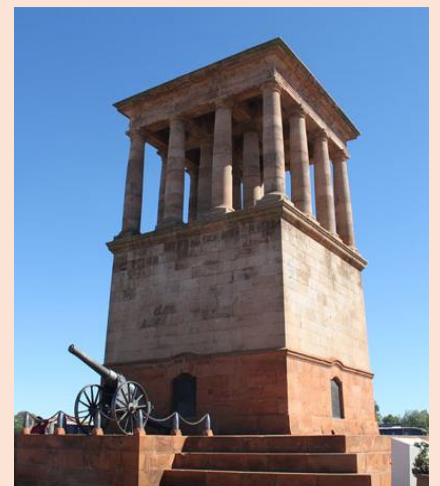
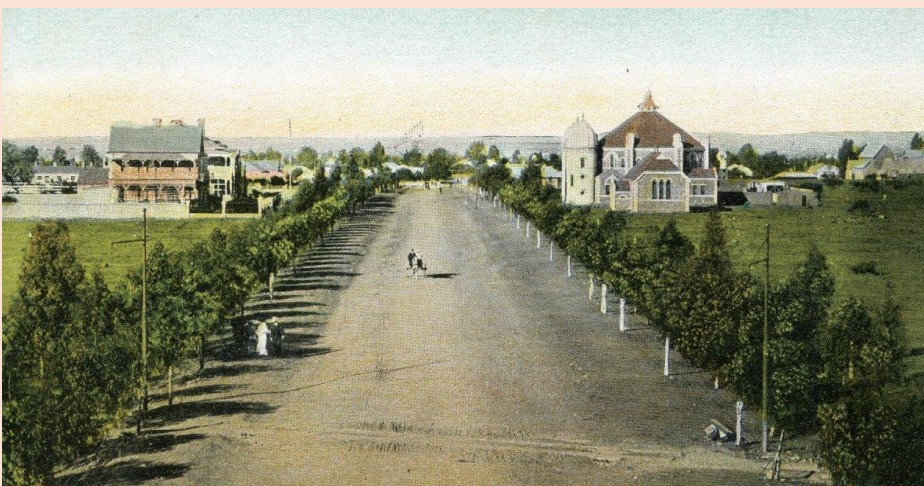


The Memorial Road Synagogue, Kimberley (consecrated 1902)



The History – and take a Tour (updated January 2023)

This iconic Synagogue building has stood in Memorial Road, Kimberley – and been in constant use as a house of Jewish prayer since 1902. It was built on land donated by De Beers Consolidated Mines, with which many prominent community members were closely associated. Below, in the postcard of 'Monument Road', we see the synagogue shortly after its construction in splendid isolation. The road was not yet tarred, and few other buildings exist. The Boer War had just ended, so probably no 'memorial' was yet in place. (The 'Monument to the Honoured Dead of the Siege of Kimberley', below right, was consecrated in 1904. It is built of sandstone quarried in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe and is the tomb of 27 soldiers.)



This synagogue building replaced a previous synagogue (of which no trace remains) that was consecrated in 1876 (hardly five years from when diamonds were first discovered in the dry diggings of Kimberley). Rev Harris Isaacs, who served as minister to Kimberley for 33 years between 1890 and 1927, explained in an interview with the London Jewish Chronicle in 1912, that the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation had been established in 1873. They had used a hired hall until 1875, when work began on the first synagogue in Kimberley. It was situated in Dutoitspan Road roughly where Cecil John Rhodes statue now stands. The site was donated by a mining company in which the Jews, Louis Hond and the Lilienfeld brothers were directors. Like all buildings in Kimberley at the time, it was constructed of wood and corrugated iron.

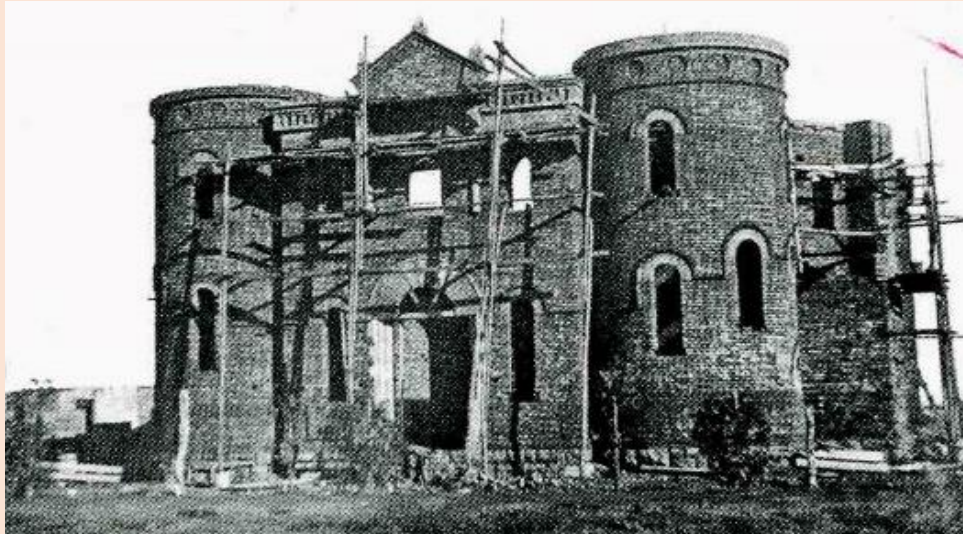
The Cornerstone for this very first synagogue was laid with all due pomp and ceremony on 23 August 1875 by Mrs C Sonnenberg, wife of the first president of the congregation. The event was attended by many Christian friends amongst them civic dignitaries such as Sir Henry Barkly (Governor of the Cape Colony) and Sir Richard Southey (Administrator of the Diamond Fields). It was designed to hold 250 people. When it was consecrated on 17 September 1876, it was already too small. (There were about 1400 Jewish souls in Kimberley during its existence, 600 of them adult males.) This first synagogue no longer exists, and there are no photographs of it. The site was subsequently, sold in 1903 – for a high price – to Alfred Beit, who bought it for De Beers to erect a statue of Rhodes who had died in March of that year.

