

## THE DATNOW FAMILY

### Farming in the Kimberley area

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE,  
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from information supplied by



Beverly Datnow, Lisette Shain Datnow, Dee Reddan. David Kretzmar, Ron Kaftel, Norman Datnow, Tracey Griffiths, David Datnow, and Trevor Datnow (via the Marrick Safari Website) also Edward and Jane Datnow in London

**The Datnows** were the best-known Jewish farmers in the Kimberley area. They had many farms on which were extensive dairy operations, supplying milk and other dairy produce to the people of Kimberley. They also farmed with cattle, sheep and goats – and game. They have been an important part of the fabric of Kimberley life and of the Jewish Community from the early 1900s - until today.

The Kimberley patriarch was **Benjamin Datnov** born in 1873 in Kaidan Lithuania. Benjamin was a learned man – steeped in Judaism. He was also qualified as a mohel (ritual circumciser) and shochet (ritual Slaughterer). He married Sarah Salkinder in Riga in 1900. The village where the family (then known as Datov) settled was **Pumpenai** in the Ponevezh district of the Kovno province in North Eastern Lithuania where they were farmers on leased land (as Jews could not own land)



Great grandson of Benjamin and Sarah, David Marcus, (son of Beverly – daughter of Levine Datnow) visited the ancestral Shtetl of Pumpenai in 2015 on

his extensive world travels and sent this picture.

## Benjamin and Sarah's Children

**Morris M Datnow** b 1901 Pumpenai, became a well-known gynaecologist in Liverpool;

**Levine Datnow** (1903-1996) b Pumpenai, became a farmer in Kimberley

**Michael Datnow** (1908 1998) b Kimberley, became a farmer in Kimberley

**Dina Kaftel** b 1912 married Alec Kaftel and went to live in Brakpan, then Houghton

**Rachel Datnow** (1915 – 2002). Ray became a vet and married Lionel Albert, a New Zealander. They lived in Auckland, New Zealand, where she died in 2002 at the age of 87.

**Jacob Datnow** (1919 – 1984) known as Jack, worked for the railways. He lived in Synagogue street with wife Dolly and 6 children. He died in 1984 aged 65 and was buried in Kimberley.

This is their story.

## The Patriarch Benjamin Datnov and his wife Sarah née Salkinder

In about 1900, Benjamin married **Sarah née Salkinder**, born in 1881, above they are seen at their wedding in Lithuania or Latvia – not quite sure.



**Benjamin and Sarah Datnov** with their first two very little boys **Morris** (b 1901) and baby **Levine** (b March 1903) left their shtetl Pumpenai in the Kovno guberniya of Lithuania in August **1903**. They travelled via the port of Libau in Latvia for South Africa.

They stayed over in London in the **Poor Jews Temporary Shelter** from 13/8/1903 to 22/8/1903 (This facility was supported by the shipping companies, to look after those passing through on this great wave of migration). They then boarded the Ship 'Briton' for Africa.

**When they got to Kimberley** Benjamin and Sarah first had a house in Roper Street. She ran it as a kosher boarding house for new arrivals. Then they started farming.

## **Benjamin Datnov's farms around Kimberley**

I, (Geraldine) had a long chat to Ron Kaftel (suggested by Lisette) on 13 May 2020. Ron is the son of Benjamin's daughter Dina known as Dine). He was born in 1937 and remembers Oupa Benjamin very well. He recalls the early days and said that the family were experienced farmers in Lithuania – on rented land though, as Jews were not able to own land.

Ron says they were not well to do when they first came out. He thinks that Benjamin and his family chose to come to Kimberley because of the opportunities that the diamond trade offered. Ouma Sarah's family the Salkinders were already in Kimberley and involved with diamonds in some way. Benjamin possibly found that even though digging for diamonds was probably not an option, as De Beers had that sewn up, but farming to supply the growing population would be a way to get on and maybe De Beers could help.

### **De Beers**

De Beers in the early 1900s was all-powerful in Kimberley, owning and running all the mines and every major Institution and employing most of the people. Having put all their money and effort into amalgamating all the diamond mines and so controlling of supply of diamonds from the existing mines, they were always nervous that new pipes or diamondiferous areas would be discovered, and diggers would rush in and destroy their monopoly and thus diamonds

could lose their value and their efforts come to nought.

So, to prevent any surprises, they **bought up as many farms as they could in the surrounding areas**. Their aim was to own the mineral rights – and they were not interested in engaging in commercial farming on that scale. Its wholly possible that Benjamin was given good terms and even encouragement for hiring De Beers farms to get him started.

