

Kimberley Ex-Pats Newsletter #42

Community History On-Line (CHOL) and Kimberley Heritage

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, 31 July 2021

Community History On-Line (CHOL)

Thank you so much to those who joined in our first international conference on putting community history online last Wednesday. We have received very warm feedback from those who heard me talk about the **Kimberley website** and heard **Eli Rabinowitz** talk about his other activities and many other kehilalink community sites. We also heard Leila Bloch talk about the extensive and wonderful archives of the **South African Jewish Museum**.



If you missed it If you were not able to join at the time – particularly Australians, you can listen again here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adXtxs-FaWA>

This week on Wednesday 4 August at 11.00am South African time, (10.00am UK time) the conference continues with Gary Sussman – in Israel, who will talk about how he found and motivated so many ex-Vryburgers to excitedly contribute stories and pictures that he has put on his vibrant and beautiful **Vryburg** website. We will also hear progress and ideas on the communities of **Muizenberg** and **Woodstock and Salt River**.

The final session is next week, on Wednesday 11 August when Dave Bloom who has made the wonderful website for the **Zimbabwe Jewish community** – which was my role model in making the Kimberley website, talks about the way he uses social media like Facebook for communications and for self-motivated activity. Also, we hear about the wonderful **Cape Town Jewish Virtual Cemetery site**, in *The evolution of a site from a database of graves to a fundraising platform and a service to the community*. Have a look at their inspirational website here: www.jewishcemetery.co.za And we also will hear about the archives of the **Kaplan Centre** at UCT

Here are some helpful details and tips for joining and watching.

- This is the meeting registration link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0sdOiorj0rHdMly9KYT0ccYjRiXzbWVTL1>
- You can share the link with anyone you wish
- I will be acting as MC this week.
- I am pleased to say that we have changed the session from a 'webinar' to a 'meeting'. This way speakers and attendees will be able to see and greet each other.
- The best way to watch the session is view it on 'full screen' and 'speaker view'. (You will find invitations to do these things if you take your cursor up to the top right hand corner of your zoom screen).

- Please come in early to get settled. When we start the session, we will mute everyone, and the speakers only will unmute yourselves when it's their turn.
- There will be a 'chat' space where you can post questions or comments – but try to keep to the subject and not be too distracting to the speakers.
- we will invite you to raise a virtual or real hand after the three speakers have presented and I will invite you to unmute and ask your questions directly.
- We want to make this as much like a real 'conference' where we would see, meet and chat to each other forming a like-minded community.
- As of today, we have 176 people registered for the session on Wednesday. That shows there is interest in the subject. Also zoom is really magic as how else could we all be in the same toom from so many different parts of the world? At the touch of a button!
- The session will again be recorded, and you will be able to see it on the South African Jewish Museum YouTube channel
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC52474AfSDXGJIS_vqEZtFQ

I look forward to 'seeing' you on Wednesday

~~~~~

## Preserving the Jewish footprint of Kimberley

Many of you have asked about progress in preserving the heritage of Kimberley Jewry in the future – that we talked about with **Barney Horwitz** and **David and Shirley Allen** in our February Zoom Meeting. We agreed then to set up a small **Heritage Steering Committee** to start the ball rolling.

I am glad to say that a few dedicated volunteers have come on board, including Barney's cousin **Jonathan Joseph** in London, **Delia and Bobby**

**Benn** and **Cherille** and **Morris Berman** in the USA. We are setting out to work collaboratively with **Barney** and **David and Shirley and Barry** in this great task.



First of all, our aim is to ascertain and detail what the footprint of the Kimberley community actually consists of. To this end Jonathan and I have compiled a document – that he has already sent to Barney and Shirley and David and Barry.

It asks about the status, size and ownership of the properties including the shul buildings and the cemeteries and the costs of upkeep. The also asks about the number and location of appurtenances such as Torah Scrolls and covers and curtains and the synagogue records such as minute books, bris and wedding registers. It asks about the cemeteries. Once we have all this basic knowledge, in one place, we can think about how best to deal with it.

We realise that even finding and putting together all the answers is a big task and we hope that a few Ex-Pats coming together in warm collaboration with some of those still in Kimberley, we can be of practical assistance to Barney and Co to achieve the aims we all have. Jonathan is confident that he can find some funds to provide and pay for professional help, if need be, to find the answers to all these questions and to pay for professional archivists to come and digitize the material to be safely archived.

We hope the Steering Group will be meeting in the next few weeks to take this forward. If you feel you have something to contribute and would like to participate, please send me an email.

The purpose of this first meeting is to make sure we are all comfortable to work together and are satisfied with the method and strategy of going forward by finding the answers to the questions in the document. I am sure we all agree it's good to work on this project together in a timely and calm fashion, while we can – and not wait for any emergencies. I will report further on the meeting when it happens.

~~~~~

Manna from Heaven – new information from the Konviser file

Sometimes information and stories seem to dry up – and then wonder of wonders – an avalanche arrives, and somehow, it's all connected. Through Eli Rabinowitz's wife Jill Rabinowitz, Laura Konviser got in touch. She happens to be the daughter-in-law of one of Kimberley's early ministers – Maurice Konviser, of nearly 100 years ago. We discovered that Laura lives virtually round the corner from me in North-West London. We got together in my garden with a huge file of cuttings carefully preserved by Rev Konviser and his wife. This covers his sojourn in Kimberley from 1927 to 1935.

Stories and updates from the Konviser Files

There was wonderful material that has enabled me to bring to life the personality and activities of Rev Konviser, who was by all accounts an exceptional man who arrived in Kimberley from London in 1927, at just 25 years old. He invigorated the community and impressed the town with his dedication, his integrity, his oratory, his writings and his all-round ability, charm and desire to take things forward wherever he could. I will be sharing his profile with you very soon.

But, not only have we been able to construct a fulsome profile of Rev Konviser, the files contain such interesting information that has filled out other stories like the funeral cortege and Konviser's eloquent words at the graveside of the much loved president of the synagogue for over 20 years **William Sagar** that you can read already on the website in [Sagar, William and Family](#) page 5.

Other stories I will be sharing with you soon, enlightened by the Konviser files are the memories of philanthropist **Bernard Klisser**; updates of Kimberley Jewish families stricken by the **Spanish flu** epidemic of 1918; the grand **mayoral procession** to the synagogue when **Barney Cohen** became Mayor of Kimberley in 1932; and the inauguration of the **HoD Louis Isaacson Lodge** in 1929.