As the community had grown stronger – and richer, many of the diamond moguls got together to design and build an appropriate place of worship, replacing their first inadequate house of prayer. The person who undertook to deliver the new building was **Gustave Bonas JP** (right). He represented a firm of diamond merchants in Europe that was part of the original syndicate that bought up all the stones from the Kimberley mines. He, and Col Sir David Harris, both associated with De Beers Consolidated Mining Co, were for many years, alternate Presidents of the Congregation.



They invited Kimberley's finest architect DW Greatbatch to design it, apparently based on designs in Byzantine style drawn up by Cape Town architect Edward Simkin.

Construction (below) commenced immediately after the relief of Kimberley in 1900, while the Boer War was still raging, as a thanks offering that its inhabitants had been spared. Every bit of timber and all other materials for the erection bear the stamp of the military authorities. On several occasions, building operations were obliged to cease owing to the difficulty of getting the military to pass certain materials. Weeks, and sometimes months elapsed on this account before work could be resumed.



In 1901 the cornerstone of the grand new synagogue was laid by **Gustave H Bonas JP**. It was said that 'It



was in great measure, due to Bonas's exertions, that the Jews of Kimberley are erecting such a splendid house of prayer in one of the best parts of town'. He, as President of the Congregation was certainly one of the two main driving forces behind the project; the other being David Harris, the treasurer. The site in Memorial Road was given by De Beers

Bonas was said to be one of the 'most popular citizens of Diamondopolis'. A Londoner, educated in Dublin, he came to South Africa in 1884 as a

diamond merchant. Upon the amalgamation of the diamond mines, he became a member of the powerful Diamond Syndicate which purchased the whole of the product of the De Beers Company, approximated at six million pounds per annum.

He was also an enthusiastic sportsman. He instituted and supported the sporting club and the race-course and owned several winning horses. In addition, Bonas was the chairman of the Diamond Fields Advertiser, a director of the Theatre Royal and several other institutions in the town as well as a member of the Divisional Council. He loved entertaining and was socially very popular. In 1892 he was made a Justice of the Peace. We clearly have Gustave Bonas to thank for this beautiful Memorial Road Synagogue.

You can read more about Gustave Bonas himself, and his own beautiful house 'Lilianville', no 10 Lodge Road (right) which he had also commissioned from the celebrated Kimberley architect, DW Greatbatch, on the 'Pioneers' page.

[Gustave Bonas](#)



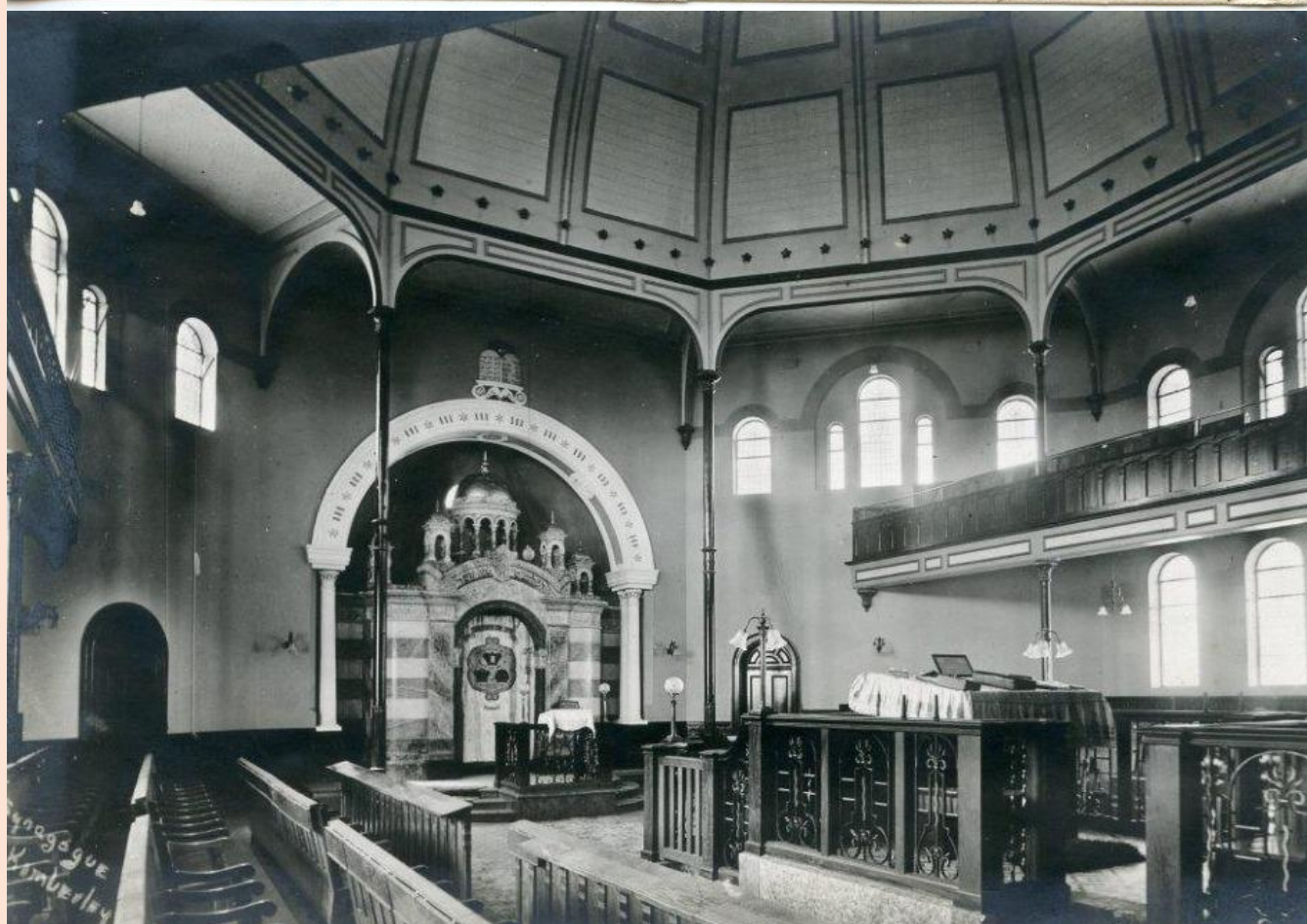
Bonas appears to have left

Kimberley the same year. He sold his house in 1902 to department store owner, John Orr, with all its furniture fixtures and fittings (some of which still remain in the house). John Orr re-named the house 'Dunluce' after a village in Northern Ireland. Today it belongs to the McGregor Museum. Read about William Sagar as Mayor, receiving the deeds of the McGregor Museum in 1907 [William Sagar](#)

The Memorial Road Synagogue opens for Rosh Hashanah 1902 (very early pictures)



New Synagogue Dear Max I suppose you are in Kimberley school
again, write & tell us all about your holidays Love from
Kunt & Co



Gustav Bonas, president of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation, declared the building open on 14 September 1902, and was presented with a golden key as a souvenir of the occasion. A service of consecration then took place conducted by Reverend Harris Isaacs. The procession passed round the building seven times with members of the clergy bearing the Scrolls of the Law. After the sermon by Harris Isaacs, the ceremony concluded with prayers for King Edward VII and the Royal Family, a prayer of consecration and the national anthem, God Save the King.



