

JOHANNESBURG



HERITAGE FOUNDATION

JHF ANNUAL REPORT – December 2024

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - David Fleminger

It's been a very rewarding, challenging, frustrating year since I became the JHF Chair – but never less than interesting! I've enjoyed the steep learning curve and it's been eye-opening to immerse myself in the nuts and bolts of this unique city. Thus far, it's been an enriching experience, and I am sincerely thankful for all the support.

In brief: our tours are flourishing thanks to the excellent work of the Tours Committee, headed by Michele Vrdoljak, and all our incredible guides. The Blue Plaques Committee, headed by Kathy Munro, is doing great work in promoting important heritage sites across Johannesburg and Soweto. The Resource Centre, headed by Diana Steele, continues its ambitious digitisation project and provides a wealth of information to researchers. Friends of Johannesburg Cemeteries, under Sarah Welham, has really gone the extra mile to maintain and repair the city's oldest cemeteries. The Finance Committee, under the leadership of Jeanne Stegmann, is making good progress in getting us fully compliant for an eventual Section 18A certificate. Our website and social media platforms, managed by Tracy Clayton and others, are gathering thousands of likes and growing our profile. And our three Heritage Plans Committees (formerly Joint Plans Committees) are becoming an invaluable part of the heritage approval process.

Spurred on by a series of incidents in the inner city, we have also been getting increasingly involved in heritage activism on behalf of vulnerable heritage buildings. This is important work and it will take time, but we remain cautiously optimistic about the possibilities. We would like to thank all the individuals, civic organisations, corporates, and government departments who engaged with us thus far – with a special thanks to everyone who participated in our successful protest to Re-open the City Library. We look forward to working together with you for the betterment of our battered Joburg.

All in all, I am very proud of what we have accomplished. The JHF is one of the most active heritage associations in South Africa and this wouldn't be possible without our dedicated volunteers who give so much time and energy to the cause. Of course, special thanks go to Flo Bird, our Life President, and Kathy Munro, Vice-Chair, who are both indomitable, indefatigable and irreplaceable forces of nature. And there are many others: Barbara Cron, our wonderful Secretary, our Board of Management, our Board of Trustees, all our wonderful members, donors, members of the media, affiliates, partners, the list goes on...

INCORPORATING PARKTOWN AND WESTCLIFF HERITAGE TRUST

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You can find many more details about what each of our committees have been up to in the pages that follow, but first – here are some of my broad goals for the year(s) ahead:

Sustainability: the JHF is financially sound, but the margin between our annual income and operating costs is narrow (and we'd like to spend more on restoration). To ensure the long-term sustainability of the JHF, we need to grow our membership, develop new sources of revenue, and improve our fundraising efforts.

Blue Plaques (BPs) are one of the most publicly visible aspects of our activities. We'd like to commission a comprehensive, interactive database of all the BPs across the city. This would be linked to a searchable map and made available to the public through a user-friendly website. Having all the BP info in one place is much needed as the current available data sets are fragmentary and incomplete. Apart from assisting writers and researchers, having a dedicated BP website will improve public awareness of BPs, encourage tourism to heritage sites, and contribute to community pride. This is a big project, and the website will require trained personnel to set up and maintain. Special funding from a donor or pro bono supplier will be necessary.

Affiliates: It's important to form partnerships and affiliations with like-minded organisations. After all, we're all in this together! The JHF is therefore a member of the Heritage Association of South Africa, which is chaired by our own Kathy Munro. For 2023 and 2024, the JHF has provided some financial support for HASA's annual conference, and we value HASA's role in connecting the different heritage associations across the country. We have also established good relations with civic organisations such as Jozi My Jozi and the Johannesburg Crisis Alliance (who partnered with us in the City Library protest action). We have also signed an MOU with GIFA that offers mutual member benefits and promotions to our respective members.

Heritage Plans Committees (HPCs - formerly known as Joint Plans Committees) have been renamed to better reflect the HPCs function as interlocutors in the heritage approval process. We should better promote the services provided by the HPCs to real estate agents, property developers, home owners, etc. The HPCs offer a lot of value, and stakeholders should be encouraged to approach the HPCs beforehand rather than after the fact. We also need to establish an HPC-South, to complement our current HPC-East, HPC-Central and HPC-West. [More information about our HPCs](#) can be found on our website.

