

Kimberley Ex-Pats Newsletter #34 – Milchig and Fleishig

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, 5 February 2021

Showing the connections between De Beers Consolidated Mining Company (Stockdale St Headquarters below) and the Jewish farmers surrounding Kimberley in the early 1900s.



Diamonds

We have seen that diamonds have been a Jewish preserve for centuries. From the time of the discovery of these precious stones in Griqualand West, Jews flocked to the area – as diggers, brokers and then setting up their little tent offices to buy the stones and send them to Europe. Soon the volume and quality of stones became so great that the European merchants set up their own offices and employed representatives in Kimberley like Julius Wernher and Alfred Beit from Germany (who were representing the French Jewish diamond magnate, Jules Porgès).

By the mid-1870s there was a large and growing cohort of sophisticated Western European Jewish diamond entrepreneurs in Kimberley from Germany and France. There were also some clever Jewish boys from London's East End of like David Harris and his cousins the Barnatos, who arrived barely out of their teens, learned fast and climbed the ladder.

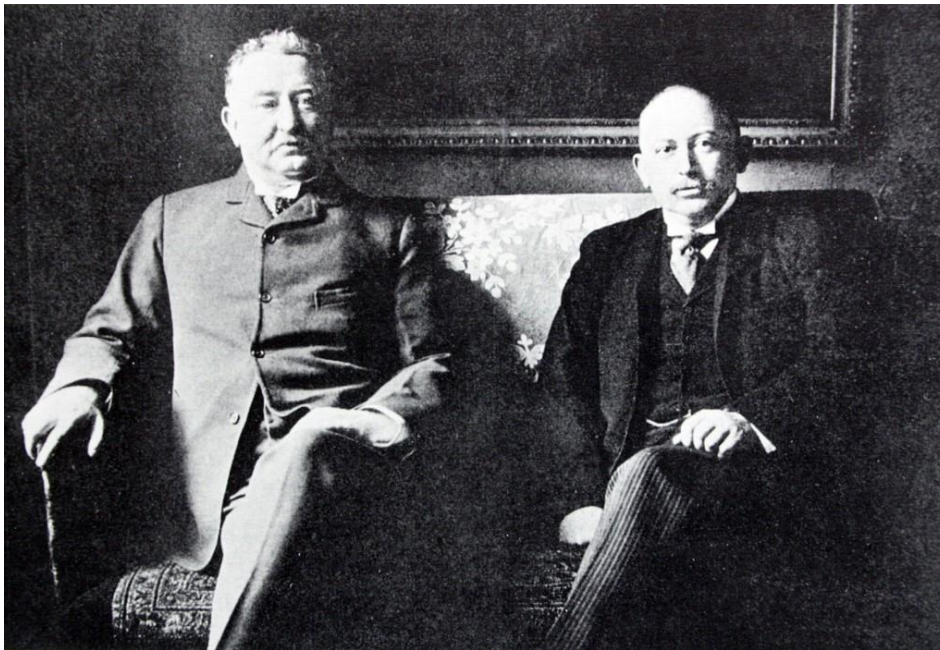
Even the heads of the diamond firms like Jules Porgès himself, one of the most successful jewellers and entrepreneurs, dropped his plush mansion life in Paris, to rush out and live for a while in a tent in the windswept, smelly, mining community of the Northern Cape to see for himself what was going on. He also saw to it, that it was worth his while - as he was one of the main (unsung) winners and organisers of the diamond – and gold industries.

Early on, the major diamond merchants of Europe realised that it was vital to control the supply of diamonds. They had already established a syndicate to buy the entire production of the Kimberley mines at a price that they all realised would keep the business profitable. All the members of the syndicate were Jewish diamond merchants, representing major firms in Europe. Later after amalgamation, this was formally established. (see [Newsletter #32 December 2020](#) to remind you of how Rhodes managed to achieve this – 'How the Christian beat the Jews').

Gaining Control of Supply – De Beers Consolidated Mines 1888.