We also know that many of the wealthy Jews in Kimberley at that





time were directors or shareholders and certainly buyers of De Beers diamonds. It's possible that the Jewish diamond dealers would have been able to vouch for Benjamin as a reliable (and friendly) farmer and in addition the Jewish Community would be able to employ him as a much needed a shochet and so could enjoy local kosher meat – and milk.

Above is a generic picture of a farm in the Kimberley area with its borehole and massive windmill (made by Climax or Southern Cross), concrete or stone dam and water tank, with the thorn trees and grass of the terrain.

After Benjamin and his family settled in the Kimberley and then started their farming life, it seems that first of all they farmed just over the border in the Orange Free State on farms that might well have been owned by De Beers. Gradually, or maybe soon, he was able to hire more farms or buy his own farms.

The central farmstead for the family was the farm Benjamin Datnov acquired early on, called **Bachelors Hall**. There he settled soon after he arrived in South Africa in 1903 and started a big dairy operation. And that is where his five children grew up – helping on the farms. Another major acquisition was **Klippiespan**, which may also have originally been a De Beers farm, and another big dairy operation was set up there, also with about 200 Friesland cows.

### **Benjamin a renowned Jewish scholar**

Benjamin acquired several more farms in the area, either hiring or buying. His sons as they reached maturity managed them for and with him. As well as delivering milk to households and businesses, Ron said that Benjamin opened several outlets for his milk in town. He got the Harris Hartley Dairy, started an ice cream factory that became the Covent Garden ice cream factory, a cheese factory and opened a milk bar in town that Levine's wife Betsy ran for many years.

Benjamin was however renowned as a learned man. He could have been a rabbi. Many rabbis consulted him on Jewish questions. He was also a certified a shochet and mohel. Ron says he was a very religious man and his Judaism meant everything to him. He was insistent that his children should marry within the faith, which was quite difficult in that situation. When a young Jewish businessman came travelling to the farm, he introduced him to his daughter Dina (Ron's mother) and made sure they fell in love and married. They went to live in Brakpan where Ron's father had several shops. (later they moved to Houghton Johannesburg).

In 1936 Benjamin's wife Sarah died aged 65. (For some reason she is buried in Johannesburg). Benjamin remained in Kimberley until after the war. Ten years later, in about 1946, Benjamin relocated to Johannesburg.

At this stage it seems that he gave the family seat **Bachelors Hall** to his daughter Dina, the neighbouring farm **Uitkyk** to daughter Ray and the other big dairy operation on **Klippiespan** to son Levine. Mike it seems managed the farms for Dina and Ray. Ron said Benjamin would not leave or give farms to his sons that had married out of the faith ie Mike and Jack. He sold some other farms.

Son Mike continued to run the farm at **Bachelor's Hall** until he was able to buy out his sister Dina and own the farm himself. Later it was acquired by his son Tony (and Tony sold it to Morris Datnow's son Edward – see later)

After moving to Johannesburg in 1946, Benjamin lived in a flat in **Yeoville** where his Jewish learning was appreciated. Ron says he used to 'run' the shul there. He married again to Taube Rachel Blacher. (Not sure what year they married).



Meyerton.

In the 1950s Benjamin started looking for farms around Johannesburg. He bought farms in the **Vereeniging /Meyerton /Henley-on-Klip** area. He drove cattle up from Kimberley to his new farms. He later sold the Transvaal farms to Datnow relatives in Johannesburg. Some were later laid out as townships and sold off in that way eg Henley-on-Klip and

Benjamin died in Johannesburg in December 1954 aged 81. He is also buried in the Brixton Cemetery Johannesburg. His second wife Taube outlived him by two years.

## Morris Datnow

Their eldest son Morris b 1901 was a very bright student. He was sent to Greys College Bloemfontein (one of the 'Milner Schools' set up in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the lines of the English Public School). He was an early graduate in Medicine of the University of Cape Town in 1920 – when was just 19 and too young to practice. His mother sent him to Europe – to Oxford – to retrain or specialise. He landed in Liverpool – and requalified in Liverpool (in 18 months). He was taken under the wing of the famous Professor Blair-Bell who mentored him and wanted him to stay there as part of his team. Morris stayed there and was widely respected and a superb obstetrician and gynaecologist in Liverpool.

**Morris** married **Elaine** (Cohen) who also hailed from Lithuania (Jack Tarsh married her sister). Morris and Elaine had three boys. Edward, John and David.

**Edward** became a Doctor too with an interest in surgery, but left the profession early to become involved in the furniture business of his parents or his wife Jane Rubinstein. They had three shops in Liverpool under the name of Hardy and Co). **John** was involved in business internationally. He has a flat in Switzerland (he has a daughter called Kimberley) **David** married Liza they have three children they lived in London – and now in Portugal.

