William Sagar and Family

Auctioneer, JP Community leader and Mayor of Kimberley

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE London, July 2021 from photographs and texts sent by great-granddaughters Cheryll Jutan, Heather Miller, and Lynne Gordon, and from historian, Paul Cheifitz.

Updated with additional material sent in September 2021 by **Robert** of the **McGregor Museum in Kimberley**

William Sagar, son of Michael and Sara Sagar of Liverpool, then Brondesbury in London,

was born in Liverpool in 1857. He was educated at the Liverpool Institute in Mount Street. It says in an article on 'Men of the Times' published in about 1903, that he obeyed the irresistible impulse created by the opportunity presented by the opening up of the Diamond Fields, to make wealth rapidly; and in 1881 came to South Africa to seek his fortune as a diamond digger.

The article continues that he had started his business career with the firm of McCoy and Manning, West African Merchants of Liverpool until 'with the initiative so characteristic of his race, he opened a business on his own account in Manchester which he carried on successfully until the news which was arriving from South Africa, of sensational finds of diamonds in Kimberley, induced him to abandon it, and set sail in all haste for the mining camp'.



'Like most new hands, who did the work while 'sharps' pocketed the product, he commenced digging, working in the Dutoitspan claims with more or less success, until, finding it was not all 'cakes and ale', he gave it up to start a general and much safer business which he continued for some years in Beaconsfield'. (Beaconsfield was named after Benjamin Disraeli, the Earl of Beaconsfield. It was the township that had grown up around the more Dutch populated Detoitspan and Bultfontein diamond mines.

While there, Sagar served on the Beaconsfield Town council where he was commended for his useful service with an address by the mayor before he moved to the adjacent municipality of Kimberley in 1897. (In 1912, Beaconsfield, was joined with the municipality of Kimberley, named for the colonial secretary, that had grown up with a more British population around the De Beers and Kimberley mines.) The article concludes that 'Mr Sagar is much respected by all his fellow townsmen, and since going to press has been unanimously elected to the dignity of the Mayoral Chair of Kimberley'.

On his arrival in Kimberley in 1897, he started as an **auctioneer and general agent** with remises on the Market Square. This proved a thriving concern. He quickly became a significant and popular figure in the Institutions of the town and in the Jewish Community.

Yearbook listings

In 1886 he was listed in the Kimberley Yearbook and Directory as a hairdresser and tobacconist, in Main Street Du Toit's Pan (Beaconsfield). By 1901 he was listed as W Sagar auctioneer 8 Market Square, Kimberley with his residence 24 Park Road. Just a year later



1902 he moved to a residence at 134 Dutoitspan Road. By 1907 he moved to lager business premises at 17 Market Square. And in 1924 he was listed as William Sagar and Sons auctioneers, back at no 8 Market Square.

One of his business premises is seen here on the left of the picture but it is difficult to read. It says 'Sagar Auctioneers'. (In the advert below the address is 10 Market Square?



William Sagar – Mayor of Kimberley

But William Sagar was so much more than an Auctioneer. He was most active in civic affairs. He was first a Councillor in Beaconsfield, the adjoining township, (as had several members of the Jewish community at different times). On many occasions William Sagar served as acting Mayor there. Upon his retirement from that Council, in 1896, he was presented with a flattering and beautifully illuminated address, signed by the Mayor and Councillors, on behalf ot themselves and the townspeople. He was made a Justice of the Peace in 1901. He then became a Town Councillor in Kimberley and when the Mayor of Kimberley JD Tyson, went on leave in April 1906, his colleagues unanimously voted William Sagar to be Mayor – 'with every confidence that he would carry out the duties not only with credit to the Council but with benefit to the town generally'. He served in that capacity and went on to be elected the next Mayor of Kimberley from 1906 to 1908.



He served his term in the magnificent Classically styled City Hall had been recently completed in 1899 – just before the Boer War.