They all realised that with four separate major mines, going full tilt and with possibly more to be discovered, they needed to do something drastic to curb the uncontrolled competitive supply – or the diamond would become worthless. There were several unsuccessful attempts to amalgamate all the mines under one control. It needed some really powerful people to make it happen.

This turned out to be Cecil Rhodes and his collaborators. He had dreams of Empire, convinced that Britons were the noblest race. Getting rich on diamonds was a means for him to expand the British Empire northwards. He had enormous flair, persuasive power and charisma. He was already a politician in the Cape Legislature. The German cohort, unofficially lead by Alfred Beit, threw themselves and their European economic power behind Rhodes as the best bet to achieve their common goal of amalgamating the mines and controlling the supply of diamonds.



Rhodes (left, in the picture left) and Alfred Beit (on the right) joined hands in this endeavour. They became firm friends. Beit idolised Rhodes. Beit was from a Jewish family in Hamburg. He was a brilliant strategist and a financial genius. He was very shy and self-effacing - but was well liked even loved and respected by everyone in the field. His philosophy was that to

succeed in business you must always see that your collaborators prosper too.

Achieving control of the diamond supply

Beit and Rhodes first bought up all the companies owning claims in the De Beers Mine (named after the brothers who had originally owned the farm). Eventually, they controlled the whole of the mine. Then they set their minds to taking control of the richest mine, the Kimberley Mine. After anxious ups and downs and hurried trips to London and Paris to persuade companies to sell shares and major banks, like Rothschilds, to finance them, and after agreeing to Barney Barnato's exacting terms, Beit and Rhodes achieved control of the Kimberley Mine as well. Ownership of the two smaller mines Dutoitspan and Bultfontein was soon to follow. By 1888 they had created the formidable De Beers Consolidated Mining Company, which was to rule the diamond world for more than 100 years.

It is widely acknowledged that it was Beit who was responsible for the success of the venture. You can read the exciting story of Alfred Beit's huge impact on the history of Kimberley here:

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

How they planned to safeguard their investment

Hans Sauer, an associate of Rhodes and also of Alfred Beit, wrote in his book, *Ex Africa*, (1935) about being present at Groote Schuur (Rhodes' Home in Cape Town) in December 1895, with **Rhodes** and **Beit**, (when they were nervously awaiting news of Jameson's raid on the Transvaal in which they were heavily implicated) Sauer says he took them to Muizenberg in a horse buggy to cool off. They were reviewing the position of the great De Beers Consolidated Mining company. They discussed how they, acting for the Company, had bought many farms in Griqualand West where diamonds might be found and had closed them against prospectors; how through Wernher, Beit & Co they had obtained control of Jagersfontein (aha! I had wondered about how they dealt that rich mine over the border in the Orange Free State, from which many of the best stones came)

They spoke of how they had done everything that was humanly possible to place the De Beers Company beyond the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune making it an investment of the first order. "Beit" he said, "was particularly pleased, as Rhodes recounted all the good things they had obtained for the company, rubbing his hands and gently murmuring 'perfect, perfect' when Rhodes suddenly remarked, 'But there is one bad fault.' Beit jumped in his seat as if he had been shot, and asked in an agitated manner: 'What is it, Rhodes, what is it?' Rhodes quietly replied: 'other mines equally good may be discovered!.'" De Beers actually had had a lot of difficulty in gaining control of the Wesselton Mine in 1890 when that fifth diamond pipe, four miles away, was discovered,



(nearly 20 years after the original pipes and two years after amalgamation). This spurred them on to gobble up all the farms they could, wanting only the mineral rights. But what were they to do with all the farms?

It seemed to me that De Beers Directors were very pleased to lease or sell some of these farms on



good terms to friendly, cooperative and enterprising Jewish immigrants (reserving the mineral rights of course). These were experienced farmers who could provide reliable supplies of milk and meat for the growing community – which was after all their work-force.

The big hole in 2020.



