

BULAWAYO HEBREW CONGREGATION

5654-5754



1894-1994

Centennial Celebrations



Editorial comment

An old man going along a highway
 Came in the evening, cold and grey
 To a chasm vast and deep and wide
 Through which was seeping a sullen tide.
 The old man crossed in the twilight dim.
 The sullen stream had no fear for him.
 But he stopped when safe on the other side
 And built a bridge to span the tide.
 "Old man," said a fellow standing near,
 "You are wasting your strength with
 building here.
 Your journey will end at the close of day
 And you never again will pass this way.
 You've crossed the chasm, deep and wide —
 Why build you this bridge at eventide?"
 The builder lifted his old, grey head
 "Good friend, in the path I have come,"
 he said,
 "There follows after me today
 A youth whose feet must pass this way.
 This chasm, which has been naught to me
 To the fair haired youth might a pitfall be.
 He too must cross in the twilight dim...
 Good friend, I am building this bridge for
 him."

From Perspective Magazine,
 King David School,
 Johannesburg.



THIS has been fun. When I was first asked to put together a magazine to celebrate 100 years of Bulawayo Jewry, I agreed ... thinking I could crack out a couple of articles, slap in a few photographs and it would be over in a few weeks.



Ha. Little did I know. So I enlisted the courageous assistance of Shelley, Charlotte, Jennifer, Elsa, Anne and Ruth — courageous because they were in the frontlines, ducking the salvos of the community which individually each had their own ideas of what the magazine should contain.

The verbal bullets flew. Some thought it should be only about the *shul*, others the whole of Zimbabwe Jewry; others said it should mention a few societies, others said all the societies, some said a few photos,

yet others argued they were not necessary; and people, *oy vey*, don't forget so-and-so whatever you do. Thank goodness no one suggested doing a critical analysis of The Bible and its relevance to the growth of Federation Jewry with schematic diagrams!

Battered and bruised and carrying not a few pieces of hysterical shrapnel, we ploughed ahead.

In this, the final edition, we hope we have encapsulated a comprehensive background of the Bulawayo Jewish community. We felt that although it was the *shul's* 100th birthday, a *shul* cannot exist without a society and all its doings, and the societies are intrinsically wound up with the squabbles, happy times and growth of the *shul*. All are necessary as all *are* the community.

Part of the fun has been the learning experience. Bulawayo had so much to offer and the nostalgia we each felt reading though the volumes of minutes, magazines, books; flipping through photos in boxes, in albums, in dusty corners; digging around little-used rooms in Cazo, Wizo House, even in the old Guild in the hopes of finding one more gem of history has been an experience we will always remember.

And we still haven't found all there is to know. Spending time with people conducting aural histories, others volunteering snippets from the past — we suddenly knew how much we didn't know and how much has been lost. Where are the *shul* minutes before 1939; the golden key that opened the Guild; the piano and gym equipment from the hall; the old copies of the *Jewish Guild Journal* circa 1919-1940s; the purple bands worn by the Chovevei Zion members and their gold badge of office; and the original photo of the Ladies Guild (see front cover)? All have gone missing, lost without a trace. We have tried to source them and herewith let you know that they *did* exist.

We hope that by producing this cross between an historic "tome" and a Reader's Digest of light facts, future generations will see how we developed the first 100 years.

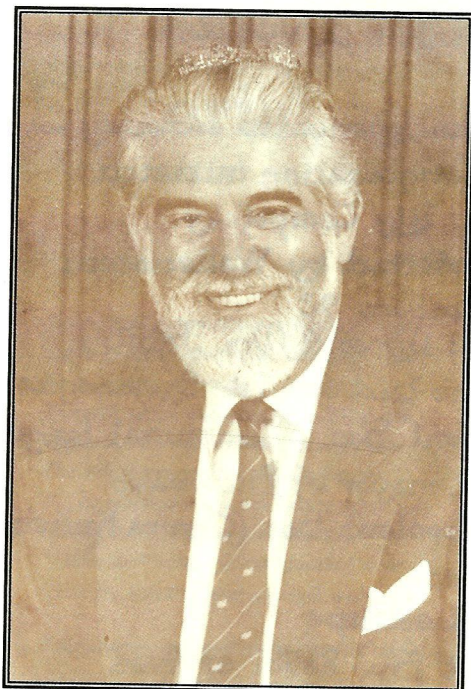
When the editor of the bicentennial magazine puts together the following 100 years, at least some of our community's past will remain in the form of this "time capsule".

Happy reading. Happy memories.