Fundraising: the JHF needs someone with experience and time to head a dedicated Fundraising committee. This person would focus on forging relationships with potential

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donors (corporates, embassies, international funders, the lottery, etc.) with the aim of building up our investments to a point where the interest generated would more or less cover our operational costs. This would leave room for income generated by tours and memberships, etc. to be used for other purposes. Separate fundraising for individual projects would also be part of this portfolio.

Press and Publicity: as mentioned under Advocacy below, our profile with the media has grown substantially. We will continue to grow our press contact list and establish ourselves as the media's go-to contact for heritage-related matters. We also want to produce a video highlighting the JHF's activities for promotional purposes, and there is also the potential to produce a series of heritage-related content featuring interviews with JHF members (such as Flo), house tours, documentaries, etc.

Research Centre: the research centre is a remarkable archive that is constantly growing under the able leadership of Diana Steele, but it does cost quite a lot to run. As such, we need to look for ways to monetise the research centre so that it can continue its outstanding work without drawing too much from the main operating budget. We have already put out a rate card detailing charges on research enquiries (where appropriate) and will look at other ways to responsibly generate income from the wealth of information we maintain.

In closing: at time of writing, we have only around 450 paid-up members and 7 affiliated Residents Associations. Nevertheless, we punch way above our weight in terms of influence and reputation. Over the year ahead, I would like to keep growing our both our income, our membership, and our public profile so that we can effectively live up to our mandate of protecting and promoting Johannesburg's vulnerable heritage. The JHF is a remarkable organisation that does remarkable work. We must do all we can to keep the JHF going from strength to strength.

To show your support for the JHF, become a [member](#), like us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), or visit our [website](#) to see how you can get involved. We can't do it without you!

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ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM - David Fleminger

Over the past year, the JHF has initiated action or been brought in on several prominent heritage-related emergencies. These include the Usindiso Fire, the closure of the Johannesburg City Library, Chancellor House, the Johannesburg Art Gallery, the Rissik Street Post Office, the Orange Grove Waterfall, Nelson Mandela's second Houghton home, etc.

Each of these projects is progressing at a different pace, and we are involved to different degrees, but it is becoming apparent that the JHF generally needs to step up and take a more active role in protecting Joburg's fragile heritage. Not only is it a necessary part of our responsibilities, but our increasingly visible role has dramatically raised our profile with the media and other communities not usually involved with JHF.

You can visit the [News page on our website](#) and social media platforms for the latest news on these various initiatives, but we are (slowly) making progress. Take, for example, the Johannesburg Central Library (JCL).

This vital civic resource has been closed to the public since May 2021 due to compliance issues. Spearheaded by Flo Bird, the JHF pushed this issue with the authorities for many months, culminating in a petition and public protest outside the JCL – held in collaboration with the Johannesburg Crisis Alliance and other civic organisations, including publishers and writers. The protest generated excellent media coverage and widespread public support. Thank you to everyone who attended the protest and signed the petition.

Subsequently, we met with the then-MMC of Community Development to hand over the petition and enjoyed a productive conversation with Cllr Magwentshu and his team. We are gratified to note that the City of Johannesburg has now committed to getting the City Library partially reopened by February 2025 (much better than the previously stated 'sometime in the 2025 financial year') and they are holding regular update meetings, which we are attending. We look forward to further positive engagement with the relevant authorities and can't wait for the library to be open to the public once more!

We hope to have more good news in the new year on some of our other advocacy projects, so watch this space!

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BLUE PLAQUE REPORT - K A Munro

Summary: Overall, the [Blue Plaque programme](#) has achieved good results by installing around 35 plaques. Some were commissioned and paid for by the City of Johannesburg, some were funded by the JHF, and some plaques were funded by owners / sponsors of heritage properties.

Objective for 2025: to ensure that the blue plaque programme remains sustainable and keeps up momentum. Financially, at the least we want to break even and any surplus income from sponsored plaques will be used to subsidise blue plaques for communities or properties that cannot pay themselves.

