

# ‘THE POWER OF POWER’: POWER STATIONS AS INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE AND THEIR PLACE IN HISTORY AND HERITAGE EDUCATION

Ms Sue Krige

*University of the Witwatersrand*

*Johannesburg*

*Susan.Krige@wits.ac.za*

*I learnt during all those years to love Johannesburg even though it was a mining camp. It was in Johannesburg that I found my most precious friends. It was in Johannesburg that the foundation of passive resistance was laid in September 1906. Johannesburg therefore had the holiest of all the holy associations that Mrs. Gandhi and I will carry back to India. (Mahatma Gandhi on his feelings about leaving Johannesburg in 1914)<sup>1</sup>*

## ***Abstract***

This article focuses on the Electrical Precinct in Newtown as an example of industrial heritage in the centre of Johannesburg. The author makes the case that industrial heritage has been neglected in terms of what is deemed to be culturally significant. Yet industrial landscapes provide a direct connection with a ‘cultural’ experience common to all city dwellers. The author demonstrates how the heritage tourism company, Cultural Encounters, used field trips/visits to Newtown with learners from Grades 8-12, over the period 2003- 2009, to grapple with the requirements of the Social Sciences and History curricula. She argues that this approach to industrial heritage could provide a radical new approach to the 2010 Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), including the Grade 10 heritage assignment.

**Keywords:** Newtown; Electricity; Johannesburg; Power station; Electric workshop; Anglo Gold Ashanti; Industrial heritage; South African Heritage Resources Act; History; Cultural significance; Curriculum; Education.

---

<sup>1</sup> Plaque on the statue of Gandhi in Gandhi Square in the Johannesburg CBD.

## **Introduction: The Power of place and the meaning of cultural significance<sup>2</sup>**

A physical place or a space of heritage significance provides an immediate story or stories that build on our appreciation of our common and diverse histories and cultures. It can also provide a unique window onto local, national and international facets of South African history. Nothing can replace actually 'being there' and encountering the textures of place.

However, there has been a consistent undervaluing of Johannesburg's *industrial architecture and heritage*, to the point of malicious neglect. Indeed, in general, the rapidly diminishing markers of our mining and industrial heritage have been regarded as ugly, intruding on refurbished urban landscapes which aim to be aesthetically pleasing to visitors. Industrial heritage should be seen as having cultural value and significance, particularly for a city like Johannesburg. According to the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) of 1999 the measures of cultural significance are: aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, linguistic or technological value or significance. At least five of these measures relate to industrial buildings, depending on how beautiful you think the buildings are! (See Appendix A: Important Definitions from The National Heritage Resources Act of 1999)

The conservation of industrial heritage is certainly not only about buildings. Oral histories (which often reclaim invisible/neglected voices) provide an incredibly important dimension to such work. According to the NHR Act, the *association* of a person or particular community or communities with a place is a measure of cultural significance. It is also not only about individual buildings. The Act recognises heritage significance resides in the whole (the precinct), its landscape, as well as the parts (the buildings). The idea of a heritage precinct or area adds to how we understand and work with heritage.

Working with industrial heritage allows us to foreground the many categories that the SAHR Act provides of what constitutes 'cultural' significance, and how it can be assessed. It allows us to highlight how narrowly the term 'cultural' has been interpreted, even by presenters at the conference for which this paper was prepared. This narrow approach is characterised by the notion of unchanging separate cultural groups, each with their own essentialised history and cultural practices. The history of industrialisation and urbanisation, viewed through the lens its physical remains, shows how people (not only

---

2 Summarised from H Prins and S Krige, Heritage Impact Assessment for Newtown Electrical Precinct, (Unpublished, February 2005). Available from the author.

Black people) had to adapt one of the many aspects of their identities, their culture, to urban living.

Such heritage opens up the issue of the 'cultural' significance of the changing technologies, as well their impact on the work that people had to do, and the quality of the lives they led. Here there is also much scope for cooperation with the Science departments in schools!

This article provides a case study of one historical and cultural precinct in the greater Johannesburg area – Newtown. Newtown contains substantial physical remains of industrial buildings connected with the supply of electricity and other services to Johannesburg. It is subject to major urban renewal initiatives which have required substantial historical investigation in preparation for statements of cultural significance, and conservation management plans.

This article outlines the history of the Newtown precinct and its power stations, and the people who worked and lived there; explores the 'first' and 'second lives' of historic industrial precincts in the context of urban renewal; considers the role of industrial heritage in heritage studies, particularly in the Intermediate and FET History curriculum. I will draw on my own experience with learners in this regard.

