

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London

The Old Stead Street Cemetery Kimberley & how to make your donation.



Dear Friends of Kimberley

Looking inside the Stead Street Cemetery 1901 – 1929

We have now been able to go into the old cemetery in **Stead Street**, thanks to Shawn Benjamin and his photography trip to Kimberley over the Christmas Holidays. One good thing you can see in his pictures is that there has been abundant rain in Kimberley. The good red earth looks healthy and the vegetation vigorous.



A pleasant and also shady place for some of our ancestors to lie in rest. But many gravestones had to be uncovered in order to photograph them.

The Stead Street Cemetery was inaugurated by Col David Harris in 1901. (He was only made a 'Sir' in 1911). It is clear though, that it was in use long before 1901 because the records show that more than 250 burials took place there before 1901.



The earliest grave in the Stead Street records, is that of **Arthur Marcus aged 17, in 1871** (left). This is often called the 'Pioneer' Cemetery – but this could be misleading as there is also an even older Jewish burial ground as part of the Dutoitspan Cemetery (that was shown in a previous Newsletter, # 54). We are hoping to find the burial records for that cemetery. So, to be clear I will refer to this one as simply the old 'Stead Street' Cemetery.

I have discovered from the old Stead Street Cemetery records, that Kimberley was a dangerous place in the late 19th century. We often hear about the young Jewish men who made their way to the diamond fields and who made good as buyers and brokers, as auctioneers and traders in all sorts of mining and living goods, and as innkeepers and hoteliers. But what the cemetery records tell us, is that many young men who came all the way from Birmingham and

Liverpool and London, and Germany and Austria did not make it good – or even make it at all, as they sadly died in their teens and twenties. I have counted that before 1904, out of about 260 burials there are records of forty men who died under the age of 35. Not all the stones give the ages – so there may even be more.

