

DIAMOND CAPITAL

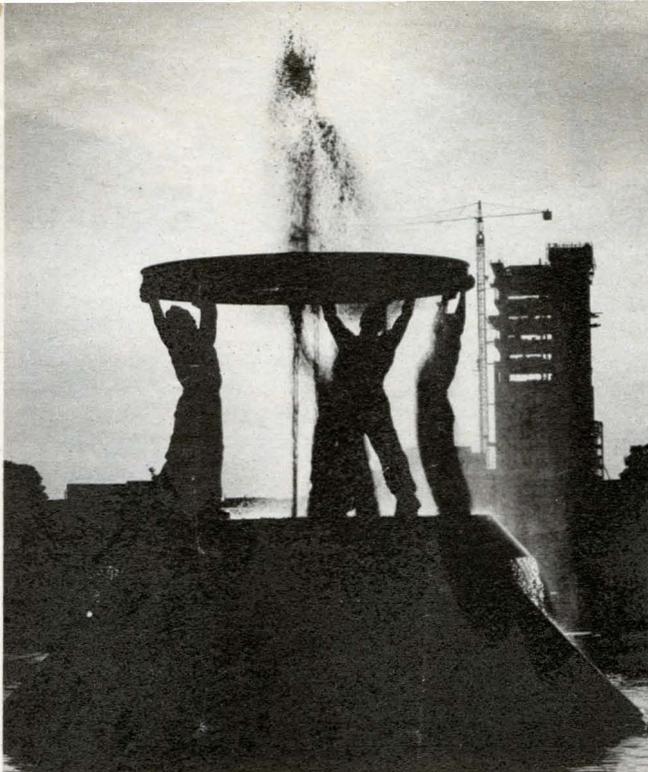
world). There are people who have lived all their lives in Kimberley who still cannot fathom the central city's confused geography.

On June 5, 1873 the tent town was officially christened Kimberley after the then British Secretary for Colonies, the Earl of Kimberley. Last month the city's fathers decided to honour the person most closely identified with their present day fortunes, although he is not a resident of the city — Mr Harry Oppenheimer. Mr Oppenheimer was installed with appropriate ceremony as the city's eighth freeman.

Mr Oppenheimer became chairman of De Beers on the death of his father, Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, in 1957. Today, De Beers' Central Selling Organisation markets 80 per cent of the free world's diamond production, and Kimberley is the home of four of the richest diamond mines in the world — De Beers, Wesselton, Bultfontein and Dutoitspan. With the Koffiefontein and Finsch mines, they produce more than 3,5-million carats a year.

There was a time when Kimberley was entirely dependent on its diamond mines, but the city has long since developed a vigorous industrial and commercial life of its own, although the words 'Kimberley' and 'diamonds' are synonymous, and always will be.

Speaking of Kimberley's future, Mr Oppenheimer said that the mines will eventually be worked out, "although fortunately not for a few years." The city will remain the centre of the world's diamond industry, even "when all the mines around are silent relics like the Big Hole," which was closed down in 1914. The new diamond-sorting building, now under construction, will be the nerve-centre of the international diamond industry, declared Mr Oppenheimer.



✓ 16/1/88
This unusual fountain in the Kimberley Civic Centre gardens represents four miners holding aloft a diamond sieve which is strongly identified with the fortunes of the world's diamond capital.

View of the Big Hole from tourists' viewpoint. The depth has been much reduced in recent years by rain-water filling the hole