How we work: Blue plaques programme is successful because of teamwork. Once a nomination is received our team assesses the nomination, establishes the funding, conducts site visits to assess whether a blue plaque is appropriate, researches and prepares the text, circulates the text for approval. Once signed off, the artwork is prepared and approved as a mock up, thereafter comes production. Finally, there is the installation of the plaque. We try to install a few plaques in a single day to cut the unit costs of installation. Finally, there may be an unveiling – but JHF does not fund unveilings and this is an opportunity for local communities to step in.

Challenges: Replacement of damaged / vandalised blue plaques; finding new materials more suitable than the fibre glass currently being used (e.g. an ABS material with a lacquer coating). Several plaques have also faded due to UV damage.

Admin: the committee has appointed Louise Marx to assist with administration of the BP programme. This will allow for a more streamlined process and ensures continuity.

COJ Cooperation: we cooperate closely with Eric Itzkin and Palesa Mnyaka of the COJ's Immovable Heritage Dept. Great thanks and appreciation to everyone who has contributed and a special thank you to Eric Itzkin.

We welcome further BP nominations, funding, sponsors and progress. However, all applications received will still be subject to our policy statement and committee approval process, whether sponsored or not.

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BOOK SALES / NEW PUBLICATION SALES - K A Munro

Book sales have been very successful in raising funds for JHF. Book sales are a fun activity for all – a good way to circulate books, pass on family book collections, find good homes for good books and ensure everyone benefits. Occasionally we add sales of prints / maps / art / architectural drawings when these come our way. The funds raised through book sales makes up a sizeable part of the JHF's annual income.

Book sales take place several times a year - most notably during Heritage Weekend, at the Holy Family College Sisonke Hall. We have also had book sales at the Rand Club, Northwards, Victoria Yards, etc. A range of selected new books are sold through the office.

Donations of books are always appreciated as we depend on a good range of second-hand books that we can assess, price and resell. This year we were particularly fortunate to sell a collection of books from the Freeland home and the collection of the late Malcolm Freeland. Popular sellers include art, architecture, South African interest, travel, military, history, and other heritage books.

The book sales committee works as a team and I thank Louise Marx for her dedication and support, as well as everyone who assisted at the book sales - Barbara Cron , Sarah Welham, Mary Boyease, Di Steele and Merle Ruff. Thanks too to all donors and buyers. We thank the Holy Family College for providing storage space and allowing the use of the Hall. We also thank Neil Viljoen for the use of Northwards. Thanks too to the community service schoolboys and girls sourced by Barbara to assist us in display and packing, as well as members who took on this task.

Thank you, Barbara, for selling books from our office store.

Publications sales: we also source new publications from the key publishers. We have negotiated good discounts, offering good prices to our members while still making a profit. We concentrate on heritage related books but depend on suitably themed books being published.

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RESEARCH CENTRE - Diana Steele

Published Index: the updated index of files held at the [Research Centre](#) has been submitted for publication on our Web site. We continue to add items to our archives continuously and update the index with new entries on an ongoing basis and will update the published index more frequently in future.

Valuation Rolls: Flo is still managing to borrow copies of the City's Valuation Rolls from the library, which we are copying and saving to our archives. Our agreement with the library is to provide them with a digital copy of each of these rolls once completed. These are an invaluable resource for research.

Research: Mary Boyeasse has finished her research on Doornfontein and will start working Fordsburg.

Museum Africa Archived Plans (Mary Boyeasse): Plans to finish accessioning our collection of Architectural drawings. Work continues on integrating our collection of Architectural drawings with Museum Africa's collection.

Digitized building plans: Heike Verhoef, one of our Tuesday volunteers, will be starting on identifying and coding the many plans which have been scanned over the past few years and which I haven't been able to complete documenting.

Sandton records: we have boxes of information on Sandton which Louise Marx is working on. Much of it was passed on to us when the Sandton Historical Society ceased to exist. She has completed sorting the bulk of it and will now commence coding, indexing and digitising items not yet added to our files.

Photograph Albums: Jannie Ferreira, also a Tuesday Volunteer, continues identifying and coding hundreds of photographs of numerous buildings from the 1980's around Johannesburg contained within 3 albums.

Ongoing work: information and photographs are received continuously and have to be coded, indexed and scanned.