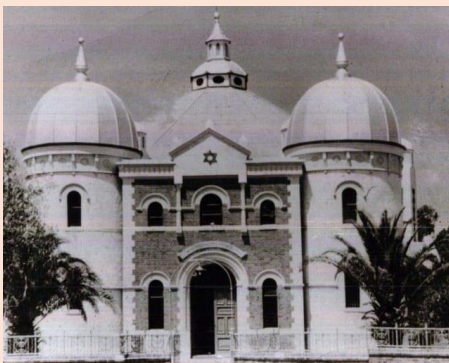
The Memorial Road Synagogue was first used for the High Holyday services in September 1902. It is generally considered the most attractive shul in the country and perhaps one of the finest synagogues, architecturally, in the world.

One month later, the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation together with all its kindred societies and residents of the district presented **Gustave Henry Bonas Esq**, with a **silver replica of the synagogue**, (left) inscribed (below) 'as a memento of his untiring energy in regard to the erection of the new synagogue in Kimberley – and as a token of their high esteem

and regard in which he is held by the community after years of service as President of the Congregation. Kimberley South Africa. October 1902.



Above Right is the presentation cabinet in Kimberley shul which is now empty. After an exciting life of being stolen twice – the silver replica is now safely housed at the South African Jewish Museum in Cape Town.



In these pictures of the Memorial Road Synagogue from the 1920s 1950s and the 2000s, the palm trees planted in the 1920s have grown – perhaps hiding some of the glory of the architecture)

Here is how **Jono David**, one of the wonderful photographers on the website described the building:

'The octagonal house of worship was completed in September 1902 and features prominent front turret-like stairwells, complementing spires, and interlaid zipper-like stonework at the corners. It's a cross between an English castle, a French chateau...and a synagogue. 'Inside, all eyes are drawn to what is surely one of the most comely of Aron Hakodeshes in all the Jewish world. It seems to tower above the eight folds of the ceiling, if that were possible, capped by gorgeous domes which give the holy ark a notably spiritual aura. From a photographic point of view, a synagogue like this one is fun to photograph because there are many nooks and crannies and unexpected angles.'



Let us take you on a tour of this lovely synagogue building

Many of us have been privileged to have attended services here during our childhoods. This tour is with grateful thanks to photographers, Shawn Benjamin, David Jawno, Alon Berman, Marvin Cohen and Colin Bloch, whose beautiful photographs adorn these pages – and the website.

We start at the silver gates at the end of the semi-circular welcoming entrance

The Vestibule On entering the large oak double doors topped with a semicircular stained glass window we enter the beautifully tiled vestibule.



There are many plaques on the walls that we will examine in more detail later.

Facing us between the two panelled double doors to the interior is an enormous brass and enamel memorial tablet. It commemorates the 114 members of the Jewish faith who fell, serving the British, in the Anglo-Boer War. To see a list of all those who died look here [Jewish Casualties](#)



These are the 'three arches' we see in so many generations of weddings with pictures taken on the steps outside the front door of the of the synagogue. (In this picture below the bride and groom are Daphne Toubé of Kimberley and Harry Gillis of Oudtshoorn just married in 1956)



The plaque was apparently made and prominently displayed (as were similar ones sited in London) to show how diligently the Jewish Community had taken up arms for King and Country.

(Sir David Harris, a prominent Jewish citizen of the city, commanded the

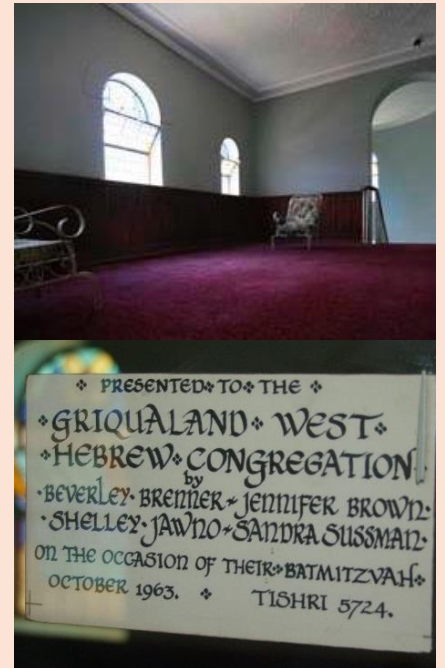
Kimberley Town Guard during the siege of 1899-1900. And Alfred Beit had funded the Imperial Light Horse).

This particularly beautiful tablet in Kimberley, built into the very fabric of the building, was commissioned and presented by the diamond magnate, Sidney Mendelssohn, son of the second minister, Rev Meyer Mendelssohn. The inscription is 'In filial and loving memory of my father Rev M Mendelssohn and also my daughter Ruby, who was drowned when the Drummond Castle sank in 1896. (You can read more about the Mendelssohn family, about this plaque and about what happened to the Drummond castle here: [Mendelssohn.](#))



The curved Staircases in the 'Turrets'. To the left and right of this tiled vestibule, grand curved staircases lead up the round towers to the upstairs foyer (right) from where you enter the ladies' gallery. **Shelley Catzel (née Jawno) wrote:** When we had our Batmitzvah in 1963, we donated

a mirror to the upstairs of the ladies' foyer with our names engraved on it. I still have my Batmitzvah invitation with the girls; names on it: Beverley Brenner, Jennifer Brown, Shelley Jawno, Sandra Sussman. It has always left me with fond memories. That was the heyday of Kimberley Jewish Community from the early 1950s to the early 1980s. What a pity there is nobody left in the 2020s to look into the mirror to see if their hat is on straight for the service. Services still take place regularly but all the less



than a dozen congregants, sit downstairs

Many of us girls will remember sitting on these stairs with our friends during Yizkor or other times when we were out of the shul.