Research into this precinct has made me reconsider standard historical narratives and approaches. I found that I was involved in a process of revisiting histories of the city of Johannesburg and its people in a local, national and international context. Thus heritage can make us reconsider our historical research perspectives too.

### **Heritage tours courtesy of Cultural Encounters**

From 2002 to 2009 I was fortunate to run a historical and cultural tourism company with a colleague, Elizabeth van Vuuren. *Cultural Encounters* focused on urban tours in Johannesburg and Pretoria. We had many local and international clients, including US and UK study groups, and local schools. The only difference between school groups and other groups was that the school groups were not there of their own free will. Much of my research, including wonderful visual sources, became part of our tour handouts and itineraries, and a rewarding synergy emerged. Unfortunately, contrary to popular perception, tourism companies do not make money unless they offer the Big Five (perhaps with Robben Island thrown in) and we had to close down our company in late 2008. But we had a lot of fun – our biggest group

was a 300 strong international cadre of young (16-24) debaters. We managed to get them fed and around Soweto in one afternoon, with help of six buses and 12 cell phones!

### *The Jozi Jive*

From early on Elizabeth and I developed a basic template for a day-long tour of Johannesburg, called the *Jozi Jive*. It consisted of stopping at points of interest from the Johannesburg CBD to Soweto. These included Main Street Mining Mall in the CBD, Newtown and Fordsburg, Sophiatown, Orlando East and West in Soweto, including the Hector Peterson Museum and the Mandela House Museum. The price included the hire of a bus, drinks and snacks, lunch and museum entrance fees. This did not leave much to pay ourselves! A major premise on which we worked and which appeared on all our handouts, was:

We do not take tours of SOWETO as if it exists separately from Johannesburg. It is part of Johannesburg and Johannesburg is part of it. SOWETO is much older than the policy of Apartheid, which the National Party put in place in 1948.

We prepared a comprehensive handout concerning each place that we visited, which we updated on a regular basis. We provided laminated photographs and maps to supplement the handouts. We kept these and used them on many different occasions. We also compiled a CD of tracks of South African music related to the tour. A commentary on each track appeared at the back of each handout as well as further recommendations and where to purchase the music. Music is an international language, which often bridges more barriers than any language difficulties. It is also a great icebreaker and a way of winding down after an exhausting day. We insisted on buses that had basic audiovisual facilities like a CD player and a microphone, though we had our own microphones as well. We trained young tour guides to accompany us, and ensured that they were certificated. We subcontracted transport to an ex Wits Sociology student who ran a fleet of small to medium buses. This was part of our equity and capacity building.

The tours could be adapted to whatever length suited the client. Thus one of our most popular tours was a half day walking tour – the City Beat Tour - which covered Main Street Mining Mall in the CBD, and the Electrical and Market Precincts in Newtown. In terms of schools, we adapted the Jozi Jive to a theme which we called the Apartheid City Tour. This took learners

and teachers on an extended walk around Fordsburg and Sophiatown, and on to Soweto, where we visited the Mandela House Museum and Hector Peterson Museum, Kliptown and Regina Mundi church, with lunch at a Soweto restaurant (NOT a shebeen). We worked with educators *before the tour* to develop appropriate materials for the particular Grade or Grades. All our tours were adapted to meet the needs of Grades 8-12.

We made extensive use of maps and aerial photographs (dating from the 1930s onwards) in orientating the learners and educators to what historic places looked like over time. As I stated in my introduction, visiting the actual place or space which has historic and Heritage significance, and interacting with the physical remains is profoundly educative. It is important that educators and learners are aware of the layered nature of a Heritage place, which, as a result, could mean different things to different people. In terms of oral histories, the museums offer a wide variety of recordings, audio and visual, but sound spillage is a problem. We were also privileged to have people on our tours who had actually been involved in the events ranging from the forced removals in Sophiatown and Fordsburg to the 1976 student uprising. According to both visitors (a more appropriate term than tourist) and learners this aspect was far more engaging than the plethora of sounds which plague many museums. Favourite places? The Mandela House Museum and hot chocolate at Nabitha restaurant both in Vilakazi Street.

