

## Colonel Sir David Harris (1852 – 1942)

### *The Grand Old Man of South African Jewry*

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE London, August 2021, updated January and April 2023 including an interview with Rev Bernard Wulf who officiated at his funeral in 1942, pictures from Robert Hart at the McGregor Museum, Kimberley, and information and pictures from his great-great grandchildren who have been in touch.

The portrait on the right was painted by Edward Rowarth inherited by his youngest daughter Phoebe's grandson Jock McKenzie of Somerset West.



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David Harris was born in the City of London on 12 July 1852, the son of Woolf and Phoebe Harris (nee Romaine). He had four brothers and two sisters. He was educated at Coxford's College, City of London. He was a cousin of Barnet Isaacs, later to be known as Barney Barnato. Both became legends on the Kimberley Diamond Fields. Harris wrote his autobiography, **Pioneer, Soldier and Politician**, published in 1931. He lived his whole long life in Kimberley. He died aged 90 on 23 September 1942 and is buried in the Kimberley Jewish Cemetery. (See a report of Sir David's funeral on page 16).

## Diamonds



In 1871, at the age of 19 years, David Harris set off for South Africa. Making his way (walking for six weeks, beside an ox-cart) to

the 'diamond fields'. He initially invested in a claim in the Dutoitspan Mine which he worked with moderate success. He also learned the business of diamond buying and became a buyer. He rose to the very top of the diamond industry and became a **director of the De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd** first as **alternate to Barney Barnato** then **on his own account in 1897**. He remained a Director of De Beers and several other companies until he retired in 1931 aged nearly 80. Above is part of a brooch David Harris gifted to his wife Rosa.

## Directors of De Beers Consolidated Mines in 1893



In this picture of De Beers directors in 1893, David Harris is standing first on the right. Apart from Rhodes himself, Francis Oats and the official staff, all the others seem to be Jewish.

Standing: l – r 1. E Bernheim 2. William Craven (Sec) 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

David Harris was also involved with and a director of several other important diamond companies such as the New Jagersfontein Mining and Exploration Company, the South African Diamond Corporation, the Kimberley Diamond Cutting Company, the Premier Diamond Mining Company, the Griqualand West Diamond Mining Company, and the Bultfontein Consolidated Company.

## Soldier

Throughout his life he was involved with military matters and for 50 years served as a volunteer in the Diamond Fields Horse and the Kimberley Regiment. He took part in several campaigns and was awarded the Volunteer Officer's Decoration in 1896. During the Siege of Kimberley David Harris was second in command of the Town Guard.

From 1903 until his death he was honorary colonel of the Kimberley Regiment and gave funds for an annual regimental ball that was held on his birthday. The ballroom now at the Kimberley Mine Museum was the venue for many of these balls and others besides.

He was mentioned in despatches and was awarded the South Africa Medal 1877-79 with a clasp for the Gaika-Gcaleka campaign. He subsequently took part in the Griqualand West campaign of 1878. On 13 August 1888, Captain Harris became the Commanding Officer of the Victoria Rifles, until he resigned in October 1890.





In December 1890 he became Commanding Officer with the rank of Major, of the Kimberley Rifles. The uniform is that of a staff officer of either the Victoria Rifles or Kimberley Rifles both precursors of the Kimberley Regiment. David Harris was a major at the time the photograph was taken in the 1890s.

He was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in May 1894 and remained Commanding Officer until December 1895.

In January 1896 he became commander of the Griqualand West Brigade and took part in the suppression of the Langeberg Uprising 1896-97, for which he was awarded the Cape of Good Hope General Service Medal with one clasp. Lieutenant-Colonel Harris was awarded the Volunteer Decoration (VD) as notified in the Cape of Good Hope Gazette of 8 December 1896.

Harris took part in the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902 when he served as **Commanding Officer of the Kimberley Town Guard**.

For his services he was mentioned in Lord Robert's despatch (London Gazette 19 April 1901) was appointed a CMG (1900) and was awarded the Queen's Medal with one clasp and the King's Medal with two. On 1 January 1903 he was appointed Honorary Colonel of the Kimberley Regiment and remained such until his death nearly forty years later.



**Colonel Harris was knighted KCMG in the Coronation Honours of 1911.**

Coming to London to receive this Honour in 1911, he stayed at the most fashionable Carlton Hotel on the corner



of Pall Mall and The Haymarket. It had been built in 1896 as part of a larger estate that included the rebuilding of His Majesty's Theatre. It was run by the famous Cesar Ritz and August Escoffier (in opposition to – and taking clients away from their former employer, D'Oyly Carte at the Savoy!).



On 11 August , while he was there, there was a serious fire at the hotel. Headlines around the world exclaimed: 'Famous London Resort Partly Destroyed Amid Scenes of Wildest Panic. Firemen Rescue a Number of Servants and Two Invalids.'

Colonel David Harris had rooms at the top of the building and had apparently literally to cling on to the balcony till the firemen with ladders extended, were able to rescue him. It was a traumatic experience, in which he was lucky to escape with his life. He was apparently very upset that he lost the beautiful suits that he had had made for the occasion and also distraught that he lost his military medals to the conflagration.

One medal miraculously survived and turned up at auction later. It was the Volunteer Decoration (pictured below). It had been presented to

'Lieut Col David Harris' for his service in the Kimberley Rifles. It is the one seen nearest to David's heart on his regimental jacket in the pictures on page 3.





## Politician

Sir David was much involved in politics and sat in Parliament for 32 years. He first entered it, at Cecil John Rhodes' suggestion, in 1897 when his cousin Barney Barnato died. Initially he represented Kimberley and after Rhodes' death Barkly West. From 1910 onwards he was the representative, in the House of Assembly, for Beaconsfield.

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## Family life: First Jewish Wedding in Kimberley

David had met Rosa Gabriel of Pomerania (Prussia) on board ship on a return journey from England to South Africa in 1872. David married Rosa the following year in November 1873. This was the very first Jewish wedding to take place in Kimberley. It took place even before there was a synagogue there. The first synagogue constructed of wood and iron, was only built three years later in 1876 and served for 26 years, until the prevailing diamond magnates by that time – led by David Harris, and Gustav Bonas, created the magnificent Memorial Road Synagogue, which opened in 1902.

The Harrises chose to continue to live in Kimberley. Many of their wealthy contemporary diamond pioneers such as Barney Barnato, Alfred Beit and JB Robinson, once they had succeeded and become millionaires, built palatial homes for themselves on Park Lane in London and amassed great art collections. (Perhaps Harris was the one who had to stay behind in Kimberley to mind the shop!)

David's love of the country, of his Jewish heritage, and in particular of Kimberley and its people, was shared by his wife Rosa who became as widely known in the town as her husband, beloved for her 'charming courteous personality, entirely free from affectation' and her tireless efforts for charitable causes with 'her ever active desire to be of some assistance to the poor and the distressed'.

They lived at a house called 'Lancaster Lodge' at 136 Dutoitspan Road. At the front was an iron railing and front garden. (Paved over and with iron grills on the front stoep below).



**Rosa gave birth to seven children.** Five survived to adulthood and only one of their children, their youngest daughter Phoebe, lived beyond the age of 53. Sir David, aged 90 when he died in Kimberley in September 1942, had outlived his wife (who died aged 54 in 1910) for 32 years and outlived all his children except for Phoebe, who lived to 78.

## David and Rosa's children were:

1. **Baby Harris** their first child seems to have died at birth on **17 December 1874** (we don't know what sex it was).
2. **Elise Gabrielle Harris, born on 17 March 1876 in Kimberley.**  
She married Charles Hertog a lawyer who settled in Kimberley and became the legal advisor to De Beers – possibly helped to this position by his father-in-law. They settled in Kimberley and had two daughters, Doris and Eileen. Later the couple separated. Elise relocated in England with her daughters. Being a diabetic, she died in England on 1 September 1916 aged just 40.
3. **Wilfrid Solomon Harris, born on 17 April 1878 in Kimberley**  
He married May (from Lancaster who came out as governess to Elise's daughters) they had two children Kenneth David and Nance. Wilfrid, who worked with his father in his diamond interests, died suddenly of thrombosis after surgery for appendicitis at Lancaster England on 19 February 1913 aged just 34.
4. **Violet Alberta Harris, born 9 November 1881 in London.**  
She married Valdemar (Val) Gielgud. They had one child Rosa. Violet died on 30th April 1935, in Sussex. She was 53.
5. **Herbert Sextus Harris, born on 19 January 1884 in Kimberley.**  
Herbert died in Kimberley 3 June 1932 – probably as a result of his mental and physical war injuries in the 1914-18 war. He was 48.
6. **Phoebe Harris, born on 25 March 1892 in Kimberley.**  
She married George McKenzie they had four children. She died in Cape Town on 18 September 1970 aged 78.
7. **Another son Harold Victor Harris born on 9 October 1896 in Kimberley.**  
He sadly died a week later on December 18<sup>th</sup>.

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## Sir David Harris's Ballroom

**Isabella Wepener** who worked for the family, as a special maid to Rosa, recalls that the **Colonel** was a wonderful husband and father and a perfect host. She spoke of how the family used to entertain the many famous actors, music hall stars, musicians and singers when they toured South Africa and played in Kimberley. She remembers the excitement of the **Annual Balls** at Lancaster Lodge, when the ballroom (pictured right) built at the back of the house in 1901, was transformed into a glittering fairy palace with carpets everywhere and lovely sitting out nooks.



She says: 'The dancing to the strains of the ensemble lead by the famous Viennese bandleader **Herr Carl Rybnikar**. She said that if you were invited to one of these balls, you had made it in Kimberley society.

[In the 1950s Dance Teacher Joyce Hooper held her ballet and tap dance classes in this pale blue painted 'ballroom' and lived with her mother in a flat on the premises. My friends and I enjoyed many happy hours dancing there. In 1966, much to the despair of the ballet school, this ballroom was moved, lock stock and barrel, to the Big Hole Museum – and you can even see the



holes where the ballet barre had been fixed! In the picture above, of this very ballroom/ballet studio, my late daughter Loren Auerbach is demonstrating some barre work on a visit we made from London to Kimberley in 1998.]