Research Centre Maintenance: it is at least 10 years since we last repainted the walls of our Research Centre. I think this can wait another year or two but we need to repaint the ceilings - paint is peeling quite badly. The bathrooms could also do with a refresh.

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FRIENDS OF JOHANNESBURG CEMETERIES - Sarah Welham

The activities of the Friends this past year have been restricted to restoring the ash walls in Braamfontein cemetery. Having recorded the details on every plaque and wall, even where the wall had not been vandalized, we prepared lists of each plaque in the order on which it appears on the wall and handed these over to the builders. We had the use of 3 builders when we had enough money to pay them. In some cases, they needed to do extensive repairs to the wall before they could start glueing the plaques in place. We now have a full list of all plaques on each wall.

On October 30th, we celebrated the completion of repairs to the Ash Walls. After a gruelling 19 months of hard work, we hand the area back to City Parks. This was celebrated at an onsite event arranged by Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo, to show members of the media what has been accomplished and to acknowledge the role played by the Friends and City Parks.

My heartfelt thanks go to all of you as you supported us with donations and encouragement. Specifically, I'd like to thank the Friends who worked tirelessly to make it all happen; the builders July, Abram and Daniel who did a superb job of repairing and restoring the walls; Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo for their supply of materials needed to repair the walls plus their installation of solar lights to make the area around the crematorium less attractive at night to vandals; and to SA tenor, Coert Grobbelaar, who performed a benefit concert to raise funds for this work. While this was not well supported, we still raised some money and Coert now wants to do another concert in the new year to increase awareness of the work the Friends do.

To all of you, thank you. We couldn't have done this without you; and we ask you to continue [following us on Facebook](#) and visit our [page on the website](#) as we move on to other projects.

Special thanks go to Liz Haines, Antoinette Morgan and Nici Noble who stuck by me 'til the end, checking walls, conducting tours of the walls, preparing a speech for the event, and giving me their support, advice and suggestions. Without you, I wouldn't have got through. I salute you.

Now that the Braamfontein ash walls have been fully restored, we will continue our work of cleaning and clearing in both of our heritage cemeteries. And I can go back to my first love - researching and writing sketches on the people buried in our cemeteries!

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RESTORATION COMMITTEE - Jocelyn Rhodes

***Jocelyn Rhodes sadly passed away in November 2024.
We remember her with gratitude and wish her family sincere condolences.
She was a rare and wonderful spirit – she will be missed.***

1. Flo Bird is trying to get the authorities to tidy up the Esterhuysen grave and memorial site in Sandton. A new blue plaque has been installed (in partnership with the COJ). An adjoining owner has agreed to take over maintenance but a more permanent solution is necessary.
2. The Rand Regiments Memorial Trust held a commemoration of 125 years since the Anglo Boer War on 13th October 2024. We were very involved in the commemorations of the centenary and they have agreed to move the Stone of Remembrance from the Rand Light Horse to the memorial site and erect the plaques. For the centenary, we sponsored the re-dedication of the memorial to all those who lost their lives – regardless of race, gender or nationality.
3. We assisted with repairing the gutters at The View.
4. The Parktown Association has been dissolved. We have a number of their files at the Research Centre. The minutes and newsletter should be handed over to the Johannesburg Public Library. Some files which may be worth saving include those regarding the closure of Public Parks as these may be the only records of the fight to stop the closures which included Rosebank Park South, the middle dam of Westdene Dam, the Eben Cuyler Park in Richmond, and of course the fight for Beyers Naude Square/Market Square/Library Gardens.
5. Restoration: Princess Alice Children's Home needs advice on how to tackle restoration and assistance with some items. We will arrange a site inspection and report further in this matter.
6. Stained glass at Regina Mundi. The long lower windows need repair and reinforcement as they are bowing from harsh sun. This will cost a lot and perhaps we should ask the Polish Embassy for help. Brian is engaging with a contractor in this regard. Once we have costs and work process in place we can try and raise some money for the work.
7. Credo Mutwa village in Oppenheimer Park, Soweto, needs some restoration assistance. Eric Itzkin should be able to advise because he did a restoration there in 2006. He also put me in touch with a sculptor who restored Sofasonke's lions. On a recent tour of the area, we noted some people already doing restoration – it is unclear who is directing these efforts and we need to find out more about this.
8. The Church at Eikenhof is too big a project for us to handle but we have offered reports on the restoration required.