**Edward and Jane Datnow** met in London. They have six children who are all accomplished and have distinguished careers and have married well. They have many talented grandchildren who have been at top schools and Universities in the UK. They have always remained in close contact with their Kimberley farming family. They bought the original Farm Bachelor's Hall from Tony Datnow in about 2000.

**Levine and Mike Datnow** Both became farmers in the Kimberley area, at first with their father Benjamin and then on their own and then with their own children.

### **Levine Datnow (1903- 1996) second son**

**Beverly** youngest daughter of Levine writes in March 2020: My Dad, **Levine Datnow** married **Betsy Lisus** b 1914, in 1933. (see picture left). They were settled on the farm **Klippiesspan** by about 1946 (When Benjamin left for Johannesburg). The farm was just 12km from Kimberley on the old Boshoff Road. I think it was about 4000 morgen. They had five children, **Sirrel** (c1935 – 2019) **Denise** b c1937, **Julian** (1939 – 2013) **Jennifer** b c1942 and me **Beverly** (b 1951)

**Beverly** remembers: '**Klippiesspan** was the place I grew up from the age of about three (1954). Levine ran the dairy farm there from about **1946 to 1992**. It was one of my favourite happy places. We all lived on the farm together. As the sons grew up and married, space was made for them. **Sirrel**, who farmed with my dad **Levine**, lived on the farm in their own house with his wife Barbara, and their five children, Ruth, Nathan, Deborah, Amanda and



**Daniel** from around 1966 until around 1980-ish when they bought a house in Park Road Kimberley. When Julian got married to Dee (now Reddan) dad divided off 1000 Morgen to form a separate farmstead call Rooifontein for them.

'I recall mostly the 1960s from when I was about ten, by which time my two big sisters, **Denise** and **Jennifer**, had already left home. My brothers, **Julian** and **Sirrel**, remained on the farm, **Julian** becoming a pharmacist, and **Sirrel** remaining a farmer.

'Our farm had mainly **dairy cows**. We also had sheep and a few fruit trees and veggie patches. The milk was mainly delivered in milk cans to Kimberley homes twice daily. The families would put their milk cans out on the "stoep" and the empty cans would be removed and replaced with

a full one. In later years this became glass bottles. When there was excess milk it was delivered to the cheese factory.

I recall mainly that I was taken to school with the milk truck and dropped outside (from kindergarten, through **Belgravia Junior School** to **Kimberley Girls High School**) at around 05:00 every morning. So, I sat on my suitcase (until I was too big to do that) waiting for the school gates to open. I was collected from school either by mom or one of my big brothers. One of the joys of being collected by a brother was that we stopped in at Kiddies Bakery and bought hot fresh bread which we ate on the way home. Once home I spent my afternoons listening to LM radio, doing homework, riding horses, and walking in the 'veld' carrying a .22 gun to shoot snakes.

I also remember a huge fig tree growing in one of the gardens (there were three separate 'gardens' or maybe 'camps' on the farm, each with a windmill and a cement dam). As a child of about 11, I climbed the fig tree to get figs and fell off one day, without breaking any bones – Datnow bones are very strong and don't break easily! I also recall hunting trips with my brothers as there was a fair amount of game on the farm. I was the designated driver from about the age of 10.

About **Beverly herself** she writes, I graduated from matric in 1968 and also received a **DUX medal** having obtained five distinctions in Matric. I won a bursary from De Beers to study medicine at Wits and even to attend residence at their cost. I gave it all up for LOVE!!

I married Richard Marcus on my 18th birthday, in 1969, and had three kids with him by the time I was 24 and divorced him in 1978. We have however remained in touch until today. Below is our wedding picture on the steps in front of the synagogue.



**In my retinue on the steps of the Kimberley shul you can see: Front Row:** Aaron Marcus, Cecelia Marcus, Richard Marcus, Beverly Datnow; Nicolette Hendler (Jen's daughter - a little in front of me),



Betsy Datnow; Levine Datnow **Second Row:** JoAnne Marcus; Rose Marcus; Denise Datnow Valkin; Jennifer Datnow Hendler; Marie Erlank Datnow **Back Row:** Lionel Marcus; Alec Kaftel; Charles Valkin; Mike Datnow.

My mom Betsy ran a **Milk Bar** in the centre of Kimberley for many years, but not sure of the dates. The family (I think maybe my dad Levine and uncle Mike) owned an **ice cream factory** on the other side of the bridge that crosses the railway line, which was sold in due course to an Indian gentleman who called it **Covent Garden** and ran it as a successful Ice Cream factory for many years. My dad continued supplying him with milk. (We all remember delicious Covent Garden ice-cream and the bicycle carts that drove around town ringing their bells and selling it.)