In the picture left, we see the little stage area (on the right)

where the band would be placed (and where the piano was placed for the dancing classes)

**Rybnikar's** music lasted till the early hours. He was the most sought-after bandleader, and he was booked to play at all fashionable functions and at the nearby resort 'Alexandersfontein' for dances every week, also for weddings and other special occasions in the city. Herr Rybnikar also conducted a classical orchestra of at least 30 players for the Diamond Fields Music Society.



In this picture left, probably taken about 1952 or 53, Joyce Hooper, second from the left is in her dance studio – the Harris Ballroom – with her pupils entertaining famous international ballet stars Nadia Nerina and Alexis Racine. See the lovely parquet dancefloor and behind the little stage for the band. (I am standing 2<sup>nd</sup> second from right)



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## Isabella Wepener's memories of all the family members:



**In the picture above**, of Sir David Harris and Rosa and their children and grandchildren, taken in about 1904 or '05 David and his wife Rosa are seated with their two granddaughters on their laps. (David with Doris and Rosa with Eileen). They are the children of eldest daughter Elise who was married to Charles Hertog (the man standing on the right). Elise Hertog is sitting next to Rosa and sitting on the ground is their youngest daughter Phoebe. Standing at the back on the left is Herbert, next to him is their daughter Violet and then Wilfrid.

## Isabella comments on each of the members of the family:

**Rosa** was so patient and kind, knowing all the frailties in people and being so forgiving. She says that Rosa had an excuse for everyone's shortcomings and many a poor person lost a friend when she passed away in December 1910. (Sir David was to live on, a widower for nearly 32 years, until his own death aged 90 in 1942).

Of the Harris children she says: 'I shall always remember **Elise (Mrs Hertog)** for her beautiful music. She was a wonderful pianist and a lover of classical music. She was majestic in appearance. She always aimed at being immaculate and rather showy and there were occasions when she was outstanding in her French couture and easily outshone many a woman in Kimberley on special occasions like weddings and at the races.



**Of Wilfrid** – affectionately known as Willie to his friends and family – she remembers him as the handsome member of the family. He loved horses and going out shooting and especially loved singing. She says that the moment he set foot in the house he used to sing. Especially when there was a musical evening in the lodge, when other music lovers were invited; his voice was outstanding.

**She remembers Violet** as the most sophisticated and uninhibited one and the most unconventional person that she ever knew. Her behaviour could be quite outrageous for the times. But, she says, the great thing about Violet was her beautiful voice. However careless she was about other people's feelings everyone forgave her when they heard her sing. On occasions, she sang in public at the old Theatre Royal and brought the house down. On her wedding day at the Queens Hotel, she wore unconventional items. She sent out for fresh marigolds to trim an old straw hat and Isabella had to pay a postman to go and pick a bunch of myrtle from a nearby hedge as her wedding bouquet, which she tied with a piece of white satin ribbon that she took off one of her petticoats! She was a truly remarkable woman.

**Of Herbert she says** – he was debonair and a bachelor. She thinks most of the girls loved him and he was just as popular with men. He was the youngest member of Parliament at his time, and she remembers keeping his maiden speech in the Legislative Assembly for many years.

Isabella reserves her warmest feelings for **the youngest (and dearest) Phoebe**. She looked forward to her homecoming from her boarding school Rathgowry in Eastbourne, England. It is described as a 'Ladies School' with day pupils and boarders from around the world, at the time that Phoebe was there at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Above Phoebe is top right in the school play



*Dolly Varden*, in the part of Dolly's father Gabriel at Christmas 1901. Isabella loved the special white gowns Phoebe brought with her and remembers the gown she chose for her coming-out ball – a foamy white net one with lilacs in felt applique at the hem of it. What endeared Phoebe most to her, and all who loved her, was her unspoiled freshness.

Probably in the 1950s when she wrote these

memories of serving the family almost 60 years before, it seems that only Phoebe was still alive. She wished that Phoebe's remaining years would be spent in the joy of having her children and grandchildren always near her. It is wonderful to have a contemporary view of the members of the family.

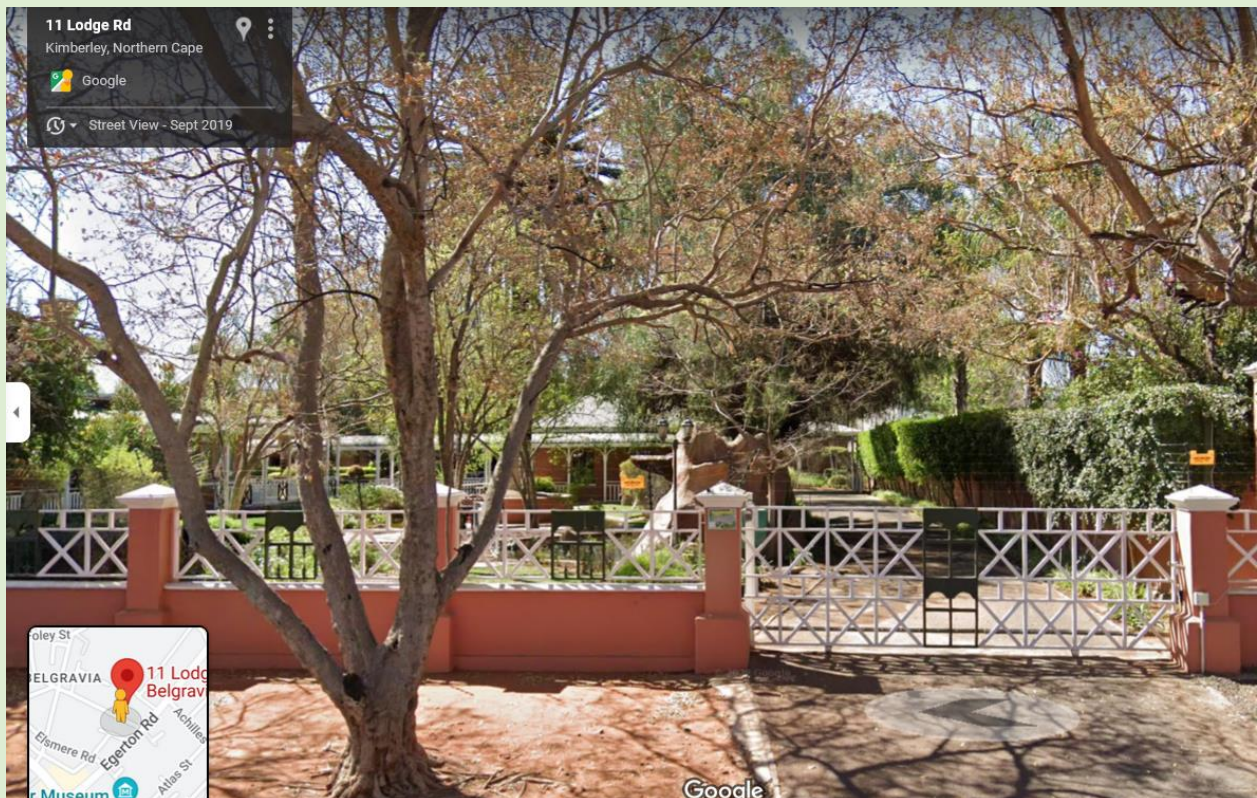
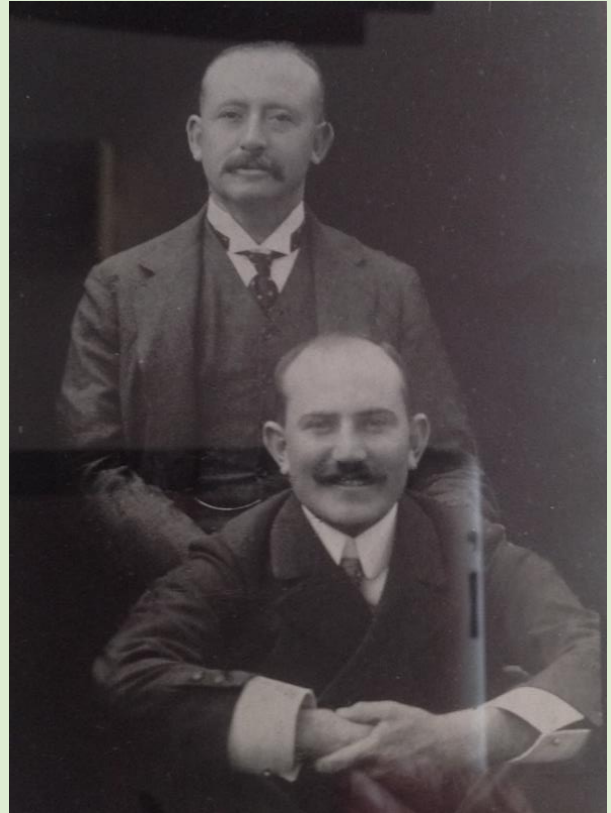
## Wilfrid and May Harris

In 1906 Wilfrid married May who had come out to South Africa from Lancaster in 1904 or '05 to be the governess to Sir David's two granddaughters Doris and Eileen. They were the daughters of their eldest daughter Elise and her husband the lawyer Charles Hertog. (May seems to have spotted an opportunity in that the eldest son was still available.)

In the picture on the right, David Harris is standing proudly behind his eldest son Wilfrid, who was born in 1878. Wilfrid worked on the diamond interests in Kimberley with his father.

Wilfrid and May settled down in Kimberley at no 11 Lodge Road (below), a house built for them by that famous Kimberley architect WD Greatbatch, who built houses for several magnates in that road. (Greatbatch was also commissioned by these magnates to design the beautiful Memorial Road Synagogue.) The house (pictured below) is still standing just as it was.

Wilfrid and May used to travel back and forth from Kimberley to England on business. On these trips they also used to visit May's sister in Lancaster. A year after their marriage and during one of their visits to Lancaster, their son Kenneth David Harris was born there.





## Wilfrid sadly dies at just 35!

On a later trip in 1913, Wilfrid developed acute appendicitis. He was rushed off the Royal Lancaster Infirmary. They whipped out his appendix, but a few days later, he sadly died of a thrombosis, aged just 35. Wilfrid is buried outside Lancaster in a small Church of England cemetery. Wilfrid's death was probably a real game changer for the Harris family.