Working with captive visitors- the learners -- is twice as much work as working with visitors who are present voluntarily. We found that it was important to take *educators* on a tour in beforehand, in order that they were able to make connections and consider the most appropriate kind of tour and material. We believed that our tours covered significant portions of the learning areas in a fashion which brought them to life, and actually saved time in terms of an overloaded curriculum. Most educators spend their time on tours dealing with delinquent children, and finding they have very little time to pay attention to what might interest them.

In the next section of this article I will deal with both the history of the Electrical Precinct in Newtown and its industrial components as if I was guiding a tour for educators, as preparation for a tour involving Grades 10-12 learners. At the start each educator would be given a handout with text and laminated photographs and diagrams about the history of the area. These include an early map of Newtown, aerial photos of Newtown and the Electrical Precinct over time (from 1937 - 2010) photographs of the internal

and external aspects of all three power stations. The text would be very similar to the information provided below. While the photographs, plans and maps will be used during the tour, the text can be read later as preparation for a learners' tour.

### **Newtown City Beat Tour: A Splendid time is guaranteed for all<sup>3</sup>**

Initial orientation for the tour takes place in Mary Fitzgerald Square, using a blown up 2010 aerial view of Newtown. The Market (North of the Square) and Electrical (South) Precincts are identified. A 1937 aerial view provides an interesting contrast to the present, which we will explore later. I then turn to the history of Newtown from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, using one of the early maps of Johannesburg as an accompaniment.

Image 1: Aerial view of Electrical Precinct, 1937



Source: Annual Report of the General Manager of the Electricity Department July 1936 to June 1937

---

3 The source of most of the material in this article comes from original archival research by the author, unless otherwise indicated. A wonderful source of the history and heritage of Johannesburg is its official website: [www.joburg.org.za](http://www.joburg.org.za).

## **A brief history of early Newtown**

After the discovery of gold in 1886, thousands of people of all races came to look for work in Johannesburg. Many found work outside the labour-hungry mines. Very early, an area not far from the mines was occupied by people of all races who provided services for the ever expanding city. Initially, unemployed Afrikaners were given permission to manufacture bricks from clay along the Fordsburg Spruit. So began the Brickfields – home to thousands of unskilled workers of all races who could find no other work. A number of independent transport riders and cab drivers also settled in the area. So too did the Amawasha, groups of Zulu men, who had captured the market for washing the laundry of the city. By early 1896, Brickfields was home to about 7000 people.

An area called Burghersdorp developed into a residential area for poor whites. It lay between the Brickfields, and Fordsburg, 'Kafir Location' and 'Coolie Location'. The latter 'Location' had been established in 1887 by Paul Kruger for people of Indian origin. As more and more people moved to Johannesburg, Burghersdorp and Coolie and Kafir Location residents began renting out backyard shacks and the area soon became multicultural and multiracial.

After the Anglo-Boer War, in 1902, the new British administration under Lord Alfred Milner set about creating order, formal racial segregation and infrastructure to support the mines and industrial growth in Johannesburg. The valuable land in what was to be called Newtown, next to the railway marshalling yard, was earmarked for industrial development.

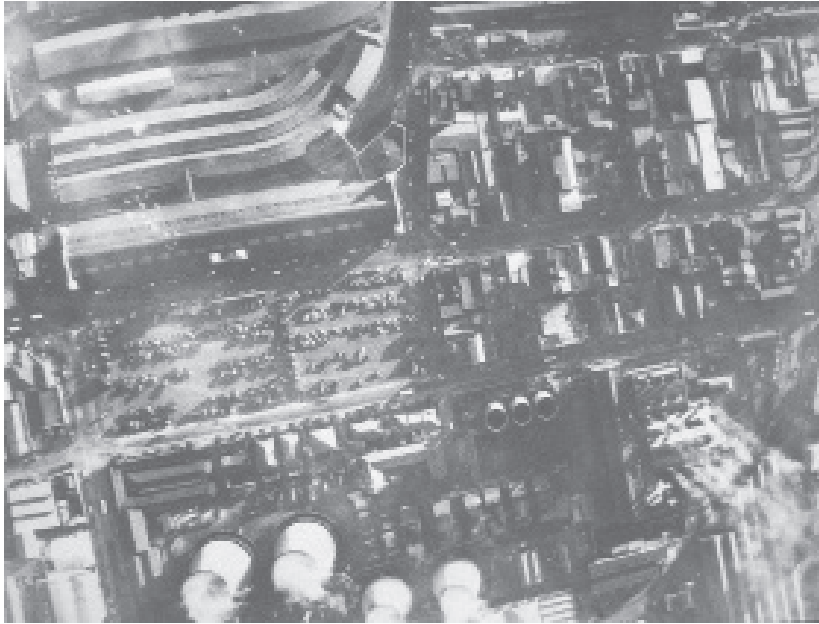
In 1904, as part of clearing the mixed area around Newtown and creating an orderly and space around the new Market on the north side of a market square, the Transvaal Government declared that there was bubonic plague in 'Coolie Location'. The Coolie Location was burned to the ground, after which the government ordered the removal of some 3, 552 Indian, Cape Malay and African men, women and children. They were moved to a camp on Klipspruit farm, portion No. 318, close to the newly constructed railway line and the Johannesburg Potchefstroom Road. This forced removal marked the beginning of Soweto.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> E Brink, *Old Town, Newtown* (Museum Africa, 1999).