Ronit Loewenstern
 Editor



The Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation Centennial Magazine editorial committee (from left): Shelley Lasker, Ruth Feigenbaum, Charlotte Bernstein, Jennifer Bernstein, Ronit Loewenstern. Insets: Elsa Roth (left) and Anne Watts.



A message from

Chief Rabbi Cyril K Harris

Chief Rabbi of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa

The Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation has a long and proud history, and the entire Jewish community joins in sending warm congratulations on the historic occasion of its 100th Anniversary.

The synagogue of our formative years always leaves an indelible impression on us, no matter how many other communities we join when we move on to more distant places. The very many thousands who over the century grew up in Bulawayo have reason to recall with sincere gratitude the spiritual personalities, dedicated teachers and selfless communal workers, all of whom played a successful part in instilling viable Jewish identity to the congregation.

Looking back over the years, one is amazed at the record of achievement in religious,

cultural and philanthropic spheres, sustained generation after generation by the vibrant Jewish population of Bulawayo.

Anniversaries provide not only the opportunity to look backwards, but also to look to the future.

A great measure of courage and tenacity will require to be exercised in the years ahead so that yet another proud chapter may be added to the chronicles of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation.

On this very special anniversary, we salute the inimitable Rabbi Ben Isaacson, the admirable Alan Feigenbaum, and all the wonderful stalwarts who keep the beautiful *shul* going and the flag of Judaism flying proudly in Bulawayo. ☆

A message from

Rabbi B Isaacson

Spiritual Head of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation

While preparing this Centenary message in honour of the Congregation which I have the privilege to serve, I paged through the Commemoration Brochure of the 75th Anniversary held in August 1969. What strikes one is the euphoria.

Here was a community a good few thousand strong but at the beginning of the period of decline in numbers that was to escalate so drastically during the 1970s. Yet, the atmosphere is one of optimism and a readiness to go forward into the future. How Jewish is that optimism! How typical of a community on the brink of crisis to think positively and how characteristically Jewish is this trait.

Together with our commitment to the eternal tenets of our faith throughout the ages, I would say that it is the eternal optimism of the Jew that has preserved us to this day.

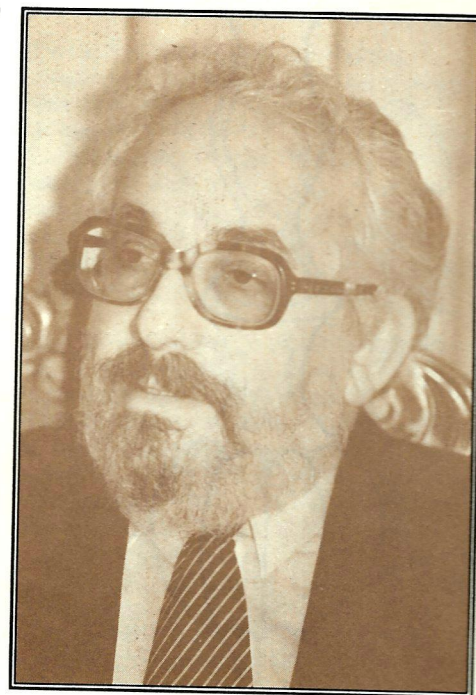
Can we, now down to 350 souls in number, continue to be so optimistic? The demographic situation is not encouraging. We are an ageing community with no great reserves of youth and unfortunately, as yet, no signs of a new and fresh influx of Jews. And yet, the spirit is there; in fact greater in some ways than when Bulawayo had almost ten times the number of Jews. On January 12 1965, a unilateral declaration of independence was made by a group of faithful Bulawayo Jews led by Mr Golden.

This declaration led to the introduction of the daily *minyan* which strangely enough had not been in existence before then. Since that time due to the dedication of a handful of faithful regulars and a group of other members who take part on a roster basis, the voice of prayer had been heard in our synagogue morning and evening without interruption. This achievement is meritorious and is the envy of many congregations in southern Africa. Of this we can justly be proud.

There are however other spheres in our spiritual life that need re-appraisal and a Centenary which is the time for celebration should also be the occasion for re-examination.

The Sabbath and Festival attendances are woefully weak and it is the same small band of dedicated regulars who keep the flag of Jewish observance raised high. Will this dedication continue in the future? That is the question congregants have to answer at this time.

It is not the size of the community that counts but the size of its heart and commitment. Judaism is not concerned with the worship of numbers but with the numbers who worship. I have enjoyed the past three years of my ministry in your midst and I am deeply grateful for the warmth and hospitality I have been shown by so many.