Wilfrid who worked with his father, would have taken over many of Sir David's business interests and his line of the family would have remained in Kimberley with all the diamond interests to look after. As it was, May was left with the six-year-old Kenneth and his sister Nance, aged just four years old. She returned to Kimberley and was entirely dependent on Sir David. The children spent their primary school years in Kimberley where Kenneth attended the revered CBC, but for secondary schooling they returned to England in about 1920 and remained there.

## Herbert Harris

The Harrises had another son, Herbert Sextus who was born in Kimberley in 1884. 'Herby', (right) as he was affectionately known, was educated at Kimberley Boys' High School.

He showed great strength and promise. He was the first person in the family to go to University. He went to Cambridge where he studied law. He was called to the Bar 1906, but only practised until 1908 when following in his father's footsteps, he became one of four Kimberley members of the Cape Legislative Assembly. This Assembly closed upon the Union being formed on 31 **May** 1910.



Herby followed in the footsteps of his father Sir David Harris in Military matters too. He was appointed a Lieutenant in the Kimberley Regiment in 1908, and after holding positions as Captain and Major became the Officer Commanding the Kimberley Regiment in 1912 as a Lt-Colonel – quite a rapid rate of promotion. It was that same year of 1912 that he won the Regimental Long Range Shooting competition being awarded a solid silver watch fob for his skills (pictured above left).



## Kimberley Aviation Centre

Kimberley in 1913 was a pioneering **aviation centre** and Herby was one of the founder directors of the Paterson Aviation Syndicate when on 1 July 1913 the ground-breaking Patterson bi-plane was registered

in Kimberley. His fellow directors were Tom Hill, Cecil Paterson, Ernest Oppenheimer, Alpheus Williams, Charles May, David Macgill and George Robertson.

The primary objective of the syndicate was 'to promote the science and practice of aviation in South Africa'. Fortunately, these men did not have to campaign too hard, for flying had become Kimberley's latest craze. In fact, such was the locals' enthusiasm for flying that they decided to establish a flying school at Alexandersfontein.

The land was owned by De Beers Consolidated Mining Company and given the company's philanthropic nature and its interests, which extended beyond diamond mining, the large tract of land was placed at the school's disposal. For the Flying school they had a Paterson biplane and a Bleriot monoplane. (The picture above is of Paterson in his 1911 record breaking Biplane.)

## First World War

When the Great War broke out in 1914, Herbert immediately saw active service. He commanded the Kimberley Regiment in German Southwest Africa, concluding that campaign in 1915. He then fought in France in 1916 as a Captain in the Royal Fusiliers. He was badly wounded in the head on 1 February 1917.

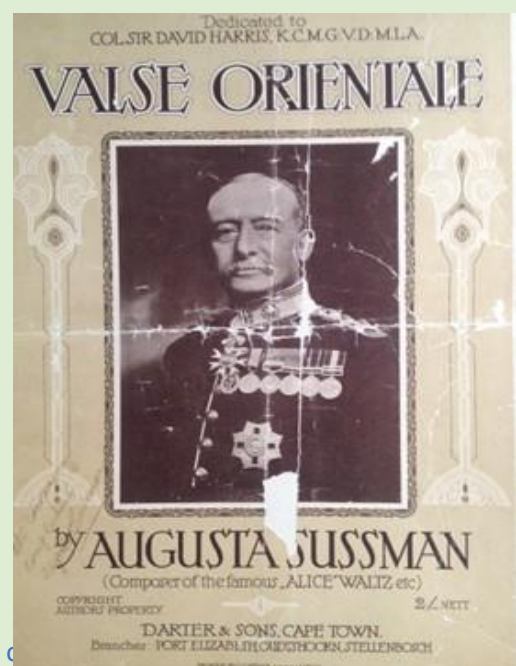
Recovering from his wound he was sent to East Africa with the King's Own Rifles, although attached to the Gold Coast Regiment. He was twice mentioned in despatches and was awarded the CBE (Commander of the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire). His service medals included the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Returning to Kimberley, he remained with the Regiment after the war. Sadly though, his health never really recovered from his intense war experience. He was probably like so many other soldiers in that war, 'shell shocked', and affected by what we would now call post traumatic stress disorder. He was not able to settle down or take a responsible job. He never married. In his last years he was in a nursing home in England from 1929, returning to Kimberley in April 1932 where he died in June that year. He is buried in the Jewish section of the Pioneer Cemetery in Kimberley.

## A Musical Family

We have seen what a musical and music-loving family the Harrises were. Another Kimberley musical family was the Sussman family, Mrs Augusta Sussman née cohen from Port Elizabeth, being a singer, pianist and composer.

Gussie Sussman wrote and published a special Waltz 'Valse Orientale' which she dedicated to Sir David Harris.





## Rosa Harris dies aged 54

December 1910 in Sea Point

The Diamond Fields Advertiser reported in a long and detailed article on Tuesday 6 December 1910: headlined:

### The Late Mrs David Harris

'Amid many tokens of respect and sympathy, the remains of Mrs David Harris, wife of Colonel Harris, were laid to rest at the Jewish Cemetery, Maitland, this morning, with the customary rites of an ancient people, the burial service being conducted by the Rev. A.P. Bender and the Rev. A. Weinberg'.

The impressive and long cortege left Sea Point on the way to the burial. They go on to describe: 'On the coffin entering the mortuary, the Rev Bender, after a short prayer, feelingly referred to the deceased lady's many virtues, her benevolence and unbounded charity. The reverend gentleman added that Mrs Harris was not only a good, but a religious woman, whose death had left a sensible (sic – probably meant sizeable) blank in the community. The coffin was then borne to the grave where the relatives and friends threw earth in turn.'

The article continues with a several column inches long list of the national and regional politicians, administrators, judges and foreign ambassadors, company directors, mayors and personnel from De Beers, from the Jagersfontein mine and other companies Sir David was associated with who were in attendance. They mention the chief mourners were Colonel David Harris and his two sons Wilfrid and Herbert who had caught the night train from Kimberley to be present. (There was no mention of his three daughters here, though they mention that amongst the huge number of wreathes from Cape Town and from Kimberley and other parts of the country were ones from 'Loving Children' and 'Grandchildren'). Others wreathes were from the Kimberley Club, the Kimberley Regiment, and the Kimberley Waterworks.

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Mrs. Harris is survived by her husband and five children, to whom the sincere sympathy of the whole community is extended in the grievous loss they have sustained. The funeral will take place at Maitland from Seapoint this morning, and Mr. Wilfrid Harris and Capt. Herbert Harris left for Capetown by the midnight train on Saturday evening in order to be present.

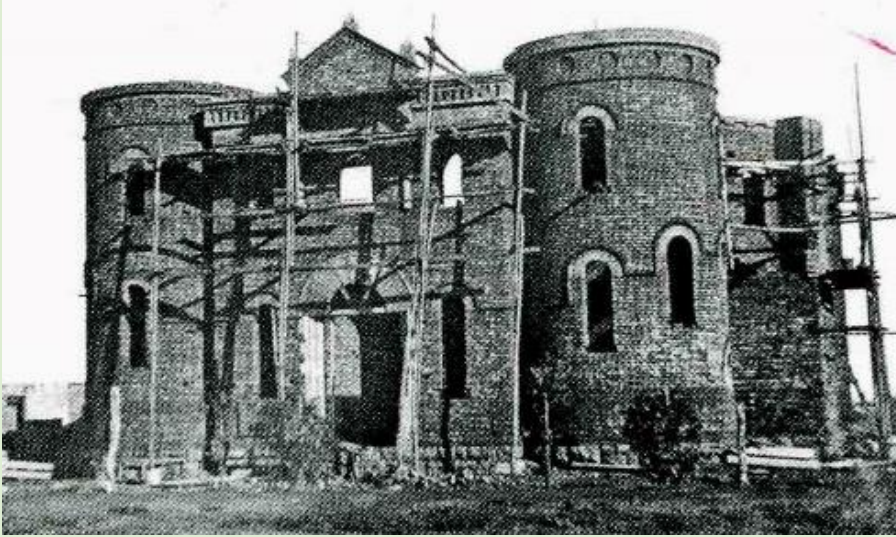
A correspondent writes:—The sad news of the death of Mrs. David Harris caused intense sorrow among every section of the community, because she was the incarnation of kindness and charity. To those who enjoyed the privilege of the personal acquaintance of the late Mrs. Harris, nothing was more beautiful than her unflinching courtesy and gentleness that charmed all who came into contact with her. And this was equalled only by her love of well-doing, by her ever-active desire to be of some assistance to the poor and the distressed. Her goodness was not limited to creed or colour or nationality. To her, all were children of God. She gave liberally not merely with her hand but with her heart. On the many occasions that appeal was made to her to aid the sick, the needy, the struggling family, it was her delight to enter into all the details of the case presented to her, and to give readily with a kind word of encouragement and cheerfulness. Nor was her charity finished when she rendered assistance. But by her personal enquiries and personal attention, Mrs. Harris infused new life and new hope to the recipient of her kindness. And 'everything was done quietly, privately, unostentatiously, and without the least fuss. The sweetness of her character rendered her lovable, and won the homage of all hearts. She was indeed the true "woman of worth" of the Book of Proverbs, because her heart was filled with a wealth of loving kindness towards all her fellow creatures, and especially towards those whose lives were darkened by sorrow and misfortune. The poor of Kimberley have lost a true and sympathetic friend. Who will take her place?

Mrs. Harris, in addition to her private acts of charity, was a member of the committee of the Benevolent Society, Ladies' Hostel, and Loyal Women's Guild, and she also identified herself with nearly all the institutions in town interested in relieving the necessities of the poor.



## Sir David and Jewish Life in Kimberley

Sir David Harris lived his whole life in Kimberley, when fellow Directors of De Beers retreated to London and built themselves fine homes there. He retained his Jewish faith and was responsible, jointly with Gustave Bonas for seeing that a magnificent synagogue was built. Both men were closely associated with De Beers Consolidated Mining Co, they were for many years, alternate Presidents of the Congregation.

