

JOHANNESBURG



HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Johannesburg Heritage Foundation

Chairperson's report to the Annual General Meeting

20 June 2014

Hopefully, members will not be surprised to learn that we have a good story to tell.

1. **Achievements**

Tours: in the last financial year we did 29 tours for members and for the public plus 12 yours for the Heritage Weekend, plus a special tour for heritage day, catering for 160 people and 5 commercial tours for non-members. These are highly specialised often involving only one person, such as a visiting academic.

Tour Leaders: we increased the number of tour leaders from 21 last year to 23. Raymond Cardoso, one of our most loyal and knowledgeable guides has retired. We thank him for the greater understanding he brought to each tour, setting each in context and expanding our vision. Pascal Petite will be off to Australia soon. Pascal has also infused her tours with her special perspective and we wish her good luck in another mining community. Four tour leaders have established a committee to develop new programmes for each quarter. They are Adam Golding, Brett McDougall, Monique Jefferson and Nici Noble.

Research Centre: We have gained a fine new researcher in Diana Steel who is proving invaluable as she understands far more about IT than the rest of us put together. Merle Ruff, a specialist IT librarian joined us for a while and continues to help and advise.

Grading Buildings in Township Johannesburg: Initiated by James Ball who led the project until we had completed the sections covered by the Bruwer reports to the City of Johannesburg. Since then Sarah Welham, Mary Boyeasse and I have continued the surveys, stand by stand and street by street, backed by Michael Fleming's research of the City's building plans. The grading committee has met every Monday in May and June and has completed Township Johannesburg south of the railway line. Professor Kathy Munro, Michael Fleming, Alex Parker and Clare Eisenstein carry the architectural side while William Gaul, Sarah Welham, Diana Steele and I try to evaluate historical significance.

The JHF has entered into a contract with the City of Johannesburg's Corporate GIS section to provide the City with Heritage Information which will then appear on the GIS system. Eustacia Jirivenga is employed to enter the data for this and other townships finding and adding in geographical coordinates and Ward numbers which CGIS has required.

We have been asked to provide heritage information for the BRT areas on the Empire-Perth corridor and have sent information for the Turffontein Development Scheme.

Archiving Drawings for Museum Africa: This project was initiated by Linda Chernis who knew of the collection which was completely inaccessible because it had not been catalogued. After discussions with Diana Wall, acting Director of Museum Africa, we put up the funds for the first month so that Linda could catalogue the drawings and at the same time list them in Excel for our purposes. We appealed for funding and Barbara and Chris Cory responded most generously as did GLH Architects. The information goes onto our data sheets and we shall be publishing the collection on our website. But we felt our sponsors and researchers should have the pleasure of seeing the drawings first, so out came simply exquisite drawings of the Park Synagogue, the second Rand Club, the Palladium Theatre, alterations to the Custom House and Marshall Square Police Station. The quality of the draughtsmanship is a joy, but we were also looking for answers to some puzzling questions. Customs House in Bree Street - was it the first police station, the Kazerne Charge Office?

This project may sound like a pure fun item for researchers, but we see it as a major contribution to Johannesburg's most important Museum which is shockingly neglected by the City itself.

We plan to extend the Architectural Drawings collection by removing those of buildings which have long since been demolished from the City's over-crowded shelves and moving them to Museum Africa so retaining not simply a lovely collection of drawings, but solid historical and social evidence of retail, industrial, warehousing, hospitals, garages and housing as the City developed. This would be another major contribution to the City which has over 1 million files of building plans and too little space and too few staff to control them properly. Michael Fleming works two mornings a week selecting plans for the City's archives, but frequently finds himself sorting documents which have been misfiled.