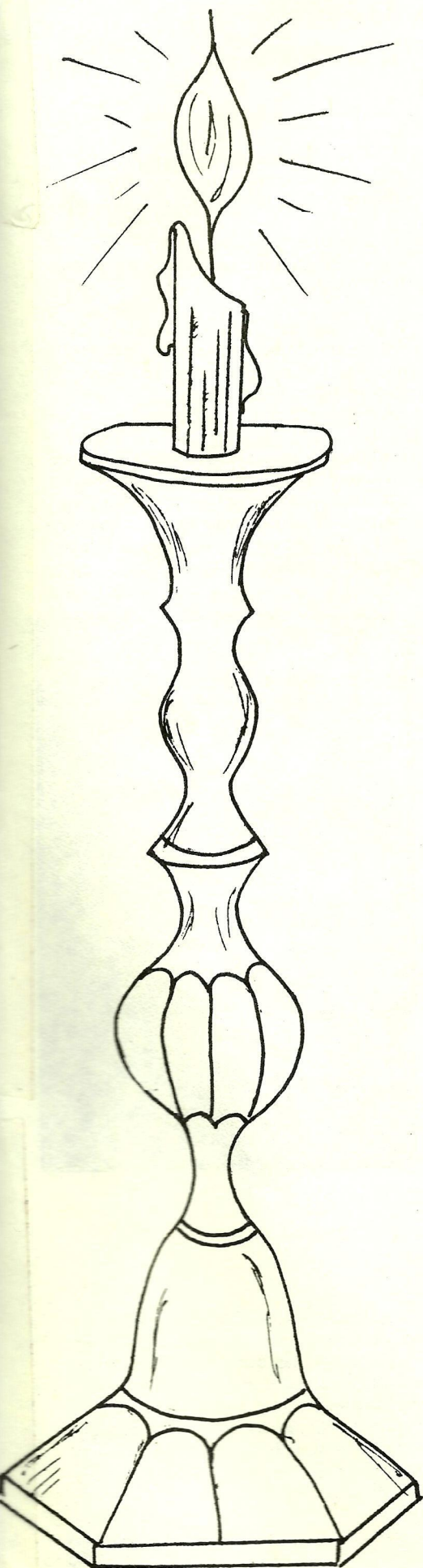


In particular I would like to pay tribute to my President who is an unique Jew and a wonderful human being. His dedication spiritually and materially to the congregation is unrivalled. Likewise I would like to pay tribute to the elders of the congregation with whom I pray and study everyday. They make my life here meaningful.

At the age of one hundred years I can only repeat the traditional Jewish blessing "*Biz a hundred und zwanzig*". ☆

100 Years of Jewish Events

- 1869 Daniel Kisch employed as Lobengula's secretary.
- 1894 Aug 12: Byo. Hebrew Congregation initiated
First white child born: Lily Tempofsky
First Byo. newspaper started by Wallenstein
- 1895 Jewish population numbers 92
First Jewish marriage: Mr and Mrs Jacobs
- 1897 June: Foundation stone laid for 1st Synagogue
Jewish Ladies Benevolent Soc. (Communal League)
I. Hirschler elected first mayor of Bulawayo
Byo. Hebrew Aid & Benevolent Soc. (Chevra Kadisha)
- 1898 Chovevei Zion established.
First Education Board set up
- 1899 Rabbi. M. I. Cohen, first Byo Rabbi arrives
Jewish population grows to around 200
- 1901 Idlers Club started (forerunner to Jewish Guild)
Jewish population stands at around 300
- 1906 Jewish Guild officially established.
- 1913 First Ohel built at the cemetery
- 1922 Jewish Guild built
- 1932 Byo. Jewish Memorial Library founded
- 1933 Guild Library established.
First Habonim meeting held
- 1935 Louis Landau Hebrew School opened
- 1937 Parkview Tennis Club opened
- 1939 Yiddish Cultural Society created
- 1943 R.Z.C. and C.R.J. established (J. Board of Dep.)
- 1943 First Zionist Conference held
- 1945 Rhodesian JNF Department set up.
- 1948 Union of Jewish Women started.
- 1949 Byo. Jewish Country Club opened (Weizmann)
- 1956 Rhodesian Maccabi Association formed.
- 1958 Jewish population now approx. 2800
Progressive Synagogue consecrated
- 1960 Carmel Primary School opened
- 1962 Youth and Education centre opened
- 1968 Savyon Lodge opened
- 1971 Sinai Synagogue & Louis Treger Hall opened
- 1974 Hebrew Order of David founded
- 1980 Zimbabwe Independ. declared ~ no new
Jewish community development.
- 1994 100 years old! A small but vibrant
community (pop. 344) plans for the future...



