

Kimberley Ex-Pats Newsletter #50 17 August 2022

Reflections on the Kimberley project

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London August 2022

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### Newsletters

I was touched this week to receive an email from somebody on the list – who has never responded before – asking why they have not received any Newsletter since #49 back in April. How nice that somebody missed it enough to enquire. The reason of course is that I have not written one since then.

We have now reached **Newsletter Number Fifty** – which seems a good number at which to stop. I am going to leave it at that now unless something really important comes along that I feel I want to tell you about. If you want to read more Newsletters, you can catch up on the previous 49 – they are all on the website.

Even if I say so myself, I think they can bear re-reading. For instance, #15 was all about the youth activity in the 50s and 60s. #27 included the Spanish 'flu epidemic of 1918, Jabotinsky's visit to Kimberley as told by **Dan Jacobson** and also mentions updates on the **B Goldberg, Cecil Cohen, Gertie Haas** and **Laz Barnett** families. #32 I liked especially

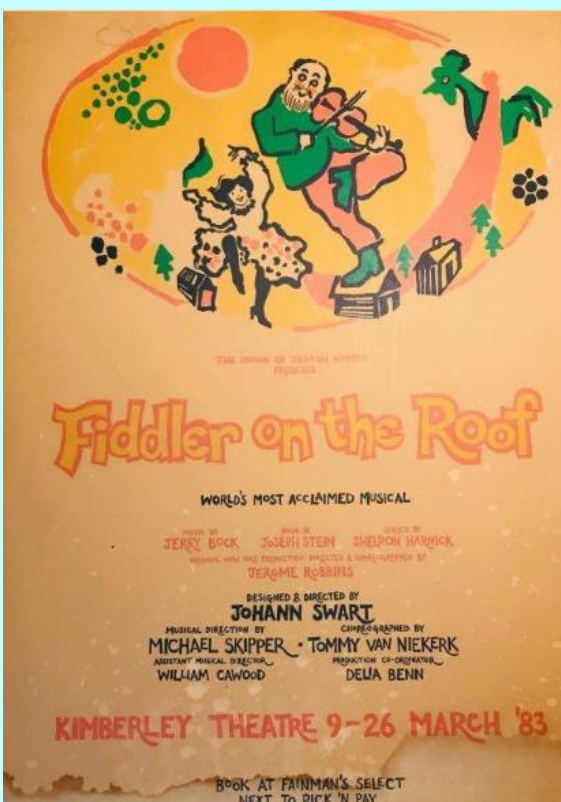


about Jews and Diamonds in Kimberley and #40 is **Delia Benn's** wonderful account of the production of Fiddler on the Roof at the Kimberley Theatre in aid of UJW in 1983.

if you want to read these Newsletters they are all listed on this link with a note about their content.

The purpose of the Newsletters was to encourage and stimulate people to send in information and pictures and to draw attention to the website which is there hopefully (if the technology and the energy continue to be available) as a permanent repository of all the Kimberley Jewry information.

If somebody else would like to write Newsletters to the Kimberley ex-pats, you are welcome to do so. I will pass on the mailing list, which is up to about 400 people, most of whom have expressed interest in receiving it. (Or if you collect the



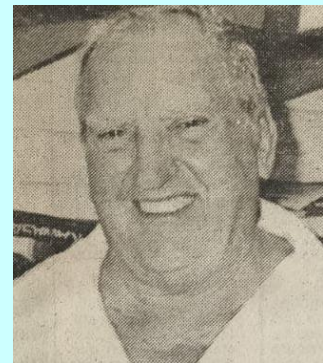
content for the Newsletter, I can edit and 'dress' it up nicely and circulate it for you).