Our tour group will then move to the Electrical Precinct South of the Mary Fitzgerald Square. Two of the three power station buildings remain, and the imprint of the cooling towers demolished in 1985. These can better be seen from the M1.

Image 2: Aerial View of Newtown, 1956



Source: E. Brink, *Old Town, Newtown* (Museum Africa, 1999)

### ***The Electrical Precinct***

For the following 90 years, Newtown was an industrial area, home to the first three major power stations supplying the city of Johannesburg with electricity. From 1886, the city was voracious in its demand for power, but gas was the main source for the city. After the Anglo-Boer War, Lord Milner and the city fathers made the supply of electricity a priority for Johannesburg. The city had to become a reliable supplier of goods and services to the mining industry. In order to support mechanized transport in the form of trams, in 1906, the city commissioned a power station on the President Street boundary, fitted with gas driven turbines. Today this building houses the Sci-Bono Discovery Centre, or 'Electric Workshop'. The gas turbines functioned



intermittently. Explosions and gas leaks forced the closure in 1907, while the corrupt contractors fled. The building became a substation and then workshop – hence the name the 'Electric Workshop'. Between 1906 and 1907, tram sheds were built on the south east corner of the Electrical Precinct for the housing and servicing of the new electric trams.<sup>5</sup> In 1996 the new Reserve Bank building was built on the tram shed site.

After the many problems with the first power station, a second power station was hastily built in 1907. It was on the site where the SAB World of Beer Museum is situated.<sup>6</sup> This Second President Street Power Station, powered by less menacing steam turbines, supplied the adolescent city until 1927.

Industrialisation and mechanisation after the First World War meant that the station could hardly keep up with demand. In March 1922 angry white strikers, including those working in the power station, added to an often chaotic situation when they attacked the station and shut it down. Johannesburg was without electricity for nearly a week. The Annual Report of the General Manager of the Gas and Electricity Supply Department commented on the effect of the strike on the power station:

Power Station employees drew the fires, shut down the station and declared a strike. Power could not be generated that night and the whole Municipal area was plunged in darkness.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in the hope of stabilising the demand for power supply, the City built the Jeppe Street Power Station, which emerged in stages between 1927 and 1934.<sup>8</sup>

Tours of the Electric Workshop/Sci-Bono Centre and the Jeppe Street Power station/ Anglo-Gold Ashanti Headquarters are possible, depending on time.  
- *author*

However, demand for power did not abate and the Jeppe Street Power station was soon eclipsed by Orlando Power Station, in Soweto, begun in 1939. After functioning in tandem with Orlando and Kelvin Power Stations, the JPS was closed in 1961. But that was not the end of the saga. In 1967 gas aero-jet turbines, driven by two Rolls Royce engines, were installed. They functioned

---

5 J Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga*, (Cape and Transvaal Printers, 1970); 'The City Electricity Department', pp. 599-602.

6 J Shorten, *The Johannesburg Saga*; 'The City Electricity Department', pp. 599-602.

7 The Annual Report of the General Manager of the Gas and Electricity Supply Department, July 1921 to June 1922. See also Renfrew Christie, *Electricity, Industry and Class in South Africa* (State University of New York Press, Albany NY, 1984), Chapter 4: War, Strikes and Mechanisation, 1914-1923.

8 *Report on the New Power Station of the Gas and Electric Supply Department*. (Municipal Council of Johannesburg, April 9, 1925).

in emergencies as standby turbines.

