

# A brief summary of the IERM through the ages

From humble beginnings on October 30, 1933 this is a brief look at how the Association of Superintendents of Public Parks and Gardens (South Africa) morphed into what is known today as the Institute of Environment and Recreation Management.

Recreation was beginning to make demands for more provision for sporting facilities when the Association was first formed, resulting in its first ever conference held in 1935 on the Reef. The success of this conference led to more conferences being held at different centres across the country. These conferences not only made a big contribution to the development of the parks, but support was given to the training of the future personnel.

The term “parks” came to mean something more than a horticultural responsibility and embraced facilities for recreation for all ages.

The idea of such an Association was the brain child of Councilor DF Corlett, JP, who was the mayor of Johannesburg around the 1930's. The Association was to be called the Association of Superintendents of Public Parks and Gardens (SA) until 1944, when it had its first name change. The first president of the Association was Harry Sharp of Krugersdorp. There were 11 representatives present at its first meeting.

Soon after its first conference, it is suggested that the Certificate of membership and the motto *Natura artis magistra* be adopted. Around 1937 the importance of training young park officials and a syllabus for the 3 year course in Horticulture and landscape design which had been prepared in conjunction with Prof J Orr of the Witwatersrand Technical College was outlined. It was also around this time that the constitution, which was already in operation for 2 years was reviewed at the AGM and the requirements for election to Fellow, Associate and Ordinary membership were amended and adopted.

The introductory paper at the 1938 conference, entitled *Municipal Parks Administration*, presented by P. Robertson, was the first paper on administration featured in a conference programme and proved valuable as Parks Administration was at last emerging as a distinct discipline at local government level in South Africa. 1939 was a significant year as by the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, war had been declared, resulting in several members of the Executive Committee proceeding on active service and it was found necessary to elect a new committee. It was also the year that saw the first series of NTC I, II and III courses completed in Johannesburg.

In 1942 following instructions from the AGM held in Durban in 1939, enquiries had been made and an application for the Association to be chartered was forwarded to the Minister of Justice in terms of the Companies Act of 1926. The Association becomes a chartered Institute, 5 years after the proposal by P. Robertson at the Durban conference. At this stage the Association was known as the Institute of Park Administration.

The first meeting of the Board of Directors was held on the evening of November 1, 1944. A year later the Institute had its newly printed constitution as well as a certificate of membership, depicting the

Cyrtanthus obliquus which was adopted as the official emblem of the Institute at the Pretoria Conference.

The 1948 conference saw the ceremonial investiture of the president with the president's badge of office. This medallion, wrought in gold, has been worn by successive presidents ever since. The first branch of the Institute was established on the East Rand that same year.

The Eastern Cape Districts branch was established in 1954 thanks to a relationship and inter-town visits between the East London Parks Department and the Queenstown Parks Department.

The International Federation of Park and Recreation Administration (IFPRA), the brainchild of the British Institute of Park and Recreation Administration, was inaugurated at a conference held at Westminster, London in 1957. South Africa was well represented at this first meeting of IFPRA.

The National Diploma Course in Horticulture and Park Administration, later to be renamed The National Diploma in Park and Recreation Administration, was initiated at the Pretoria Technical College on 24 February 1959.

The 60's saw several mechanical innovations introduced to the park and recreation industry. Around 1965 there was a hint of possibly changing the name of the Institute to include the words "...and Recreation". The change would bring the Institute in line with similar organisations around the world. Later that year, the president, L Prosser, during his presidential address supported a change to "The Institute of Park and Recreation Administration (Southern Africa). The Institute's relations with IFPRA was being cemented when it received an invitation to present a paper at the first International European Congress in Monaco.

The Kirstenbosch Scholarship was established in 1966 to enable suitably qualified candidates to aid in the preservation of the indigenous flora of South Africa.

In October 1969 J Replon, P Botha and M Theron travelled to Stellenbosch for discussions with the university regarding the possibility of creating a degree course in Park and Recreation Administration. An agreement was reached subject to the Institute providing certain financial guarantees to the value of R100 000,00. This was beyond the Institutes means, but thanks to the effort of Phil Botha found support from the central government.

Messrs B van der Walt and Company of Johannesburg, were appointed to take over the secretarial duties with effect from 1 January 1972. It was also around this time that the board considered a major revision of the memorandum and articles of Association. The new constitution was to be submitted to the membership at the February 1973 AGM in East London.

1977 was the first time in its 43 year existence that the Institute was preparing to hold a congress later in the year jointly with another organization sharing the same aims and objectives as it did. This was the year that IFPRA had agreed to host its Congress in Durban. Both the Institute and IFPRA were to benefit from the experience.

An important change was to be made in 1980 which saw the appointment of a five-member standing committee that would, between meetings of the council, exercise all the powers and authority of the council.

The Institute has evolved over the years and had several name changes. Starting out as the Association of Superintendents of Public Parks and Gardens (South Africa) in 1933, it then changed its name to the Institute of Park Administration (South Africa) in 1945. Thereafter, in 1960, it was known as the Institute of Park Administration (Southern Africa). Seven years later, on the 22 November 1967 the institute had become known as the Institute of Parks and Recreation Administration (Southern Africa). It kept its name for 23 years until another change came in 1990 when it became known as the Institute of Park and Recreation Management (Southern Africa). 1995 was to usher in a final name change to what the Institute is known as today, the Institute of Environment and Recreation Management (Africa).

The Wafa scholarship was established by the World Association of Flower Arrangers in 1999 after the World Flower Show in Durban. It was established through the donation of R75 000 to the Institute of Environment and Recreation Management. The scholarship is funded by the interest from the investment. At least 20% of the interest must be reinvested every year. The scholarship is awarded to students studying in the fields of Horticulture, Landscape Technology, Parks and Recreation Administration or Nature Conservation.

November 18, 2002 would be a historic year as it saw the first black female president of the Institute, Pumla Radebe, being elected. There was an IERM membership structure review in 2005 with a new non-voting organizational membership class styles as "Associate Members" being created.

Fast forward a few years and the Institute of Environment and Recreation Management (IERM) is still as strong as ever. At the Institute of Environment and Recreation Management Conference in Cape Town, in October 2004, it was decided to establish The Institute of Environment and Recreation Management, National Cemetery Association (INCA). INCA would give effect to the conference declaration on cemeteries management, by developing a national framework policy document to guide municipalities and other stakeholders in interment practices.

Around 2013 the IERM adopted a new logo, bringing the Institute in line with current trends. Today the IERM boasts around 1000 members of which 100 are municipalities within six branches across the country. Currently, the Institute is pursuing the SAQA professionalisation and designation accreditation process.