Blue Plaques: We have funded a number of these using the commercial vandal-proof plaques in areas where we fear the ceramic plaques might be damaged. Contributing to the 20 years of Democracy we sponsored a plaque for Adam Asvat who founded the Save Pageview Association in Fietas and will be unveiling one at the Regina Mundi Church in Soweto. We erected plaques for the first Reform Schul, *Temple Israel*, in Hillbrow and for the Pabst building, *Esselen Street Clinic*, also in Hillbrow, *Annadale* in Parktown. Only 6 ceramic plaques could be produced last year as this almost came to a complete halt due to Magda Mostert's being in New Zealand and the manufacturer's moving to Cape Town where the clay is not as good as that in Joburg! It has meant more breakages and frustrated Den tremendously.

Restoration: we did a minor repair to a window at *Wynnstay* for the National Children's Theatre after a burglary, donated Woodoc to *Alpine Court*, but spent the bulk of the funds on *Holy Family College* in lieu of paying rental for the Research Centre. This was used for repairs and painting of wooden windows in the kitchen block where the accommodation was adjusted after the fire to create classrooms which involved the removal of the partitions for the old bathrooms.

Money received during in 2013 for St Mary-the-Less is now being spent with the repairs underway ensuring the outside is water-tight, the charming turrets clad in shingles are being restored and new

industrial downpipes will be installed. The latest donation from the Mackenzie Foundation has meant we can paint the interior of the Church and replace the doors to the porch all ready for the 125th birthday in September.

Fundraising: David Forrest organised two tours to Bloemfontein which were once again a great success with members and which made a very welcome profit. The prices are kept low which is a great benefit to our many pensioner-members and David doesn't charge for his time or expenses while researching the tours with his wife Gwyn so really the funds raised are largely a donation in kind from the Forrests.

Education: We ran 10 tours for non-fee-paying schools involving 599 learners and 4 for fee paying schools. Janet Hughes developed a new tour which focuses on applied arts and goes between *The View* and the National Children's Theatre. This was generously sponsored by Pauline Martin enabling us to train the docents, adjust timing and finalise worksheets in the most practical way. Brenda Adams has agreed to lead this programme which involves a number of retired teachers, Silas Raseala and Stacey Jirivenga .

Funding for the Quintile 1 schools came once again through BOE from the Chiappini Trust. We are most grateful to BOE in Cape Town for this continued support.

Financial administration: Diana Steele undertook a course in the Pastel system and this is now running under her care. It means figures are readily available in different formats as needed in addition to the normal monthly reports. This finally brings relief to Dennis who has been handling these manually for the last 30 years – an invaluable contribution. .

Heritage Conservation in official Planning: The biggest achievement here was the rezoning of the 19 stands in Richmond to ensure the reconstruction of the old buildings along Napier Road of the **Rand Steam Laundries**. The agreement reached with Imperial Properties was endorsed by the City of Johannesburg and we now enter the exciting stage of just what and to which period reconstruction should be done. Only a few of us actually remember when the laundry was functioning. Most people knew it as a hub for artisans. We believe it should be restored to what we lost in January 2008.

The Foundation has been, and still is, involved in the proposed rezoning of 7 large properties in project known as *Quisisana* in Rose Road on the Houghton Ridge. The numerous meetings, site visits and lengthy discussions which the Joint Plans Committee has debated is evidence of the support enjoyed by the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation when considering the protection not only of the conservation-worthy houses, but the gardens, beautiful stone driveways, The Wilds and the ridge itself. The protection will take the form of extensive restrictions in the amendment scheme and a notarial agreement.

The rezoning and restoration of *House Barnard* in Guild Road next to the Milpark Hospital has been a good example of heritage input for the adaptive re-use of an old house. The new rights depend on the retention of the old house.

The house on Dundalk Avenue which is part of Renico's new development, *Parkview Manor*, was retained at our insistence in terms of the zoning. The structural engineer they consulted said it could

not be saved – the roof had fallen in, walls were cracking outward. It was in dreadful state, but they had given us their word and managed to reinstate the roof using the same terracotta tiles from an old house in Jan Smuts Avenue.

Special thanks to Renico for providing a container to the National Children's Theatre. This allows storage of material in the old redbrick house, *Wynnstay*. Fire is the biggest danger to old buildings and storing flammable material increases the threat. The NCTT needs another two containers to relieve *Wynnstay* of the burden.