The Jewish Chronicle London, Reports:

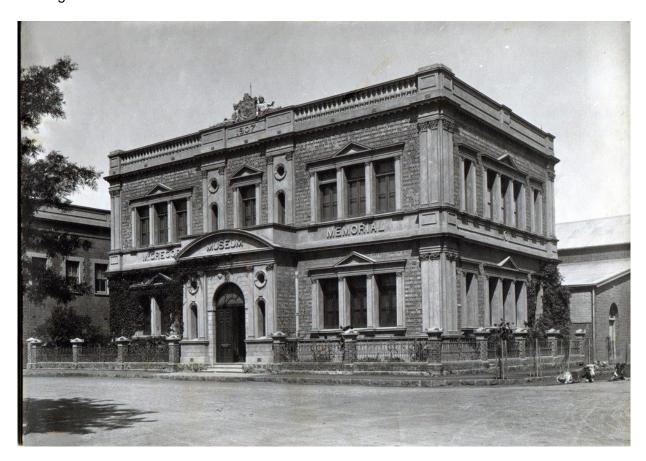
The Jewish Chronicle (JC) of London in their 'Jottings from South Africa' of 25 May 1906 reported on the mayoral inauguration, that 'Councillor Sagar, who was warmly applauded, said that he esteemed their personal selection of himself not only as a personal compliment, but it was rendered more gratifying by reason of the fact that it was the first time in the municipal annals of Kimberley, that a Jew had received so signal a mark of appreciation, and in that respect, he regarded it as one more triumphant assertion of that cherished tradition of religious freedom and equality in public life which characterised British communities in whatever part of the Empire they might be found'. He continued by saying, 'The recognition of this traditional British principle would be appreciated not only by himself, but by every one of his co-religionists in Kimberley and throughout South Africa: and he had no doubt that it would also serve as a wholesome example to other communities less endowed with liberal views. He then presented Councillor Tyson with an address on behalf of the Council. His career furnishes a notable instance of a man who, making the most of his early advantages, and of his own natural abilities, rises to fill the high position of the mayor of the very important township of Kimberley.

'As Mayor, he becomes a representative of the licencing board, the Hospital Board, the Public Library Committee, and was appointed in 1905 by the Kimberley Borough Council their representative on the Board of Health. He has already had the honour of receiving the representative of the King, as Sir Walter Hely Hutchinson, the Governor of Cape Colony, visited Kimberley on the 28th of April, on his way to the Victoria Falls'.

Handing-over of title deeds of McGregor Museum

William Sagar as mayor played an integral role in the handing over of the title deeds of the Alexander McGregor Memorial Museum (below) to the official representatives of the community of Kimberley on Tuesday evening 24 September 1907.

Mrs Margaret McGregor (widow of Alexander McGregor, a former Mayor of Kimberley) received the guests at the head of the staircase and thereafter took her place in the centre of one of the upstairs rooms. Seated on either side of Mrs McGregor were the mayoress Mrs W. Sagar and Mrs J.J. Christie the wife of the Civil Commissioner.



View of the museum in Chapel Street c 1912. Note the cow at leisure on the right.

The Mayor, William Sagar JP made a few introductory remarks after which D.J. Haarhoff, a former mayor, made a short speech on behalf of Mrs McGregor. Amongst what he said was that her presentation of the Museum 'was actuated by a desire to perpetuate the memory of her late husband and his long and happy association with the Diamond Fields... In handing over this building in trust to the Mayor, as representing the Town, and to Mr Christie as representing the Government, Mrs McGregor hoped the Museum would be the home of many beautiful and interesting exhibits, so that it would be a standing testimony as to what could be done on the old Diamond Fields'.

After the town clerk had read a short address of thanks to Mrs McGregor the mayor made a speech in which he expressed the Town's appreciation to Mrs McGregor for her 'munificent gift'. Her son William McGregor handed over to the Mayor W. Sagar, and T.W. Harker (representing the Civil Commissioner) the title deeds of the Museum enclosed in a silver casket upon which were engraved the names of the trustees (J.J. Christie and W. Sagar), the name of the institution and the date.