## Kimberley Cheder Register 1919 - 1925

A few months ago, **Issy Salkinder** wrote to me that he had a register of all the children at the cheder classes in Kimberley between 1919 and 1925. He said he rescued it in the early 2000s when a room behind the Ark was being 'tidied up'. He says that there was a whole pile of books in the foyer that were being thrown out and he took this one. How wonderful that Issy had the foresight to retain this precious piece of Kimberley history! He was able to send it directly to the Kaplan Centre at UCT who will digitize it and store it safely in their archives. In it are all the names you might expect and some!

Issy writes: 'I have sent the attendance register to Cape Town. There is a great deal of information about many of the ex-pats' families in the register. Here are a few of my family members that I discovered in the book.'

- Louis Salkinder my dad (right)
- Mike Salkinder uncle
- Joe Salkinder uncle
- Lily Salkinder aunt
- Ruth Salkinder aunt
- Mike Datnow my dad's cousin
- Jacobson family my mom's cousins



Other family members by marriage were the Brenners and Shapiros. Most of the Salkinder and Segal families left Kimberley after the war and early 50s. Since most of the congregants at the time may be known to members and expats of the GWH Congregation, I am sure they would like to see the names.'

If you click [View album](#) that Issy has kindly supplied, you can see the full list of names on each page by clicking them one at a time. for instance, in Baby Class, with **Joe Salkinder** we find **Harry Klein, Monty Blumenthal, Sadie Lincow, Jean Callis** and **Mark Rauff** amongst others. In Sub A, with **Lily Salkinder** was **Rachel Datnow**. In Sub B, amongst others with **Louis Salkinder** were **Bert Apter, Bennie David, Dinah** and **Michael Datnow** and **Herman Jacobson**. In Standard 1, we find **Cyril Frank, Freda Blumenthal** and **Pauline Zolty**. (Pictured are Ray and Mike Datnow in later life!)



I wonder what else might have been in that little room behind the Ark when they 'tidied' it up – and what other treasures were in the pile of books in the foyer that the powers that be thought should be thrown away. Books in a synagogue should never be thrown away. And what with somebody giving all the pre-war synagogue books to the wastepaper drive for the war effort – it shows how urgent it is to make sure all existing documents are safe. Thank you Issy for saving this register. It is being scanned as we go to press and will be available to read on our Kimberley website. Look under the 'Community' section in due course.

## The Kimberley Jewish Community Website Project – is now Done!

Several years ago, I had a dream of creating a website commemorating the lives of the Jewish men and women who came to live and work in the metropolis that quickly grew on the dry and dusty plains on the edge of the Kalahari.

I started by collecting email addresses – and writing to all those I could find who came from or were still in Kimberley. The first letter I wrote was nine years ago in August 2013. It was to try to find out who and where our Kimberley residents and ex-pats were. Slowly people, who were spread around the world, started to respond and tell me about their families' lives in Kimberley.



In early in 2014 I was very fortunate to be introduced to **Eli Rabinowitz**, by **Saul Issroff**, the president of the South African special interest group of Jewish Genealogy.

Eli is the indefatigable researcher and documenter of communities, who specialises in making websites for Jewish Communities in towns and villages both in Eastern Europe and in South Africa.

Though Eli lives in Perth Australia, and I am in London, we actually met soon after when he stayed with me for a few days in London on his way to Poland. (Eli had this picture taken of me and him on one of his visits to my home in London – you will no doubt recognise the African baskets on the wall above our heads.) We spent many hours deciding how to develop the website so that it would be easy to navigate and serve as a repository of the Kimberley family stories and of articles and of the newsletters.

I was thrilled when in 2014 Eli had developed it and the [Kimberley Jewish Community Website](#) became a reality. **Stella Clingman** (née Kroll) in Australia was the first to send an amusing story of growing up in Kimberley and her time at Girls' High School. Her sister **Natalie** and husband **Cecil Sussman** were special correspondents with wonderful memories. **Daphne Gillis** and **Trevor Toubé** were eager contributors and, like so many of you, were very appreciative of the endeavour. **Sarah Goodman** and **Bernard** and **Hellen Benjamin** have been keen writers and commentators. Eli and I have continued to work together across the oceans to create and populate this website.