On the previous page there is a picture of the Big Hole (Kimberley Mine) as it looks today, with the couple of skyscrapers on the horizon – to show the scale. However, the picture above is of the Big Hole as I remember it as a child. You could hardly see any dark green water right at the bottom unless you stood on tiptoe and peered over the primitive viewing ‘cage’. Now it has filled up with water and is not nearly so impressive, I fear.

Of course, the Big Hole Museum is very impressive. I am sure you have all been there. If you look at Sir David Harris Ballroom – you will notice it is none other than Mis Hoopers’ dance studio and you can even see the holes where the bar was fixed. Did you know that the idea of a museum at the Big Hole came from a member of the Jewish Community? You might do, because I told you about it before. It was Cyril Harris, a star journalist on the Diamond Fields Advertiser. You can read about him and his big idea here https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Harris,_Cyril.html



We must also remember that in the very early days De Beers was almost totally Jewish. Apart from Rhodes himself, and Francis Oats and people they employed as mine managers and secretaries – almost all the Directors and the Life Governors were Jewish – see picture left.

Directors of De Beers Consolidated Mines in 1893

Standing: left to right 1. E Bernheim 2. William Craven

(Secretary) 3. Gardner F. Williams (General Manager) 4. Ludwig Breitmeyer 5. Lt Col. David Harris
Seated: 1. Woolf Joel 2. Charles Nind 3. Harry Mosenthal 4. Cecil Rhodes 5. Barney Barnato
6. Francis Oates 7. George Compton

Datnows and Sussmans arrive to farm in Kimberley

in the very early 20th century.

It seems certain from the family stories, that both the Datnows (originally called Datnov) and the Sussmans, bought and /or leased farms from De Beers. Putting two and two together, there is a nice symbiotic scenario that these poor but hardworking Jewish farmers were given their first step up in life in South Africa by fellow Jews in the diamond industry in De Beers - who could vouch for their good character and reliability – and use their services. Surely a win-win situation all round.

The Datnow Family



Benjamin Datnov was born in 1873 in Kaidan in the Ponevezh district of the Kovno province in North Eastern Lithuania. At that time, before WW1, all this was part of the Russian Empire.

Ron Kaftel, Benjamin's grandson, says the family had been farmers there. They farmed on land that was hired, as Jews were not allowed to own land. They came to the Kimberley area in about

1903 where his wife's family, the Salkinders, were involved in some way with diamonds. (This may have been the introduction to leasing a farm from De Beers.) He was a learned man – steeped in Judaism. He was also qualified as a mohel (ritual circumciser) and shochet (ritual slaughterer) for which services the growing Kimberley Jewish community may well have been pleased to employ him.

Above we see **Benjamin Datnov** and **Sarah (née Salkinder)** at their wedding in Lithuania in 1900. They set off for South Africa in 1903 with Morris (b 1902) and baby Levine (b March 1903). They travelled by boat via the port of Libau in Latvia for South Africa, stopping over in London on the way. They settled in the Kimberley area. At first, they farmed just over the border in the Orange Free State on farms that the family say might well have been **owned by De Beers**. Gradually, or perhaps quite soon, Benjamin was able to hire more farms or buy his own.

The central farmstead for the family was the farm called **Bachelors Hall** which Benjamin Datnov had acquired early on. He started a big dairy operation there with 200 Friesian cows. Here his five children grew up – helping on the farms. Another major acquisition was **Klippiesspan**, (probably also a **De Beers farm** originally, based on some features that have been found there). Another big dairy operation was set up there, also with about 200 Friesian cows. The Datnows supplied milk to the growing city and also ran dairies, a milk bar and an ice-cream factory in Kimberley.

The Sussman Family

Philip Sussman, the pioneer of the Sussman family, arrived in Kimberley in 1900. He was the oldest brother of Cecil Sussman's father Kollen (Kalman) Sussman. The family came from Taverig, a largish town in the south west of the Kovno Guberniya of Lithuania. The family also had a background in farming, so it was natural for Philip to turn to what he knew best.