SAGAR, William, J.P.; Town Councillor and Mayor; Auctioneer; b. March, 1857, at Liverpool; s. of Michael and the late Sarah Sagar. formerly of Liverpool, and now of Petherton Road, Highbury, London. Educ. Liverpool Institute. Came to S.A. 1882; m. 1885, Rose. d. of Sophia and the late Henry Silberfein: children. Member of Beaconsfield Town Council from 1889-96. First Jewish Mayor of Kimberley, elected 18th



April, 1906; re-elected for the year 1907 President and Treasurer of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation; President Jewish Burial Society; President Jewish Benevolent Society; President Kimberley Polo Club; Borough Council's representative on the Licensing Board, the Hospital Board, the Public Library Committee, and the McGregor Museum Committee. Add., "Uhlenhorst," 134, Dutoitspan Road, and 8, Market Square, Kimberley, Griqualand West.

Serving the Jewish Community

The Jewish Chronicle also reported that 'William Sagar had always interested himself in all affairs concerning the Jewish community and his coreligionists and has served as the following: President and Treasurer or he Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation, President of the Jewish Burial Society and President of the Jewish Benevolent Society. In 1890 he was presented by the last-named Society with a handsomely illuminated address for valuable services rendered.



[Read the sad story about Ella Borkum and her children (as signed on this postcard) here https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Borkum.html

William Sagar was to serve the Jewish community of Kimberley with great distinction over a very long period from the late 1880s. He was the popular and efficient President of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation for well over 20 years during the time that the new Synagogue was built and opened in September 1902.

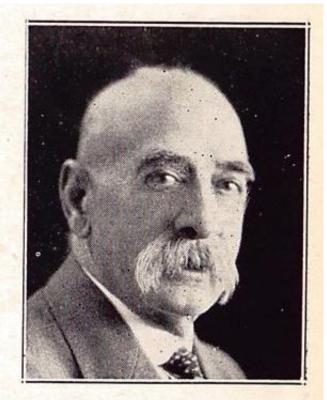


In 1929, Sagar was
President when he and
Rev Konviser opened
the new West End
Cemetery. He laid the
foundation stone and
was given a suitably
inscribed silver trowel.
His name is on the
foundation stone (On
the left is a picture by
Shawn Benjamin.).

William Sagar was made a Life President of the community and a

special presentation was made to him by the co-congregants for his great service to them for 40 years! His son **Harold Sagar** presented a lectern to the community in 1952, in memory of his late father who died in 1933.

SAGAR, William, Auctioneer and Estate Agent. Justice of the Peace, Commissioner of Oaths. Born in Liverpool in 1857. Educated in Liverpool, England. Married in 1886 to Rose Silberfein; has six children. First Jewish Mayor of Kimberley, 1906/8; President, Kimberley Jewish Congregation for 20 years; Chairman of the Kimberley Hospital; Past President of the Burial and Benevolent Societies. Postal

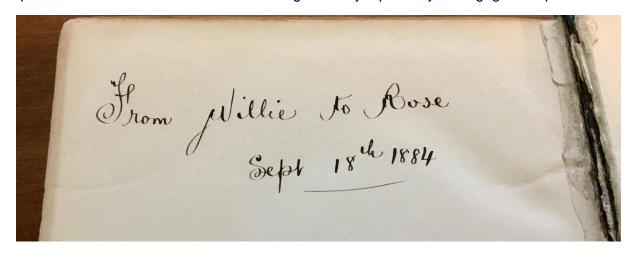


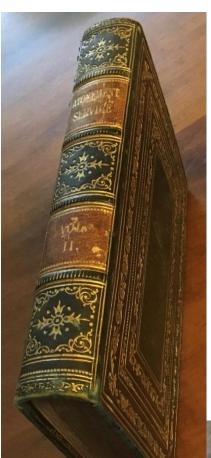
Address: P.O. Box 234, Kimberley.