**Leon Chonin** in Toronto engaged fully and has made a significant contribution to the website. Leon wrote wonderful articles about his family – especially appreciating his grandfather **Lipi Weinstein** who was the mainstay of the Grinne shul. He wrote about the travels of his father and mother. He wrote a tribute to his brother **Seville Chonin** who sadly died very young. He also did profiles of **Rev Goldberg** and **Rabbi Werner**. (They can all be found in the family section of the website.)



Leon also wrote articles about **Jewish education** in Kimberley and how difficult it was **keeping a Jewish and kosher home**.

Leon's magnum opus was a survey of business life of Kimberley Jews. Helped by **Milton Jawno** in Israel, who has a prodigious memory of people and places, he compiled a table of all the business and professional activity, where it took place, when it started and when the business closed – and the family ultimately moved away. You can find this here under the 'Community' section: [business activities](#).

Leon has also edited and contributed to several Newsletters and researched and written about several other families.

We have listed the names of 233 Jewish people who lived and worked in Kimberley. You can see it here [List of Kimberley people](#) It's clearly not comprehensive – there must have been many more. Some 150 of those families now have extended family stories on the [Families](#) section. Some are just the filled-in questionnaire – which is a good start, but most now have developed into fulsome and attractive stories with pictures describing the family and their lives and activities in Kimberley.

We have wedding galleries capturing many nuptials in the Kimberley shul from 1911 to 2019 with their retinues identified. (It is interesting to see how many have stamped on them 'Kimco Proof'!) Again, this wedding list is not comprehensive. We have a few Batmitzvahs, but only one Barmitzvah picture. Surely families have barmitzvah pictures!

Today I am pleased to say that the Kimberley Jewish Community website is held to be a shining example of its kind. Thanks to those of you who have contributed, it has been filled with family pictures and stories, and the history of the activities of Kimberley families whether in business, in farming, in wartime, in cultural life, in sports, in youth activities or in religious life. See the 'Community' pages, and the 'Articles' pages of the website to read all about them.

Recently I was pleased to have refurbished the [Synagogue Pages](#) I have compiled the histories of the two communities and created virtual tours of Kimberley's two synagogues – only one of which remains standing. We have been blessed with some wonderful pictures taken by Kimberley ex-pats and associates, **Colin Bloch, Shawn Benjamin, Alon Berman** and **David Jawno**. (But then the building is very photogenic!)



**1928-1973 Lipi Weinstein**

Lipi Weinstein (left) was the de facto prayer leader in the Grinne Shul for an unbroken 45 years. Later when the two communities merged (daily services in Baronial Street and Shabbat and Holidays in Memorial Road) he supported all the Rabbis in the main shul.

You can read Leon Chonin's tribute to his grandfather Lipi Weinstein too

With help from several of you, we have found ample material on the lives of almost all the [Kimberley Ministers](#) who served from 1875 to 2020. Barney has provided information on the most recent ones.

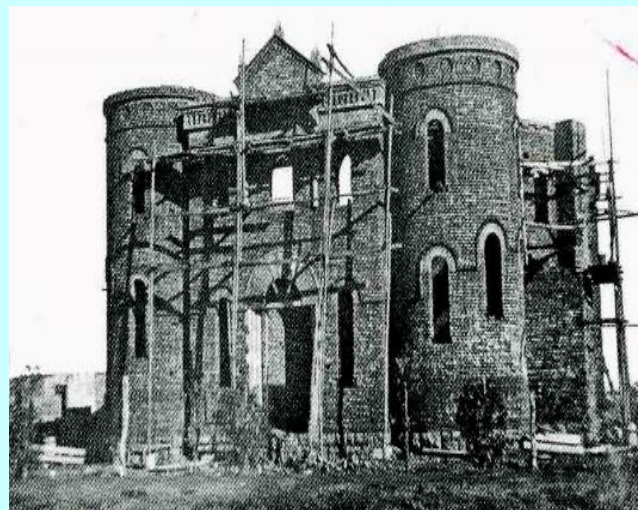
Through working on this project, I have been pleased to connect with