Once married though I immediately started studying by correspondence and as I could not study Medicine that way (no University in Kimberley and no laboratory to do practicals) I registered for the next degree on the list which was Law. I completed my B Iuris LLB in five years (instead of 6), won bursaries each year to help study thank goodness as there was no money, and wrote exams whilst I was pregnant or nursing my babies.

After my divorce from Richard, I relocated to Kimberley and first joined the Bar and later the Side Bar. I moved to Cape Town in 1981. I met the man I am currently married to (common law) in 2000. He is Fred (River) Rosenthal and his grandfather Myer Magid hails from Kimberley (as does his mother and Aunt Sarah and Judy). He was a watch repairer and Jeweller in Kimberley.



**Dee Reddan** wrote, I came to Kimberley as a young bride of **Julian Datnow** in November **1971** from Cape Town where I was born. Julian worked as a pharmacist. We lived on Rooifontein farm which was a separate erf adjoining **Klippiespan**. The milk from Klippiespan was bottled with the name **Rooifontein Dairies**. Levine and Betsy lived on Klippiespan with their other children.

**Julian and Dee** had three boys, **Hilton, Andrew** and **Paul Datnow**. Dee says: The family purchased a house in town so that the children could attend school during the week. **Left** is a picture (sent by Beverly) of herself **Beverly** in the middle. with **her brothers, Julian** (left) and **Sirrel** right.



**Julian** and **Dee** moved into town at 35 Carrington Road so that the children attended school and the smallholding where they initially lived was sold. **Dee and Julian** were sadly divorced when their three boys were still young. Dee says: In later years, our sons moved with their father to Cape Town. **Julian passed away in 2013**. **Sirrel** and his wife **Barbara** have both passed away.

Dee writes: I moved to Knysna after spending 20 years with my present husband Mike Reddan, running a business in Kimberley. We have been in Knysna for 21 years and enjoy the beautiful, peaceful town and outlying areas. I am now in regular touch with our sons and grandchildren. Hilton, lives in Israel and Andrew and Paul live in Cape Town. Thank goodness for WhatsApp; it makes contact with the families so much easier.

Betsy Datnow died in 1994 and Levine died in 1996. They are buried in Cape Town, Pinelands no 2 – as are their sons Sirrel who died in 2019 and Julian (in 2013).

Below are pictures of their gravestones and also below a picture of Julian and his gravestone.





## Mike Datnow 1908 – 1989

**Mike Datnow** (b September 1908 in Kimberley) grew up with his father and mother, Benjamin and Sarah and siblings Morris, Levine, Dina and Ray and youngest brother Jack at **Bachelors Hall**, where the family had first settled and where there was a big diary operation.

### Mike and Sue

Mike first married Sausan Blignault. They had a son (Anthony) **Tony Datnow** b.1940) and daughter **Sylvia**. They grew up with Mike and Sue in a house on **Bachelors Hall**. Dee Reddan told me that Tony with his wife Ardath farmed at Bachelor's Hall. She said that Tony's son **David Datnow**, worked for De Beers for many years. And that they also have a daughter, **Tracey**.

Mike's grandchildren, Tony's children, **Tracey** and **David Datnow** have both now been in touch. **Tracey** confirms. Bachelors Hall where we grew up, had '**Uitkyk**' and '**Benfontein**' bordering us. **Klippiesspan** and **Rooifontein** are on the Boshoff/Bloemfontein Road and we were on the Perdeberg/Bloemfontein Road.

Tracey says: **Oupa Mike** was married to **Granny Sue**. After the divorce, Granny Sue lived in Kimberley town and she ran a small dairy. **Dad Tony** lived with her for a while with **Aunty Sylvia**, but dad was sent to **Marrick** to farm with Mike, when he was about 13/14, (1954) and then he was sent to agriculture college in Hartswater.

When dad **Tony** got married, in 1966, he and **Ardath** went to live on **Weltevrede** a farm adjacent to **Marrick**. When I was 2, they moved to **Bachelor's Hall**, where dad Tony ran a



large dairy farm with his father Mike who had acquired the farm from aunty Dine (his sister Dina). (Tony later acquired the farm from Mike). They milked twice a day at 4am and 4pm. In the holidays it was a great treat for me to “help” him in the dairy and would ask him to wake me at 4am, I had a little overall and gumboots and went down to the dairy to help him make sure all was OK. (Below is the farmstead on Batchelor’s Hall)

**David Datnow** says that in about 2000 his dad Tony sold **Bachelors Hall** to a cousin of his from the UK – **Dr Edward Datnow**, but I’m not sure that they are actively farming or using the farm at present’.



