



The old whaling station years back.

It's almost whale time

BY Nothando Mthembu

IT'S time to get excited as Sodurba Community Tourism Organisation (CTO) wraps up plans for the third annual Welcoming of the Whales Festival taking place on Saturday, 29 June 2019.

This event will take place in Foreshore Drive, between Anstey's Beach and Brighton Beach on the Bluff and promises a whole lot of markets, food stalls as well as various beach activities and exhibitions.

The free event is open to the public and it promises to be bigger and better. The whole of Foreshore Drive will be closed. The official opening will see local surfers make their way to the ocean to form a big circle at Anstey's Beach, which will be followed by the sounding of a whale horn, a recital

of a poem and a song by local music group DiTPO at 12pm.

"The majestic whales have always graced us with their presence and we're trusting that this year's turnout will be just as amazing," said Sodurba vice chairperson, Melissa Lee.

There will be complete road closure and this will create a street festival vibe, along the route there will be an educational section with various stakeholders including WESSA, WildOceans, Sharks Board, CMH Kempster Ford Durban South and many more.

Attendees are advised to wear comfortable shoes as it is a street festival that will involve quite a bit of walking.

Although the festival is free some of the activities inside, such as the beer garden, kids rides and market crafts will have an entry fee.

Many locals living in Durban are unaware that the city once supported a thriving whaling industry. Thousands of migrating whales were caught at sea and towed back to Durban to be processed into a number of products.

These were highly prized by both local and overseas consumers. Whaling ceased in Durban in 1975, but older residents won't have any problem remembering the bad smells which wafted from the whaling stations on the seaward side of the Bluff, making the lives of those who lived in the vicinity a misery.

The whaling season in Durban lasted from March to September, because whales would migrate northward past Durban at the start of the Antarctic winter and pass by again on their way back south.

During these months, the whalers could reap a rich harvest of whales without having to sail much more than 150 miles from Durban.

The whaling ships would sail up close to whales and shoot them with 165-pound metal harpoons loaded with explosive charges. The whales would be brought into the bay and pulled up out of the water onto a slipway on the bay side of the Bluff.

On Sunday morning, 30 June there will be a special tour of the historic whaling station which people can purchase tickets for.

"People will be welcomed with a goodie bag, coffee on arrival, a breakfast before going on an insightful private tour through the whaling station, guided by two highly knowledgeable tour guides," said Melissa. To book tickets for the private tour or for more information contact Sodurba on 071-143-1235 or email helga@sodurba.co.za.



Sodurba chairperson Helga du Preez and vice chairperson Melissa Lee are counting down the days leading up to the much anticipated Welcoming of the Whales Festival.