A message from

Alan D Feigenbaum

President of the Bulwayo Hebrew Congregation

In 1894, the same year Bulwayo was declared a city, there were enough men for a *minyan* — men of vision and foresight who formed the Bulwayo Hebrew Congregation. Their way of life at that time must have been very difficult. It is hard to imagine what little infrastructure there was then. Many of those men came without their families and, in most cases, were virtually penniless.

Nevertheless they had courage and, on August 14, just before *Rosh Hashanah*, they came together. Today we have to give thanks to those far-sighted gentlemen. I feel sure that they could never in their wildest dreams have thought that it was possible for their endeavours to result in the beautiful *shul* and buildings that go with it and the institutions that revolve around the *shul* — such as Carmel School, the nursery school, Savyon Lodge and the many societies that our congregants have formed over their years.

It would have been difficult for them to foresee that our congregation would have grown to approximately 4,000 people in its heyday. Our community probably grew because of the *shul* that was founded.

Many of those immigrants from Europe had grown up in the *shtetel*. They were used to holding services on a regular basis and

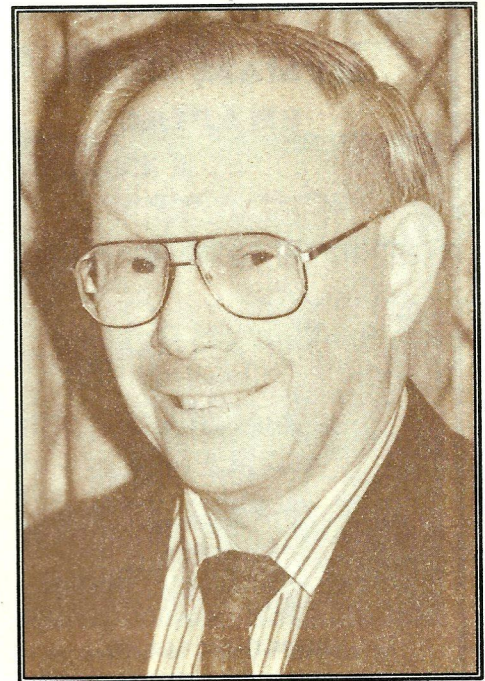
knew no other way of life. I hope that we, in 1994, will prove that we are people who believe in keeping our congregation going and, obviously, having a Rabbi to look after our religious affairs.

We unfortunately have very few members together with the probability that our numbers will decline further in the not too distant future. Nevertheless I am convinced that with goodwill and understanding from those of us who remain in Bulwayo, we will be able to fund a Rabbi and maintain our *shul*.

We have had, from time to time, some outstanding Rabbonim and Chazonim and some great men in our community who have held high positions in this country. Many of us will remember our first minister, Rev Cohen, who came from England. He was a friend of Jew and non-Jew who left his mark on this community.

Our learned and knowledgeable Rabbi, Ben Isaacson, with the help of a small, dedicated group of congregants, is able to maintain a morning and evening *minyan* which we hope he will continue to do for many years.

I believe that we can be proud of our history and I certainly hope and pray that



we will maintain our facilities into the next century. Perhaps with the new world situation and peace in Israel, our community will not diminish. We must be positive and have courage. Our forefathers would not have come together without faith. ☆

A message from

Clr Joshua T Malinga

Mayor of Bulwayo

Although the City of Bulwayo celebrated its 100th Anniversary in May/June this year, the year 1994 remains one of much significance and to us, the people of Bulwayo, it is time to reflect on the present and past achievements of the citizens of this fair city.

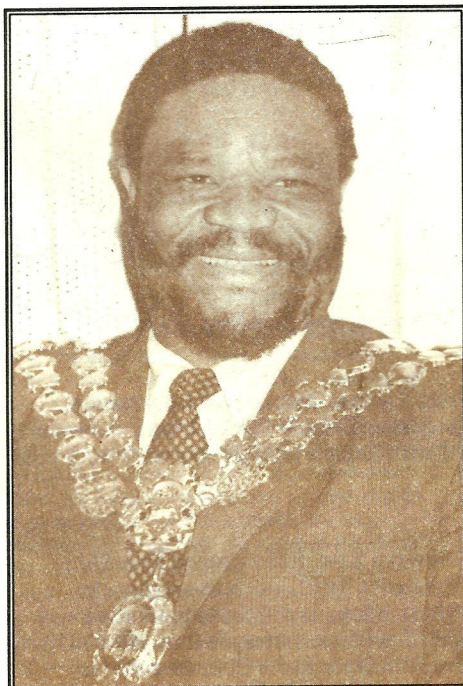
From 1894, Bulwayo has been home to a cross-section of races and communities and to date we have achieved so much through the efforts of the diverse social and cultural groups which have worked together in building this city.

