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Kimberley cemeteries – merged Spreadsheet of burials



Dear Friends of Kimberley

As you may know we are working very hard to compile **accurate lists of all the Jewish burials** in Kimberley and to devise safe ways for you to visit whenever you want to. You can show how you remember your family members interred there under the hot sun and red earth of Kimberley – and support those who look after the physical graves. I am sure it is true that every one of us know more Kimberley people that are resting in the Kimberley cemeteries, than are currently living there. This is a vital and timely enterprise. And you will have a chance to support it soon.

As you may know, the Kimberley heritage steering group commissioned Shawn Benjamin who grew up in the Jewish Community in Kimberley and is now a professional photographer in Cape Town to go to Kimberley over the Christmas period 22/23 and he has taken beautiful photographs of all the gravestones in both the current Green Street and Pioneer Stead Street cemeteries. Supported by Barney and staying with his dear friend Trevor Datnow, Shawn was honoured to do this sacred task. We have put these details together on a spreadsheet and matched the photographs up with the burial records sent by Barney, and the additional information that many of you have been able to supply.

The Stead Street photographs are being uploaded onto the spreadsheet. Meantime it would be very helpful if you will take a look at this spreadsheet, attached, to see if it is accurate for your family and if you can supply any further information. if you can fill in the names of the 'sorrowing wives or husbands children - and grandchildren' then we will be able to piece the families together properly.

Kimberley Jewish Cemeteries

There are three places where Jews are buried in Kimberley.

New Cemetery, Green Street, West End

(1929) This 'new' and still current cemetery was inaugurated by William Sagar JP, the much admired and long-serving (over 20 years) Congregation President, and former Mayor of Kimberley. He thanked the Mayor and the City Council for granting the land for the grounds and laid the foundation stone for the new Prayer Hall with a suitably inscribed silver trowel. Rev Konviser led the congregation round the grounds, with Cantor Rudy chanting psalms on 24 March 1929. Just four years later, in 1933, Rev Konviser was very sad to have to officiate at William Sagar's interment. You can read details of his funeral cortege and oration on page 5 in the story of 'Sagar, William and Family' on the website. There are approximately 500 graves. This cemetery is still in use, but few people are left in Kimberley (2023) to be buried there. Many Kimberley residents who left the city to be nearer their children, are buried elsewhere.



The Pioneer Cemetery Stead Street (1901-

1929) was consecrated by the long-serving Rev Harris Isaacs who served the community for 30 years. The foundation stone of the Ohel (prayer hall) was laid by Col (later also Sir) David Harris in 1901. The silver trowel right was presented to Harris on the occasion. **The inscription reads:** Chevra Kadisha – in Hebrew letters. Presented to Lt Col David Harris VD MLA by the Griqualand West Jewish Burial Society in commemoration of his laying the Foundation Stone of the mortuary Kimberley, January 23rd, 1901, and the Hebrew date '3 Shevat, 5661'. This cemetery was in use for nearly 30 years and also has about 500 graves. Evidence of neglect and vandalism was seen by Shawn in this cemetery.

(The Jewish burial society is known as the 'Chevra Kadisha' – the 'Holy Brotherhood' or perhaps 'Holy Society'. It is deemed a special mitzva (honour) to prepare a body for burial, because you are doing something for a person who can never thank you.)



The Dutoitspan Cemetery (1871 – 1901) on De Beers grounds,

This is a picture of Kimberley's oldest Jewish cemetery – in use from 1871 presumably until 1901 when Stead Street was inaugurated. There are approximately 30 Jewish graves that are not accessible to the general public without special permission. In the early days of the diamond fields with rough and unhygienic conditions, many of the young men who came to Kimberley to try their luck succumbed – including Jewish



young men. We do not have a list of Jewish burials in this cemetery, but we know that one of the first burials in 1871 was that of a 17-year-old young man named Arthur Marcus.