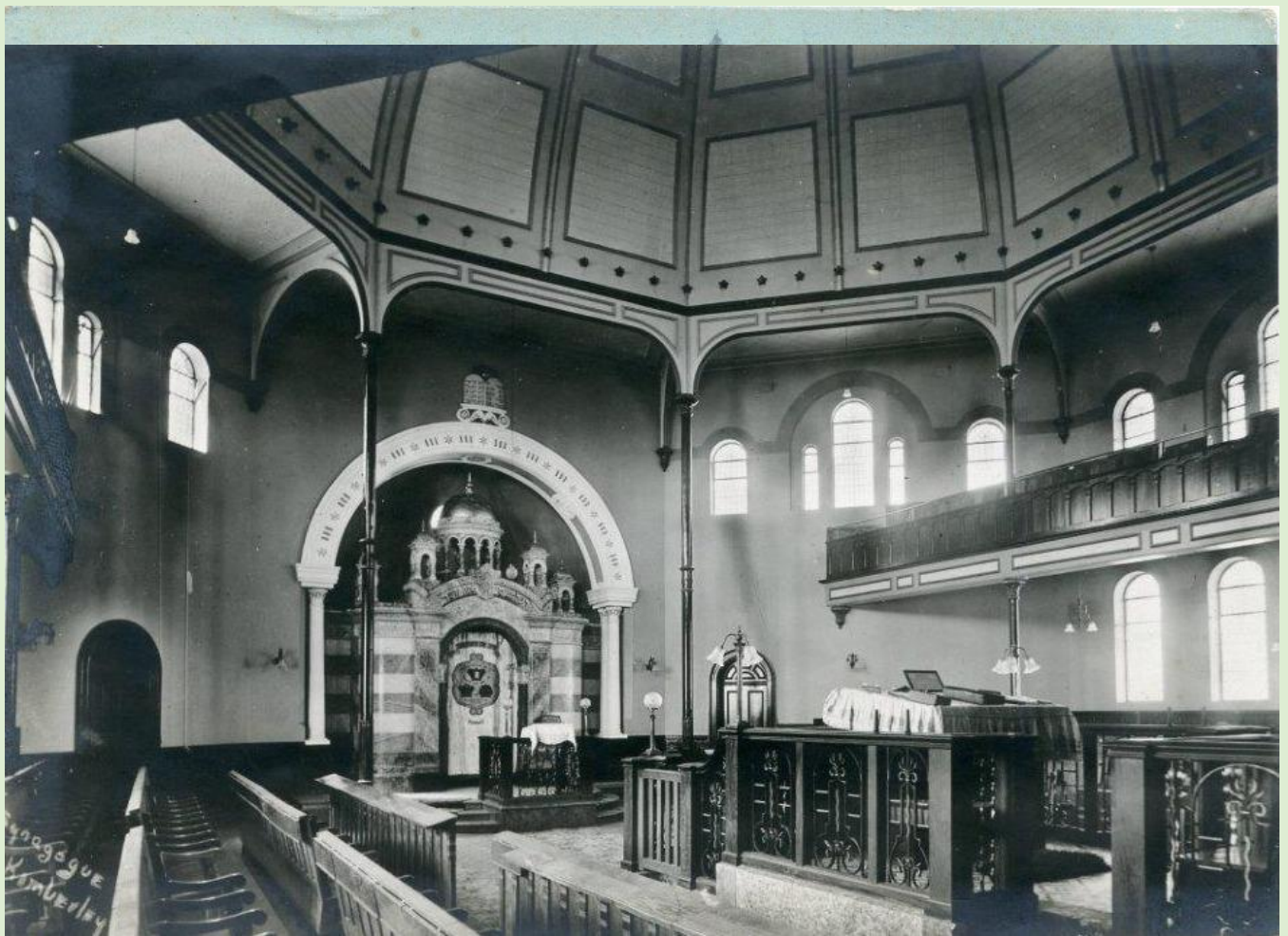


They invited Kimberley's finest architect DW Greatbatch to design the new building, apparently based on designs in Byzantine style drawn, up by Cape Town architect Edward Simkin. **Construction** (left) commenced immediately after the relief of Kimberley in 1900, while the Boer War was still raging – as a thanks

offering, that its inhabitants had been spared. Every bit of timber and all other materials for the erection bear the stamp of the military authorities. On several occasions building operations were obliged to cease owing to the difficulty of getting the military to pass certain materials. Weeks, and sometimes months elapsed on this account before work could be resumed.

## The Memorial Road Synagogue opened for Rosh Hashanah 1902

(A very early picture from the McGregor Museum, Kimberley)





Harris's benefactions to the community included jointly with others the provision of the site on which the original Kimberley synagogue was built in 1875. He also contributed largely to the community funds and was jointly responsible by his efforts and munificence for the building of the Memorial Road Synagogue which opened in 1902.

### The foundation stone for the mortuary

In January 1901, Sir David Harris laid the foundation stone for the Stead Street cemetery prayer hall. The Chevra Kadisha of the community at the time presented him with an inscribed silver trowel. The Jewish burial society is known as the 'Chevra Kadisha' – the 'Holy Brotherhood' or 'Holy Society'. It is deemed a special mitzva (honour) to prepare a body for burial, because you are doing something for a person who can never thank you. 121 years later his great-grandson Peter Harris brought this very trowel (right and below) to show me



### The inscription reads:

Chevra Kadisha – in Hebrew letters  
Presented to Lt Col David Harris VD MLA  
by the Griqualand West Jewish Burial Society in commemoration of his  
laying The Foundation Stone of the mortuary Kimberley, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1901, and the Hebrew date  
'3 Shevat, 5661'



**As a boy** David Harris had been a member of the choir of the Great Synagogue in Dukes Place, London, (destroyed by bombs during the Second World War). In his book, David Harris recalls that when Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild was visiting South Africa at the end of the South African War, he (David) surprised the Baron by telling him that he had been present at his wedding – as one of the choir boys who had been selected for the choral service.

In an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in 1931 close to his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Sir David expressed profound contempt for those Jews who wish to disguise or disown their race. He said: 'Those people in this country who think that their religion is a bar to entrance into society are mistaken, he said. People only think less of them because of that. In any case they cannot disguise their features. Wherever they are, one can always see in them the Rav, the Chazan, the

Shochet or the choir-boy' – alluding to his own membership of a synagogue choir. At the same time, he concluded, 'Jews must not isolate themselves from the rest of the Community, and while remembering their religion they must also remember their citizenship of the country in which they live.'

## Death and Funeral of Col Sir David Harris (b London, 1852)

by Rev Bernard Wulf as told in an interview in about 1985, for the UCT Kaplan Centre

Rev Bernard Wulf was the Jewish minister in Kimberley during the war from 1941 to 1943 while Rev Yesorsky had enlisted and went 'up North'. Rev Wulf related his experience of something special, which he says does not happen to every Jewish minister. He explained: '**Colonel Sir David Harris, KCMG**, was a well-accepted Jew in his day, He was a Director of De Beers. He was also the Colonel of the Kimberley Regiment and had been in the Parliament.



'When I came, he was about 90, paralysed, sitting either in a chair or in bed. I used to visit him very, very often, at least once a week and we became quite friendly. Contrary to other pioneer Jews like the Oppenheims and so forth, he kept to his Jewish faith and remained in Kimberley.

'He was very much Jewish in his behaviour and so on and eventually he became very ill. One afternoon, the nurse said to me, it looks to me like we are coming to the end. People called me when there was a death any time day or night, so I said to her don't hesitate to call me.

'I was called at about five o'clock the following morning, [23 September 1942]. I actually held his hand while he died, I said a prayer, his daughter Phoebe (his only living child) was with him. She turned round to me and said "Mr Wulf I married out of the faith, but I'd like my father to have a proper Jewish funeral", I said "Certainly".

Pictured above in 2020 is the interior of the Memorial Road Synagogue.

'Now in all the years of my service I have spoken on all different types of occasions, but I made up my mind from the first day never to prolong a funeral. I never delivered an oration, whoever it is, I looked for opportunities at later dates, maybe the shiva house (where a family would gather for prayers in the first week of mourning) maybe at a special memorial service and so on, so I said certainly. I immediately phoned the Chevra Kadisha (community members of the Jewish burial society) to make arrangements – but everything got stuck. The minute his death was announced – they came.....'

Rev Wulf said: 'I don't know if I was right, it depends on which way you look at it. He was Colonel, pre-Boer War and so on, he was an ex-Member of Parliament a man of great standing and all



wanted to give him honour, and they came together, the Mayor from his side, the Army from the other side, they wanted to give him a military and civic funeral.

'Now what does that consist of: the Mayor, the Councillors and so on, in all their robes following the hearse: the military wanted to give a company of soldiers with a band, now this gave me a bit of a shock, I did not know what to do, if it means giving honour to a Jew – and through this perhaps we can bring together closer the Jewish sections, the Jews and the non-Jews, and they want to honour a Jew, I said all right we will do it. They said, we want three days to organise it, so they were organising this.

'I stipulated that from the house, the pall bearers, from the house to the hearse, and from the hearse, I mean the Chevra Kadisha will do their job as usual. I followed the hearse in the car and then followed the military and the Mayor and Civic Dignitaries and the band, all this, down to the cemetery the pall bearers even non-Jews until the gates of the cemetery.



'Once we arrived at the cemetery gates (left) I insisted the Chevra Kadisha must take over. It was quite an occasion, quite an occasion, and I said to them I am not going to make any oration I do not want to treat Sir David in any other way than any other Jew, but I said to the Mayor, the City Council can organise a memorial service two weeks later or so, they had a daily newspaper there, advertise as much as you can, and we organised a memorial service two weeks later in the shul, in the synagogue, and there I will deliver my oration.

'And that is what we did ... this is something maybe a minister of a big congregation will not have this opportunity. As I say it gave me a bit of a sleepless night, I know in certain respects I am not doing right, but I had to weigh the pros and cons. I thought to myself ... it was a very trying time, (1942) we had the Nazis working, we did not

know what's happened to our people and this gave us an opportunity to bring us together.'

What a brave and forward-thinking man. I am sure he did absolutely the right thing!



He was considered 'A great Englishman, a great gentleman and a great Jew'.

This is his simple gravestone in the new Cemetery in Green Street, Kimberley.