The Jewish community is one such group and has consistently recognised the spirit of

co-operation that has always existed within the various sectors of this city.

The Jewish community has taken advantage of this spirit and used it to ensure a secure future for our children. They have always been on the forefront of charitable endeavours, seeing to the needs of others.

On behalf of the residents of Bulwayo, I take great pleasure in congratulating the Bulwayo Hebrew Congregation on its 100th Anniversary and take pride in sharing your sense of achievement. ☆



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Louis Rubenstein

Known as "Uncle", he was born in Dublin 1881 and arrived in Bulawayo in 1897, just one year too late to rank as a pioneer. During his lifetime there were many changes and saw, as he said, "The bundu blossom into nationhood." In 1916, he married Sarah Grossberg, a pioneer. He was a founder of the Idler's Club, secretary of the Chovevei Zion 1902-1905; of Hebrew Congregation 1909-1914. He was a keen cricketer and all-round sportsman, and played tennis till the age of 73 and bowls until 1961.



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Advertisements in the Bulawayo Directory
1895-1886

Past Jewish Mayors of Bulawayo

Hirschler, Isidore Henry Esq JP — 1897-1898

Bulawayo's first mayor, Stockbroker, company director " ...of Bulawayo, Rhodesia and of the Badminton club."

Basch, Emmanuel Esq JP — 1907-1908; 1908-1909; 1909-1910; 1910-1911

President Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, jeweller, member local Chamber of Commerce and Mining, member Matabeleland Political Assn (to reform the Charter).

Ellenbogen, H B Esq JP — 1927-1928; 1928-1929

President Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, Justice of the Peace, executive member Chamber of Commerce and Licensing Board. On committee which dealt with German refugees.

Harris, Alderman Cessy M — 1934-1935; 1935-1936

President Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, president Matabeleland Cricket Board, OBE. Miller and produce merchant. First chairman of Bulawayo Chamber of Industries 1957. He presented a civic mace to the city to honour his 50 years in Zimbabwe.

Menashe, Alderman Abe — 1965-1966; 1966-1967

First Sephardic Mayor at age 38. Elected to council 1959. President Jewish Progressive Congregation, executive member of Board of Deputies, member Carmel School Board. (Building of fountain controversy.)

Goldwasser, Alderman Jurick — 1968-1969

Elected to council 1961. Executive member of Board of Deputies, trustee Hebrew Congregation, chairman Carmel School Board of Governors, president Bulawayo Chamber of Industries, chairman Economic Affairs Committee of CZI, chairman Central African Textile Manufacturers Assn. Presented chain to deputy mayors as badge of office. Opened new fountain.

Coronel, Alderman Harold — 1971-1972

(Purchase of new car controversy.) Businessman, chairman of General Purposes Committee, and Health and Welfare for city, president of Combined Charities.

Harris, Ralph S Esq — 1972-1973

Son of Cessy Harris. Leading figure in industry.

Gordon, Alderman Dr Eugene D — 1973-1974

Opened Upper Ncema Dam, new Revenue Hall, new Kelvin Abattoir. A councillor from 1969-1992; received civic honours 1993; president Bulawayo Chamber of Commerce 1969-1971; deputy president Associated Chamber of Commerce Rhodesia, 1972-1974; past chairman National Arts Council and Bulawayo and District Blood Transfusion Service.

Past Jewish notables in Government

Abrahamson, Hon A E 1958

Re-elected to S Rhodesia Parliament for Bulawayo East, Minister of Labour, Social Welfare and Housing in Sir Edgar Whitehead's cabinet, chairman Rhodesian Zionist Youth Executive, Chovevei Zion Society, served Rhodesian Zionist Council, Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, Board of Deputies.

Goldberg, Hon B D

Minister of Education and Health, Federal Government.

Goldstein, B 1958

Elected MP for Bulawayo South. Leading personality in Rhodesian Commerce, president of Federated Chamber of Commerce of Rhodesia, Bulawayo Chamber of Commerce, chairman of Bulawayo Rotary Club, founder of Parkview, past president of Guild.

