

Gustave Bowman Haberfeld

'One of Kimberley's finest sons'



Kimberley Jewish citizens identified themselves from the very beginning not only with their own community, but also with every facet of civic life - local and national. Many joined the City Council, and six members of the Jewish Community became Mayors of Kimberley. **Such a man was Gus.** They were:

1. William Sagar 1906 – 1908 [Sagar, William and Family](#)
2. Ernest Oppenheimer 1915 – 1917 [Newsletter #16 March 2018](#)
3. Barnerd (Barney) Cohen 1931 – 1932 [Cohen, Barnerd \(Barney\)](#)
4. **Gustave Haberfeld 1953 – 1955 and again from 1965 – 1967**
5. Lionel Jawno 1959 – 1961 [Jawno, Lionel](#)
6. Cecil Sussman 1964 – 1965 [Sussman Cecil and Natalie](#)

You can read about each of them on the links above

Three former Jewish mayoresses

In the picture below we see three former Jewish mayoresses at the civic reception for the Israeli ambassador, Mr Michael Michael and his wife. Mr Michael was Charge D'Affaires for Israel in South Africa. Left Mrs Lionel (Lily) Jawno, **Mrs G B (Anne) Haberfeld**, Mrs Cecil (Natalie) Sussman and Mrs Michael.



Gus Haberfeld was born on 21 September 1904 in Kimberley. He was a brilliant student at **Kimberley Boys High School** and matriculated in 1921 with 6 distinctions, High Dutch being one of them. His Latin and retention of languages was remarkable as was his fluency in Hebrew. After school he joined Louis Isaacson in his wholesale linens business. He married Anne and they had one son Ivor. Ivor's friends Elly Shles and Alan Dave had wonderful memories of Anne – they loved her and said that she was their role model of a wife and mother.

Anne was born in Bethal (Transvaal) in September 1912 and went to school there. She came to Johannesburg to commercial college and met Cokie Lurie from Kimberley (who had two daughters Julie – who married Solly Jacobson and settled in Kimberley having five daughters and Hannah). Cokie invited Anne to Kimberley for the holidays and introduced her to Gus. The shidduch was on!! They married On 31st December 1935 at the Berea shul in Johannesburg. Anne worked in the business doing all the secretarial work for many, many years till they closed up. She had also been a superb Mayoress of Kimberley. She suffered a stroke in December 1983 and came to live with Ivor and June, with nursing help, as she was paralysed down her right side. She died 3 weeks before Gus in July 1986.



Civic activities

Gus was the first **Kimberley born** Jewish person to be Mayor of Kimberley. He immersed himself in civic duties. He was chairman of the South African Permanent Building Society – which had its Head Office in Kimberley at the time. He was Chairman of the Technical College for many years. He gave unstintingly of his time and expertise to Kimberley. He was highly regarded for his work as a City Councillor. As we see above, he was called upon to be Mayor of Kimberley on two occasions, from 1953 to 1955 and again from 1965 to 1967. June donated all Gus's civic and municipal invitations and letters to Nancy Tietz at the Kimberley McGregor Museum.

Gus and Cyril were great sportsmen.

Daughter-in-law June has a special cricket ball from Wisden's that was presented to Gus. He was a provincial umpire for cricket and had lodged a query about a rule which they agreed to change, Thus the inscribed cricket ball (right) . His brother Cyril was a great wicket keeper who played for the local Griqualand West team. Apparently, many fingers were broken in the process!



Communal activities

The Shul and the Chevra Kadisha were the true mainstays in Gus's life. He always had the interests of the community central to his heart. One can't ever remember going to shul without encountering Gus's towering presence either in the president's box or in his special pew opposite the Bimah, always leading the congregation with his impressive figure and full-throated song.

He served as President of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation for seven years from 1947 – 1954. June remembers that later on when a nursery school had been established, Gus had been reluctant to open the nursery school to non-Jewish children but as the community dwindled in the 1980s it was inevitable, and they had no choice but to do so, to keep the school viable. (Today 2021 it carries on and the children are nearly all black.)



Here Gus is standing with his son Ivor. Seated are his wife Anne, and Ivor's wife June at a black-tie function in 1973.

Hebrew Order of David

In November 1931, the Hebrew Order of David came to Kimberley. A new Lodge, No 29, was inaugurated and named for Louis Isaacson, a much loved and admired citizen (and Gus's partner in business) who had died the year before. Rev Maurice Konviser, who was the Minister in Kimberley from 1927 to 1935, and who greatly invigorated the community was probably the person who initiated this. Konviser became the first President and Gussie Haberfeld was its first Treasurer. Gus remained an honorary officer throughout its existence. The Lodge and its activities meant a lot to Gus. He became a member of the Grand Lodge in 1964. At the end of this story is a report of the Lodge activity in September 1964 when Gus was President.