In the foyer of the Memorial Road Synagogue is a plaque erected in May 1911 to Rosa who passed away in December 1910. It is connected to one for David whose death followed 32 years later in 1942. These plaques were erected by the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation in grateful memory of the life and achievements of Col. Sir David Harris KCMG, VD Pioneer, Soldier and Statesman – and his wife Rosa.





# Col Sir David Harris Remembered in Kimberley

## Memorial bust in Regiment Way



Sir David is remembered in an obituary as being 'held in the highest esteem and affection by all with whom he came into contact. His name will be remembered as one of the most devoted sons of South Africa'.

A memorial to Sir David Harris as a soldier was erected in Regiment Way Kimberley in 1930 by his friends and fellow citizens of Kimberley as a mark of their appreciation and esteem. The Kimberley architect William M Timlin, partner of the famous WD Greatbatch (who had designed the many magnate houses and also the synagogue) designed the pedestal for the bust by John Tweed.

It looks like – (on the left) as so often happens in Kimberley – the metal plaque with inscription on it has been removed and stolen. This apparently happened in the early 2000s!



The above is a photograph of the clay model of the bust of Colonel Sir David Harris, K.C.M.G., V.D., to be erected in Kimberley as a public memorial to his services to the city. The bust is being executed by the well-known English art sculptor John Tweed.







Above is a picture of the bust complete with plaque and inscription sent to me by Robert Hart of the Kimberley McGregor Museum. Robert also sent the cutting (above) from the **DFA** which printed a picture of the **model for the bust**.

Then Robert sent this picture (left) in August 2022: The bust, itself though now surrounded by iron railings, has disappeared! (You can still see the imprint of the metal plaque which was long gone.) Has the statue been put away for safekeeping or stolen I wonder? As the upper portion of the pedestal has also gone – maybe it is being preserved somewhere safe. (Apparently a copy exists in the Kimberley Club which we hope will be safe)

## Civilian and Social institutions

with which Sir David was associated.

Because of his popularity as a genial host, and his military and civic stature in the city, Sir David was often invited to chair meetings and organisations and open important buildings and events. This included being invited to be a pallbearer at significant funerals.

## Statue of Queen Victoria

Another bronze monument that Sir David Harris was involved with was that of Queen Victoria. It now has pride of place outside the William Humphreys Art Gallery (we hope it is still there) opposite the Oppenheimer Gardens. Resplendent on her State chair, and clad in her state robes, Queen Victoria holds a sceptre in one hand and orb in the other. Mario Raggi of Regent's Park, London designed the statue, and three were cast in Frome, Somerset, from the same mould. The other two are in Hong Kong and Toronto. The height of the statue is nine feet and six inches. The Statue committee included such local dignitaries as DW Greatbatch, Charles Nind, John Orr, William Pickering, JD Tyson, HA Oliver, Gustav Bonas, **Colonel Sir David Harris**, and Fergus Carstairs-Rogers. They decided that the finished product would grace the entrance to the Kimberley Public Gardens, (now Regiment Way. It was unveiled on 18 May 1906 by Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson. Greatbatch designed the base and the local constructors employed were Church and McLauchlin. The Union Castle line shipped the statue free of charge to Cape Town and the railways did likewise in transporting it





to Kimberley. De Beers Company donated the basalt stone for the pedestal. The entire cost came to £1500, of which £1050 was collected in Kimberley through public subscription. The statue was moved to its current position at the William Humphreys Art Gallery in 1959, and shortly thereafter, Regiment Way was constructed as part of the new road to Boshoff.

## Neville Pickering's watch

**Sir David Harris** happened to witness an extraordinary scene at the De Beers Mining Company Boardroom on Warren Street a few days after Neville Pickering (lover of Rhodes)'s death (18 October 1886). Rhodes and William Pickering (Neville's brother) were conversing. David said: "I saw two men sitting at a bare writing table. Something made me stop and I stood quite still. They had no papers in front of them and did not say a word. Damn funny, it looked. They were both in the same attitude; one hand on the brow shutting the eyes and supporting the head with the elbow resting on the table, the other hand and arm lay flat on the table. Damn funny, I give you my word. I stood there stock-still, sort of fascinated. Then on the table between them I saw a gold watch and chain in a rough pile which Rhodes and Willie Pickering were alternately pushing from one to the other. First one would give it a shove and the other would only shake his head and push it back again. And I give you my word they were both crying. All I heard was, 'No, you are his brother,' and again, 'No, you are his greatest friend.'"



Pictured in 1927 are the Resident Directors of De Beers, plus staff. (This was when Oppenheimer was able to become Chairman of De Beers)

Standing: Charles Hertog (Haarhoffs legal firm – and one time son-in-law of Sir David Harris), Eustace Raynham DSO (Secretary) and AGM Compton. Sitting: William Pickering DSO, Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, **Sir David Harris**, HP (Percy) Rudd, and RFP Philipson-Stow.

Photograph via Paul Raynham.

## Pallbearer at Funerals

During the Siege of Kimberley, Henry Scott-Turner was killed in action against the Boers surrounding the diamond town at the second battle of Carter's Ridge on 28 November 1899. He was a favourite of Cecil Rhodes and had been the resident magistrate/mayor of Umtali in the newly populated Rhodesia before being seconded to the British Army in Kimberley, where he was appointed as Officer Commanding the Mounted Troops. He led three actions against the Boers on 24 October, 25 November and 28 November 1899, and was killed in the last one. He was buried the next day, with full military honours. His funeral was attended by all the town's dignitaries including Cecil Rhodes and the Mayor RH Henderson. Sir David Harris was invited to be one of the pallbearers – others were Colonel Robert Kekewich, Lt-Col Chamier, Lt-Col Robinson, Lt-Col Finlayson and Lt-Col Peakman. Archdeacon Holbech conducted the service at Gladstone cemetery.

## Sir David Harris and Sport

David Harris was also a pallbearer to another member of the regiment who was also a great rugby player. **Dan Smith** had won for himself international colours and was one of the founders of the famous Kimberley Pirates Sports Club. He had seen service during the Siege of Kimberley 1899-1900 with the Cycle Corps as a Lieutenant, and did garrison duty in South West Africa during World War I (1914-1918). He died at the Sea Point Monastery while being treated for heart disease. Among the pallbearers at the funeral were **Sir David Harris**, Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, Irvine Grimmer, and FW Glover.

## Sir David Harris awards Coloured Cricket Board trophy in 1926

The South African Coloured Cricket Board controlled Black cricket until 1926 when a split resulted in the establishment of the South African Independent Coloured Cricket Board. Sir David Harris, a Director of the De Beers Consolidated Mines, who assisted Horatio Isaiah Budlwana Bud 'Mbelle to secure the Barnato Memorial Trophy in 1897, donated the **Sir David Harris Trophy** to the South African Independent Coloured Cricket Board in 1926.

## Sir David Harris Chairman of the Kimberley Club

in 1901, 1903 and from 1917 to 1940.

The Kimberley Club was founded in 1881 by Cecil John Rhodes and the top men in the diamond industry. Many historic decisions have been made on the 'stoep' at the Club, affecting not only Kimberley, but Southern and Central Africa. It was said that there were more millionaires per square foot at the Kimberley Club than anywhere else on earth.

Membership of the Club when it opened in 1881 was limited to 250 members. Among the members over the 140 years have been at least four prime ministers, Cecil Rhodes, Sir Leander Starr Jameson, John X. Merriman and Sir Charles Metcalfe. The Oppenheimer family have been, or are, all members of the Club. So too were JB Currey, Barney Barnato, Alfred Beit, JH Taylor, JB Robinson, Lionel Phillips, **Sir David Harris**, Charles Rudd, all truly large names in this country's history. The President's Board in the hallway reads like a Who's Who of South African history, while the Chairman's Board is a Who's Who of Kimberley. When one leans on the bar counter, it is humbling to remember that the famous once stood in the very same spot. There are not many Clubs in the world that can give that experience.





Some of the famous visitors to the Club have included the Royal Family in 1947, including both the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. Queen Elizabeth (the late Queen Mother) left a diamond ring in the bathroom which was found after their departure and returned to them.

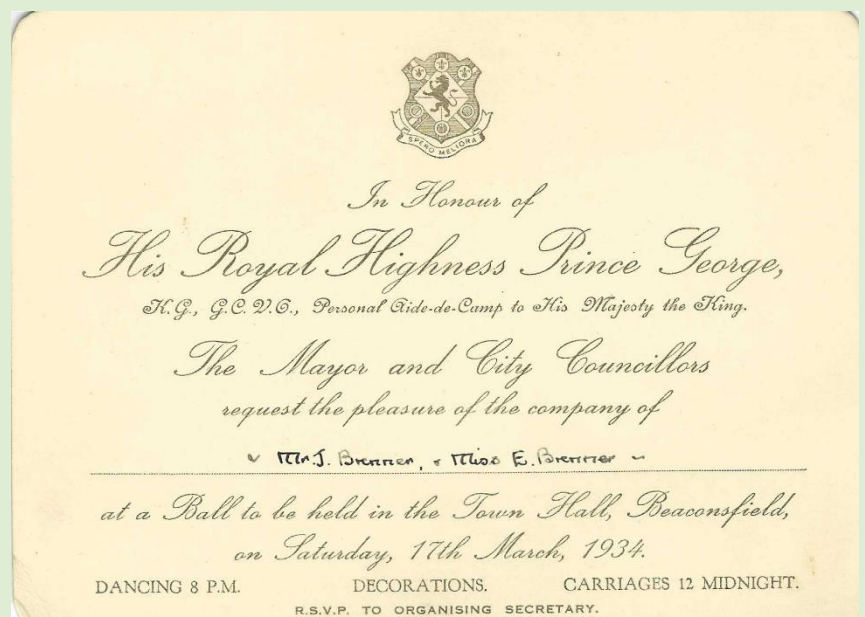
Other important personalities who have visited over the years include Lord Randolph Churchill (father of the more

famous Sir Winston), the Prince of Wales in 1925, Lord Roberts, Lord Kitchener, Lord Methuen, Sir Alfred Milner, Sir Thomas Upington, Sir Hercules Robinson, Henry Scott-Turner, various Directors of De Beers over the years, Nelson Mandela, and many, many more.