Broomberg, E 1971-1974

MP Minister of Commerce and Industry, Rhodesian Cabinet. Minister of Information, Immigration and Tourism. National chairman Rhodesian Council for the Blind, chairman King George VI Rehabilitation Centre. Honoured with Legion of Merit for work with blind and handicapped.

Pincus, Senator Joel 1971-1974

Elected to Senate Rhodesian Government MP Bulawayo East. Born Orange Free State, qualified attorney at Wits University, moved to Bulawayo 1950. His interest grew in Zionism during the visit of Ze'ev Jabotinsky to South Africa in 1937. National chairman Zionist Revisionist Organisation 1947. Distinguished political career, first as MP 1965, then Senate as a member Legal Committee. Awarded Independence Commemorative Decoration in 1970. Member Cazo judicial body. ☆

Jewish adventurers make their mark

*"Remember the Past
Live in the Present
Trust in the Future"*

*Exit to the
Diaspora Museum,
Tel Aviv.*

by Shelley Lasker



Bulawayo in 1894 on the site where Government House stands today before the town moved to its present location.

FROM the dawn of creation to today — 5754 years in terms of Jewish History — the hundred years of Bulawayo Jewry is only the blink of an eye.

But in that short time Jews have made a substantial contribution to the city. From the original small-time traders, the labourers, the refugees and the explorers, Bulawayo Jews have come a long way. They have been in the forefront of business, medicine, culture, fighting for freedom and giving to charity.

Long before the signing of the Charter for the British South Africa Company, Jewish traders and explorers came to



Alfred Beit — Rhodes' closest friend and admirer. Jewish by birth and Lutheran by religion. Born 1853 in Hamburg, he learned the basics of the diamond business in Amsterdam. Came to South Africa in 1897 at the insistence of his cousin. His training enabled him to see the fine quality of the generally disparaged Cape diamonds. He borrowed £2,000 from his father and set up in Kimberley in 1879 as a diamond merchant. He bought land and put up iron shacks which he rented for £1,800 a month. He later sold the sites for £260,000. He came to Rhodesia in 1882 and put his unrivalled business ability, his means and his influence at the service of his friend. His zeal on Rhodes' behalf was always completely unselfish for he was a modest and retiring man. He was liberal and helped all sorts of people in undisclosed ways in addition to his widely known endowments. Died in 1906.

Matabeleland. The earliest sign of a Jew can be traced to the witnessing of a letter to Queen Victoria from Lobengula by a trader, Moss "Paddy" Cohen. Along with several other early settlers, Cohen supported Lobengula's vain attempts to hold back the tide of Western civilization represented by Rhodes and his associates.

As early as 1869, Daniel Kisch, a Jewish adventurer, worked at the Tati concession and later moved to the royal kraal of Gubulawayo. There he worked as Lobengula's secretary and he imported the King's wagon and double-breech loader. He and Thomas Baines, the explorer-artist, often dined together, and as Kisch had the only French chef in the far interior, his hospitality was famous. Leopold Kessler, a Jew from Upper Silesia, produced the first geological survey of Matabeleland.

By far the most significant Jewish businessman to be involved in Bulawayo's early history was Alfred Beit, Rhodes' right-hand-man. Beit received financial support from British and French banks, such as the Rothschilds and Erlangers. His legacy is a vast fortune which is still used to develop Zimbabwe. This money has funded bridges, railways, telegraph lines, schools, hostels, and scholarships.

Before the railway line reached Bulawayo in 1898, the country was developed by ox and wagon transport by Messrs Weil of Mafeking. There were only a few original Jewish pioneers, but many more followed. They were mostly young, poor men, ready to rough it and they did their share to open up the country. Their welcome contrasted harshly with the oppressive atmosphere of eastern Europe. At the initial sale of stands in Bulawayo there were more than 20 Jewish buyers.

The Jewish contribution to early Bulawayo came in many forms, from trade and commerce to culture and local politics. There were many firsts for the city's, in fact the country's, Jews. They were among the first to open up the mining and cattle

industries. The first white child born in Bulawayo was Lily Tempofsky in April, 1894; the first marriage in 1895 was a Jewish one, as was the first burial; Mr I Hirschler became Bulawayo's first mayor in 1897; and the first newspaper, *The Matabeleland Times and Mining Journal*, was started in 1894 by William Wallenstein.

The Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation was formed on August 12 1894 and Jewish education got off to a start a few years later. When in 1900 Rev M I Cohen arrived, he found Jewish religious and communal life firmly established.