### ***What about the workers (and the bosses?)***

On the north boundary of the Electrical Precinct, there is a fully preserved Municipal Workers' Compound and a set shiftmen's and managers' cottages and domestic workers' quarters. These buildings were grouped together, refurbished and declared a National Monument in 1995. As was noted by the National Monuments Council<sup>9</sup> at the time:

The buildings on the Newtown Power Station [sic] are a compact illustration of the distinctive nature of the South African Working class as a whole. The workers' houses fronting on Jeppe Street, occupied by white craftsmen and their families, serve as a foil to the domestic workers' shacks (which housed single servants in the backyards of the houses) as well as the compound provided by the Johannesburg Electricity Department, for their black male labourers.

The title 'craftsmen' is somewhat misleading in the context of the Electrical Precinct. These were 'shiftmen' ranging from artisans to highly skilled men, in the intense demands of the crucible of the coal hoppers, boiler houses, turbine halls. They worked both day and night shifts. The so-called workers' houses did not house workers only, but managers too.<sup>10</sup>

### **Black worker accommodation**

This municipal compound is one of the last remaining fully preserved examples of compounds which were in use all over the Witwatersrand, and is symbolic of the migrant labour system in general. Thus, its importance as both a physical and representative heritage resource cannot be overstated. It has local, regional and national significance, and broader African significance.

The Newtown compound is based on the model of the mining compounds. It is a U-shaped single storey building with a south-facing courtyard providing accommodation for 312 workers. Compound accommodation consisted of seven dormitories of about 652 square foot each. There was one on each wing and the rest occupied the length of the building. Workers in the Newtown compound slept side by side in concrete bunks with toilets and urinals at each end. The bunks were double story with nine workers per level.

---

9 This was replaced by the South African Heritage Resource Authority in 1999.

10 Author's own research in City Power Archives and photographs obtained from the Museum Africa.

### **White accommodation**

North of the compound, abutting Jeppe Street is a row of houses. There are three 'Shiftmen's cottages – all semi-detached and single storey. Next door is a Manager's house. In 1928 the City bought these structures, which had belonged to the 'Sanitary Department', to demolish stables next to these three existing cottages and to build two double storey houses for the 'Power Station Superintendent and the 'Assistant Superintendent'. The construction of the Jeppe Street Power Station in 1927 meant that new accommodation was needed urgently. It was essential to have skilled staff living on the premises to attend to the problems arising as a result of the Jeppe Street Power Station running day and night, with attendant faults and breakdowns.<sup>11</sup>

We visit the Black workers' compound which is now a museum. It is dedicated to foregrounding stories and lives of the thousands of nameless migrant workers who built and serviced Johannesburg and elsewhere. The white workers' and managers' cottages can be observed only from the outside. Aerial photographs are provided as well. - *author*

### ***The decline of Newtown 1980-2000***

From the early 1980s, Newtown was crumbling, mostly because of the City Council's indecision about the area and its inability to come up with a viable plan for its future. In the adjacent Central Business District the flight of businesses to Sandton had begun and the degradation the inner-city was becoming a reality.

During this period, the Electrical Precinct became a storage depot. The workers' compound and by now iconic cooling towers were both used as storage facilities. By the mid 1980s, it became apparent that the city had some vague intentions for the reinvention of Newtown. These was symbolised by the demolition of these cooling towers in 1985. The city had proclaimed them structurally unsound. However, a number of initiatives came to nothing.<sup>12</sup>

By the 1990s, the Electric Workshop and JPS had fallen into decay. A large number of homeless people moved into the Station. The compound stood

---

11 Annual Report of the General Manager of the Electricity Department, July 1927-June 1928

12 SAHRA Archives, Northwards, "Minutes of Meeting No 2 on Turbine Square with the National Monuments Committee (sic) (NMC) on 24 July 1991" and "Minutes of Meeting held at the National Monuments Council on Turbine Square, August (date obscured) 1991, 15:00".

neglected. Only the Market Theatre, Museum Africa and Kippiess Jazz Bar held the line against the complete degradation of the area.

In 2000, the City Council and Gauteng Province moved to rescue Newtown by investing millions of rands re-inventing it as a 'Cultural Precinct', building on the achievements of the Market Theatre, Museum Africa and other small cultural groups. This initiative meant new lives for the buildings in the Precinct. But there was a long road ahead.