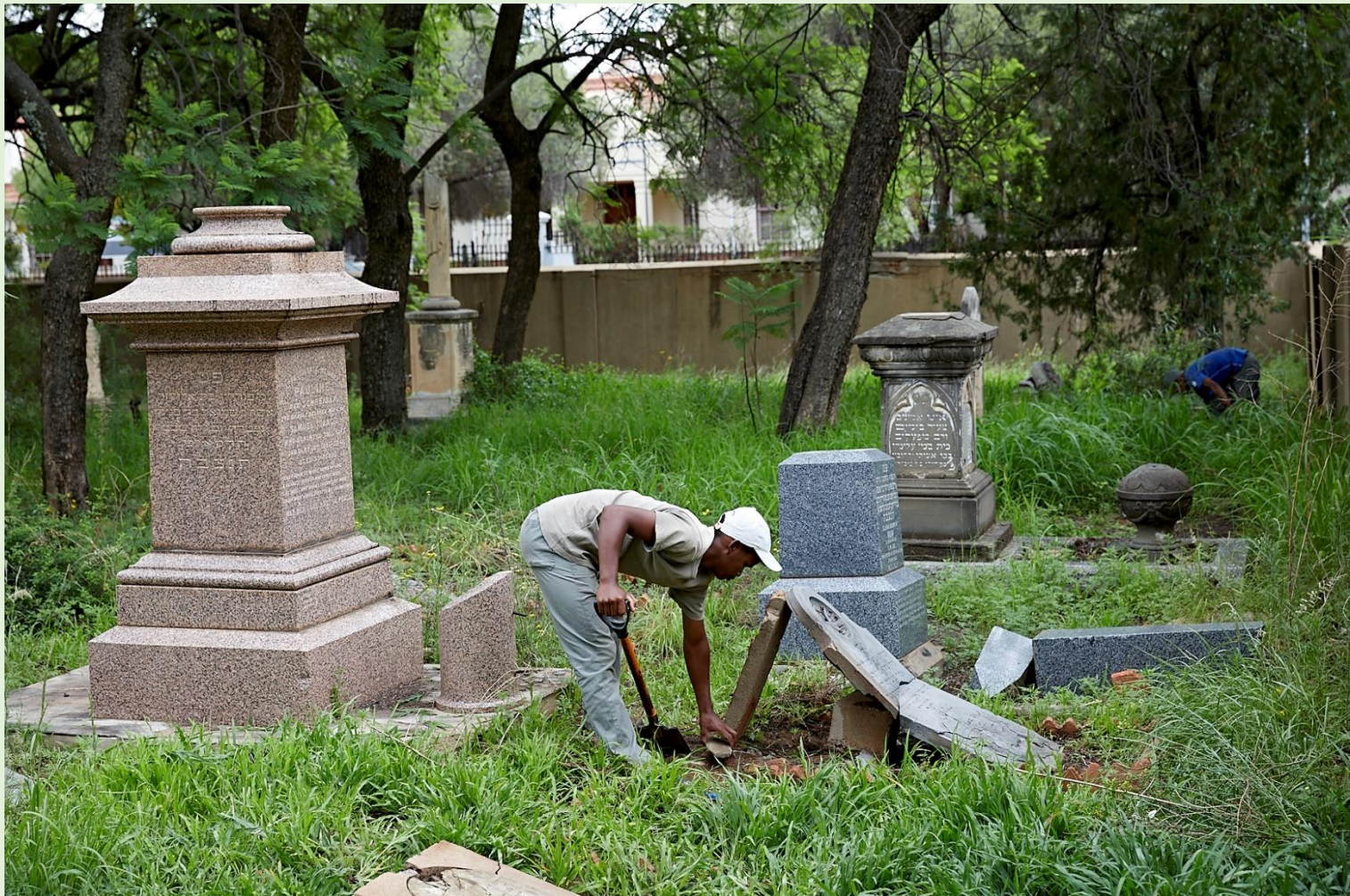


Above, we see the tombstones that Shawn Benjamin photographed of **Julius Weinberg** who died in 1901 aged 26; **Abraham Drusinsky** who died in 1900 at 21 and **Philip Hepker** from Goldingen in Courland, Latvia who died in 1899 at 27 – mourned by parents far away on other continents.

Many of the gravestones in this cemetery are now illegible. The letters have come off the white, probably Portland, stone ones as above, and the pink sandstone ones (like Arthur Marcus's) have simply crumbled away. Many are not standing straight, and even more are not standing at all. Quite a few are broken. This is about the ravages of time. It is nobody's fault. Barney Horwitz does an unbelievable job in looking after the cemetery properties, but with the passing of time – the last burial here was nearly 100 years ago – this deterioration is inevitable. However, I feel comfortable, and I hope you do too, that the setting is peaceful and whatever happens to the stones above, the bodies lie peaceful and undisturbed below.



We are very grateful to Shawn Benjamin and to the team of gardeners and cleaners sourced by Trevor Datnow and Barney Horwitz, who so sensitively uncovered the graves for photographing. I am glad to say that we now have the best possible images of each of the gravestones that we could find in this cemetery.



As you see below, in the picture of graves next to the Ohel, those tombstones of dark polished granite with their inscriptions etched out, seem to have stood the test of time best.



The Virtual Cemetery

The Kimberley Virtual Cemetery is nearly there. The information on the Virtual Cemetery site will be taken from the spreadsheet. I am sending this to you again. You can click on the image link (second last column) to see the stone and click again, and it will be enlarged and hopefully you will be able to read the inscription. Please check to see that I have incorporated all the changes and additions that you have already sent me.

There are still some questions. We still have unidentified Salkinders, Horwitzes, Jacobsons and Kaplans and others – and of course Levys and Cohens. Several are dated 1900.01.00 which is not a proper date but may mean an infant or child. Any information on those would be helpful.

Please see how much information you can supply, so that we can know who was married to whom and who their children or parents were. When the site is up you will be able to write a message on each person's wall of remembrance, upload a picture of that person and leave a stone to show that you have visited.

How to send your contribution

The Kimberley Heritage Steering Group is so pleased that you have expressed the earnest desire to financially help this process of creating the Virtual Cemetery. We are now in a position to receive your donation. Please see below for details of how to make a donation.

The Virtual Cemetery will give you the double benefit of enabling you to visit your family graves at any time from wherever you are, and also knowing that most of funds you donate, will actually go to Barney Horwitz and those on the ground, who so dedicatedly care for the physical cemetery.

Whatever you decide to donate – substantial or modest, will be gratefully received and well used. All those that donate at least £50 will receive a leaf (or multiples of leaves) on the 'Tree of Life' on the memorial page of a person or persons of their choice.

How to send your donation.

To find out how to send a donation email geraldine@chol.website

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

Geraldine

Kimberley Ex-Pats Newsletter #56 Old Stead Street Cemetery

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London 20 April 2023

From photographs by Shawn Benjamin

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