Rhodes once said: 'This club must be anything but a failure. To that must be added, this club must preserve its past through preservation of what it has today. The collection of paintings, photographs, and artefacts is unique and irreplaceable, and failure to save and preserve what the Club has, can be considered tantamount to failing the Club, its past members, and all future members.'

### Prince Of Wales Visits Kimberley, 23 July 1925

When the heir to the British throne Edward, Prince of Wales visited South Africa in the winter of 1925 he visited Kimberley on 23 July for one very busy day. The 'White Train' arrived at 11am and the first engagement was the inspection of a Guard of Honour on the Market Square and the presentation of no less than nine Loyal Addresses. At the offices of De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd a display of diamonds was viewed, and the **prince was presented with a large stone by Sir David Harris**. (Miss Ethyl Brenner – later Friedman/Ginsberg) was chosen as a dance partner for the Prince of Wales at one of the balls.



Sir David was proud to be a citizen of the Diamond City and wrote in his autobiography 'Pioneer, Soldier and Politician' that 'I have frequently refused to accept many tempting offers to settle down in England, preferring to remain in Kimberley, where I am happy and contented, and among whose good people I hope to end my days'.

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## Sir David remembered also in Beaconsfield

As well as with Kimberley, Sir David was closely associated with Beaconsfield, which he represented in the Union Parliament. Originally called The Pan or Dutoitspan this township grew up around the first 'dry diggings' and diamond pipes that were discovered, namely the Dutoitspan and Bultfontein mines.

Its worth looking for a moment at the beginnings of Beaconsfield: In the early 1880s. As the Dutoitspan and Bultfontein mining camps began to take on a more permanent look, the inhabitants sent a petition to the Governor of the Cape Colony to change their status to that of a municipality. The petition was granted and on 16 August 1883 the mining camps officially became known as Beaconsfield, named after Lord Beaconsfield (Benjamin Disraeli) who had died in 1881. Even the coat-of-arms and motto of Lord Beaconsfield was adopted, the motto being 'Nothing is difficult to the Brave'. In October 1883 the Village Management Board was replaced by the Municipal Council, and on 31 October in the Good Templars Hall, Mr Samuel Charles Austen was elected Mayor with Mr C.K. O'Molony as the Town Clerk. Plans were immediately put into action for the laying out of streets, for bringing in water, and for installing a more efficient sanitary system. So lively were the early meetings of the Beaconsfield Council that a policeman was stationed in the council chambers to eject unruly members.

By 1886 the neatly planned township as it is today was in existence while the small villages of Dutoitspan and Bultfontein would be left to die a natural death. Certain of the buildings were in existence between 1883 and 1886 including the Magistrate's Court (1884), the Phoenix (1885), and St Augustine's Catholic Church (1883).



Some early buildings on Beaconsfield market square including the Phoenix Hotel for many years owned by the Mehl Family.



The well-known journalist and writer, Vere Stent, wrote that in 1898 there were 3396 whites, 6650 blacks, and Indians and coloureds totalled 1532, a sum of 10 478 inhabitants. He stated that there were the usual number of tradesmen and civil servants, but that the majority of inhabitants worked as debris workers or on the mines.

**'The Beaconsfield Club'**, he wrote, 'is an institution with a history, and has been transplanted bodily from Dutoitspan village to the main road of this town. Besides the Club, there were social, dramatic and literary societies. There were not many public amenities, the Public Library being an exception, subscribers paying £1 per annum to be a member.

**The impressive Beaconsfield Town Hall**, (right) demolished in 1968, was opened on 11 June 1888 as a memorial to the volunteer military forces of the Diamond Fields who died in the 1878-1879 colonial uprisings. In 1897 a Jubilee wing was added to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee while in 1902 a clock tower was added to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII.



That same year – 1888 – saw Barney Barnato being elected in November to the Cape Legislative Assembly as the parliamentarian representing Beaconsfield, a post that would become the long time parliament seat of his cousin many years later – **Sir David Harris**. The amalgamation of the mines in 1888-1889 saw both Dutoitspan and Bultfontein mines cease production in order to reduce output and the town suffered as a result of massive unemployment. By 1891 the population of Kimberley had halved and in Beaconsfield it had been trimmed by a third. Many miners had gone north to the gold fields.

Beaconsfield, often called the Cinderella suburb of Kimberley, is actually the elder sister and should be respected as such. Historically, apart from the diamond discovery, Rhodes' Cape to Cairo railroad passed through Beaconsfield before reaching Kimberley in 1885; it was through Beaconsfield that General French rode after relieving the besieged town on 15 February 1900; and it was at the Beaconsfield station that the British soldiers arrived en masse after the relief of Kimberley. Beaconsfield was the rail junction to Bloemfontein once the line had opened in 1908, and it was here that a large marshalling yard was established

### **David Harris officially reopens the Beaconsfield Club after fire**

on Wednesday 28 March 1923. The Diamond Fields Advertiser reported:

'In February 1922, one of the biggest fires which Beaconsfield has experienced broke out unexpectedly in the early hours of a summer morning, and illumined the township with its glaring blaze. With it went the demolition of the historic Beaconsfield Club, a primitive structure, though one which had been the scene of many a memorable gathering of celebrities of the bygone days. And now, about a year later, there has arisen from the ashes, as if by a touch of the magic wand,

a pile of buildings which constitute a monument to the endeavours of the members, as well as an ornamental and social acquisition to the township.

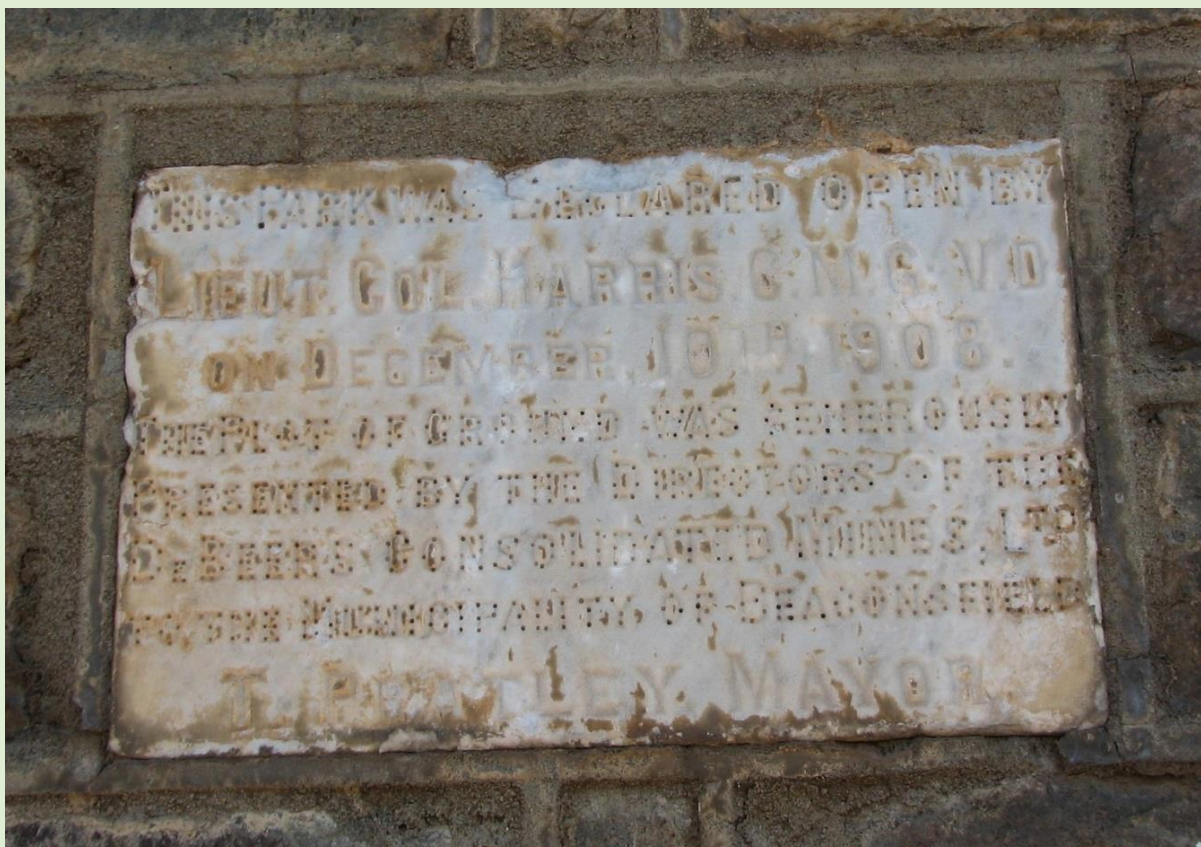
Subscriptions by voluntary contributions from the old members of the club, as well as from many prominent citizens of the town, have made the new building possible at a cost of approximately £2000, only half of which, however, has as yet been subscribed. The handsome erection is replete with all modern conveniences, including a comfortable lounge, spacious billiard room, cosy assembly room, card rooms, and bedrooms, while the usual domestic conveniences, such as kitchen, etc, have not been overlooked.

Amid the happy auspices of a large concourse of representative citizens drawn from both Kimberley and Beaconsfield, the proceedings were officially opened on Wednesday evening, and **the club was fortunate in securing its choice of Sir David Harris KCMG VD MLA, the "Father of Beaconsfield"**, and for so many years its Parliamentary representative (who is spending his short Easter respite in the city) to perform the ceremony. A splendid musical programme had been arranged, and with the effective blending of both song and speech, the proceedings passed off with unalloyed enthusiasm. Mr DJ James (chairman of the club) presided, and he was supported by Sir David Harris MLA, and many other well-known townspeople.

Chairman then proceeded to welcome the company, and to explain the import of the occasion. He said he was pleased that Sir David had consented to meet their wishes in officially opening the new building, though he was far from well; in fact, if the request had come from any other source than good old Beaconsfield, he was afraid that he would have had to refuse the invitation. Sir David was an old resident of the "Pan", and took a very keen interest in their welfare. With those few introductory remarks, Mr James said he had now much pleasure in asking Sir David to officially declare the building open. (Applause). The Beaconsfield Club today (2020) is the well-known pub and grill "Cheers".