## Wedding on Bachelor’s Hall

**Jane and Edward Datnow** now take up the story: They write that their eldest son James married his wife Kate on Batchelors hall. Family and friends from all over the world came to the ancestral South African homestead on the veld in Kimberley to be part of the occasion

Jane and Edward brought out Rabbi Saloman of the Westminster synagogue – who came to South Africa with his wife and son to marry James and Kate under a chupah on the farm.

Jane said ‘David Kretzmar drove from Cape Town in my late father- in -law Morris Datnow’s 1951 Rolls Royce which Mike had bought from him. My brief was to renovate the homestead- (see above) it was all quite romantic.





Above is a picture of the whole Datnow Clan at the wedding

Below we see Edward in the centre with his uncles Mike (left) and Levine (right)



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## Mike and Marie

Later, Mike Datnow married Marie Erlank b 1931, (daughter of Hezkia Erlank and Jeanette Mary Hibbs Erlank/ Archer). Marie's grandfather was born in Norway. Her father Hezkia was born in 1883 in Colesburg South Africa and her mother Jeanette Hibbs Erlank was born January 16, 1896 at The Poplars, Warwick, Sherbourne, UK.

Marie grew up in Dingle which was a small mining town just next to the Sishen iron ore mine in the Northern Cape. She came to Kimberley as a young woman where she met and married Mike Datnow who was 23 years her senior.

After they married **in 1954** Mike acquired the farm called **Marrick**. (Many people thought, for obvious reasons, that it was named by them as a combination of Marie and Mike, but the name of the farm was Marrick, long before they bought it – a nice coincidence).

Marie converted to the Jewish faith and made a warm family home on Marrick. She became a central figure in the Datnow family and was a much loved and active member of the Jewish Community. She kept in touch with Mike's siblings, children and cousins and their offspring and her home was open to all. She was a most gracious hostess always welcoming and always warm and interested. She knew about every member of the family and was interested in them and their doings.

Mike and Marie Datnow's three children were **Benice** (1956-91) **Norman** 1958 and **Trevor** 1960. **Benice** married **David Kretzmar**. They had two daughters Janna b 1980 and



Samantha b.1982. Benice sadly died of breast cancer in 1991, when the children were just 8 and 10.

Left we see Marie with her 'princes and princesses'. four of her grandchildren – Benice's daughters Janna and Samantha Kretzmar and Norman and Lisette Datnow's

sons, Danny and baby Michael –



**Norman Datnow**, is a vet now living and practicing in Johannesburg. He was previously married to **Lisette Shain Datnow**. They had two sons, Daniel and Michael Joel Datnow before sadly being divorced. Norman re-married to Dianne had another two sons Joshua and Aaron.

**Trevor Datnow**, with his wife **Hubre**, now owns and runs **Marrick** as a game farm. They have two children Gabi and Mike.

Beverly says that Lisette has been amazing and although divorced from Norman she never divorced from the family and has played an active role in the Datnow family and still does. (Lisette has provided many pictures and much information about the family that she clearly loves).



In this picture of Normans wedding to Lisette (courtesy Lisette) we see the Retinue from the left Lionel Albert (Ray's Husband), Ray Datnow, Mike and Marie Datnow, Norman and Lisette, David Kretzmar (Benice's husband) Tracey Datnow, (Tony's daughter), Trevor Datnow and cousin Barry Jacobson. The flower-girl is Janna Kretzmar, David and Benice's daughter.

## Mikes Farms

**David Kretzmar** (Mike's son-in-law – husband of **Benice**) writes (May 2020): From **Bachelors Hall** they **delivered milk** to some of the De Beers mines next to Kimberley and also to customers in the town itself. Mike and his younger sister Dina (we called her Auntie Dine) used to drive a donkey cart to Kimberley each morning before school. It was loaded



with cans of milk from the previous afternoon and that early morning's milking sessions, and they delivered the milk before school. They dropped off cans at some people (I'm guessing smaller than the big 10 Gallon cans that were the largest they used) and also went to customer's homes where they "ladled" out smaller amounts of milk.

Once done with the milk 'round', they would outspan the donkeys at the Beaconsfield common, and leave the cart and the donkeys there while they went to school. After school they would go back to that area, collect and span in the donkeys and then head home. Both Mike and Dine used to speak about taking turns to open the many farm gates on the road into town, and of course the way back as well. The road in those days was literally a farm road going through all the various farms, with gates separating the camps and the farms it probably took several hours each way.

They both used to enjoy relating a story about how there was a camp on one of the farms they had to go through where there was a bull which was aggressive and scared the donkeys. The donkeys were thus nervous about going through the gate into and through that camp and Mike and Dine could not persuade the donkeys to move. As a last resort, as they told it, and here Dine would do the talking, she got down from the cart with whip in hand, but holding it the "wrong way round", and walked up behind one of the donkeys and shoved the handle up its ..... – the result was exactly what they wanted, and the donkey shot forward through the gate and they were able to proceed on their way!! I'm not making this up. This story was told by Mike and Dine a number of times.