Daphne Toubé (who's wedding to Harry Gillis in 1956) we see above says:

This building holds so many memories of services attended, weddings and barmitzvahs celebrated, going to cheder, and just

generally it being part of our lives.



Here we are looking back to the Ladies Gallery from the Aron Kodesh and can see the octagonal shape of the building and the two doors to enter at ground level and on the elegant ladies' gallery level. The interior of the synagogue has subtle geometric stained-glass windows – that are so evocative bringing back many memories on Yomtov in Kimberley. We can still imagine the shul full to capacity in the '50s '60s and '70s.



But perhaps the synagogue's most striking feature is the imposing octagonal domed ceiling, the summit of which is thirteen metres high.



The ceiling behind the **Aron Kodesh** is depicted as a blue sky with stars.



Marble steps lead to the **Aron Kodesh** (Holy Ark) the surrounds of which are painted to look like marble



Inside the Ark, we find the scrolls of the law adorned by special embroidery, breastplates and bells

The seats for the **President and Hon Officers** in the front of the Bimah, are bound in rich red leather.



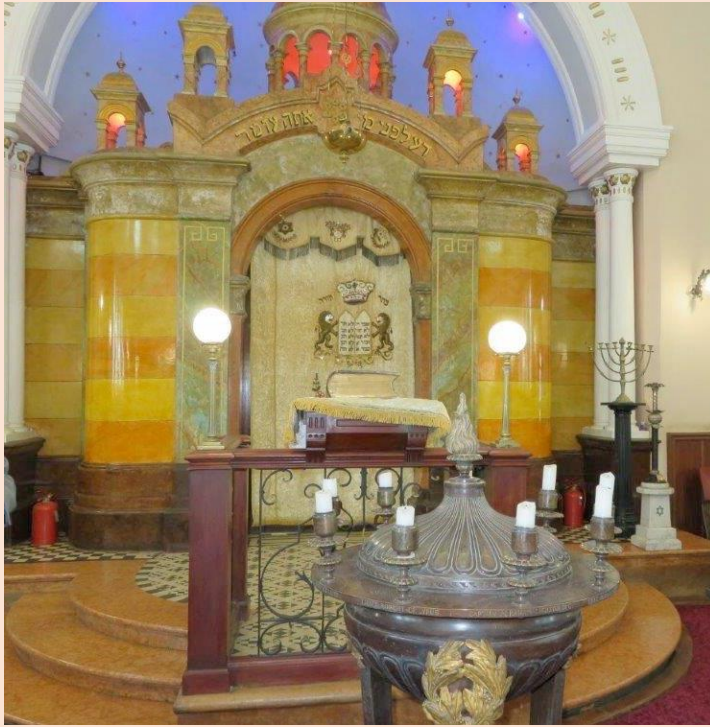
The pews were made of oak imported from Canada.

There are said to be 613 seats in the shul, symbolising the Mitzvot (good deeds) of that number.



The Kimberley congregation is reputed to be the only one in the world that has a diamond tipped Yad. (scroll pointer – yad meaning 'hand'). Although not in use – it is in safe keeping for obvious reasons – the pointer has a blue-white diamond set on the fore finger, the yad being donated to the congregation by IR Triebex. (I am not sure if this is the actual one in the picture)





Here we see some of the **special objects** of the synagogue in their places

Barney says: 'All we know about the MEMORIAL CANDELABRA pictured left (and below by Barry Katz) and also on the [Kimberley Shul Facebook page](#). It was presented by the families of the deceased soldiers, who were all killed fighting for the allies in the First World War. Their names and regiments are inscribed beside each candle. They asked for it to be lit each year on Erev Yom Kippur – which we

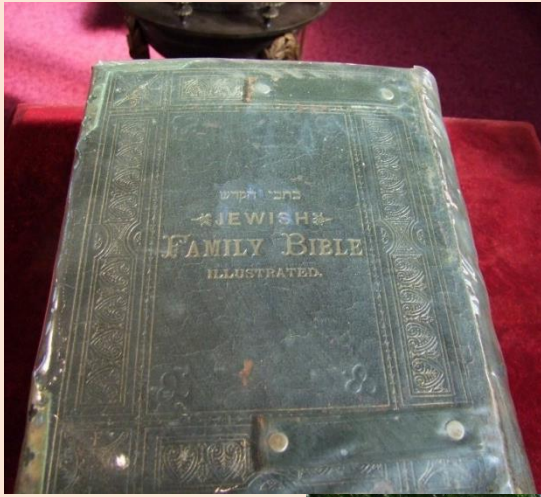


do. But now we also light it on Yom HaShoah. Because it has nine candles, this enables us to light six 6 candles, one for each of the six million Jewish victims, plus one for the five million forgotten non-Jews who also perished in the Shoah including the Roma. We also light one for those murdered for their sexual orientation and political beliefs and one for the servicemen and women on the allied side who died in the war. 'Each year we invite other religious leaders to light these extra 3 candles which enables us to perpetuate a consciousness of the worst genocide in History far wider than just in our own community.



The Brass Chanukiah below is lit on Chanukah





This old family Bible was published in 1881 and has a long history in Kimberley

The Minor Hall and other buildings

A small hall was built at the same time, in the grounds of the synagogue. It was first known as the Queen Victoria Memorial Hall and later as the Minor Hall. It was used for meetings, cheder and for 'brocha's' after services. This is now used as a kindergarten (though there are no Jewish children left in Kimberley).