**Beaconsfield Park Gates** ( photos taken in 2007). The inscriptions on the plaques recorded the following information:

This park was declared open by **LIEUT COL HARRIS CMG VD** on December 10th 1908





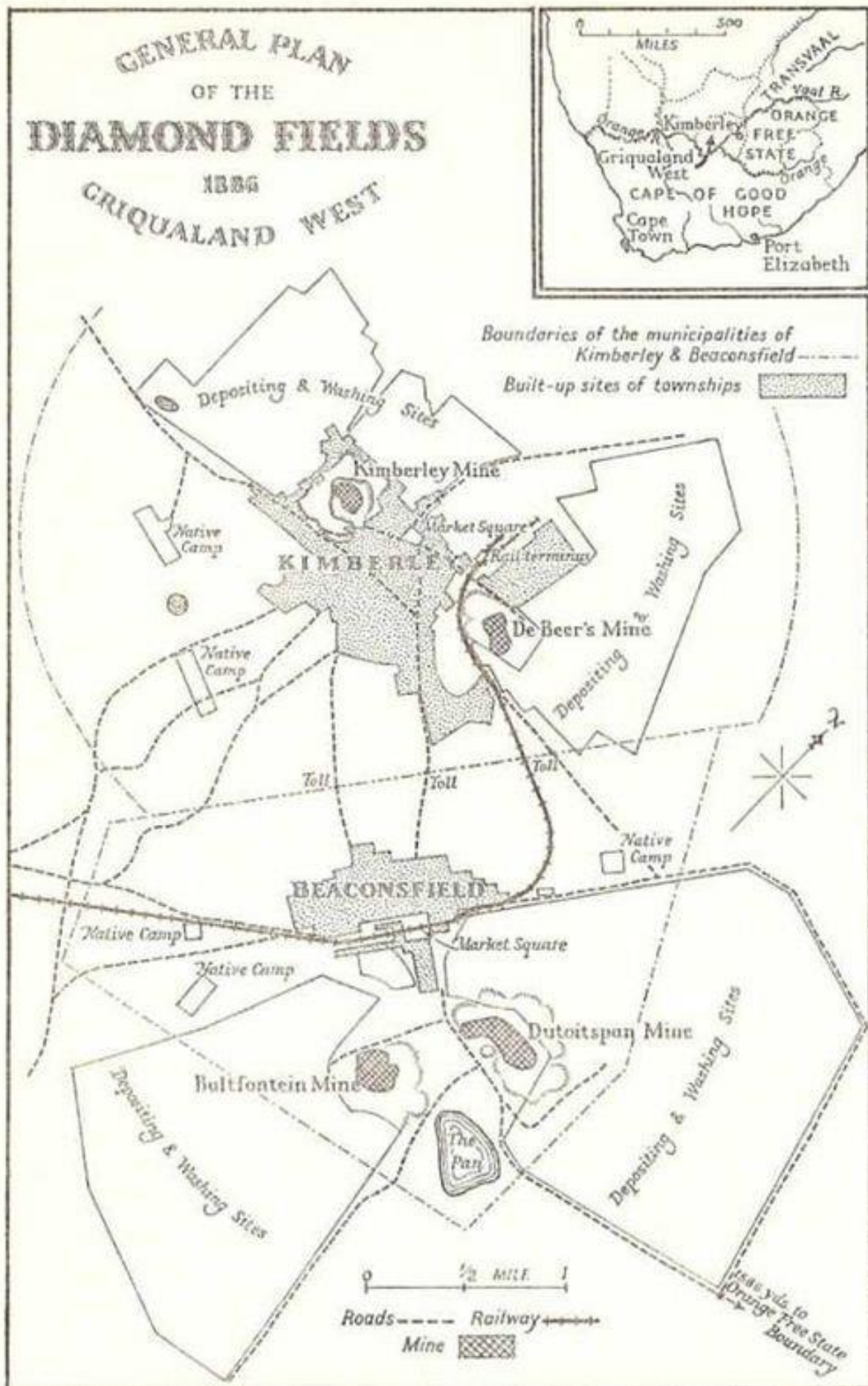
The plot of ground was generously presented by the directors of the De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd to the municipality of Beaconsfield, T Pratley Mayor

These gates were presented by Gibson Bros JA & FC, early coach pioneers before railways, 1879 tramway 1887 electric 1906





On the map below we clearly see the four main diamond 'pipes' in Kimberley and their depositing and washing sites as well as the spreading towns of Kimberley and Beaconsfield in 1886.





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## Sir David's descendants

**Phoebe** his youngest daughter and the only child to survive his own life, married **George McKenzie** who had seen service in the First World War. He was a delightful man of whom it was said that people could hardly understand him, because of his broad Scottish brogue, compounded by a war wound, in which part of his lower jaw had been shot away. They had four children: **David, Herbert, George** and **Rose-Anne**. Below the three sons and one daughter are seen with their parents who were known as 'Pop' and 'Kenzie'



Their eldest son **David McKenzie**, (in the middle back) **born in 1920** (named after his grandfather Sir David) studied medicine at the University of Cape Town. The family often invited other Kimberley UCT undergraduates for lunch and tea - who were very grateful for the warm hospitality. David became the Chief Pathologist at the Red Cross Children's Hospital in Cape Town and was Professor, and then Dean, of the UCT Medical School.

Next there was **Herbert McKenzie** (back right) named for his uncle. He qualified both as a civil engineer and a barrister. He practiced as a barrister in Cape Town, with several stints as an Acting Judge. **George McKenzie** Junior, (back left) born in 1926 married Prudence Scheuble whose parents farmed in the Kimberley area. They went farming in the Kimberley area too – but seemingly like the sad family trait, he died

very young. There was also a daughter **Rose-Anne McKenzie** who married Roy Wilson and they lived their entire married lives in the Cape.

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## Pop and Kenzie

At first Phoebe and George and family lived in Kimberley at 23 Egerton Road. Their sons attended CBC. In 1945, after Sir David Harris died in 1942, the family moved to Cape Town, Phoebe and George lived in a lovely old home 'The Red House' in Harfield Road in Claremont, Cape Town (Right). It was made of red Devon sandstone, When Pop died in the 1960s, Phoebe left the Red House (now sadly demolished and replaced by a block of flats) and moved to a home in Mains Avenue, Kenilworth.



The McKenzies owned the **Queens Hotel in Sea Point**, (pictured below in the 1920s) originally built in 1887 and refurbished in 1923 and again in 1936. In the 1930s and 40s it was regarded as one of the leading hotels in Cape Town with extensive lawns leading down to the seafront. (Sadly, it was later sold and morphed into the President Hotel in 1967 with further building where the lawns had been, and the magic of the Queen's was lost.)

Phoebe died in Cape Town on 18 September 1970 aged 78.





## Obituary of Phoebe from the DFA 25 September 1970

She was warm and generous and hospitable to all Kimberley people.

JUDY'S  
PAGE

# She worked hard for others

DFA  
25.9.70

A WOMAN loved by all who knew her and, in turn, never had an unkind word to say about others. This sums up the qualities of Mrs. Phoebe McKenzie who was a philanthropist and an untiring worker for a variety of causes.

The daughter of the late Sir David Harris, a former member of the Legislative Assembly and chairman of De-Beers Company for many years, Mrs. McKenzie grew up in Lancaster Lodge, the family home in Dutoitspan Road. In 1948 she gave the house to the Kimberley Masonic Hostel committee for use as a home for older people.

Members of this committee have recently decided to re-name the building Lancaster Lodge and to call the east wing the Phoebe McKenzie wing. The ballroom, which stood at the back of the family house, is now an exhibit at the Kimberley Mine Museum.

### OPEN HOUSE

At the outbreak of the Second World War Mrs. McKenzie's Eger-ton Road house became a second home for many of the wives of serving soldiers. If we failed to turn up for tennis, or for Sunday buffet

luncheon which was always "open house" for wives as well as members of the armed forces, Phoebe would be around to find out if all was well, recalled one of the women who will never forget her hospitality.

Chairman of the Medicine Supplies Committee of the S.A. Red Cross in Kimberley, Mrs. McKenzie provided the funds necessary for the running of occupational therapy classes for personnel in the West End Military Hospital. She was also directly responsible for making pyjamas and furnishing medical supplies for patients in military hospitals and sick bays throughout the Kimberley area.

She provided premises for the local branch of the Red Cross Society for the entire war years and by her personal endeavours raised considerable amounts of money for the Prisoners of War Fund.

### HOSPITALITY

She was organiser of the Victory sewing party and in an entirely different field was chairman of the Barnato Gift Fund. The latter assists students in the field of higher education.

Until her death, which occurred

McKenzie received letters from all parts of the world from men who had enjoyed her hospitality. Although she left Kimberley in 1945 Mrs. McKenzie paid frequent visits to the city from her Cape home.

She leaves two sons and a daughter, all of whom live in Cape Town.



Mrs. Phoebe McKenzie

## The next generations

I was pleased to be contacted by several of David and Rosa's great-grandchildren.

In 2021 Great-Granddaughter-in-law Pat McKenzie of Cape Town wrote to me: 'My husband Simon McKenzie was the great grandson of Colonel Sir David and Rosa Harris. Simon's grandmother was their youngest daughter Phoebe. His father, **Herbert Simon McKenzie** grew up in Kimberly and went to Christian Brother's College (CBC). I have the original books of the Kimberly press cuttings as my husband Simon (who passed away in 2021) was Herbert's eldest son.' [I hope the press cuttings will be given to and held secure at the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at UCT].

In 2022, **Peter Harris** contacted me. His father, **Kenneth David Harris** (who also went to school at CBC in Kimberley) was the son of **Wilfred Harris**, the eldest son of Sir David and Lady Rosa. Peter lives nearby in the UK. He came over to my house bringing some of the Harris family photographs and also the surviving medal and silver trowel inscribed from the Chevra Kadisha. He brought a letter with the descriptions of each member of the family by Isabella Wepener who worked for the family,. We had a lovely afternoon together. Peter Anwyl Harris, as he is known, is the only descendent who bears the name 'Harris'.