**David Kretzmar** says: As I recall, the Datnov family first lived in Jacobsdal, which is south east of Modder River, approx. 50 to 60km from Kimberley. He was a rabbi – not sure what that meant from those times. In the early 1900's, he acquired **Bachelors Hall** and moved there with his family.

On the subject of buying farms I do recall Mike telling us about times when he was a youngster, wanting to or being in the process of buying a farm, and his father Benjamin would say to him that he must not do so, but rather let him Benjamin buy it. Am pretty sure that applied to **Uitkyk** – next door to **Bachelors Hall**. It also definitely applied to a farm that Mike wanted to buy at **Henley-on-Klip**, not far from **Meyerton** where Benjamin had bought a farm. It may even have applied to the Meyerton one in the first place. This area is approximately 50km south of Johannesburg. So, Mike stepped away from that farm which Benjamin then bought, and years later he sold those farms to one or more Datnow nephews from Johannesburg, who subsequently developed some as residential townships as the greater Johannesburg urban area grew.

**David Kretzmar** has written that in the course of his farming career, Mike Datnow farmed on a number of farms. He is not sure when exactly they were acquired or sold.

**Broomlands** was about 1,800 or 1,900 morgen and was north of Kimberley – about 15kms I think - just off the Johannesburg Road – as we called it. Used for cattle, sheep, and goats.

**Melrose** – about 1,500 morgen, in the Orange Free State, and we got to it by driving through Uitkyk and a few other farms. Also, cattle and sheep.

**Botha's Dam** – a small farm of about 700 morgen – much further past **bachelor's Hall** and then a few kilometers north of that. This was the most 'remote' of all the farms – mostly sheep and goats, but also some cattle.



**Marrick** – Bought in the early 1950's, I think after Mike and Marie were married, which was 1954. This farm comprised a number of different title deeds but was always referred to as **Marrick**. **Weltevrede** was bought later, and then a further two portions adjacent to it were acquired. Marrick and its adjacent farms thus became the home farm from the late 1950's onwards. The total area was eventually over 3,000 morgen and Mike had a dairy operation there, milking around 200 Friesland cows – much like on the other two farms where he had dairy operations running. There were also sheep and goats on Weltevrede and the upper parts of the farm, as well as lots of game.

**Riverside** – He bought a 3,000 morgen farm called Riverside, located on the Riet River, near a tiny place called **Plooyburg**. Not sure when this was bought but possibly in the 1950's as it had irrigation from the river and he produced Lucerne there, which he used for feeding the dairy cows on the 3 farms where they were dairying, **Marrick**, **B/Hall** and **Olifantsdam**. They also grew wheat and that crop was sold each year to the co-op in Modder River or Douglas. The veld part of the farm had cattle and sheep.



**Kingston and Tenerife** – In 1970, he bought a farm just off the Schmidtsdrift Road – it was called Kingston, and a few years later acquired the neighbouring property known as Tenerife. These farms were farmed with cattle, sheep and goats. Tenerife was bounded by the road to Schmidtsdrift. This property had an unusual feature on it that could be seen from the road as one drove past heading to or from Schmidtsdrift. This was a kopjie that had been cut for rock to be crushed for the building of the “new” road between Kimberley and Schmidtsdrift – when they redid the road and tarred it. The result was something that looked like a giant nipple pointing to the sky – sorry – I cannot think of another way to describe it – and that’s how we always referred to it.

What made it noteworthy was the fact that it was often referred to as being the land feature at or closest to the “middle of South Africa” – quite incorrectly as I later discovered. Way back in the 1970’s we used to buy Chappies Bubble Gum, and on the inside of each wrapper in capital letters were the words “DID YOU KNOW” and they would give one, two or more “facts”. One day we found a Chappies which had for the DID YOU KNOW – “Where is the centre of SA?” or words to that effect, and it showed a sketch of that cut kopjie on Tenerife, claiming that to be where the centre of the country was – as we all thought at the time. See above and below the images I have found from Google Earth street view! First Looking towards Schmidtsdrift direction and under that with back to Schmidtsdrift



**Graspan** originally bought by Benjamin, measured approx. 3000 morgen, and was farmed with cattle sheep and goats. The farm was sold in the early 1980’s to the government in what was a “friendly expropriation” as they had decided to establish a National Park there. They purchased further adjoining properties there and established the **Vaalbosch National Park**. This land became the subject of a land claim after 1994, and in 1998 Sanparks started looking for an alternative area to “relocate” the park. In 2005/6 the Vaalbosch National Park moved to a new location near Plooyburg, between Kimberley and Douglas, and it was renamed the Mokala National Park.



