

JOHANNESBURG



HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Newsletter No 21

December 2018

Dear Members,

It has been a very busy quarter! Our tour programme started with a memorable members-only tour of St Andrews, which included a visit to George Farrar's grave, and ended with our Christmas book sale, exhibition of architectural plans and talk on Joburg maps at Holy Family College. But perhaps the most important event commemorated was the end of World War I.

In anticipation of the centenary of the end of World War I, the JHF's Friends of the Cemeteries cleaned graves and surrounds in Braamfontein Cemetery, and then led a free tour of the graves and memorials of WW1 soldiers in both the Jewish and Main sections of the cemetery, placing poppies on their graves. Of all the commemorations that took place in Joburg and beyond, this was the most intimate and moving. Friends of the Cemeteries was formed in September, with the aim of taking care of graves in Johannesburg's oldest cemeteries, Braamfontein and Brixton. It is led by veteran JHF researcher and cemetery enthusiast Sarah Welham, and has the support of Heritage in the City of Johannesburg, and approval from Johannesburg City Parks. As a function of the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation, its activities will be reported on in the Annual Report and Financial Statements, which are audited and available to the general public. Please consider supporting Sarah in this important work, by either volunteering time, labour and skills, or making a donation. For more information simply contact Eira on mail@joburgheritage.co.za

Thank you to the many members who wrote to their local political representatives following the frustrations I expressed in the last newsletter on the City's disregard (more specifically the JDA's and JPC's) for Heritage.

INCORPORATING PARKTOWN & WESTCLIFF HERITAGE TRUST

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I can provide the following updates:

A senior contact in the JRA managed to get a response out of the JDA on work being done at the Orange Grove Waterfall. The JDA have agreed to remediation measures to protect the Waterfall, and have agreed to a JHF site inspection.

It took a formal question being asked in the Gauteng Provincial Legislature for JPC to respond to our concerns around House Bleloch. They have agreed to repair the fence, but that is all. A notice of alienation of the property (we assume sale) has now been distributed to City stakeholders, and we will be monitoring progress closely.

Sadly our battles with the City have not ended. Eloff Street is one of Joburg's iconic streets. Not only does it have several landmark historic buildings but it also had established trees (rare for the CBD). That was until the JDA decided to 'lower' the trees as part of a major upgrade of the street. The rationale for the 'lowering' appears to be concern that litter gets stuck in the existing tree boxes, and that some tree boxes have become too small to contain roots. The Johannesburg Urban Forest Alliance (JUFA) has advised that 'the lowering of trees is ill advised in the best of times and that at this time of year (during the November heatwave) lowering will result in the death of the affected trees'. It is also not clear that the "lowering" of trees received PHRAG approval. At a heated meeting between representatives of the JHF and the JDA, the JHF received the City's commitment to replace all trees that don't survive with 200L trees. A follow up meeting is planned in January to assess the extent of tree loss.

Recently some interesting applications have been reviewed by the Joint Plans Committee East that deal with the pressing issue of affordable housing. In the first, we engaged with the developers of student housing in Doornfontein. The development is on historic Beit Street, and within a block of the intersection of Beit and Siemert, where much historic fabric still remains. Our engagement with the architects on matters of scale and massing and an appropriate response to surroundings was productive, and the development is likely to bring stability and better urban management to the historic neighbourhood. In the second, the developers had assembled a set of properties in Jeppestown, one of which is the magnificent Jooste & Bryant building on the corner of Betty and Marshall. Marshall Street in Jeppe was the suburb's most important commercial street, but when the tram moved to Main Street property owners had no incentive to redevelop, and the street has remained frozen in time. Here the developers sensibly appointed an architect sensitive to heritage, and augmented his skills with a heritage architect, so the plans presented to us were already of a high standard, and the Jooste &

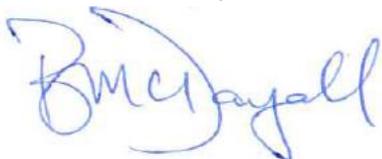
Bryant building will remain untouched. We are now working with heritage architect on guidelines to restore Jooste & Bryant, and hope to recognise it with a blue plaque too. Both these examples are case studies in providing affordable housing while protecting heritage.

On the matter of blue plaques, December was a very busy month! We erected plaques at: the Country Club in Auckland Park, Phoenix Place in Parktown, Riviera Mansions in Riviera, the Oxford Road Trig Beacon, Beryl Court in Troyeville, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Doornfontein, Master Mansions in West Street, and to commemorate the explosion at Begbie's Foundry in City and Suburban. And in early January we will be erecting plaques at Somerset House and the neighbouring High Court Building, and at The Wilds. The pace does not slow – in February we will be unveiling another raft of plaques in Dube!

In the first quarter of 2019 we have some exciting new tours on offer. In Skin Deep on the 26th of January, Ted Botha and I will explore the beauty and richness of the sculptural elements found on Joburg's historic buildings, in particular the legacies of Marega, Shapshak and Hendrikz. We will be celebrating Black History Month in February with a tour of Dube. Few Joburg suburbs have as rich a social history as Dube, and Cheche Selepe, Tshenolo Mokhele, Dave Gurney and Flo Bird will be unveiling a number of blue plaques to its most eminent citizens on the bus tour. On the 23rd of February Kathy Munro hosts a launch of Marc Latilla's Johannesburg Then and Now at Wits's John Moffat Building, followed by a tour of the building. On Saturday the 2nd of March Flo Bird and Brian Kent McKechnie tour historic Hollard Street, including the impressive second Chamber of Mines Building (now the Minerals Council). But I am most excited by Yasmin Mayat, Brendan Hart and Brian Kent McKechnie's exploration of the 1980s in Back to the 80s. Dust off your power suits, puff up your shoulder pads, and spray your perm in place – this is going to be quite a journey!

Thank you for your continued support. I wish you and your families a restful and happy December, and a successful 2019.

Yours sincerely,



Brett McDougall
Chairman