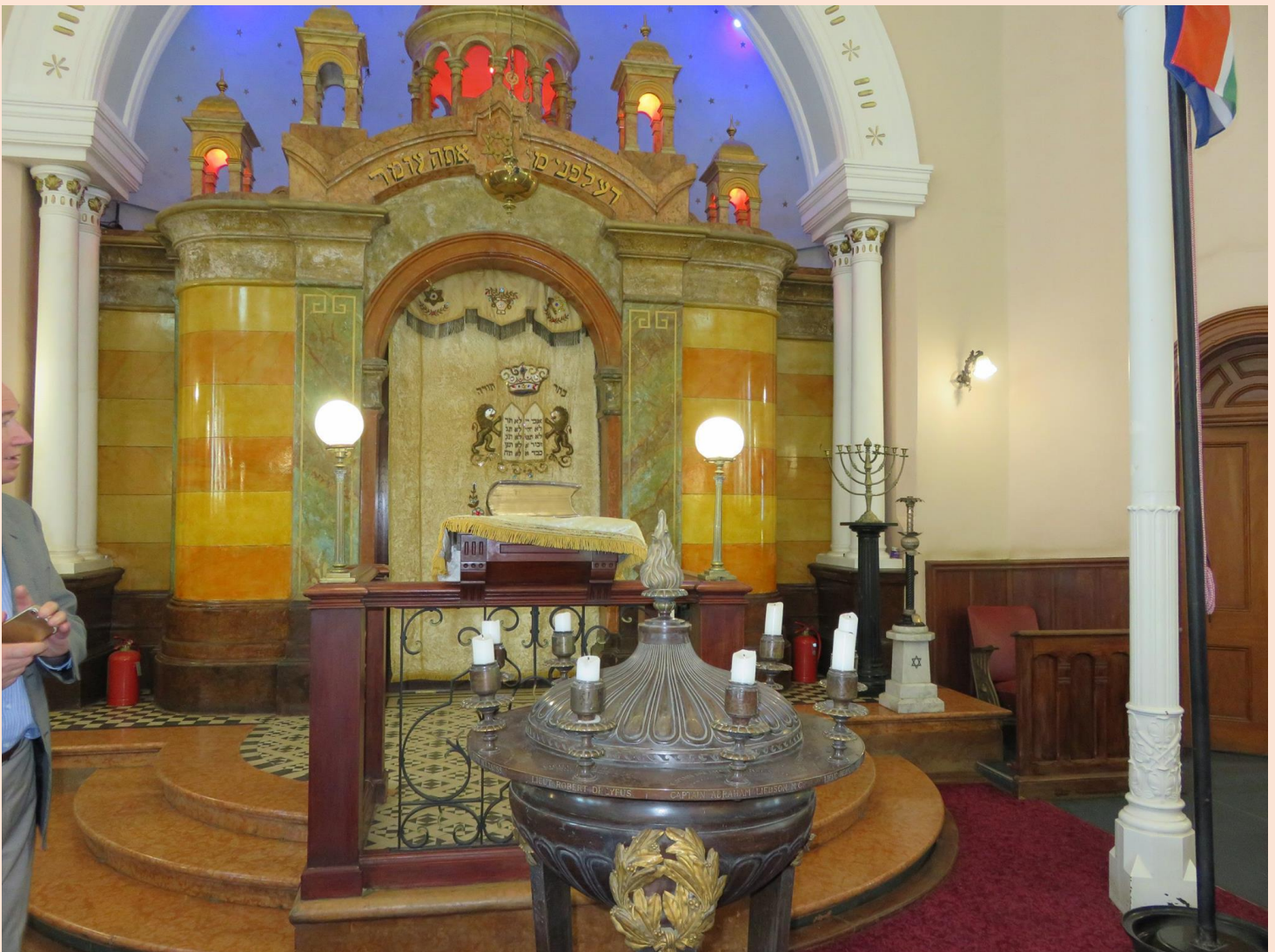


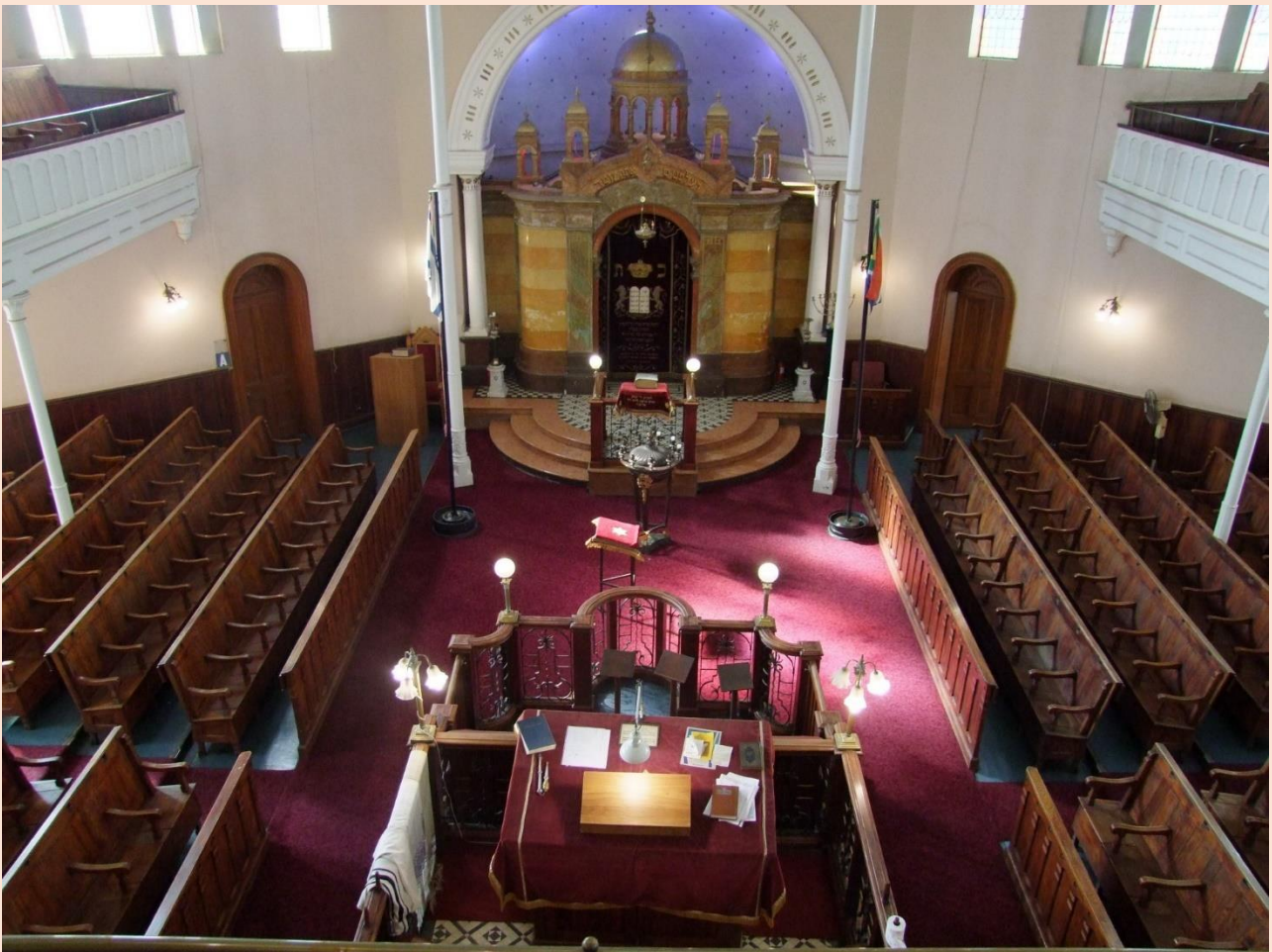
In the 1950s a larger community function hall was built as well as a block of classrooms (below) for Hebrew lessons. (The new buildings were not nearly as beautiful as the original)