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9. The Florida Gaol is in such a bad state, it is well beyond our tiny budget. The stormwater channels are non-existent and the foundations are at real risk. We have spoken to Eric and shared a restoration report with him. We will continue to assist where possible.
10. The only restoration project to which we are committed is the greenhouses at The Wilds (we are holding funds specifically for the restoration of the greenhouses). We will discuss with City Parks and try to determine a long-term vision and purpose for the greenhouses so the money can be spent appropriately.
11. House Bleloch and Orange Grove Waterfall – a weekly gardener is still in place and very necessary (paid for by the donation from Walmart for this purpose and supported by the Lower Houghton Residents' Association). We hope to assist in securing a tenant for the building soon as the Police Reservists who previously maintained a presence on the site have now withdrawn.

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EDUCATION / SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - Brenda Adam

Our [Educational Programme for Schools](#) continues to inspire young learners with an appreciation of heritage. Sadly, we have been advised that we will not qualify again for the funding from Jim Joel Trust, so we need to find other funders. We are extremely grateful for their sponsorship over the last 5 years, which was used mainly for our Museum Africa Tours. Since education qualifies for Section 18A status, we are hoping to find new donors more readily once we get our certificate.

The funds remaining for our Museum Africa Tours are almost depleted. This tour went beyond the white colonial heritage and focused on Early Man in Southern Africa. It has been a most successful and well received tour by our school groups but the costs were high because we paid for buses and the excellent Concourt guides (trained for MuseumAfrica by the JHF). We would like to continue with these tours as working with the museum means we are taking advantage of a public facility which offers a safe environment, free of charge, with the space to handle large groups if necessary. We need to investigate expanding these tours to include higher grades which would include geology, archaeology and cultural achievements up to political history. However, since the schools are mostly disadvantaged, we will need additional funding to continue.

We are still doing tours for schools which can meet the costs themselves, mainly at Holy Family College.

We have introduced fully funded tours to the James Hall Museum of Transport with the 2023/2024 grant from the Jim Joel fund. This has proved to be a popular and cost-effective tour for us as we use their guides, so only pay for Silas as the organizer and for the buses. The present funding should last till the end of the first term 2025.

We have not explored more controversial aspects of heritage as that would move largely into more senior grades and we would need to consult with teachers as to which heritage issues fit into their syllabuses. It would be possible to make use of the Worker's Museum and looking at areas of forced removals, such as Ferreirasdorp, but again bus costs and recruiting guides are a stumbling block.

Basically, we need to apply to other organizations for funding.

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FINANCE AND BUDGET REVIEW - Jeanne Stegmann

Projects for the year ahead: it recently came to our attention that the Heritage Foundation was not fully compliant with all of SARS' requirements. We have made good progress in rectifying this and once we are compliant, we aim to identify activities for which Section 18A status can be applied. The list of activities is detailed in a Schedule to the Income Tax Act. Should we succeed, this would greatly elevate our ability to raise funding, especially from corporates who require the 18A tax deduction for any donation.

We also aim to investigate the possibility of individuals being granted a S18A tax deduction where individuals donate funds to the JHF in their deceased estates, this reducing their taxable deceased estate value. We will also look at what activities fall under the COJ Department of Community Development (which includes art galleries, museums, public libraries and immovable heritage) as these may also qualify as 'community development' in terms of the act.

Budget for the financial year ending 2025: the budget assumes a 10% increase in revenue consisting of tour income and membership fees (budgeted book sales have remained the same) and most expenses increasing with 5% inflation unless there is evidence to higher rates being applied, such as the rental cost at Northwards where a 10% adjustment was made. The digitisation expense has been reclassified from special projects to operating expenses with an 5% increase expected.

A decision to be made by the Finance Committee is to potentially place the capital reserves on fixed deposit to enhance interest rates. The Chairman's Report mentions the importance of fundraising to build up our investments so that the interest on our capital can better match our operational expenditures.

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TOURS AND GUIDE TRAINING - David Fleminger

Our tours continue to be very popular, with many selling out quickly. We have built up a dedicated group of followers with many people attending multiple tours. We continue to promote our [schedule of tours](#) through the website and social media platforms, as well as regular emails to members.