Gus passed away in August 1986. This was just a few weeks before the 100th Anniversary of Boys High School where he was due to be the keynote speaker. He had been preparing a speech in Latin as he had done at his school farewell in 1921. Quite a feat! At his funeral, the current mayor remarked that Gus was 'one of Kimberley's finest sons'

Girlie (Henriette) Haberfeld

Gus's sister Henrietta – known as Girlie, married Herman (Poddy) Shein on 27 November 1947. Girlie had waited all the war years for Poddy to come home. He had spent another year after the war ended in the DP camps in Italy helping to re-locate Jews from the Holocaust to Palestine.



In this typical group on the steps outside the Kimberley shul, are from the left: the parents of Poddy, Abie and Bennie Shein. (They spoke only Yiddish and Afrikaans) Girlie, the bride and Poddy the Groom. I think the bridesmaid was Bill Lurie's first wife and Cyril Haberfeld is on the end. Standing at the back are Gus and Anne. Girlie helped Poddy build up his white goods business. They had no children. Girlie passed away just five days after Poddy in 1996. Read their story here [Shein, Poddy](#)



Cyril Haberfeld.

Gus's younger brother Cyril also went to Kimberley Boys High School and left to join Gus and Louis Isaacson in the business as a traveller. He traded for them all over the Northern Cape and Botswana. Abe Pollen was a partner in the business too. Cyril was a great cricketer playing for the province. He never married and lived with Anne and Gus in the house till a few years before he passed away, of emphysema in 1976.

Cyril was also the historian of the community and compiled its story in 1973 on the centenary of its establishment. (1873) You can read it here from a brochure that was produced on the occasion.

https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Community_files/Haberfeld%201.pdf

Ivor and June Haberfeld

Ivor, son of Gus and Anne, was born in Kimberley, on 1 August 1935. He finished school at Boys' High and went to Wits University to study architecture, qualifying in 1961. He then went to London for seven years working for Denys Lasden, an architect of renown in England. He returned to South Africa in 1968. He met June on a blind date in Johannesburg and they were married in March 1969. They settled in Kimberley and had three children.

June remembers Kimberley in its heyday – and the decline of the Kimberley community when she lived there from 1971 to 1991. She said: I remember arriving in shul the first Yom Tov in 1971 and the shul was so full that there wasn't a seat for me. In fact, I sat on the steps near my mother-in-law for 2 to 3 years eventually finding a place at the back on a chair. When I left, twenty years later, in December 1991 my younger daughter, Nadine, and I were the only two ladies upstairs!!!!

As Ivor had been an only child, his large and extended family including five grandchildren, gave him much pleasure. Both their daughters, Jenny and Nadine, are medical doctors, Jenny a radiologist and Nadine a GP. Their son Brandon is in computers with a local bank. They all live in Johannesburg very close to June. Ivor sadly passed away in June 2018 after many years of suffering. In 2019 June said, 'My children and grandchildren went back to Kimberley a few weeks ago and had such a wonderful weekend of reminiscence. My children are the third generation Haberfelds at both Boys and Girls High Schools and had so much to see and show their own children. They were most impressed with the two Haberfeld Streets in Kimberley – one for each of Gussie's terms of office as Mayor! June remarried, in January 2021. Barry Saffer, her new husband, had been a friend of Ivor's of many years. They live in Johannesburg close also to some of their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Here is a report on the Louis Isaacson Lodge from 1964 when Gus was President.

LOUIS ISAACSON LODGE Kimberley



This year is a most momentous one in the history of the Hebrew Order of David. It marks the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Mother Lodge. Since then the Order has grown in stature and members can be proud to be associated with an organisation that has done more than any other Jewish organisation to cement the bonds of "chaver-shaft" and brotherly love.

This year also marks the end of an epoch by the retirement of Wor. Bro. H. S. Blank, who has given more than half of the past sixty years in loyal self-sacrificing service to his brethren and the community in general. He will be greatly missed by all of us to whom he was more than the Grand Secretary.

It was our proud privilege to extend congratulations to Bro. Cecil Sussman who has been elected First Citizen of the city of Kimberley. He is the third member of our lodge to hold this distinguished position. To Bro. Archie Sandler we also extend a hearty Mazeltov on his election as President of the Kimberley Rotary Club and also as a member of the local School Board.

We were very sad to bid farewell to our dear Wor. Bro. Louis Segal, who had served the lodge so well and loyally as hon. Secretary for nearly ten years. For one in such advanced years he was a shining example of what can be achieved by dedicated service.

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The highlight of the year's activities was the Second Degree raising at our June meeting. This was conducted entirely by our Past Presidents of whom there were eight present. It was a most impressive ceremony and an inspiration to all present

We join our brethren in the Order in offering our felicitations to the Grand Lodge on the forthcoming celebrations of the Diamond Jubilee and express the hope that the Order will continue on its path of progress, spreading the principles of unity, fraternity and goodwill.

We wish all our brethren a "Shana Tovah" filled with God's richest blessings.

— GUS HABERFELD

Gustave Haberfeld family story compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE,

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