Town planning objections still to be resolved:

- The foundation has objected to the Rezoning to an FAR of 4.0 of the property now a Chabad with the *Little Church in the Pines* in Sandton and has been involved in discussions on how best to incorporate the heritage building
- We are objectors to the rezoning of the Aurum Institute property (old Baptist College site close the Charlotte Mxeke Hospital) seeking rights to 10 storeys and a bulk of 0,7
- *Farleigh* in Third Avenue opposite Brenthurst - excessive bulk and no HIA .
- Expansion of the Shell Garage in Parkhurst which would involve the demolition of a house built in 1933 designed by Issy Wayburne and still largely intact.
- Subdivision of 8 Woolston Road on the Westcliff Ridge. Subdivision on the north facing ridges is prohibited by the RSDF. We have won this case which is a huge relief as the objections of the Westcliff Residents Association and those of individual objectors didn't reach the City so we appeared entirely alone!

We don't simply lodge objections. We are leading a group to try and establish a conservancy to protect the Eastern Parktown Ridge. If that works we shall have a model for other ridges in the city.

One case which was won with our support concerned an 18th Century Warehouse in Cape Town adjoining the Martin Melck House (now Gold Museum) and Lutheran Church. Some heritage is truly of National concern and we hope that if we need their help Captrust and the Habitat Council will return the courtesy. The City of Cape Town upheld the objection and we were courteously notified by the City of the decision.

JOINT PLANS COMMITTEE: This is an incredible group of volunteers from the JHF, Forest Town Residents Association, Parktown Association, Parkview Residents Association and the Westcliff Residents Association and includes 7 architects. It meets every second week and handles applications mostly for alterations and additions to buildings in these areas, but occasionally also for demolitions. There have been 26 meetings in the last financial year. Representing the JHF are Vincent Bath, Michael Fleming, Alex Parker, Mira Fassler-Kamstra and myself. The JPC has been chaired and convened by William Gaul for the last 14 years throughout which time Michael Fleming has been the Minutes Secretary. Hats off to both of them for an incredible contribution to the community at large and heritage in particular.

Because there is a shortage of local associations in Johannesburg we have been asked to deal with applications to PHRAG for buildings in Roosevelt Park (the houses are all over 60 years old now)

Sydenham, Hillbrow, Fordsburg, Braamfontein and Doornfontein. Clearly lots of buildings are being altered without building plans, let alone permits from PHRAG. But where there are residents associations the PHRAG is requiring comment from local associations and when owners get desperate they send them our way.

Heritage Impact Assessments: These are required for rezoning of property larger than 5 000 square metres and other major changes. Our most successful intervention has been for the new Market Theatre block where we opposed the demolition of the old warehouse and eating house. These are little buildings fronting Mary Fitzgerald Square. The development was changed to accommodate their retention and we believe it a much better design.

From Herbert Prins we have received an important collection of HIA's for the Research Centre. These contain a great deal of original research and will be referenced in our catalogue.

Sponsors and regular donors: We are immensely grateful to the Mackenzie Foundation which has continued to support our work in restoration. St Alban's in Ferreirdorp and the Lutheran Church in Doornfontein have been beautifully restored largely through this funding and now St Mary- the-Less is in the process of being carefully restored. We know of no other Trust which has been so staunch in its support for Johannesburg's old buildings and, unlike the Cape, there are no special Trust funds devoted to caring for Johannesburg's built heritage.

- BOE has supported our Schools programme offering tours to disadvantaged schools for 22 years through a number of Trust funds which it administers.
- TRANSMAN has been another extremely loyal sponsor.
- GLH architects came out in 2013 in support of our Museum Africa project as did Chris and Barbara Cory. The Stirling Foundation has also supported the architectural legacy work.
- Amongst our members there are also very loyal donors: Sonia Claasen, Pauline Martin, Jill Murray, Pieter Steyn, Brett Murray and the Westcliff Residents Association.

COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA We are most grateful to Brett McDougall for publicising all our tours on Facebook. James Ball has made use of Twitter and the Heritage Portal to promote the tours as well. Our website carries news, photographs and the tours for each quarter. We will be adding the Financial Statements to that and minutes of Boards of Trustees and Management as well as the AGM's to ensure complete transparency.

We have been grateful for the exposure give us by *Radio Today*, but ensuring a new guest every week has been hard work for Den Adams who has managed superbly with a little help from James Ball and myself. Jenny Chrys-Williams on *Radio 702* has been a staunch supporter of heritage causes; recently *Classic FM* has started covering our special activities thanks to Adam Golding and Nici Noble. I am always especially grateful to Graeme Shackleton of *CAXTON* for covering our events in the diary and boosting special news we want to disseminate. Anna Cox and Lucille Davie of *The Star* are known for their concern for heritage issues and politicians do like to keep on the right side of these formidable ladies. *Die Beeld* has always been a strong proponent of Joburg's heritage and we need to re-establish our contacts with their newsroom.

Publication: This has taken the form of the Johannesburg Heritage Journal which is edited by William Gaul and greatly supported by Sarah Welham and John Whiteside in providing original material. William has also written extensively about Melville, providing a source of information we haven't encountered before. The Journal is published on line free of charge on our website, and a limited number of copies can be bought from the office at R35 each

Challenges ahead:

Registration of Johannesburg Heritage Foundation as an NPO: Although we received notification that the change in name had been accepted and we would continue registration under the same number, this was apparently wrong and we needed to file reports for 4 years. All our audited accounts had been lodged, but not the Chairman's reports which needed to be presented in a particular format. Dennis Adams has reformatted these an enormous undertaking involving researching old minutes.

Extending the school tours into the city centre: We were very disappointed by the National Heritage Council to which we had applied for funding to enable us to take tours into the Inner City. This was turned down. I attended a workshop for those of us who had failed in our applications and was urged to apply again as they liked the sound of the project, but when the forms came out the very first item was our NPO Number. You have to tick all the boxes or the application gets trashed.

Digitising the records in the Research Centre. We have received no reply to our application to the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund and assume it was unsuccessful. It was a very ambitious project, but the Wikimedian project goes some way to dealing with this. That has started in June 2014 and involves scanning records and writing up the most significant buildings in the city centre for Wikipedia.

Increasing membership: We have not managed to increase membership from last year. The numbers are:

Individuals 106 Family 50 Pensioner 169 Corporate 4

I do get irritated when people who come on our tours don't want to join because it isn't worth it in terms of savings. You aren't members simply to save money! You are citizens supporting the Foundation's work of trying to save and promote the heritage of Johannesburg. To those people who have paid - THANK YOU!

Fundraising: There are so many old and culturally valuable buildings in Johannesburg in desperate need of funding for repairs and maintenance and so little money available for this work. Nothing at all from Government (it owns some of the most neglected) or Province and small amounts from the city for its own incredibly important buildings like the Rissik Street Post Office. If we were more effective in raising money we could commission a lot more work and save some very significant or simply beautiful buildings.

Breaking the race barrier: The Fietas celebrations showed the JHF to be welcome in what was a pioneering Indian Community. However, heritage must seem a frivolous concern to those who are

battling with land invasions, lack of service delivery and lack of accommodation. Heritage needs to become central to community issues so benefits must emerge which at present are lacking.

Restructuring the Foundation: Dennis Adams and I have been at the helm of the Foundation and the Parktown and Westcliff Heritage Trust for a very long, long time. We are reducing our involvement and handing over much of the work to a younger group of people who have been involved for some years already and are eager to take it all forward. It doesn't require a change in the constitution because the Board of Management will operate as a collective.

I want to thank you all for your support and especially the members of the Board of Management, our tour leaders, the teachers and our Board of Trustees for the support you have given me since the founding of the organisation in 1985. Top of the list must be my husband, who has enabled me to devote so much time to doing what I have enjoyed so much.

Flo Bird