He acquired farms in the Kimberley area, farming with cattle and sheep. By 1912, his business had expanded so much that Philip was able to send for his brothers, Isaac (who became a diamond buyer – is this a clue?) Guttel, Kollen, and George who joined him in the farming and meat business. He also brought out his sister Tilly – below is her wedding picture, taken at the side of the Kimberley shul in 1911. She married family friend Barney Dorman – and their progeny went on to develop farms and also Fisherman's Wharf and Mall at Hout Bay near Cape Town.

The Sussman Brothers now acquired several more farms in the Kimberley district and prospered as farmers, livestock dealers and entrepreneurs in the **meat industry**. Kollen was regarded by his peers as an expert judge on the weight of livestock and was seldom out by even a kilo.

They established the **Kimberley Ranching Company** and the **Premier Meat Supply**, the most significant butcher shop in Kimberley, situated in De Beers Road, (pictured below). They had a kosher counter in operation for many decades. Many family members were in the business.

The De Beers Connections



Natalie Sussman (widow of Cecil who sadly passed away in 2019) writes:

I think you are correct in assuming that some of the farms were bought or leased from De Beers. Philip Sussman was very friendly with Sir Ernest Oppenheimer and did lease farms from De Beers. I know of one farm that was still leased during Cecil's father Kollen's lifetime. It is interesting that many of the farmers were Jews. They were called 'Boere Jode' who had a very happy relationship with the Afrikaans speaking population.

Jeff Sussman says: There were also other farms that were leased from De Beers. One called Mia Mia was located near Petrusberg on the Bloemfontein Road.



Photo: inside the Premier Meat Supply - probably around 1950
left to right Cecil, Kollen and Guttel Sussman, Chaim Katz, unknown, Mr Cvi

The agreement, Jeff understands, was a handshake deal between Sir Ernest Oppenheimer and Phillip or Kollen Sussman and was honoured until the farms were sold in the mid-1970's. They say that the De Beer's connection surfaced annually during the June / July, the springbok hunting season with many De Beers officials invited to Kimberley to participate.

Keeping Game

It also seems likely that there may have been one further proviso, in making a helpful deal to immigrant Jews who may not have been wealthy enough at the time to buy their own farms. Apart from De Beers retaining the mineral rights, they might also have insisted that the farmers should

nurture plentiful herds of native game (springbok, steenbok, blesbok, and kudu) to keep up stocks for the De Beers shooting parties for company officials and visitors.

Certainly the **Sussmans** and **Datnows** both kept herds of game. They also hosted shoots and supplied quantities of venison and biltong to order to the Kimberley Club and individuals.



Natalie Sussman just sent me this picture of 'One day's De Beers shoot, May 20, 1897' Cecil Rhodes is fourth from the left.

Rooipoort, De Beers Shooting Box now a 'game reserve' and conservation centre



In 1899, De Beers set up their own 'Shooting Box' on one of their farms, Rooipoort near Klipfontein, about 65km west of Kimberley. It was a venue for hosting hunts for company officials and important guests. Cecil Rhodes had insisted that a comfortable house be built. The entire house had been imported, in kit form, by ship from England and transported

to the farm by ox wagon. The access road was repaired.

The grand opening shoot took place on Thursday 10 August 1899. Rhodes was not able to attend due to Parliamentary matters directly concerning De Beers such as taxation and revenue. Parliament was in session virtually right through September and Rhodes only came to Kimberley when the Anglo-Boer War had started in October 1899 – and was there during the siege. It is highly unlikely that Rhodes ever stayed at the Shooting Box. He died in March 1902.

Those Company officials who did attend the week-long shoot beginning that Thursday were Gardner Williams, GW Compton, William Pickering, D MacGill, and Tim Tyson. On the following day, Friday 11 August Dr Leander Starr Jameson and Lady Sarah Wilson were expected to join the party. (Obviously shooting springbok was not a favourite Jewish sport, and the Jewish directors were probably busy minding the business.)

