding who heroically nursed the sick and dying during the 1918 Spanish Influenza, only to fall victim of this pandemic during 'Black' October 1918, and the graves of soldiers and policemen who were killed in the execution of their duties during the lawless days of the 1922 Miners' Revolt.

Orange Grove Water Fall. On 17th November, Brett McDougall and David Fleminger led a popular tour (more of a bush exploration) to the Orange Grove Waterfall and nearby Art Deco apartment blocks.



The Waterfall, is a secret spot tucked behind a wall below the steep rise on Death Bend as Louis Botha descends down the ridge; it's called the Orange Grove Waterfall because it is a source of the Orange Grove Spruit. A heritage study commissioned by the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation appears to have fended off the worst intentions of Joburg's planners. One accesses the waterfall through the grounds of House Bleloch, a Cape Dutch style imposing home for the geologist, William Bleloch and designed by the architect Theophile Schaerer.

The house is occupied by the Police Reservists; in 2020 we hope a cooperative project emerges to restore this important site to easier enable access to the waterfall. At one time this was a favourite Orange Grove scenic picnic spot on the outskirts of the town.

Beauvais, Mountain View. The JHF hosted a tour of the Beauvais mansion on 23 November 2019, led by Clare Van Zwieten & Judith Cabral. The 40 room three-story home was originally built in 1907 for mining magnate Percival White Tracey, his wife and seven children. Beauvais was designed by architect Allen Wilson and constructed in 1907 at a substantial cost of £70 000. Tracey personally supervised its construction, driving his car along rough dirt tracks to the site on the ridge. The car often broke down, and Tracey was regularly towed back home by a team of oxen, leading his family to nickname the house,

"Tracey's Folly". The home positioned high on the ridge in Mountain View commands grand views to the north and is a landmark heritage building.

The house is now the headquarters of Cargo Carriers and has been restored and sensitively maintained by facilities manager Ryno van der Riet. Conservation architect Henry Paine has also been consulted extensively on the restoration of the house. We are grateful to Cargo Carriers and its CEO Solly Letsoalo for the continuing conservation of this gracious relic of Johannesburg's past.



Art Deco Joburg – this tour on 1 December led by David Gurney and Brian McKechnie was fully booked, and provided wonderful photo opportunities.





Final event for 2019

We hosted a total book immersion event at The View, Parktown's oldest mansion and home to the Transvaal Scottish, on Saturday 7 December. We held a select book sale of quality books, The highlight was the book conversation session with 5 authors - Johan Swart (Hidden Pretoria) Vincent Carruthers (Cradle of Life) Pam Hiller Stern (Jose Dale Lace) and Monika Läufer's le Roux and Judith Mavunganidze (the Gas Works Book). Copies of all of these books are available from JHF. This was followed by a novel book auction of collectable books (donated by our many supporters); our auctioneer was Mark Inman of Old Limpopo books of Parkview. There were many super bargains for the book hunters. We thank our donors and supporters, Ian Hooper of the View, Sarah Welham and Mary Boyease for the hard work.

Bez Valley War Memorial

The much desecrated war memorial commemorating the names of 64 men who lost their lives whilst serving during the First World War who came from "the Valley", is in the process of removal, re-erection and recreation. Colin Barrow has again played a heroic role by dismantling and moving the memorial to Bezuidenhout Park. Brendan and Yasmin Mayat are the heritage architects; Eric Itzkin's Department with the adds the overall direction and cooperation of the City Parks Department. This project was also made possible with the donation of funding from the Johannesburg Heritage Trust (Neil Fraser). Brendan reports that the stone wall is progress, and that they have met with Boltson's regarding the repair of the memorial stone; we hope to see the base completed by year end and the renewed memorial plinth with the names of the men should be completed in the new

year. The original triangle site now needs to be landscaped and some reminder of the old memorial created there.

A photo collage showing the progress on the Memorial move:



Johannesburg FNB Run your City series. JHF was the beneficiary of the 10 KM FNB Fun Run that took place on Heritage day in September. We thank Stillwater Sports for their donation to the JHF and congratulate them for being the recipient of the “2019 Participation Event of the Year Award” for the FNB Run Your City Series at the Hollard Sports awards event. See the FNB Joburg 10K Cityrun website: <https://www.joburg10k.com/2019/11/25/fnb-run-your-city-series-wins-participation-event-of-the-year-award-at-hollard-sport-industry-awards/> Next year (2020) we need two 20 group participating walkers (our senior members) and a running team (our younger members).