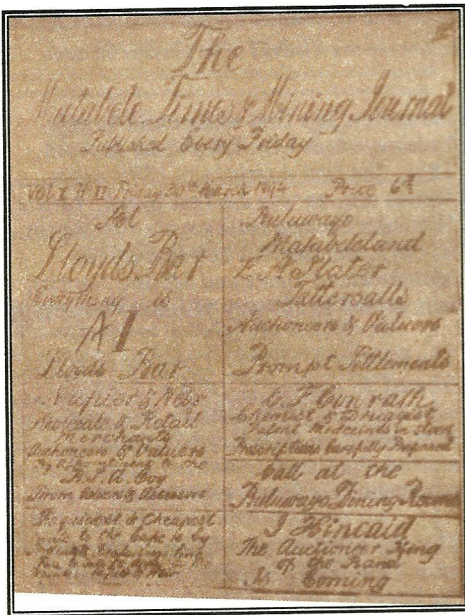
The city's Jewish population grew rapidly after 1904 with prosperity accelerated by the boom in small gold mines and European agriculture. By 1911, the Rhodesian Jewish population had doubled to 1,283, but by 1921 it stayed almost the same reflecting the depression in the country, and the start of World War One when Jewish immigration from Europe almost stopped.



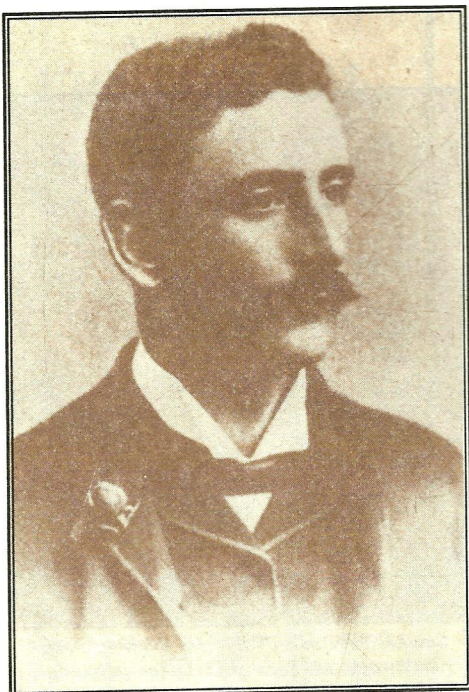
Southern Rhodesia Volunteer training camp. Bulawayo, 1915. Rev M I Cohen (circled).

With the Great War, more biased attitudes began to replace early pioneer acceptance. Several German Jews, including the brother of Bulawayo's cantor, were sent to internment camps in South Africa. Russian immigration was discouraged following the Bolshevik Revolution and the growing fear of communism.

Although there was no conscription during the Great War, many volunteered to fight. A concerted campaign was raised by anti-semites questioning Jewish participation. In 1917 George Stewart, Bulawayo's mayor, accused "aliens" of joining local volunteers to avoid active service. He grudgingly withdrew his remarks after figures were published to prove him wrong. But resentment still ran high. A typical case was Jessie Anderson who wrote to *The Chronicle* on May 3 1918 asking why "slackers" of alien origins



(Above) The cyclostyled news-sheet which began on March 23 1894. On September 28 it became the first printed newspaper in Matabeleland. (Below) W F Wallenstein, editor and proprietor of Bulawayo's first newspaper, *The Matabele Times*.



were given jobs when returning soldiers faced unemployment. Figures were again compiled to emphasise Jewish participation in the war effort and Rev Cohen took a stand.

More than 100 Rhodesian Jews served at the front during World War One and many were decorated. The first local man to be killed in Germany was Ben Rabinson, a well-known rugby player.

The decades between the Wars showed little involvement by Jews in national politics. On the local scene however, many individual Jews were elected to local government bodies. Two such people were Mr H B Ellenbogen, a wholesaler, and Cessy M Harris.

Immigration increased during the late 1930s and by 1941 of the 3,215 Jews in the country, 60 percent lived in Matabeleland. Most were still storekeepers, but there was a growing tendency by the younger generation to move into the liberal professions. Among Bulawayo lawyers was the son of the first Jewish couple married in the country, Cecil Jacobs, as well as Abe Kaplan, Henry Lazarus, Ben Baron and Harry Sonnenberg. These young men took advantage of the good education available to white children. Several won Rhodes, Beit and Charelick Salomon scholarships to university.