Many of us may have memories of cheder classes in these rooms with Rabbis Abramson, Bloch and Werner.

Let us have a last look (below) at the beautiful interior of the shul first close up and then on the next page as seen from the Ladies Gallery – both empty – and full!





Above we see the synagogue in all its glory in September 2019 for the first wedding in 30 years when Ida Horwitz, daughter of the Congregation Chairman, Barney Horwitz, married Jack Lieberman of Johannesburg. Barney says this was the most significant event in the synagogue for all those years.



Now to look at some of the plaques in the foyer that are self-explanatory on the next few pages



תבנה עוזר דלים יד ליד
האכן הזאת תהיה לזכרון עולם
לרודפי צדקות וחסד כתייהם
ונם בחפרדם לא משכו ידם
ממעשי הצדקה הזאת
ת נ צ כ ה

THIS STONE IS ERECTED
BY
THE HELPING HAND JEWISH
PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY
IN EVERLASTING MEMORY OF THOSE
WHO, BY THEIR BEQUESTS, HAVE
PROMOTED THE WELFARE OF THIS CHARITY.
MAY ALL THE GENEROUS GIFTS THEY'VE GIVEN
PLEAD FOR THEM
BEFORE OUR FATHER THAT'S IN HEAVEN.
KIMBERLEY SEPTEMBER 1908. -5669.

- SOLOMON VAN PRAAGH.
- MORITZ PICKLER.
- BORUCH BROUDE.
- WOOLF BANESHK.
- PHINEAS TALLERMAN.
- GUSTAV A. ETTLING.
- JOHN COHEN.
- ISAAC LEWIS
- BARNET RIGAL
- BERNHARD COHEN.
- SAMUEL MENDELSSOHN.
- NATHAN SONG.
- LOUIS ISAACSON.
- AARON & HELENA SIEW.
- COL. SIR DAVID HARRIS, K.C.M.G. V.D.
- MAX BLUMENTHAL.
- JACOB ZEMACHOWITZ.
- PHILIP SUSSMAN.
- ARTHUR SLOSBERG.
- FRIEDRICH H. HIRSCHHORN.
- SOLOMON DIAMOND.
- SAMUEL SCHRIRE.
- RAPHAEL AWERBUCK.
- NATHAN ODES.
- ELIAS BLOOM.
- HARRY S. KLEIN.
- RUBY ROBINS.
- JOE BRENNER.
- SAUL GINSBURG.
- ABE POLLEN.

לזכרון עולם יהיה הגל הזה
על אנשי מעשה
אשר עסקו ועמלו בצרכי
צבור באמונה לחזקת הדת
בלקח קימבערלי יזכרם ה'
למנוחה ושלום להם פעלים
תנצבה

THIS TABLET IS ERECTED BY THE
G. W. HEBREW CONGREGATION.
IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION FOR ZEALOUS
SERVICES TO THE GLORY OF GOD,
AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF JEWISH
INSTITUTIONS, IN KIMBERLEY.
SEPTEMBER 1908 - 5668.

LOUIS GOLDSMITH. PAST PRESIDENT
JOSEPH SABER. PAST PRESIDENT
FLAVIEN E. LEZARD. PAST PRESIDENT
ISAAC STONE. PAST V. PRESIDENT
ABRAHAM GREENBERG. PAST PRESIDENT

REV. MEYER MENDELSSOHN. MINISTER
REV. ABRAHAM ORNSTIEN. MINISTER

DAVID WOLFSON. ACTING MINISTER

BORUCH BROUDE.

MAURICE PRICE.

SYDNEY MENDELSSOHN.

ISAAC LEWIS. PAST PRESIDENT

BARNET RIGAL

BERNARD KLISSER

CUSTAVE H. BONAS, LIFE HON. PRESIDENT.

L. ISAACSON, VICE-PRESIDENT.

WILLIAM SACAR, LIFE HON. PRESIDENT.

REV. HARRIS ISAACS, MINISTER.

SOLOMON ZWEIBACK, PAST PRESIDENT.

M. M. ARONSON, PAST PRESIDENT.

SAM LEVIN, SECRETARY.

S. APTER, PAST VICE PRESIDENT.

DR. H. M. WOLFSON, PRESIDENT

B. COLDBERG, PAST PRESIDENT & TRUSTEE

H. STEIN, PAST PRESIDENT.

K. SUSSMAN, TRUSTEE

S. ALUFOVITZ HON. LIFE PRESIDENT

J. BRENNER, HON. LIFE MEMBER & TRUSTEE

A. POLLEN, TRUSTEE

G. B. HABERFELD, HON. LIFE PRES. & TRUSTEE



בשנת תרע"ט
 ועסרוחי נותי ה' לי ולא אירא
חברה קדישא
 הגל הזה יהיה ליזכרון להנאהבים והנעימים
 בחייהם ובמותם לא נפרדו אשר עסקו בחסד
 של אמת יזכרם ה' לטובה וישלם משכורתם
ת נ צ כ ה
 SEPTEMBER 1909-5670.
 THIS TABLET IS ERECTED BY THE JEWISH BURIAL SOCIETY.
 AS A MARK OF RESPECT & ESTEEM TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE
 WHO DEVOTED THEIR TIME TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THE LAST RITES
 TO THE DEAD OF THIS COMMUNITY.
 MAY THEIR SOULS REST IN PEACE.
 "A NOBLE ACTION, DONE ON EARTH, THE DOER SHALL PRECEDE;
 AND TO THE FUTURE WORLD OF BLISS, IT SHALL THE DOER LEAD."
 SOYAK, S.B.