many of you again (or for the first time). I have learned so much about the history of Kimberley and its Jewish population through the years. In my time (1940s and 50s) there were about 180 families. I effectively left Kimberley at barely 17 to go to university to return only for holidays while my parents still lived there (as so many of you did – either for further education or to work in a bigger city). When I was growing up in Kimberley, I lived in a ‘bubble’ of my own extended family – my mother’s three sisters, **Hilda Hendler**, **Hannah Frank** and **Eileen Sandler** and my father’s brother **Julius Kretzmar** and their families all lived in Kimberley. My best friend **Norma Levinsohn** lived just across the lane that ran between the backs of our houses. So, I never ventured very far.

After my BA at Wits University in Johannesburg (1959) and a teaching certificate at the University of Cape Town in 1960, I spent a year teaching standard 4c at Barnato Park Girls High School in Johannesburg – not realising of course the Kimberley significance of the name of the school. Then straight after our wedding in the Kimberley shul in February 1962, **Ronnie Auerbach** and I left for England, and we have been here ever since. (We celebrated our diamond wedding anniversary this year.)

Almost everything that we have gathered and put on the website was new and interesting to me. I was sustained by your enthusiastic response to the development and your contributions of stories, articles and pictures and comments. It has made this a very fulfilling enterprise for me. Together with Eli we have filled out the story of Kimberley Jewish life. And to know that many of you appreciate this, is wonderful.

I am particularly pleased to have been contacted by **Charles Bonas** and **Peter Harris**, descendants of **Gustave Bonas** and **Col Sir David Harris**, two of the most significant pioneer diamantaires of Kimberley. They were the two people largely responsible for the site, the design and the construction of the magnificent Memorial Road Synagogue – seen here under construction during the Boer War in 1902.



The story of David Harris has been much updated. Since I last wrote to you in April, I met with his great grandson Peter Harris who brought information and many pictures. Go to his page in 'families' to see the newest version updated August 22. This includes family pictures and anecdotes and the inscription on the inscribed silver trowel he was given in 1901 by the Chevra Kadisha, for laying the foundation stone of the cemetery prayer hall. (Also it has corrected typos from the July version) (Bonas laid the foundation stone for the synagogue)



I wanted to know more about another pioneer, **Alfred Beit** – and not finding anything much I have compiled a monograph myself on South Africa's dear man and financial genius – very much the unsung hero in the story.



My story of Beit is based on the personal memories of his contemporaries. I am particularly fascinated by his personality and his story, and I am sure you will be too. It's the story of Kimberley – of the nail-biting work to get all the mines under one control and so safeguard the industry. The outcome was never certain, and the huge investment needed for the enterprise made it a nerve-wracking experience. It was touch and go all the time. His devotion to Rhodes made Rhodes scheme work.

I have revised my Alfred Beit Part 1 Kimberley with new material and pictures, and it (dated August 2022) will shortly replace what is there on the pioneers and families page. I will also publish here on the website Part 2 of the story, which is Beit's continued activity on the Goldfields of the Transvaal and his role in the Jamison Raid and the Boer War. Also, it deals with his

life in London and his work in completing Rhodes vision of opening up Rhodesia for the British Empire. Watch out for these updates.

So now I feel that the Kimberley Website project is finished. As far as I am concerned, I have achieved most what I set out to do. It can never be complete or comprehensive – but it is what it is, because you have contributed your story. I would have liked to have had **Jane Beth Cantor's** grandmother's story transcribed that she wrote about Taung. It would still be nice to have a story of the **Horwitz family** who were so important in Kimberley and maybe one or two others. If they come in, I will edit them and Eli will post them.