Marriage and Family

William Sager married **Rose Silberfein** in Kimberley in 1885. The story goes that she and her parents Sophia and Henry from Romania were on a world tour with their daughter when she met William Sagar in Kimberly and married him. She was only 17 and he was 28. It is said that both Cecil John Rhodes and Barney Barnato had attended their wedding in 1885. The acting minister was Meyer Mendelssohn. (Read more about him and his son Sydney Mendelssohn here: https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Mendelssohn.html. The couple became part of Kimberley high society. They resided at 134 Dutoitspan Road.

Great granddaughter Lynne Gordon shows us something lovely that she has in her possession - 6 volumes... One for each High Holiday – probably an engagement present.





The Sagars had three sons and three daughters.

- 1. Minnie (Mimi) Sagar, July 1886 the oldest daughter married Leo Kramer and settled in Bloemfontein. They had two children, Francis and Michael Kramer
- 2. **Lily Sagar 1888** married Norman Francis **Marcus**, a diamond buyer who was born in Birmingham England. He was a diamond buyer in Kimberley. They lived in Carrington Road Kimberley. Lily was a homemaker She died in 1953 and was buried in Kimberley. Norman Marcus died c1961 and is also buried in Kimberley. **Cheryll Jutan** is her granddaughter
- 3. **Harold Sagar** b September **1890**. The eldest son Harold married **Julie Newman** and remained in Kimberley running the auction rooms. They had two daughters. **Lynne Gordon** is his granddaughter.
- 4. **Henrietta (Rita) Sagar 1895** married Harry (Herman) **Spitz** in Kimberley in 1925. **Heather Miller** (their granddaughter) says that Rita and Harry moved to Johannesburg where Heather's mother, Pauline was born in 1927. Rita passed away in 1963 and Pauline in 2017.
- 5. **Norman Sager 1897** went to England at some stage we don't know much about him.
- 6. **Arthur Sagar, December 1901** his wife was Jean and they had one daughter Jillian.



In this amazing, 'coloured' picture below, taken in about 1898/9 we see five Sagar children at about the ages of (from the left) Norman 2, Lily 10, Rita 4, Mimi 12, eldest son Harold 8. (Youngest son Arthur was only born in December 1901 – after this picture was taken)

Sagar's worked with several ministers of Kimberley synagogue

Scarcely had the digging and sifting of diamondiferous ground began when Jews on the diamond fields met and formed a congregation for divine service praying in homes which were no more than tents. 1870s and 1880s: Jews were already well represented in the digger community and nearly half the brokers and buyers were Jews. There were also Jews who ran transport to the fields and who traded goods and services. They also took a prominent role in the social life of the diggings and emerging city. They featured significantly in boxing, racing, theatre, and other entertainments as well as in journalism. A tentative association was created in 1871 but incorporated in 1873 as Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation. The magnificent Memorial Road Synagogue was desgned and built under Sagar's watch.



- Rev Meyer Mendelssohn 1878 1884 married them
- Rev Joel Rabinowitz 1884
- 1886-1888 Rev Mark L Harris
- 1888-1889 Rev E Joffe
- Rev Harris Isaacs 1890-1927 (left) longest serving
- Rev Maurice Konviser 1927 1935 Buried him
 Read about all the ministers and synagogues in Kimberley here:
 https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/News_29.html

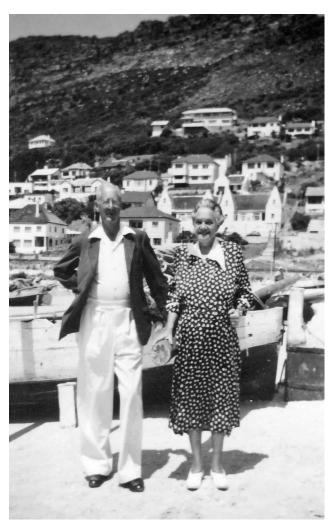
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## Marks of a Great Soul – William Sagar's passing in August 1933.