### **The first and second lives of objects, places and spaces**

The museum authority Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that heritage resources have two lives: a 'first life' where they performed particular set functions; and a 'second life' where they no longer perform their original function, but, as heritage resources, perform a different set of functions.<sup>13</sup> Heritage practitioners straddle the divide between these lives. They are in the business of giving a 'second life', to buildings for example, which both recalls their first life as sensitively as possible, and adapts it to the demands of the second life. These demands may enhance, adapt or perhaps compromise the buildings. The accepted term for giving heritage structures and precinct second lives is '*adaptive re-use*'. The National Heritage Resources Act has guidelines for how this should take place. (See Appendix A)

### ***The second (and rather fragile) Life of the workers' library and museum***

The black workers compound and the cottages were given a second life when the structures were beautifully adapted to housing a 'Workers' Library' and Museum, which honoured the thousands of migrant workers as well as providing library resources to the trade unions. At the time the WLM was opened in 1995, Labour Minister Tito Mboweni declared that the project was 'an important act of historical recovery', and pointed to the neglect of the history of manual workers in South Africa's history.

The Workers' Library and Museum and White housing complex [WLM] still constitute the only declared National Monuments in Newtown. The Newtown precinct was declared a protected heritage area by SAHRA only in June 2005, in response to major plans for urban renewal under the auspices of the Johannesburg Development Agency. These included the construction

---

13 *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

of a multi-storey luxury hotel immediately south of the WLM, in the centre of the Electrical Precinct. This development would not only have dwarfed the compound and cottages, but would have threatened the integrity of the heritage precinct as a whole.

The integration of heritage places and spaces with urban renewal is an uneven process. There is much debate about how an area in which heritage significance resides in the whole (the precinct) as well as the parts (the buildings), may be conserved and re-used sensitively by a set of separate developers. The Heritage Resources Act of 1999 and the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA) itself in recent rulings favour a conservation approach that works with heritage precincts. The stakes are very high with multi-million rand deals involved.

What is preserved in a precinct relates to what is seen as immediately 'sexy' i.e. politically current in terms of heritage spaces. In Newtown, the Electric Workshop was converted into an interactive Science Centre, the Sci-Bono Centre. While the building is almost perfectly preserved, almost no reference is made to its historic function (in spite of its obvious relevance) or to the rest of the precinct. A bi-plane hangs oddly in mid-air from one of the cranes which lifted giant turbines for repair, its original fabric and function ignored. At the time of this conversion, the Jeppe Street Power Station continued to stand empty, except for the homeless people. All its machinery had been stripped.

Mary Fitzgerald Square was paved and set up as an entertainment area at huge expense, with much of the money coming from European funders. While millions of rands have been pumped into Constitution Hill and Kliptown, Museum Africa, part of the original Newtown Market Building, continues to languish with minimal funding for maintenance and exhibitions. Adjacent to the Square, the Workers Library and White Housing complex, in spite of its National Monument status credentials and legacy has also languished until recently, bedevilled by neglect and vandalism. In the last 10 years, the WLM complex has had a very chequered second life, as its champions have battled to both preserve the past and meet the educational and political needs of workers into the millennium and beyond.<sup>14</sup> In spite of its proximity to the expensively revamped Mary Fitzgerald Square and Sci Bono Discovery Centre, it was, until recently, seriously at risk as a structure. But there is some good news.

---

<sup>14</sup> See A Coombes, *History after apartheid*, (Wits University Press, 2004), pp. 200-201.

### ***A third life for the WLM***

The WLM complex has [again] 'been restored and reopened as a museum focusing on the lives of the migrant labourers who flocked to the city of gold.'<sup>15</sup> However, the City has not acknowledged the neglect of a City treasure over so many years. A recent article reports on the second refurbishment as if little had happened in 1995.

According to Eric Itzkin, the Deputy Director of Immoveable Heritage in the City, the Newtown Workers' Compound was declared a national monument in 1996 (sic). That same year, it was restored by conservation architects Alan Lipman and Henry Paine. In 2008, Paine returned to the site, and once again set about restoring the compound.

The new museum is worth an extended visit, and is ideal for learners from Grade 4 onwards. Here are some of the highlights:

Walls in the first room in the exhibition are lined with photographs of former residents, giving a brief history of their lives. Video clips are shown throughout the room, of the recollections and experiences of these people about their time at the compound. Items on display include brooms, blankets, bottles and passes - that hated symbol of apartheid oppression that had to be carried by each worker. The exhibition, focusing on the years from the early 1900s to the 1970s, reveals the hardships faced by migrant workers as well as their cultures.

Sections of the compound are now used as meeting rooms and there is a small library with books related to labour history and socialist theory. The museum is housed in the restored west wing, while the east wing is a temporary space for exhibitions and community gatherings.