Mike had leased **Olifantsdam**, near **Bachelors Hall**, from De Beers, not sure when. It must have been at a time when he was already getting established as these were relatively large farms and would have required further capital to stock with cattle, sheep and goats, and in the case of **Olifantsdam**, dairy cows.

Mike leased another De Beers farm to the west of Kimberley off the road to Schmidtsdrift. This was adjacent to **Graspan**, which Benjamin owned. It was approx. 7,000 morgen (6,000ha). It was called **Waterkolk**. David remembers going there with Mike a few times as a youngster still at school. This was a large farm with very few camps, and it was farmed with cattle. They were not worked with often and as a result were just wild. It was a big thing to go there to work with them once or twice a year. People and horses would be sent two or three days earlier to round up the cattle and get them into the kraals so that they would be in and ready for working when Mike and his managers and their team of workers would arrive. There was always dust and snorting and charging cattle and it felt like the “wild west” and a bit like a rodeo! Beverley remembers going there too with Levine.

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century De Beers was not interested in actually farming their farms, but in the 1970's and early 1980's they began looking at doing so, as it offered better returns than simply leasing them out to other farmers. This led to them not renewing leases on their properties as and when they expired. As they took back the farms, they generally set up cattle farming operations on these properties.

## Game farms

De Beers had 2 or 3 farms which they kept as game farming operations for hunting in winter – **Rooipoort** (Known for years as The Shooting Box – as I recall), **Benfontein** and



**Dronfield.**

Rooipoort is today the **Rooipoort Nature Reserve** 42,000ha – which is still owned by De Beers.

In the 50's and 60's there were **springbok** and some **blesbok** on all the farms. There were

also **kudu** on some of them where there was thicker bush and shrub areas. At some point, in the late 50's or in the early 60s, Mike took part in a special programme launched by De Beers, maybe with **Nature Conservation authorities** playing a role.

The numbers of **Black Wildebeest** had dwindled to the point that they were endangered as I recall it being told, and De Beers had a good number on one of their farms, and made breeding groups available to a number of farmers around Kimberley, so that the numbers could be bred up. Mike received 1 bull and 2 or 3 cows at that time, and over the years they bred up to a healthy herd, as happened on the various other farms where they were distributed, and the **threat to their existence was averted**.

## Winter Friends

Up to the 60s having game was considered a bonus a 'pasela' on the farms, and not at all valued. This is a very far cry from how it is today, with game being farmed, in many instances, instead of domestic livestock such as cattle and sheep. David said: I clearly recall how the phone would start ringing at the farm in about April or May, with 'friends' calling from Kimberley and Cape Town (am sure there were people from other places too) and they would want to speak to Mike. Once a year callers they were! After some chit-chat and small talk, they would get to the point – 'How are the buck looking this year Mike?' or 'Hoe lyk die bakkies Oom Mike?' and 'How are the birds this year?'



This played out every year – people calling and asking these questions, and then travelling to Kimberley (if they were not from there) to come hunting in the area. They would shoot mostly springbok and a few blesbok, and those who were into bird shooting used to go on early morning sandgrouse shoots. These shoots were hosted by Mike and sometimes Marie joined, and WERE TAKEN FOR GRANTED – THESE FRIENDS AND VISITORS NEVER PAID A CENT – for anything! We always used to refer to them as "Winter vriende" meaning Winter Friends. This was not unique to the Datnows – that is how it worked in those days – it was as if the game was there for the taking, and these people were hosted and entertained each year – this always involved much time and effort, and I recall much wear and tear on vehicles that had to be used, being driven in the veld. We also provided the braai and the booze. Seems crazy when I think about it now. The shooting was often terrible – many of the

guys – who did love the hunting – were useless at it, and often wounded buck which we would have to go after to make sure they were put out of their misery and not just left....

I would say it was in the 1970's that things began to change in earnest, with value being attached to the game aspect of the farms and farming. The free and 'free-for-all' shoots came to an end, and commercial shoots replaced these – mostly with different and more serious hunters, who were often better shots (not always). Over the years more species of game were added and in some cases game fences were erected, to keep the game on the farms – stopping them from simply jumping over the boundary fences and going onto neighbouring farms, where they were often shot. Mike would get orders for buck or venison, and he, Norman, Trevor, Tony or myself, would go into the veld to shoot what was required to fill the orders. This was often on the different farms.

## **Commercial Shoots**

We also had commercial shoots, where local business-people would want to entertain friends or clients, and in some cases prominent politicians, and these too became annual events with regular clients. We hosted these, but our "clients" organised the programme and catering and they provided and saw to the braais and the booze, which was always a big thing after the hunt was over for the day.