FLAVIEN ERNEST LEZARD. PAST PRESIDENT ISAAC STONE. PAST VICE PRESIDENT HYMAN NEWMAN. PAST TREASURER BORUCH BROUDE. IGNATZ REUBEN TRIEBER. PAST VICE PRESIDENT HENRY MELCHER. PAST PRESIDENT ISAAC LEWIS. LIFE PRESIDENT JOSEPH (JOE) COHEN. LOUIS ISAACSON. LIFE PRESIDENT JACOB KLEIN. R. SENDEROWITZ.	BESSIE RIGAL SOPHIA SILBERFEIN. REV. HARRIS ISAACS. BELLA ISAACS. ABRAHAM HABERFELD. SAMUEL HERMAN. ADELAIDE HABERFELD. SOLOMON RABINOWITZ. RACHEL HERMAN. KALMAN KANUSHEFSKY. BARNETT KLENERMAN.
---	---

PERE BLOOM.
 ABRAHAM N. HOFFMANN.
 JOSEPH MASTERS. PRESIDENT
 ROSA BRENNER.
 MORRIS KAPLAN. TREASURER
 SAM LEVIN. SECRETARY
 ADA MASTERS. HON. LIFE MEMBER
 JOE CERSHOWITZ.
 JULIUS SHLES.
 ELIAS BLOOM. PAST VICE PRESIDENT
 NATHAN LINCOW.
 FANNY CERSHOWITZ.
 REV. CH. GOLDBERG.
 CHANA WEINSTEIN.
 ARCHIE L. SANDLER.
 HARRY S. KLEIN. TREASURER
 ROSE BLOOM.
 BESSIE KLEIN. HON. LIFE MEMBER
 LIPI WEINSTEIN. HON. LIFE PRESIDENT
 HINDA CVI.
 BORIS KAPLAN.
 SOLOMON ALUFOVITZ. PRESIDENT
 CYRIL B. HABERFELD.
 JOE BRENNER. HON. LIFE PRESIDENT
 G. B. HABERFELD. HON. LIFE MEMBER

משחפה קדישא
 בתל אביב
 יסודו דוד קרשקוש
 Resolved To Memory
 of
CHARITE PICKLER
 IN CHARITABLE DISPOSITION
 IN HER BEQUEST TO THE
 HELPING HAND JEWISH
 PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY
 KIMBERLEY.
 FEBRUARY 1901-5661.
 MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE.

And let us leave by looking back at the exterior



Before we finally depart, let us gaze up and down Memorial Road to remember how we wended our way to and from the magnet of the Kimberley Memorial Road Synagogue



Looking up, towards Dalham Road and the Memorial to the 'Honoured Dead' of the Boer War, consecrated in 1904



And looking down towards Detoitspan Road.

What do you remember on your way to and from shul I wonder?

