



Spotlight shines on Kensington's heritage

Months of planning paid off last weekend when the highly anticipated launch of the Kensington Heritage Trust took place.

Several residents gathered to celebrate the suburb's heritage,

meet new people and find out what is in store for them over the next few months.

Mrs Elaine Thorne, the I Love Kensington Association (Ilka) infrastructure leader who is involved in the Kensington Heritage Trust, said that the Kensington Club had a "refreshing make over" in anticipation of this event. Mr Paul Vermeulen, the president of the Kensington Club, and Ms Jenny Kleynhans, the secretary, were at the helm. Established in 1914, the club was built to cater for the recreational needs of the largely English immigrants who brought the skills necessary for the development of the gold mining industry around Johannesburg at the time. This evolved with the suburb over time.

"The opening of the Kensington Heritage Trust was conducted by Ms Flo Bird, the founder and chairperson of the Parktown Westcliff Heritage Trust. "She shared wonderful, heartfelt and informative things about Kensington," said Mrs Thorne. Ms Bird spoke about the richness of Kensington's history and the contrasts within it, noting that Kensington is a peaceful and tolerant suburb, yet with somewhat militant street names.

"Mr Herbert Prins, the chairman of the Egoli Heritage Foundation, did the honour of unveiling the plaque of the Kensington Club. That was rather emotional," she Mrs Thorne. He spoke about the importance of heritage societies being more active in communities and working together to preserve the city's history. Once the veil of the plaque was removed, the African Skye Pipe Band brought on the goose bumps with their music. As people filled in the registration and membership forms, the Campus of Performing Arts (Copa) entertained with light jazz ensembles.

"Mr Colin Dickinson, who has been a member for more than 60

years, was our first speaker and he introduced the history of the Kensington Club. Alkis Doucakis, a renowned historian and author of a few books, spoke on the street names in Kensington and their history. Mr Eric Itzkin, the deputy director of immovable heritage at the City of Johannesburg, shared information on the Scottish Cross in Kensington and its restoration. He also spoke about the history of the Indian Monument in Observatory," said Mrs Thorne.

Later in the day, Mr Dickinson was called down to the North Green. He was struck by emotion when the North Green was renamed The Colin Dickinson Green.

"The Jeppe High School for Girls drummers then played for us. They were excellent. Ms Genie Wright, a teacher at the Leicester Road School, shared wonderful bits of history about the building of the school and delightful stories of camps gone by. Her father was the first headmaster of the school. The school uniform was also displayed. I am sure that many people had their memories re-awakened," said Mrs Thorne. Mr Rob Marsh, the author to more than 30 books on crime and mystery, then spoke on the Foster Gang, which is one of the crimes that he wrote about a number of years ago.

The Foster Gang was a trio of desperate criminals who operated in Johannesburg between July and September in 1914. The dramatic end to the Foster Gang story took place at the Kensington cave. Directly and indirectly the Foster Gang, South Africa's most wanted men at the time, caused the deaths of 11 people, which included five suicides.

"Visitors were then encouraged to take a tour of Kensington. Some people took the tour in the Quantum which was donated to us by Safari Lodge Shuttle. Ms Isabella Pingle, also part of the trust, took a number of walkers on the tour as well," said Mrs Thorne.

People toured some of the suburb's 44 prominent landmarks which included the Foster Gang Cave, the Lion House and the building which is home to the Jeppe High School for Boys.

All landmarks are shown on the new Kensington Heritage Trust map. The map is available at the Kensington Club and Country Flowers in Queen Street. All guests including the Local Chef, Princesa, Mr Willem Boshoff, Ms Jo Ractliffe, Kade, Ms Cynthia Piercey and Ms

Jackie West were thanked for their help during the opening.

"Mr Frank Raubenheimer, our potter, was handed a water colour portrait of himself that I painted. He made our 'button' and memorabilia for the Kensington Heritage Trust.

"Shame and Washington Chakanyuka's outstanding sculptures were also showcased. They are internationally acclaimed and showcased their sculptures at the Park Meadows Shopping Centre for a season. We would also like to thank the De Lange family from Illustrator and Ginger Design. They designed and illustrated the heritage logo, the map and illustrations on the leaflet and designed the plaques and buttons," said Mrs Thorne.

Mr Vermeulen thanked all who participated and in particular Mrs Thorne and her husband Rodney as well as Ms Pingle for choosing the club to host the event. "We encourage all to join and strengthen the new trust," he said.



Mr Herbert Prins, the chairman of the Egoli Heritage Foundation, unveils the plaque of the Kensington Club.



Cecily and Mike Alfred are seen here with Isabella Pingle before the start of the tour of Kensington.



Isabella Pingle was presented with an "Oscar" for all her hard work.



Flo Bird and Elaine Rose Thorne.



The Mamela drumming group entertained guests. Pictured here are Khethinkosi Mthimkhulu, Ismatou Balde, Kate Mazomba and Shannon Brough.

Secret of the button is out

Everyone has been wondering what the "button" is all about and now the secret is finally out.

"We want to encourage people to be members of the Kensington Heritage Trust. We want interested parties to see our beautiful history, heritage and architecture beyond the 'high wall' syndrome we have found ourselves to be accustomed," said Mrs Elaine Thorne, I Love Kensington Association member and part of its infrastructure committee. When you sign up to become a member of the Kensington Heritage Trust, you will be issued with a membership number. People can then select

highlights of heritage in their home that they would like to showcase. Residents can photograph them and send these to the committee.

A Kensington Heritage Trust Button with your membership number on it, will be issued for you to attach to your wall where it can be seen.

"Your membership number and photographs or website will be connected to our website and interested parties can log on and see what is behind your walls. So you can share what you have with your privacy kept intact. The whole idea is to showcase Kensington's Heritage in a unique way," said Mrs Thorne.



Mrs Elaine Thorne hands over the watercolour that she did of Frank Raubenheimer to him. He made the Kensington Heritage Trust button and memorabilia.