In June 2017 the Ekapa Mining company who has taken over from De Beers decided to rehabilitate the cemetery. This massive undertaking took 15 months to complete, the rededication service taking place on 26 September 2018 as part of the national Heritage Month. This munificent gesture saw a general clean up, clearing invasive trees, shrubs and bushes, as well as an overgrown and unkempt cemetery. Headstones and crosses were repaired and cleaned, overspill from tailing heaps were suctioned off many buried graves, the Jewish Prayer Hall was cleared of rubble, and most scrap metal, bottles, broken vases, destroyed railings and other refuse removed. Special machinery had to be manufactured for the lifting of heavy granite or marble that had been vandalised. Demarcated pathways were made neat and the gate and horse rail repaired and painted. During this entire time a photographic record of the headstones and crosses was documented, and in conjunction with this, the cemetery has also been divided into lettered and numbered sections, thus making any visit by families that much easier to find their loved ones buried within. A memorial wall has been built for visitors to pay their respects and lay flowers should their loved ones not have a marked grave with headstone. Here below is the tidied up Jewish section.



The Situation on the ground

Barney Horwitz, the longstanding Chairman of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation, does a magnificent and valiant job of caring for the cemeteries and our loved ones that lie beneath – against immeasurable and inexhaustible odds.

Just recently, Barney has told us that since about June last year he has had to carry the costs of the two cemeteries personally at around R10 000,00 per month just for security and emergency repairs which included having to rebuild the front wall of the West End Cemetery after someone drove a truck into it and then drove off.'

But help is at hand. We have set up the **Kimberley Jewish Heritage Steering Group** to support Barney and those in Kimberley and to help preserve the footprint of Kimberley Jewry for the future.

As an emergency, the **Horwitz family members** from all around the world have contributed significant funds and are helping Barney over the current crisis of repairing walls and the Ohel and ensuring security. But this is not just a family affair, it affects all of us. It will soon be time that we all rolled up our sleeves to help him. We will let you know when to do this. So please keep this in Mendelsohn.

The Virtual Cemetery

There is shortly going to be the ideal opportunity for you to put your hand in your pocket to ensure your loved ones are cared for – when we reveal our **Kimberley Virtual Cemetery**. Here you will be able to visit their graves, whenever you like – and in complete safety – from wherever you are. You will be able to leave a stone, upload a picture of the person, leave a message on their memorial wall and more importantly you will be able to **buy a leaf** for their ‘tree of life’ – the funds going mainly directly to Barney in Kimberley and a small amount going to the amazing and generous creators of this special Virtual Cemetery site for us.

The **Kimberley Virtual Jewish Cemetery** is just weeks to being ready to be uploaded. However, to make sure it is comprehensive and accurate I am attaching a spread sheet again of the names and pictures of over 1000 graves that have been beautifully photographed by Shawn Benjamin over the Christmas period.

Your help is needed again to corroborate the details and fill in more facts please – if you have them.

It's frustrating that the fashion seems to have been to just say that they were deeply mourned by his or her sorrowing spouse and children etc. More importantly for us now is to know who the spouses and children were, so we can put the families in place and together. So, I am asking you to look at what we have compiled and to supply if you can, any of the following information if you have it – even if it was not on the gravestone, which you can see by clicking on the link at the end of each line.

The table consists of surnames and first names. There is also a column for ‘nicknames’ or any other important facts that they were known as such as ‘Life Pres of GWHC’ or ‘Mayor of Kimberley’ or their professional title like Rev or Dr. Where there was an age at death, I have tried to calculate their birthdate – but please check if that is accurate. Then please say whose wife or husband they were and the names of their children and grandchildren – even if these were not written on the gravestone. In the case of a death of a child – his or her parents could be named. Where no spouse or children are mentioned at all, I have said ‘bachelor’ or ‘spinster’ – and we could name a brother or sister or parent if we know it. I have also added a link, to further information on that person or family – if indeed we have any. Most importantly – is there somebody that you know is buried in the Green Street Cemeteries where you don't see an entry at all!! Please give us all the information you can about them and we will try to rectify the matter.

So, to see that our, soon to come, Virtual Jewish Cemetery has the most accurate information when it is revealed, please email me any changes or additions that you would like to see **by Thursday night if possible**. (don't change the document itself, just email me the information)

I will keep you posted of the progress. I look forward to hearing from you. Geraldine

(If you would rather not be on this Kimberley mailing list, please let me know.)