



Newsletter: February 2022

HERITAGE BLUE PLAQUE FOR FRANZ HOENIG HAUS



Museum Curator Lodwick Mahasha with heritage champion Keith Martin admires the new blue plaque at the main entrance to the house.

Photo: Kathy Munro, Johannesburg Heritage Foundation

After some months of negotiations and discussions, Modderfontein's historic Franz Hoenig Haus was awarded Blue Plaque Status by the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation (JHF).

Keith Martin spearheaded the application for recognition.

Two plaques were erected by the JHF in December 2021, one at the Main Street entrance to the property and the other, sponsored by your Society, at the foot of the entrance stairs to the house.

"The purpose of these plaques (used internationally) is to draw the public's attention to the heritage value of the building in question," says Keith. "These plaques typically contain a brief description of the building and its history."

The wording on the FHH plaque reads: *"This is one of the first residential buildings to be completed for the dynamite factory – the largest in the world – which opened in 1896. Set in extensive grounds, the house was built using materials imported from Germany, and the roof is Germanic in character. It was the home of the first Factory Manager, Franz Hoenig and housed seven successive Factory Managers from 1897 to 1949. The house was restored by AECI in 1971."*

Keith is planning to have an official unveiling of the plaques on Saturday 21 May, International Museum Day. A heritage walk for the JHF may be included.

**NOTE:
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SATURDAY, 19 MARCH 2022
WATCH YOUR EMAIL FOR
DETAILS & DOCS**

CORPORATE TEAM BUILDING OUTING IN THE RESERVE



A group of participants with ConSoc committee members and Honorary Rangers Bruce & Sue D'Arcy and Jen Dalrymple. See more photos on page 4. Photos: Pat van Nierop

Weir ESCO, an international manufacturer of engineered metal wear parts and components for mining applications, celebrated its 150th birthday last year.

Part of the celebrations comprised a “My day of Purpose” and the company’s Johannesburg office team, comprising about 24 people, and based in Linbro Park, chose to do a sustainability project in the Modderfontein Reserve.

Chairman Ellen van Dongen coordinated the event, and your Society hosted the group. A number of activities were undertaken, including removing

alien vegetation and planting 23 indigenous trees/shrubs.

The company has three manufacturing facilities and 10 sales and service branches in South Africa, as well as its head office for Africa. Several members of the team use the walking/cycling trails in the Reserve.

Your committee is keen to encourage more of this type of activity in the Reserve in the future.

HEADING UP A BLIND ALLEY



Proving that you can't always rely totally on your GPS device, this trucker was seen one Tuesday early morning heading in the direction of the massive warehouse near the Stone Bridge entrance to the Reserve. The informal pedestrian track was not an option. Somehow the driver managed to correct his error and extricate the vehicle from the area. The photographer did not have time to wait to see the exercise, but some walkers reported that it had left by the time they exited the Reserve.



FROM THE SHREDS & PATCHES COLUMN BY JOHN BECKETT (WRITING AS 'Dogberry') IN AECl'S STAFF NEWSPAPER "REPORTER" BACK IN 1977

The pleasantly unpredictable pastime of turning out desk drawers – only in this case it was a typewriter cover – has brought me a bonsella. To wit, an article by Meg Orpen on what life at Modderfontein was like when as newlyweds of 10 days' standing, she and her husband, later to become in turn Consulting Engineer and Company Chief Engineer, took up residence there in 1935.

The magazine editor who turned down the piece, on the feeble grounds that it could be thought a mite parochial, missed, in my opinion, having himself a winner. Who, for example, knowing the older homesteads of Modder (or of any other country community for that matter) will not recognise the quality of this extract:

"We had a corrugated iron house lined with wood. Bats lived in the space between and were assaulted with shrieks and tennis racquets as they swooped in uncanny silence between the bedroom and the bathroom. There was also the sitting room and a huge kitchen with a big black coal stove and – luckily – a huge black cook; and a wide veranda trimmed with wooden lace and romantically draped with wisteria, alive with bees.

"The bathroom had a bath with claw and ball feet, and guess what it didn't have? Right. That was outside in the back garden, unwisely sited by some raw pioneer among lethal roots and stumps. Even on those summer nights of flashing, banging thunderstorms, with rain like steel rods, or winter nights crackling with frost, there were times when it was impossible NOT to go. In my simple way I had thought that such dark and dangerous sorties were things of the past, or at least strictly agricultural. Wincing with terror at every flash, or suffering from exposure, according to the season, you hustled there and back."



YOUR COMMITTEE

Name	Portfolio	Cell phone	Home phone	E mail
Ellen van Dongen	Chairman Education	082 813 9611	011 462 3067	ellen@vandokem.co.za
Janet Brodrick	Minutes & Tuesday Walks	072 679 6461	011 686 1930	janet7@vodamail.co.za
Alison Coppin	Speaker liaison	083 2925406	011 608 3927	alisoncoppin@mweb.co.za
Jen Dalrymple	Rangers	083 273 3735		dalrymple@mweb.co.za
Bruce & Sue D'Arcy	Rangers	082 902 5570		brucec.darcy@outlook.com
Peter Ewen	Reserve Development	076 377 3263	011 608 4043	petemar@gam.co.za
Daryl Fuchs	Technology	083 395 0778		cyclotron@freestateprojects.org
Jenny Gough	Speaker Liaison	082 685 0959	011 452 2201	jagough@mailone.co.za
Patricia Llewellyn	Treasury	082 497 9241	011 882 4114	llewellyntricia35@gmail.com
Keith Martin	Heritage	082 450 4003	011 608 2864	keith2864@gmail.com
Peter Olive	Education & Special Projects	083 461 6221	011 608 2799	polive@mweb.co.za
Carol Sherwood	Treasury, Members & SPs	082 906 5794	011 524 0296	csherwood@telkomsa.net
Pat van Nierop	Birding & CAER Committee	083 326 6838	011 882 4392	pat.nierop@mweb.co.za
Robbie Vermont	Communications	082 800 3704	011 608 2693	robbiev@netactive.co.za

BUILDING A CORPORATE TEAM IN THE MODDERFONTEIN RESERVE



Above: the team prepares for some heavy work and ... Below: some of the trees they planted near Fish Eagle Dam.



TELL US ABOUT IT

If you've changed your phone number or address, please remember to tell Membership Secretary Carol Sherwood about it. We'd like to stay in touch but cannot unless we know where you are. Also, if your membership status changes, please let us know (single, couple, family, senior or scholar).

DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Modderfontein Conservation Society.