The Diamond Fields Advertiser recorded it as follows: The new Shooting Box is replete with everything leading to comfort and a quiet rest after a hard day's shooting. The site for the Shooting Box, close to a spring, was chosen by William Pickering, Secretary of De Beers Consolidated Mines.

De Beers has now made this into a conservation area. Rooipoort became a South African Natural Heritage Site in 1985. It is situated on the transition zone between the Karoo, Kalahari and grassland zones. A visit to Rooipoort must include game drives accompanied by a guide as well as a visit to Bushman's Fountain, one of the richest rock engraving sites in Southern Africa.

At the turn of the 19th century, the Red Hartebeest was extinct outside of the Kalahari and the only viable population was on Rooipoort, which has been a major contributor to establishing and conserving the Red Hartebeest throughout Southern Africa. Rooipoort is also recognised as the only site where the genetically pure Cape Ostrich exists and the Rooipoort population has been used for restocking a number of other Cape reserves.

Rooipoort has over the years provided tens of thousands of heads of game to other reserves for restocking, most notably Pilanesberg. It was during these relocation exercises that the techniques and protocols of moving animals quickly, reducing stress, as well as the use of chemical tranquillisers in order to further reduce the impact, were developed.

Alfred Beit Remembered in Kimberley



Alfred Beit (bottom front), Lionel Phillips (fifth from bottom) and J.B. Taylor (top) at Kimberley. (Mr & Mrs Owen Hunt)

Alfred Beit (who had left Kimberley for London in 1889, and who died in 1906) left a large sum of money to the City of Kimberley for the Alfred Beit Memorial fund. This was further subscribed to by Beit's partner Wernher, his brother Sir Otto and by De Beers. It was later supplemented by the Bernard Klisser bequest consisting of the major portion of his estate of about £45,000. The fund, which is known as the **Alfred Beit and Klisser Bequest**, functions for the benefit of the needy of the city.

See the **article from The Star**, in October 1966, at the end of this Newsletter (sent by Jeff Sussman). It says that thanks to the Beit Trust pensioners in Kimberley were getting R2 every week!

(Also at that time in the 1960s and later, the members of the Union of Jewish Women (UJW) were serving tea and cakes to the pensioners coming to get their Beit grant. Read about the [UJW History of the Kimberley Branch](#).

Above is Beit with his dog at the bottom of this pile at a party in Kimberley.

Alfred Beit is remembered in Kimberley with a bust in the gardens of the Kimberley Africana Library (a building for which he was one of the original donors in the 1880s) as well as having his name attributed to 'Beit House', the boarding house of the Kimberley Girls' High School.

Library Bust

In 1912 the Alfred Beit Memorial Committee approached the Library Committee requesting permission to lease a small portion of the Library grounds. They wanted it to be the location for a bronze bust of Alfred Beit, the great benefactor to the city, that they had commissioned from Royal Academician sculptor, Henry Pegram.

Right: Alfred Beit's bust in the gardens of the Kimberley library:



Beit House (pictured below)

Beit House is a large double storeyed Victorian property, consisting of a main bay and 2 projecting bays at either side. The building was designed as a hostel possibly by Timlin and named after Sir Alfred Beit. The school was built in 1906 so it might have been built at about that time.



(I actually spent a term at Beit House, as a boarder, when my parents went 'overseas'. Adele Bayer whole family lived in Taung, was there at the time. It was my own wish – maybe having read too many Enid Blyton's boarding school stories, but it was an interesting time. I had no idea then, why it was called 'Beit House'.)

To read the full Alfred Beit story (The Right Man in the Right Place at the Right Time), and see the glowing tributes to Beit made by General Smuts, Gardner Williams, George Beet, Lionel Phillips, Sir Percy Fitzpatrick and others who knew him personally at the time, click here:

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

Other related articles you can read are

Read [Sussman, Cecil and Natalie \(nee Kroll\)](#)

Read [Sussman, Philip and Augusta \(nee Cohen\)](#)

Read [Datnow Family: Benjamin, Levine, Mike](#)

Read [Kimberley Jews and the Second World War](#)

See reproduced below the article in The Star headed '**Generous Gift for the Aged**' mentioning Beit's Trust.