I am happy that this historical Kimberley website has provided a platform for me to research and write about my own family. Both my mother's (**Beryl Kretzmar** née Bergman) and father's (**Noel Kretzmar**) extensive family stories are now on the website. Many of you have also said how much your grandchildren have appreciated somewhere to find out about their own family history. So now Eli and I can concentrate on other projects.



## Preserving the footprint of Jewish Kimberley

I would like to turn my energy to helping Barney in his endeavour preserve the footprint of Jewish Kimberley. I know this is something close to his heart. We all also know that Barney has a huge amount on his plate, therefore I wish to support and help him do this. We have identified the people who can help and sourced money to pay for digitizing the documents and registers, (which will remain intact in Kimberley). We also intend to photograph and transcribe every gravestone and create a virtual cemetery that we can all visit leave a stone and make a contribution to the upkeep. I hope to be in touch with Barney very soon and to have his cooperation to set this in motion.

## Community History On-Line (CHOL)

Another spin-off from our work on the Kimberley community is the development of an entity called **Community History Online (CHOL)**. Eli and I, working with Professor **Adam Mendelsohn** of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish studies at UCT and **Gavin Morris**, the Director of the Jewish Museum in Cape Town, have brought together all those working in the field of Jewish Community history in some form of online format. Other towns, such as Vryburg and Upington and Muizenberg have websites and East London, Bloemfontein and others have Facebook pages.



As well as documenting what is already happening, CHOL is also a platform for new initiatives. We have an interactive email list for people to communicate with each other – like in the search of South African Jewish cookbooks and offering or asking for information. CHOL has held two **International Conferences** online with fascinating speakers including **Marc Latilla** on early Johannesburg, **Gail Loon Lustig** on Cape Town General Practitioners of Belville and Parow and **Roy Ogus** on his journal of the South African special interest group.

It also now has its own CHOL website that **Bramie Lenhoff** from Upington has set up for us. If you want to see it, it is at [www.chol.website](http://www.chol.website). At the moment there may just a holding page which tells you at the bottom how to join the CHOL interactive mailing list – which you are all welcome to join and hear about new activities. The CHOL website will be launched on Monday 22 August 22. On it, you will be able to read about the aims and activities, the people involved, and link to each of the events of the two International Conferences which were recorded and are on the website of the South African Jewish Museum. And you will see how other projects are developing.

## New CHOL project launching next week Monday 22 August 22 – Share your Stories

Next week CHOL launches the 'Share your Stories' project. This is an initiative of **Gail Loon Lustig** who invites you to: **Join the 'Share your Stories' forum.**

Gail, who grew up in Cape Town and qualified in medicine at UCT, and who now lives in Israel, says:



'Stories fill the gap between history and memoir and can be more 'telling' about life in South Africa and of South Africans wherever they are.

'As a group, we plan to meet regularly to share stories, reading out loud what we have written or just listening to the stories of others and then have time for comments afterwards. We plan on arranging writing workshops, introducing related topics and other challenges over the course of time. For those who haven't yet taken the plunge to write, but like listening to and discussing stories, you are just as welcome to join the Forum and attend our meetings.'

If you would like to be included, please [email](#) me and I can let you know the meeting link.'

The first story-sharing meeting is on Zoom on Monday 22 August 6.00pm UK time. Five people from Israel the UK and America will be sharing their stories. If you want to join and listen, please email [gail@chol.website](mailto:gail@chol.website) and she will send you the Zoom link for the Share your Story meeting on Monday. If you have stories you would like to share in the future get in touch with Gail. And if you have an idea for a new CHOL project get in touch with us at [info@chol.website](mailto:info@chol.website).

So, now. at the end of Newsletter #50, its Tot Siens, Lehitraot and Au Revoir.

We are not closing the door, however. Eli and I will continue to tidy up the website, to add new information and stories, but I will not be proactive in seeking them out. If they come, they come. As you see, we are now putting our efforts into other projects.

I will be happy to arrange a pre-Rosh Hashanah zoom for all Kimberlites in September. Let me know if you are interested.

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