

# Kimberley Ex-Pats Newsletter #58 November 2023

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London

## The Virtual Cemetery for Kimberley is accomplished!

### The Kimberley Jewish Cemetery has now become a Virtual Reality!

As you know, it has long been my dream that Kimberley Ex-Pats, who are now spread around the world, could be able to visit the Kimberley Jewish cemeteries to pay our respects to our loved ones lying in the red earth and sunshine of Kimberley. Travelling to Kimberley at this stage is not easy. And once there, one can't even visit the cemetery without being accompanied by an armed guard!

I discovered that the Cape Town Cemeteries Board had devised a remarkable online system that you could not only visit the graves, but actually interact with them like leaving a stone and uploading a picture. I wanted to do the same for Kimberley. I wanted us to be able to visit in safety at any time to see and interact with the graves of our dear family and friends that we are now separated from. I thought it might be impossible. But I persevered.



At last, this has come to pass, and I am delighted to announce that the Virtual Jewish Cemetery for Kimberley is open and operational. Please visit and try it out. See how it works for you. (I will give you the link of how to get there at the end.)

### Blessing the Cemetery

I am hoping we can get together soon on Zoom to officially launch the site and have invited Barney Horwitz and Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft to give it their blessing in the very near future.

### Donating to support the Jewish footprint:

The Kimberley Jewish Heritage Group (KJHG) is so pleased that many of you have expressed the earnest desire help financially to preserve the footprint in Kimberley in meaningful ways such as this Virtual Cemetery.

Please consider donating now. You should be able to do this very easily **via PayPal on the Virtual Cemetery site**. You can simply make a donation, and you can also 'purchase' leaves on the 'tree of life' of relatives and friends. Your funds will go into a dedicated account set up in the UK by the Kimberley Jewish Heritage Group (KJH).

**The Kimberley Jewish Heritage Group** (KJH (first called a ‘Steering Group’) was set up in 2021 with the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation Chairman, Barney Horwitz, and the late David Allen (the President) and Shirley Allen of Kimberley, together expats in the UK (myself and Barney’s cousin Jonathan Joseph – who is chairing KJH) and in the USA (Delia and Cherille – née Brown). The purpose is to help to preserve the Jewish footprint of Kimberley. Through this account we raise funds for the projects needed for preserving the heritage, and also supply funds to Barney and those on the ground in Kimberley, who so dedicatedly care for the physical cemetery and community.

Whatever you decide to donate – substantial or modest, will be gratefully received and well used. Please try now.

## The Tree of Life

A few people already donated some months back when we first asked. We were delighted that we raised nearly £1000 from four people in donations ranging from £50 to £500. If you were one of them and would like to ‘commute’ that donation into ‘leaves on a tree of life’, please email me and I can facilitate that for you.

If you would like some leaves for a relative or friend, try it out now: One Leaf is £50; two for £75 and you get four leaves for £100.



## How did we manage to create this virtual cemetery?

In investigating the Cape Town site, I was led to the company who made it – and more importantly, the person whose brainchild this is. His name is **Larry Galansky** and he made the Cape Town site for his father Sam Galansky who is the Chairman of the Cape Town Cemeteries Board. Larry immediately offered to roll this out for Kimberley too – in honour of his father, Sam. What a thrill. We are so grateful to Larry.

## Photographing the Gravestones



The first thing they needed was a complete set of high-quality photographs of all the gravestones. I was most fortunate to have met **Shawn Benjamin** who is a professional photographer in **Cape Town**. Shawn was born and grew up in Kimberley and had long wanted to do this sacred work. He was overjoyed to be commissioned to do this. As you may remember, Shawn arranged to go to Kimberley over the Christmas /New Year

period in 2022. He was able to stay on the farm with his dear friends Trevor and Hubre Datnow.

Shawn's work of photographing all the graves in both the current Green Street and previous Stead Street cemeteries was facilitated by Trevor and also by Chairman Barney Horwitz and ex-Kimberley businessman Barry Katz. They made sure he had a good team of security guards, cleaners and gardeners. Kimberley had been blessed with copious rains that year and the vegetation was for once abundant. It had to be cut back from the gravestones to get a clear view.

## **Family information**

We also needed to find out as much information as we possibly could about those buried in Kimberley and compile a comprehensive spreadsheet. You, our readers, have been most helpful in filling in the gaps with your family information. Where stones just say 'mourned by sorrowing wife and children' we don't know who they belong to. The information on the spreadsheet is the basis for the site. We have been able to make some modifications to the Virtual Cemetery, so that on the special 'dedicated page' for an individual, you can also connect directly with the family stories that are already on the Kimberley website.

## **Working with the website team in Cape Town**

As you may know, I have worked steadily all year with Larry Galansky's wonderful team in Cape Town to refine the look and operation of the Virtual Cemetery site for Kimberley. I am so grateful to them for their patient and careful work and their advice and guidance.

I am so happy that this new site for the Kimberley Cemetery is everything one could want – enabling us all from wherever we are – to visit, leave a stone; upload a picture; write on their wall; buy some leaves; and also donate in general. (Uploading a picture or message needs approval so may take a few more hours – but that is a good safeguard and I get to look at those and approve them before they can be displayed.)

## **The Kimberley Jewish Heritage Group (KJH)**

I am sad that with the passing of the President David Allen, we have lost a member of our Kimberley Jewish Heritage Group (KJH). We would like to consider a couple of new members to join this small group of pats and expats set up to help Barney preserve the footprint of Kimberley Jewish life. Preferably they should be under 70 – or 75 at most. If you would like to volunteer or suggest a person who is able to contribute in some way, we would be happy to hear from you.

## **How to enter the virtual cemetery of Kimberley:**

Please go the 'Cemetery' page of the Kimberley website by clicking [Kimberley Jewish Cemetery](#) and at the top of that page, click to visit the '**Kimberley Virtual Cemetery**'.

(You can also read about the history of the Kimberley Jewish cemeteries on that page.)  
I hope you enjoy and find comfort in your visit.

**Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London November 2023.**