Newsletter 34 Compiled by **Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, February 2021**

GENEROUS GIFT FOR THE AGED

THEY WERE SEATED on a straight row of high-backed chairs in the foyer of the City Hall in Kimberley.

Each one of them was elderly. Lines of worry and care were etched deeply into their faces. Patiently they waited for their money.

As I walked past them, Mr. P. C. Winters, Kimberley's publicity director, told me why these old folk gathered at the City Hall each week — and why they were each given R2.

"They can thank Alfred Beit and his Jewish generosity," he said. "It was his money which founded the Beit Trust. People of a certain age who qualify can collect their cash from the trust every week."

More than most people, the Jews have made a mighty contribution towards the commercial and industrial development of South Africa, and in Kimberley I heard how the Diamond City was in fact the mother city to South African Jewry.

Appropriately the synagogue in Kimberley is believed to be the only one in the world to have a diamond-tipped "yard" — a pointer with a diamond insert used when reading the Holy Scrolls.

This unique present was given to the congregation by a German named Trichert in about 1890 and is still in use.

"The story of Kimberley is the story of South African Jewry," said Mr. Winters. "The first Jews passed South Africa with the Portuguese navigators but Jewry did not establish itself in the Cape until 1841.

FIRST RABBI

"In 1849 the first rabbi, the Rev. Isaac Pulver, arrived in South Africa, and his arrival coincided with the consecration of the first synagogue."

Ten years later the Rev. Joel Rabinowitz started his work in the Cape — he was later to become one of the first rabbis in Johannesburg — and by 1860 there were 60 Jewish families in the Cape. An isolated few made their homes in the other provinces.

But the year 1871 saw a sudden increase in the numbers of Jews in South Africa. Diamonds were discovered in Kimberley.

"From this period we can trace the dispersal of Jewry throughout South Africa by considering the trading slumps in the diamond industry," said Mr. Winters.

"The first slump of 1873-1874 coincided with the discovery of the Pilgrims Rest gold fields and probably the most prominent Kimberley Jews to leave the Diamond Fields at this time were the Marks brothers.

"Sammy Marks struck up a friendship with Paul Kruger and pioneered industry in the Transvaal — before that he had been one of the biggest diggers down

THE STAR

JOHANNESBURG

y feline

ly feline -earner

has Not that Kits really cares. She
r. thinks it far more fun to sleep
fat, in the Publicity Director's
chair.
proud Now and then she will languidly
have stretch herself and swagger off
Not into the dark confines behind
you the stage.
she's Especially when strange men
South try and photograph her.
After all -- every girl has to put
on a show for the Press.

erley
uncil
nates

to
care-
lls, is
she
now.
mice
catch.

APPOINTMENT FOR LOCAL PRIEST

The Vicar-General of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Johannesburg was appointed a domestic prelate of Pope Paul on September 21.

This means that he will be known as the Rt. Rev. Monsignor Anthony Kelly.

the Marks brothers.

"Sammy Marks struck up a friendship with Paul Kruger and pioneered industry in the Transvaal — before that he had been one of the biggest diggers down here."

Many Jews went to Oudtshoorn to help in the booming ostrich feather industry when diamonds suffered their second depression in 1881-1883.

GOLD INDUSTRY

Barney Barnato, formerly of Kimberley, was one of the big-time pioneers of Johannesburg's gold industry and Sir David Harris, another Kimberley Jew, was responsible for the amendment to the Immigration Laws which recognized Yiddish as a European language.

By 1891 there were 1,500 Jews on the Diamond Fields, but gradually many of them moved to the Rand as the young gold-mining industry took hold and grew.

Today the Diamond City retains much of its Jewish flavour.

There are not quite as many Cohens as there are in Johannesburg, "but," said Mr. Winters, "we had them first."

DRG

OCT 18

1966