Donation of a Simmer and Jack Mines Letter book to the Wits Historical papers

JHF received an unusual archival item from one of our supporters. We decided to donate this Letter book (Secretarial correspondence, 1932-1934) to Wits Historical papers as Wits specialize in this type of ephemera and it adds to the Witwatersrand mining archive. Gabrielle Mohale their archivist has written to us: *"We have now added the Letter book to the existing Simmer and Jack Mines Ltd. Collection, where it complements an existing Letter book of 1932-1932, as well as an Accident recording book. Anyone interested can follow this link to the online inventory: <http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/index.php?inventory/U/collections&c=A2950/R/645Z>.*

These records continue to fascinate national and international researchers and visitors alike, as they document the history of mining on the Rand in a very tangible way." We thank our donor (who also gave us some great books for the October book sale).

Connections further afield

In the last couple of months I have been fortunate to be invited to a few heritage events around the country: the annual October HASA conference in Tulbagh was a wonderful event commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1969 Tulbagh Earthquake; then I enjoyed participating in a heritage conference commemorating the 120th anniversary of the outbreak of the Anglo Boer War, hosted by Kedar Lodge situated on the Boekenhout (Kruger) farm north of Rustenburg. In November I was invited to deliver the annual AGM lecture at the Durban Art Deco Society. My topic was the 1936 Empire Exhibition at Milner Park. Kedar Lodge is a lovely heritage Lodge with the largest private Anglo Boer War museum – it is a project of Roger Forsythe and Recreation Africa. The Tulbagh adventure offered the opportunity to stay at one of the restored original homes – the Cape Dutch Cottages where I received a warm welcome and consolidated friendships with HASA people. Jayson Clark worked tirelessly to put together a stimulating programme of over 24 quality papers interspersed with some great wine tasting and tours of the Boland farm houses. The highlight for me was the visit to the Boer War block house at Woolsey. In Durban I enjoyed the hospitality of the Wrights at their St Anne's Guest House on the Berea, a beautiful 1886 Durban villa home. The highlight of the Durban visit was the very special Art Deco tour. Did you know Durban has more than 100 Art Deco Buildings and the Art Deco Society advises property owners on restoration and colour options (all the subtle olives, pale, pinks, and startling blues). All three events were learning journeys into heritage, connecting with scholars and experts and making new friends. I felt privileged to be a heritage participant and came to the conclusion that heritage and history can make successful bedfellows. Just talk to the serious activists in heritage around the country!. Today the name of the game in Heritage is networking and joining with partners near and far.

Books from JHF. We sell books old and new as a fund raiser for JHF; we have some excellent offers for members: the Cradle of Life (Carruthers), Hidden Pretoria, Hidden Johannesburg, Jose Dale Lace, The Jhb Gas Works Book, the Isabella Lipp Boer War Diary, Franco Frescura publications, Latilla's Johannesburg Then and Now, Forgotten Johannesburg. We offer discounted price; your purchases support JHF.

Final event for 2019

On 7th December hosted a total book immersion event at The View, Parktown's oldest mansion and home to the Transvaal Scottish. A bumper festive season book sale opened at 3pm, and at 4pm, Kathy Munro hosted a discussion with the authors of four fascinating books on Joburg, Pretoria and the Magiesberg. This was followed by an exciting book auction of collectable books (donated by our many supporters). The evening concluded with cocktails.

Season's Greetings

May I wish you happy holidays, season's greetings and a peaceful and joyous Christmas. Here's wishing that 2020 is a good year for you and your families and a year that sees JHF continue with its work and achieve more successes.

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Munro

Chairperson

Johannesburg Heritage Foundation

Weber House

is a charming Cape Dutch styled property on Parkview's trendy Tyrone Avenue, and dates back to 1934. Beautifully renovated, this historic property boasts character features pressed steel ceilings, parquet and strip timber flooring, and 3 beautifully detailed brick fireplaces (all in working order). It has been awarded a Blue Plaque from The Johannesburg Heritage Foundation.



For more information visit:

<https://www.jawitz.co.za/results/commercial/for-sale/johannesburg/parkview/business/801/>