House tours remain the most popular, followed by inner city tours. Tours relating to the anti-apartheid struggle and politics are less popular but are still worth considering if there are special interest groups or specific days of commemoration that should be acknowledged (e.g. June 16).

Bus tours are generally harder to fill, probably due to their higher cost. However, it's still worth running bus tours as they can cover areas people wouldn't ordinarily go on their own. Bus tours also give older members who may not be up for a walking tour the opportunity to join.

We are getting an increasing number of requests for private tours, geared towards groups from conferences, leadership academies, tour operators, etc. These 'bespoke' tours generate additional income and are welcomed. A potential on-going relationship with UJ is also being discussed.

We are happy to note that we are attracting a more diverse demographic to our tours. It is important to keep on attracting new audiences so that we can deepen our membership and reach.

We are also delighted to have enjoyed excellent tour collaborations with Johannesburg In My Pocket, Design Week South Africa, the Nelson Mandela Square Antique Fair, Victoria Yards, and the Wilds. These invaluable collaborations expand our reach and we will continue to explore further opportunities for joint-tours in 2025.

Over the next year, we will run another training course for new guides as we always need fresh faces and ideas for tours. The guide training is also a good way to bring passive members into JHF operations and (hopefully) see them taking up active participation in one or more of our portfolios. We will also look at ways to enable current JHF guides who would like further training with an accredited agency, so that they can register with the Department of Tourism as official Johannesburg tour guides.

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A photography workshop has also been suggested where guides can learn how to take better photographs, which we can use for promotional purposes.

Innovative ideas for different types of gatherings, such as movie evenings, music concerts, lectures and the like are also being explored.

Above all, we will endeavour to ensure that our tours operate as close to capacity as possible as the income generated by tours makes up a substantial amount of our annual income. We will also instruct our guides to always include a punt for the foundation as part of every tour, pointing out the benefits of membership and encouraging people who aren't already members to join (or at least follow us on social media).

We regretfully note the passing of Luane Grant and extend our sincere condolences to her family. She was a dedicated JHF volunteer for many years and gave freely of her time both as a tour guide and guide trainer. It has been suggested that we set up a guide-training endowment in her name as an appropriate commemoration.

Additionally, we note the retirement of David Forrest – another dedicated guide and trainer who has served the JHF with distinction. At our AGM, David was awarded an honorary life membership as a token of our sincere appreciation for all he has done for the foundation.

In closing, we thank Michele Vrdoljak, Alexandra Burr Dixon, Tracy Clayton and the whole tour committee who work very hard to maintain our weekly schedule of tours (not an easy task!). We also sincerely thank all our amazing guides for their dedication and time. And thanks to Barbara for coordinating bookings and sending through guest lists, etc.

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WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA - David Fleminger

Our website (www.joburgheritage.org.za) is now well established as a central point of contact for information about the JHF and its various activities. The News blog is updated regularly, as is our tours page. Our social media platforms frequently refer visitors to our website for more information. The site numbers are not huge but consistent – indicating that people are visiting and using our website on a regular basis. We will continue to keep the website up to date and will add additional functionality and resources where possible to enhance the user experience.

Our social media platforms ([Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)) have about 9400 and 5600 followers respectively. These have grown consistently in size and diversity of followers – especially with our increased profile in the wake of our well-publicised advocacy efforts relating to the JCL, etc. Our social media platforms also play a crucial role in promoting our tour offerings and other activities.

Many thanks to Tracy Clayton and Michele Vrdoljak who are managing our social media presence very well.

Online bookings through [Quicket](#) are also working well with younger members, while older members tend to prefer booking directly through the office with Barbara.

Considering our growing following on social media, we have recently started monetising our platform by accepting payment for sponsored postings, where appropriate. These could include book launches, external events, and selected real estate listings for heritage properties that may be of interest to our followers. This is a useful source of extra income but must be managed carefully so that we don't 'cheapen' our brand with too many paid-for posts.

In the upcoming year, we will continue to grow our online audience with engaging content that features the JHF's activities and interests (including competitions, exclusive offers, etc.).

The importance of our online presence cannot be overestimated. It is a crucial component of our operations and entirely necessary if we are to attract and engage younger people.