When William Sagar passed away suddenly in August 1933, the whole community and the city were in shock. Only a few years before, in March 1929, Sagar had been presented with a suitably inscribed trowel when he had laid the foundation stone for the new mortuary at the consecration of the new cemetery with rev Maurice Konviser. He had thanked the Mayor and City council for granting the land. Now at his graveside, Rev Maurice Konviser said 'it will be impossible in this hour of bereavement to estimate the extent of the irreparable loss sustained by the Kimberley community in general and our Jewish community in particular and because it is indeed a rare personality whom we are assembled to mourn it would not be easy in one brief discourse at the open grave to do justice to his memory.'

The huge funeral cortege of many cars had paused as it passed by the synagogue with whose life and worship William Sagar had been so intimately associated for so long (over 40 years) and where he had been President for over 20 years. It also paused at the hospital of which he had served as a valuable chairman of the board. The flag here was at half-mast for Sagar. In listing his extraordinary service and compassion, Konviser lamented that 'it is very difficult to realise that his comely presence, his winsome manner, his kindly bearing, the remarkable intelligence and the deep sympathy, so characteristic of him – these have gone down forever in the dust'.

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Granddaughter of Lily Sagar Cheryll Jutan writes:

Cheryll, now living in London, Ontario, Canada, says, My grandmother was Lily Sagar, William and Rose's second daughter. She married Norman Francis Marcus who was born in Birmingham England. He was a diamond buyer in Kimberley.

On the left we see **Norman and Lily Marcus** (née Sagar) on holiday in Muizenberg in the 1950s.

They lived at 38 Carrington Road.

Ouma Lily was a homemaker. She died in 1953 and is buried in Kimberley. My

Oupa Norman lived with his son my uncle Kenneth Marcus, until he moved to Belgrave Lodge. He passed away in 1961 and is buried in Kimberley.

Cheryll's mother was **Nancy Julia Marcus** (Nan) daughter of Lily née

Sagar and Norman Marcus. She was born in Kimberley and worked for Kimberley newspapers.

Nan married Ithmore (Itty) Goldring (see picture below). He was a salesman in Kimberley originally from Jaggersfontein. They lived in Kimberley where Cheryll was born in 1949. Ithmore sadly died in 1953 at aged just 40. He is buried in Kimberley.



Cheryll says: 'After my dad died young, my mom remarried and we moved to Jo'burg. My ouma Lily also died in 1953, the same year as my dad. My mom, Nan, died 1991 at 71 and is buried at Westpark Cemetery Johannesburg.'



Cheryll gained a Nursery School
Teacher's Diploma (NSTC).in 1970 in
Johannesburg. She says: I married
Arthur Jutan of Johannesburg, at the
Berea Synagogue on 8 August 1971
(see left) and my husband and I moved
to Canada three days later, where we
have been ever since. Arthur became a
Chemical Engineering Professor and I
worked as a Preschool teacher, in
London Ontario Canada until we retired

We have two children, Norma Michelle Jutan 1978 Ottawa Canada PhD data analysis for health care and Michael Justin Lee Jutan b 1982.he is now in San Francisco USA. Where he works in R&D for Lucasfilm/Disney

Below we see me, Cheryll Jutan, with my uncle Kenneth Marcus, also born and raised in Kimberley.