Besides the museum, a new addition to the compound was also unveiled at the launch - a Visitors' Centre, built in front of the courtyard linking the museum with Newtown Park. This new building is flat-roofed, *so as not to compete with the historic buildings of the old compound*. At the same time, it provides a modern entry point to the museum. (my emphasis).

### ***Going for Gold: The second life of Jeppe power station***

In 2008 Anglo-Gold Ashanti completed its conversion of the Jeppe Power Station into its international Head Office. Almost all the power station was preserved and integrated into a modern design. The company worked carefully with the historical and heritage report, changing significant aspects of its design to accommodate public concerns about conservation of

---

15 Naidoo J Worker's Museum Opens. Available at: [www.joburg.org.za/index.php?ophan=content&task=view=1912Intemid=203](http://www.joburg.org.za/index.php?ophan=content&task=view=1912Intemid=203), as accessed on 2 September 2010.

industrial and electrical heritage. The result demonstrates how the beauty of industrial buildings may be enhanced in giving a building a second life. After researching the history of the power station and the Electrical Precinct, I was commissioned to write a book on the conversion. Bobby Godsell, the CEO of Anglo-Gold Ashanti, who spearheaded the conversion of the JPS, told me how his previous offices had looked over Newtown and how he became inspired:

Located in Diagonal Street, I became a fan of Newtown. I liked the vibe, I liked Diagonal Street, I liked the retail, and I liked the cultural district. But a cultural district cannot survive alone, it needs a commercial anchors. And the building (the JPS) was the best and obvious place to be.<sup>16</sup>

### **To em“power” the educator: Industrial heritage in the History Curriculum**

*Put on your thinking CAPS: Heritage in the History Curriculum (See Appendix B)*

In the Department of Basic Education’s Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) of September 2010, Heritage as a concept for study appears explicitly in Point 8 of the specific aims of the Intermediate, Senior and Further Education and Training History Curriculum. However Heritage sites or objects (resources in general) can provide educators and learners with material which meets the aims of Points 1-7. History and heritage are natural bedfellows.

A major opportunity to demonstrate this is in the Grade 10 Heritage assignment, which is extremely open-ended. This means there is no excuse not to include industrial heritage under the general rubric of Heritage. I gather this project has been moved from the Grade 12 portfolio, and I’m not sure what impact this will have on how seriously educators and learners take the process. I have helped a number of Grade 12 youngsters develop their Heritage projects on industrial heritage in various urban areas and with great success.

However, the guidelines for the project are too vague, especially at Grade 10 level and need to be more clearly scaffolded so that youngsters can make the most of opportunity given to them. I hope that the Heritage definitions from the Heritage Act in Appendix A helpful to educators in this regard. They need to be recast in much simpler language to be of help to both educators

---

<sup>16</sup> Personal interview, B Godsell, May 2008.

and learners. These things should never be left to lawyers!

## **Conclusion**

It is hoped that this article will inspire educators to rethink both the way they approach the teaching of late 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century history, by incorporating and integrating processes of South Africa's industrial and post industrial development into the narratives required by the curriculum. I hope they can find ways to link this up with teaching the multifaceted aspects of heritage. How to do this? Abandon your preconceptions about culture and heritage, expand your idea of what a field trip is and use the rich resources of landscapes peppered with buildings, containing not only the remains of machinery but the invisible lives and loves of those who have gone before us.

To end I will share my favourite quote from the Italian writer and novelist Italo Calvino:

The city ... does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps ... every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls... Cities are invisible stories and stories are invisible cities.



## APPENDIX A

Indicate who developed Appendix A and Appendix B. Indicate underneath or as footnotes\*

### IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS FROM THE NATIONAL HERITAGE RESOURCES ACT of 1999

- i. **“Cultural Significance”** means aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, linguistic or technological value or significance.
- ii. **“Heritage resource”** means any place or object of cultural significance.
- iii. **“National Estate”** means the national estate as defined in **Section 3**.  
Section 3.1 states *“For the purposes of this Act, those heritage resources of South Africa which are of cultural significance or other special value for the present community and for future generations must be considered part of the national estate and fall within the sphere of operations of heritage resources authorities.”*

The National Estate may inter alia include: (**See Section 3.2 of the NHRA**)

- Places, buildings, structures and equipment of cultural significance;
- Places which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage’;
- Historical settlements and townscapes;
- Landscapes and natural features of cultural significance;
- Objects of scientific or technological interest.