To see more pictures of the synagogue go to the [Synagogues page](#) and click the photographers names. There are also links to the ministers who served in Kimberley




~~~~~

## **Some Comments from Kimberley people** who remember being in the synagogue

**Sarah Goodman (née Cohen)** (b Kimberley 1938) said:

This really took me down memory lane. Both my brother, Lennie (Webby) Cohen, and my sister, Fay Cohen who married Nathan Cohen of the Savoy Hotel, have passed away. My nephews and nieces are spread all over the world, but we keep in touch with them. Thank you for doing this, it is very much appreciated.

**Trevor Toubé** (b Kimberley 1939) said:

A lovely set of photos, Geraldine. And an interesting introduction to the history of the shul. I wonder if you have any information about what the set of buildings above the Ark are supposed to be. As you will recall, there is an almost identical structure above the Ark in the New West End Synagogue in London. I am often asked by visitors what they represent. When I was a kid, I was told they were 'The Temple'. but we know neither the 1st nor the 2nd Temple were circular. So, what are they?!! (Trevor is going to do some research to find out)

**Alma Steinberg** (b Kimberley 1942) says:

I found your article on the Kimberley Shul very interesting and the photos are magnificent. Even as a child I realized that the shul was very special. I remember the cheder rooms, where I used to attend classes regularly.

**David Levinsohn** (b Kimberley 1935) says

Looking at this reminds me of the times we went to shul and had no idea how unique it was. Whether it was before or after cheder we would either play soccer or Kenneky in the back area until Rev Chaim Goldberg would come out and scold us and tell us to get inside. I remember some of the group involved. Wonder how many of us are still around. They included the current President, David Allen, Ellie Shles. Alan Dave, Norman Horwitz, Max Kaplan, Herbert Hendler and Ivor Haberfeld (when his dad Gus would not be watching. ) We were all too dumb to realize the beauty and importance of this place of worship.

**Brian Cohen** (b Kimberley 1946) wrote:

Thank you for time and detailed work on this and all the other aspects you have covered.

**Roy Ogus** (who edits the South African special interest group journal) said:

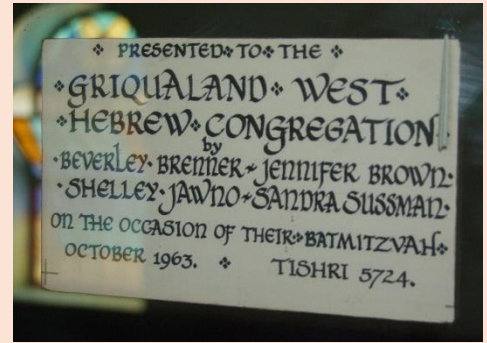
A beautiful article! and the pictures are outstanding! Thanks for sharing. (Roy has invited me to submit this 'tour' for the Journal of the South African Special-Interest Group of Jewish Genealogy.)

**Ann Bremner** wrote:

Many thanks for this. Oh my dear, a great delight. I have spent the most wonderful hour, looking at this building a the most magnificent Synagogue with bits of a castle added. Oh yes, I know it so well, as we passed every day, from Beit House to Boys High for our daily swim instructions. And went to musical recitals, by Holocaust Survivors. A very, very rich beautiful history indeed.

**Shelley Catzel** (née Jawno) (b Kimberley 1943) wrote:

When we had our Batmitzvah we donated a mirror to the upstairs of the ladies' foyer with our names engraved on it. My second cousin is David Jawno took some of the photos and he said it is still there. I wonder if the photo can be included in the tour of the synagogue. I still have my Batmitzvah invitation with the girls' names on it. It has always left me with fond memories, but I have no photos.



**Colin Bloch** says:

Thank you for this which, as an architect, is one of my favourite buildings. I may be wrong, but I understood that the Memorial Candelabra was given by a family that had lost sons in WWI. We have made further enquiries and have been told they were all related but were not siblings. Ida has told us all the names of those memorialised, which are:

1. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Denis H. Krauss – North Staffordshire Regiment, died of wounds on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1917
2. Lieutenant Herman Feinhols – Cape Corps, died 8<sup>th</sup> October 1918
3. Lieutenant William Joffe D.S.O. – Yorkshire Light Infantry attached to the RAF, killed in 1918
4. Private Isaac Michael Kovenski – 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment S.A.I., killed 8<sup>th</sup> October 1918
5. Private Albert Weinberg – S.A.M.C. killed at Le Cateau 17<sup>th</sup> October 1917
6. 2/15 D. Co. Private Michael Joffe – London Regiment, killed 7<sup>th</sup> June 1917
7. 1908/A Cor. L. Lipschitz – S.A.M.C. died 9<sup>th</sup> October 1918
8. Captain Abraham Liebson MO – R.A.M.C. killed 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1918
9. Lieutenant Robert Dreyfus – Croix de guerre, Le Croix de Chevaliende, killed 16<sup>th</sup> October 1915

(Geraldine says: I do not recognise any of these names in relation to Kimberley families (Except perhaps Weinberg). Does anybody else? And is there anybody who knows anything more about this item - or where it was made why and when it was donated.)

**Arnold Bayer** (b Kimberley 1937) wrote:

I have some information for you with regards to the memorial for the 9 soldiers killed in the 1914 - 1918 war. Michael Kovenski was a half-brother to my mother Helen Kovensky. (I don't know when they changed the spelling of their name.) He was a pupil at CBC and ran away from school to join the army. When his father discovered this, he traced him, and the commander of the camp was informed that Michael was under-age to be in the army. Michael was sent back to College, only for him to run away again and joined the army under a false name and the family were unable to trace him. (I was trying to think of the name he used to join up but couldn't remember, but it has just come back to me I'm sure it was Isaacs.) He was shipped to Europe and was wounded and was in hospital in England. He recovered and stayed with an uncle and aunt in Birmingham. After being declared fit again he returned to the front. Unfortunately, he was killed one month before armistice. To the best of my knowledge the memorial was donated by the families of **the fallen soldiers who were not connected to each other except for their common grief.**

**Dennis Hammer** (b Kimberley 1948) wrote:

For a few years I acted as a "junior" Gabbai....assisting with aliyot, etc. By the way, for my barmitzvah on 14th October 1961, my Mom had a Barmitzvah cake made in the shape of the Shul. I have a photo somewhere....just need to find it!! Yes, please Dennis – it would be great to see it.

**Raymond Ellis** (b Kimberley 1949) recalls that:

He too was regular attender at shul. He was at CBC and had to attend Synagogue - or present himself for Cadet parade! Because of his constant attendance, he too was appointed the Junior Gabbai at the shul services. He had the job of calling up the members for honours such as reading from the Torah and dressing the scrolls. He was given an award for this position. It was called the Lionel and Lily Jawno Cup for Youth Gabbai. Did anyone else other than Dennis and Raymond have this honour, I wonder?

**Theo Klewansky** (b Kimberley 1939) says:

Thank you. This is a magnificent record of the Kimberley Shul and its history. Page 6 is of particular interest to the Blumenthal clan, since it shows Daphne's marriage to Harry Gillis in 1956. Standing right next to the happy couple is a guy, who is clearly uncomfortable wearing a hat. The "guy" is yours truly and, on my right is, I believe, our cousin Rosemary June Epstein. Thanks again; it was an unexpected joy to see.

### **Gwynne Robins née Schrire in Kimberley 1943-1949**

I remember sitting upstairs in a fluffy white angora bolero my Mom had knitted for me and pulling off bits of fluff and watching them floating down to stick onto the men's hats and jackets below. And worse – the pictures here seem to show that the railings upstairs have been changed. They used to be of brass with solid brass balls on top here and there, and I remember playing with the ball, screwing and unscrewing it until – oops – it fell out of my fingers! I watched in horror. Fortunately, instead of braining some unfortunate soul underneath, the heavy brass bullet landed onto an empty hat placed on a seat.

We used to go to **cheder five times a week** – the Reverend used to complain bitterly when the children chewed chewing gum, comparing us to cows with the cud. He had taught my father Louis and used to compare us unfavourably to him. I remember picking the pink pepper corns off the pepper trees while waiting for my mother to fetch us from cheder. We joined the Bnei Zion youth movement and made a guard of honour when their madrichah got married.

### **Dr Leon Jacobson (Jake Jacobson) writes**

I am basically an archaeologist although I work in other applied areas. I moved to Kimberley from Windhoek as the assistant director of the McGregor Museum. My wife taught at CBC. Our son Paul had his barmitzvah in the magnificent shul. He matriculated from CBC amongst the top 10 in the province. While at school he drew political cartoons for the DFA. When I formally retired (although I still occasionally teach and do other academic work) we took over his house outside Sasolburg. He had worked for Sasol as a chemical engineer and had then gone to do an MBA in Berlin. After working around the world he now lives in Washington DC with his family. I have a facebook page and the links below relate to my professional work. P.O. Box 2844, Sasolburg 1947 [lj.heritage@gmail.com](mailto:lj.heritage@gmail.com) <https://ufs.academia.edu/LeonJacobson>  
<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Leon-Jacobson>

~~~~~

The Kimberley Memorial Road Synagogue, history and tour

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, and updated January 2023

~~~~~