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# Heather Miller, granddaughter of Rita (Henrietta Sagar right)

writes:

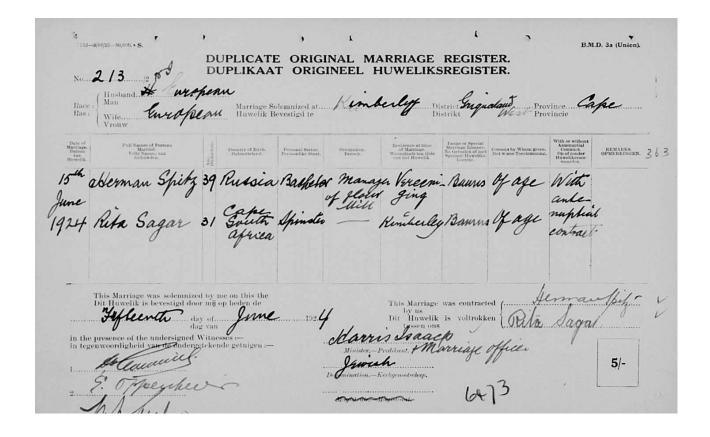
'My mother was **Pauline**, daughter of **Rita** (née Sagar) and **Harry (Herman Spitz).** 

Rita and Harry were married in the Kimberley synagogue in 1924. (See their wedding certificate below.) Ernest Oppenheimer was a witness. The Minister was Reverend Harris Isaacs (who served in Kimberley for 33 years between 1890 and 1927).

They moved to Johannesburg shortly afterwards where their daughter Pauline was born in 1927.



This is a link to the story of the Rev Harris Isaacs. <a href="https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Families\_files/Kimberley%20Ex-Pats%20Newsletter%20%2333.pdf">https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Families\_files/Kimberley%20Ex-Pats%20Newsletter%20%2333.pdf</a>



## **Four Generations**



Heather Miller is seen here as a baby with her grandmother Henrietta (Rita) Sagar. This must have been taken in 1951/52

Below we see the fourth generation. This picture was taken about the same time in Kimberley and shows on the left Heather on her mother Pauline Goldring's lap (daughter of Henrietta (Rita) Sagar) and Cheryll on her mother Nancy Marcus's lap (daughter of Lily Sagar)

Rita passed away in 1963 and Pauline in 2017.



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In this picture below of Pauline's wedding in Johannesburg 1948, on the left-hand side are Heather's great uncle Harold Sagar and her grandmother Rita.



# **Harold Sagar:**

# **Granddaughter Lynne Gordon sent us these pictures.**

Harold, the eldest son of William and Rose Sagar lived in Kimberley and carried on the auctioneer's business in the city. (See him in action on the right) When he passed away in 1955, aged just 65, **Cyril B Harris**, the distinguished journalist on the Diamond Fields Advertiser wrote an obituary tribute under the headline:

# OUTSTANDING WORKER FOR EX-SERVICEMEN



It said: NEWS WAS RECEIVED in Kimberley yesterday of the death with tragic suddenness at his home, 1 Gately Court, Gately Road, East London, of Mr. Harold Sagar, an old and respected resident of Kimberley who, until three years ago when his health compelled him to move to the coast, carried on the well-known auctioneering business of W. Sagar and Son.

One of the most popular and highly esteemed businessmen of his day, Mr Sagar came from a pioneering family who in many spheres promoted the general development of the Diamond Fields and thus set up a unique record of service. Mr. William Sagar, his father, was Mayor of Kimberley for many years, as well as occupying many other influential offices, not the least important being that of President of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation.

#### HIS FATHERS FOOTSTEPS

And Mr. Harold Sagar, the eldest of three sons, carried on where his esteemed father had left off, and rendered inestimable service to the community in many and different ways. His predominant interest, however, was the welfare of ex-servicemen, whose services to their country were never allowed to be forgotten. Harold Sagar was always anxious to learn their difficulties and help to rehabilitate them in Civvy Street.

Mr. Sagar was born in Kimberley some 65 years ago and was educated at the Christian Brothers' College. He was a brilliant pupil and passed all standards with credit to himself and

to his teachers. Soccer football was the game he then favoured, and as goalkeeper in the Findlayson Cup he helped to keep the school's colours flying. He was always a true sportsman in whatever game he played.

In later life he joined his father in the auctioneering business which he subsequently acquired and conducted on his own behalf. He wielded the hammer effectively over the years at many important property and furniture sales, and from time to time put through several gigantic land deals.