The hunts started early in the morning – it was always mid-winter and really cold! Often below 0 degrees! We managed the hunting, placing the hunters in the veld, and drove around throughout the morning or longer if it continued into the afternoon, collecting the buck that had been shot, to take them back to the "camp" where we had people clean and dress the carcasses. At the end of the shoot, which was usually around 3 to 4pm, there would be a huge braai, with lots of booze, and this could continue to as late as 10 or 11pm. We would then leave the farm where the shoot was late at night and head back home to Marrick – these shoots were never at Marrick.



## **Things are so different today.**

There are no more big shoots like that anymore. Game is farmed much more methodically and scientifically, and there is no ill-disciplined shooting permitted by farmers. Various game



species are bred specifically for either trophy or venison hunting, whilst other species are bred for conservation and tourism. Trevor and Hubre run Marrick today as a game farm, with different and separate facets. They breed species such as sable and roan antelope, buffalo, and many others as well, and people come to the farm for game drives, for bird watching, and in a separate area, for hunting. They offer homely farm style accommodation warm hospitality and wonderful food, on the farm. People visit from all over South Africa and overseas visitor stay many days to enjoy what Marrick has to offer.

Marrick also has some rare 'exotic' breeds such as copper springbok and black springbok. It also is home to the very rare nocturnal animals, the Aardvark, as well as the Aardwolf and African Black-Footed Cat. Marrick offers guided night drives, particularly to see these rare nocturnal animals, Wildlife enthusiasts from all over the world come to Marrick especially to see the Aardvark (pictured above) and the night drives on this property are almost 100% successful for sightings of this elusive and unusual animal.

**Marrick Safari website** This is what **Trevor** and **Hubre** say  
<https://www.marricksafari.com/>

Marrick Safari is located in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, approximately 12km out of Kimberley on the Douglas road. Nestled in 3000 hectares of



unspoilt savannah thorn veld, this family-run business offers a vast expanse of space and silence providing endless opportunities for returning to nature. The property itself sustains a range of ecosystems, from African savannah land to rocky hillsides to thicker thorny bushveld and there is also an ephemeral wet landscape. At Marrick Safari, there is "something for everybody", with a variety of activities specifically designed to enable guests to get as close as possible to this large, unique ecosystem that is almost free from human interference.

Marrick Safari has been a **family-run undertaking since patriarch Michael Datnow** bought the farm as a dairy and sheep concern. The running of the business was then taken over by his two sons **Norman and Trevor** after Michael's passing. **Trevor took sole possession of the farm and together with his wife Hubre**, they have been working towards establishing a world-class eco-tourism operation, focusing on the provision of home-style service. <https://www.facebook.com/Marrick.Safari.Kimberley/> **Sunsets at Marrick** are extraordinary and there is nothing more relaxing after a hot day in the bush than sipping an ice-cold drink next to the Pan. Enjoy dinnertime around an open fire while chatting to friends and other guests before retiring to your luxurious cottage for a good night's rest.

## Eulogy for Marie Datnow

**Barney Horwitz Chairman of Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation wrote** after Marie passed away in 2012,

Marie was a most beautiful young woman and when she fell in love with Mike Datnow she converted to Judaism. Marie became very active in the Jewish life of Kimberley being a member of the Union of Jewish Women and Women's Zionist League as well as being an active Rotary Anne and generally working for those less fortunate than herself.

Her home had expanding walls and there are many young and older people who have extremely fond memories of "Auntie Marie" and her warm Hospitality.

(**Dee Reddan** writes in April 2020: I remember spending a Yom Ha'atzmaut or two on the farm Marrick with my late aunt **Marie Datnow** where the whole Jewish Community of Kimberley would gather and enjoy a wonderful spread.)



Marie left, with Elaine Datnow (wife of Morris from Liverpool) and Mike Datnow on Marrick (courtesy Lisette)

Marie lost her beloved husband Mike in 1989. Mike was a respected Kimberley farmer and had served as a member of the Divisional Council for many years. A couple of years later she lost her beloved daughter Benice to breast cancer. This took a heavy toll on her, but she really enjoyed her grandchildren and loved them all dearly. She was a loving, warm, giving,

generous human being with no malice at all and who endured many hardships, and was always deeply loved by all her family”.

She was also a person who lived her Judaism through her children and gave meaning to the phrase “the mother rocks the cradle” since I am told it was she who dragged them away from the adventures of farm life and into cheder and ensured that they would grow up to perpetuate their Jewish heritage.

Mike and Marie are both buried in the Kimberley Jewish cemetery.

Many thanks to all members of the Datnow family and in-laws for their generous sharing of the Datnow family story and pictures and their extensive saga of farming around Kimberley.

**Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, May 2020 – updated April 2021**