In 2023 I was pleased to be contacted by **George** and **Jock McKenzie**, sons of **David McKenzie** (the Pathologist) the eldest son of **Phoebe** and **George**. They filled in the family story.

**George McKenzie** wrote from Adelaide Australia:

I am the great grandson of Sir David, my father was David McKenzie, the eldest child of George and Phoebe (generally known as Pop and Kenzie), Phoebe being Sir David's youngest child, as noted in the article. I am the youngest of 4 children. My sister, Patricia, the eldest, and my middle brother, Robin, are both deceased, leaving my eldest brother Jock (John David) and myself as the surviving siblings. My wife and I emigrated to Australia (Adelaide) in 1989 and have 3 boys, James 39 (a lawyer in London) Matthew 36 (who works in the wine industry north of Adelaide) and Simon 30 (who, after completing his doctorate, now works as a data analyst in Sydney).

George McKenzie

**Jock McKenzie** (eldest son of Pathologist David McKenzie) who lives with his wife Liz in Somerset West wrote: I attach a photo of the portrait of Sir David by Edward Rowarth which I inherited (see page 1). My father had a copy made by Jan Corewijn which he donated to the "Big Hole' Museum. I last visited Kimberley some time ago and at that stage the portrait was no longer being displayed (presumably in storage at the museum).

A little family background. I married Elizabeth Logie (Liz). Interestingly, given Sir David's military positions in the British side of the Boer War, her grandfather George Brink was interred in a Concentration Camp as a young boy. He later became General George Brink who commanded the South African Forces in Egypt during the Second World War. Liz took over the running of Save the Children in Cape Town after my aunt Rose-Anne died, so it stayed essentially a family concern for probably half a century. She has also published several Childrens Books.

Just one anecdote: When Liz took over 'Save the Children' I took over the fundraising. On a trip to London for a Board meeting I followed up on a previous Donor, the Childwick Trust ( founded I discovered by Jim Joel, grand-nephew of Barney Barnato – Sir David's cousin). There I met with someone called Peter Harris. My opening comment, to break the ice, was: 'I had a Great-Grandfather surname Harris.' So did he! It turned out this was Peter Anwyl Harris who is also a great-grandson of Sir David being the son of their eldest son, Wilfrid. At that stage I didn't know he even existed. We have since become good friends.

We have three children Kirsten who won a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford to complete her PhD and is currently Professor of History at Sydney University. She has written a number of books on South African and Australian Colonial History (Scandal in the Colonies, Imperial Underworld etc. etc.) Her partner, Brad, is head of the Military History Museum in Sydney. Carey who is a Medical Doctor (Radiologist) practicing in Empangeni who lives in Zululand. Her husband is a farmer, and they have 2 children (including another David) at High School. David



who is a Senior Correspondent with CNN who lives in Johannesburg with his family. He has two young daughters. He reports from around the World and is currently in Kiev (for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time). Once more thanks for the interesting article. Regards **Jock McKenzie**

**Phoebe's daughter Rose-Anne** lived at the Cape. She was very charitable and cared for Save the Children. She inherited much of the family jewels from her mother including some say elaborate tiaras and the diamond brooch below.

## Kim Springveldt

When I posted the picture of Sir David Harris's ballroom on the Kimberley history Facebook page 'Kimberley Calls and Recalls' somebody called **Kim Springveldt** commented that the portrait on the wall was of her Granny Phoebe McKenzie. Jock filled me in about her.

He explained that Kim is the eldest daughter of Roseanne (Kenzie and Pop's daughter) who is married to Aubrey Springveldt and that Roseanne's children are as follows: Roseanne adopted Roddy (Jock believes from Kimberley) in 1958 in the belief of not being able to fall pregnant and then promptly had Kim in 1959. Roddy is deceased. Next child is Ian (1961) who is a Doctor in Perth Australia. Josephine (Jo) (1964) who is a teacher at SACS. In 1971, Liz and I (and Kirsten who was a baby) left RSA to study for an MBA in the UK. I sold a very large double bed I had made to Roy and Roseanne. They promptly had a 'laat lammetjie' Phoebe in 1972.

## Diamond Brooch comes up for sale



This is a picture of the spectacular brooch with over 70 diamonds including a couple of whoppers, four square-cut diamonds and 5 beautiful yellow diamonds, originally a gift from Sir David Harris to his wife Rosa, that was put up for auction in Cape Town in 2015. The brooch is composed of seven flower-heads, the centre claw set with an old brilliant cut diamond weighing approximately 3.20 carats, enclosed by yellow and white old brilliant- and old European-cut diamonds, mounted in gold and platinum. The width is approximately 37mm. This was owned by the family of their youngest daughter Phoebe. In line with the family's philanthropic aims, a part of the proceeds was to go to charity.

## ~~~~~ Kimberley family connections to Sir David Harris

### Beverly Solsky and Grant Immelman

Beverly wrote: Sir David Harris was my great-great-uncle, let me explain: My paternal grandfather **Benjamin Buirski**, in July 1902, married **Daisy Speelman** who was Sir David's niece, my **great grandmother Hannah** Speelman was **Sir David's sister**. What brought my grandmother Hannah to South Africa was because her mom and her two sisters came out from England to see their brother and uncle.

My childhood was peppered with stories of “**Uncle Dave**” as they referred to him. The family used to go backwards and forwards to London where they resided and then purchased an apartment above the Odeon Cinema in Sea Point on the Main Road where they lived for many years. Out of the three nieces only my grandmother married, and the two sisters lived out their lives in the flat dying at the ages of 92 and 94. My sister and I were very close to them and as children we used to visit them every week.

I spent part of my childhood in Kimberley and only a few weeks ago I became connected and learnt about the Website which Geraldine has been instrumental in creating. She has done an amazing job together with Eli Rabinowitz who lived in Perth Australia. The website has ignited so many memories for me and I am delighted that Sir David is included. He was from all accounts an extraordinary individual. I have read his memoirs – my sister Lynette has a copy of the book. She lives in Cape Town, my family and I have been in Sydney since 1987.

**Sandy Immelman** wrote :

Thank you so much for your lovely email! It is amazing when one starts going back through history to see all the connections and to try and link them.

My connection is rather tenuous, so I am cc-ing in my mother-in-law's family in the hopes that they have more information about Sir David. Basically, my husband's grandmother married **David McKenzie** who was the son of **Phoebe née Harris**, Sir David's youngest daughter.

I have so enjoyed reading some of the info from the website as well as the information on the Facebook page. I look forward to tracking down a copy of Sir David's book - am hoping someone in the family will have one for us to read.

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### **Colonel Sir David Harris (1852 - 1942)**

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, 2021 London August 2022, updated again January and April 2023 with new information and pictures from Great Grandchildren and from Robert Hart at the McGregor Museum Kimberley, from Steve Lundstedt's Kimberley history Facebook page 'Kimberley Calls and Recalls' and other sources.

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Read more about this colourful and popular character David Harris in the [Newsletter #32 December 2020](#) featuring Jews and Diamonds in Kimberley. Specially see in this Newsletter the lovely story David Harris told Percy Fitzpatrick about Rhodes in 'How the Christian Beat the Jews'.

Take a tour of the [Memorial Road Synagogue](#)

Also read the story of Augusta Sussman who dedicated some music to Sir David [Sussman, Philip and Augusta \(nee Cohen\)](#)

And especially recommended is that you read the exciting story of how it was in the very early days, and the part played by David Harris, Barney Barnato and Rhodes in the early years, in my monograph of the key player: Alfred Beit

[https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Alfred Beit.html](https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Alfred_Beit.html)

See below the marriage certificate of Phoebe Harris and George Mckenzie

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UNIE VAN SUID-AFRIKA

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

Inkomste/Revenue 116.

## HUWELIKSERTIFIKAAT.

## MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

Uitgereik overeenkomstig artikel 40 van Wet No. 17 van 1923.

Issued in terms of Section 40 of Act No. 17 of 1932.

B 778882

No. 1109 19 19 Ras Man European  
 Race—Husband  
 Huwelik bevestig te Kimberley Distrik —  
 Marriage solemnized at Province —

Datum van huwelik. Date of Marriage.	Volle name van eggenote. Full Names of Persons Married.	Onderdom. Age.	Geboorteland. Country of Birth.	Persoonlike staat. Personal Status.	Beroep. Occupation.	Woonplek ten tyde van huwelik. Residence at time of Marriage.	Na geboorte of met spesiale huweliksinsent. Banns or Special Marriage Licence.	Met wie se toestemming. Consent by whom Given.	Met of sonder huweliks- voorwaardes. With or without Antenuptial Contract.	Opmerking. Remarks.
Seventeenth December 1919	George McKenzie	32 years	—	Bachelor	Bank manager	Windsonton, dist. Kimberley	Special Licence	—	—	—
	Phoebe Harris	24 years	—	Spinster	no Occupation	Kimberley		—	—	—

Hierdie huwelik is deur my bevestig op hede die 17th dag van December 1919, in die teenwoordigheid van ondergetekende getuies :—  
 This marriage was solemnized by me on this 17th day of December 1919, in the presence of the undersigned witnesses :—

Getuies : L. E. Herbst P. J. de Bees  
 As witnesses : H. Harris mgt.  
 Huweliksbevestig.  
 Marriage Officer.

Kerkgenootskap of Magistraatskantoor.  
 Denomination or Magistrate's Office.

Ek, D. L. M. Bleeker, sertifiseer hierby dat bostaande 'n getroue afskrif is van die Originele Huweliksregister in my kantoor gehou, en die huwelik tussen  
 I, G. McKenzie, do hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the Original Marriage Register kept in my office, of the marriage of  
G. McKenzie and P. Harris

Bekragtig onder my handtekening en seël te Pretoria  
 Witness my hand and seal at Pretoria  
 op hede die 8th dag van Oktober 1951  
 this 8th day of October 1951

Handtekening actg  
 Signature actg  
 Registrateur/Registrar.  
 Huweliksbevestig/Marriage Officer.

Hierdie huwelik  
 is tussen ons  
 voltrek.  
 This marriage  
 was contract-  
 ed by us.

G. McKenzie  
Phoebe Harris

BEDRAG  
 BETAAL

216  
 FREE  
 PAID