**Section 3(3) states:** Without limiting the generality of subsections (1) and (2), a place or object is to be considered part of the estate if it has either cultural significance or other special value because of:

- Its importance in the community, or pattern of South Africa’s history;
- Its possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of South Africa’s natural or cultural heritage;
- Its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of South Africa’s natural or cultural heritage;
- Its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of South Africa’s natural or cultural places or objects;
- Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;
- Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical

\* Extracts from the National Heritage Resources Act.

achievement at a particular period;

- Its strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;
- Its strong or special association with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in the history of South Africa; and
- Sites of significance relating to the history of slavery in South Africa.

### SECTION 7.1 (C)

‘Heritage resources assessment criteria , consistent with the criteria set out in section 3(3), ... must be used by a heritage resources authority or a local authority to assess the **intrinsic, comparative and contextual** significance of a heritage resource and the **relative benefits and costs** of its protection, so that the appropriate level of **grading of** the resource and the consequent responsibility for **management** may be allocated in terms Section 8’.

### Section 5 General Principles for Heritage Resource Management

This Section requires that “All authorities, bodies and persons performing functions...must recognise principles asserting the:

- Lasting value of heritage;
- The moral responsibilities of succeeding generations to manage heritage resources in the interest of all South Africans;
- The capacity of heritage resources to promote reconciliation;
- The need to avoid using heritage for sectarian or political gain;
- The need to develop skills capacity;
- The values of heritage as a means to encourage ongoing education;
- The importance of laws, procedures and administrative practices;
- The value of heritage resources as an important part of the history and beliefs of communities;
- The importance of integrating heritage conservation in urban and rural planning.

This **Section lists** what must be dealt with in the identification, assessment and management of the heritage resources of South Africa. These are listed below:

- i. Take account of all relevant cultural values and indigenous knowledge systems;
- ii. Take account of material or cultural heritage value and involve the least possible alteration or loss of it;
- iii. Promote the use and enjoyment of and access to heritage resources, in a way consistent with their cultural significance and conservation needs;
- iv. Contribute to social and economic development;
- v. Safeguard the options of present and future generations; and
- vi. Be fully researched, documented and recorded.

**APPENDIX B: CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY<sup>2</sup>  
STATEMENT: SEPTEMBER 2010** \*

<http://www.education.gov.za/CAPS/FINAL%20SOCIAL%20SCIENCES%20Sept4.pdf>

<http://www.education.gov.za/CAPS/history/HISTORY.pdf>

**Specific aims of History for the Intermediate, Senior and FET Phases**

History is a process of historical enquiry. A rigorous process of enquiry enables learners to:

- understand the range of sources of information available to study the past;
- extract and interpret information from different sources;
- evaluate the usefulness of sources, checking for reliability, stereotyping and subjectivity;
- recognise that there is often more than one perspective of historical events;
- explain why there are different interpretations of historical events and how people react to these interpretations;
- participate in constructive and focused debate through the careful evaluation of historical evidence;
- organise evidence to substantiate an argument when creating an original, coherent and balanced piece of historical writing;
- engage critically with issues of heritage and public representations of the past and with conservation.

---

\* A direct quote from the CAP statement, 4 September 2010, as accessed on 4 September 2010.

## FET HERITAGE ASSIGNMENT GRADE 10

### RECOMMENDED TEXTS/RESOURCES

Heritage sites, museums, monuments, oral histories, commemorative events, family and community traditions and rituals, local history, school history, family history

Website:

<http://heritage.thetimes.co.za/>

[www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org)

### What is heritage?

Heritage is a word that has different uses. One use of the word emphasises our heritage as human beings. It concerns human origins in Africa. Another use of the word concerns the ways in which people remember the past: at heritage sites; in museums; through the construction of monuments and memorials; and in families and communities (oral history). Some suggest that heritage is everything that is handed down to us from the past.

*The content detail is not specified in order to provide the choice of studying local, regional or national examples of heritage.*

**This assignment should include a research component in order to teach research skills in Grade 10.**

What is meant by heritage and public representations

Memory and oral histories as heritage

The importance of the conservation of heritage sites, monuments and memorials

Debates around heritage issues and the ways in which the past is represented, for example at heritage sites, in museums, monuments and memorials and in families and communities

The ways in which memorials are constructed in different knowledge systems for example monuments, ritual sites including grave sites

African origins of humankind as world heritage

**Concepts:** heritage, conservation, ideologies, heritage, oral history.