#### YEARS OF ACTIVE SERVICE

He was called to the colours in the First World War, and saw much active service, first in South-West and then in East Africa. It was while serving throughout these arduous campaigns that he contracted an illness which in later life considerably lowered his vitality and from which he never really recovered.



When the Second World War broke out, he was too old for campaigning, but he did his duty loyally on the home front and joined the National Volunteer Brigade, to which organization he rendered much useful service.

In a busy life he managed to devote a great deal of time to social work in its many branches, but the welfare of the returned soldier was always the cause dearest to his heart, and he laboured unceasingly towards this end. For three years he was president of the Kimberley branch of the British Empire Service League; he served on the national executive for some time and was a member of the local committee for more years than one can remember. He was a familiar figure at many congresses throughout the Union and spoke with authority. Also, he took an active interest in the welfare of Coloured exservicemen; and as the case with Europeans, always made pressing claims for necessitous cases. [Harold Sagar addressed the very first meeting of the Kimberley branch of the Union of Jewish Women in 1939. You can read the <a href="UJW History of the Kimberley Branch">UJW History of the Kimberley Branch</a> on this link.]

### **MEMORABLE OCCASIONS – presented to the King and Queen**

During his presidency of the local branch of the B.E.S.L., Lord Wavell became a life member; Field-Marshal Montgomery visited the city while he was in office. In 1947 when the Royal Family were here, Mr. Sagar, together with Mrs. Sagar was privileged, as president of the branch, to be presented to Their Majesties and the two Princesses, at the

official reception in the grounds of the Duggan-Cronin Bantu Gallery.

He was a member of almost every fundraising committee in Kimberley which had for its object. Popular among every section of the community, Harold Sagar had a very wide circle of friends whom he and Mrs. Sagar (right aboard HMS Windsor Castle on one their trips to London.) were always delighted to welcome at their home in East London.

He believed that the sweet charities of life, sympathy, affection and benevolence, were the blessings blended with sorrow. sickness and infirmity; and from the mutual forbearance practised to each other arose the kindnesses of goodwill—the charm of social life.



He married Miss Julie Newman who, barely two weeks ago, suffered another

# WINDSOR CASTLE

bereavement in the loss of her sister at the Cape, and to her the deepest sympathy of the community will be extended.

(Read about Cyril Harris here: <a href="https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Harris">https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Harris</a>, Cyril.html)

Harold and Julie Sagar had two daughters (see below - Thelma (Mrs. B. Hochschild, Cape Town) (left) and Nan (Mrs. Dudley Goldberg, Kimberley). Dudley was the third son of Mr and Mrs Bernard Goldberg another illustrious Jewish family of Kimberley.



Mr. Sagar leaves two sisters (Mrs. Minnie Kramer, Bloemfontein, and Mrs. Henrietta Spitz, Johannesburg) and two brothers, Mr. Norman Sagar (England) and Mr. Arthur Sagar (Johannesburg). The late Mrs. Lily Marcus, wife of Norman Marcus, of Kimberley, was another sister.

The funeral will take place at East

London this afternoon, and the members of the B.E.S.L. and the Moths will perform the last rites. Kimberley will remember him and will be well represented. Cyril B Harris

(Mr B Goldberg was known as 'the Breakwater King' of Kimberley diamonds. See their story here:

https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Goldberg2.html

In this picture below left Dudley Goldberg and Nan Sagar (Lynne's parents) are on Honeymoon



This is a picture of Lynne
Gordon with her mother Nan (Mrs Dudley Goldberg – née Sagar) stepping out in town snapped by a pavement photographer.



Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE London, July 2021 from photographs and texts sent by great-granddaughters Cheryll Jutan, Heather Miller, and Lynne Gordon, and from historian, Paul Cheifitz. Additional articles and pictures sent from Robert at the McGregor Museum Kimberley. Updated October 2021