The rise of fascism and Nazism in Europe directly affected local Jewry with a rise in anti-semitism. The question of the acceptance of Jews in the white community arose. The 1930 Immigration Quota Act in South Africa caused a delegation of Bulawayo Jewish leaders to appeal to Premier Moffat about British naturalised subjects. His unsatisfactory reply led to a new plea to Major Blundell, Rhodesia's Chief Immigration Officer. Blundell was opposed to union with South Africa, so he supported Jewish efforts and was able to get temporary status for southern African Jews.

With Hitler's power growing ever more menacing, Rhodesian Jewish leaders appealed to Colonial authorities to protest the discrimination in Germany and the closed-door policy in Palestine. A committee was formed in Bulawayo to deal with the German refugee problem and it joined forces with the South African Fund for the Relief of German Jewry.

The committee had success when the SA Minister for Internal Affairs eased restrictions on naturalisation into that country. The Nuremberg Laws in Germany fuelled a wave of German Jewish immigration to South Africa. But the doors to that country were then closed by the Aliens Act, forcing refugees to seek entry into "undesirable" Rhodesia. For those refined and cultured Germans, this part of

the world offered very little attraction.

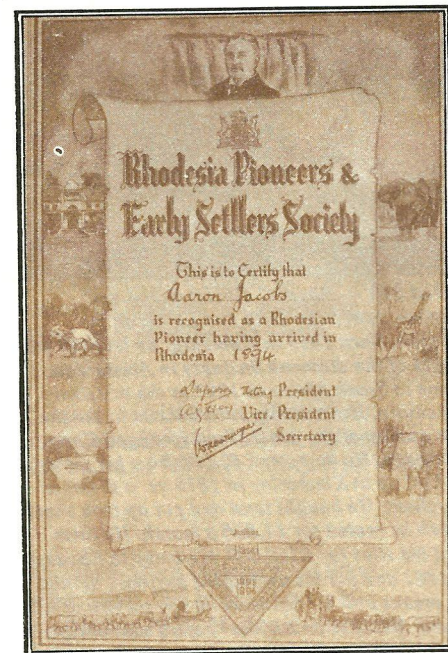
Unfortunately the colonies, with their long history of discrimination against the black population, were a fertile breeding ground for anti-semitism. But as these ideas were promoted by anti-British elements, they did not make real headway into Rhodesian society. British immigration favoured a certain class of people, in particular English landed gentry with farming



I Hirschler, Mayor of the Bulawayo Town Council. (centre front with bow-tie.)

experience — Rhodesia was not seen as holding any industrial potential by the ruling powers. Thus, European Jewry, with its bias towards trade and commerce, was not considered useful to the country's development. The antagonism towards Jewish settlers was spelt out in *Rhodesia not Judesia*:

"In the lifetime of our children, it will be found all other races have been submerged numerically and economically, and we, too, shall require not a Huggins but a Hitler to remedy (if possible) a state of affairs allowed to grow through our own apathy and the lack of vision in those in authority to see 'the writing on the wall'."



Pioneer certificate of Aaron Jacobs, father of Cecil Jacobs.



Red Cross comforts for the troops passing through Bulawayo station during the Great War. Jewish women joined the activities.

These feelings proved fairly popular and a proposal to settle Jews in East Africa and Northern Rhodesia — areas with a few white settlers — was opposed. Sir Leopold Moore, leader of the white members of the Northern Rhodesian legislature, echoed the fears of many when he claimed Northern Rhodesia would become “an annex of Palestine”. Despite Bulawayo Jewry’s strong support of another plan to settle Jewish immigrants in “Rhobeit”, an uninhabited area on the Angolan border, Huggins, the Federal Premier, supported Moore’s objections and suggested Tanganyika, an ex-German colony. Sadly, nothing came of it and those Jews who could have benefited ended in the gas chambers.

The ensuing debate over whether or not to allow Jewish refugees haven in Rhodesia led to more anti-semitism, as can be seen in *The Chronicle* letters of January and February, 1939. A barrage of accusations were made including an absurd idea that a “Jewish plot” to undermine civilization was underway. There were some non-Jews who defended us, especially George Murray who reminded the public of the significant role Jews played in the development of the country.

A plan to start a settlement in Umgusa Valley, near Bulawayo, was explored in 1936. Although opposed by a number of Matabeleland residents and certain members of Government, the scheme was finally approved by the Minister of Agriculture for 20 families to start small-scale mixed farming in 1938. A Bulawayo committee organised land and tools for these Jewish peasant farmers, but again this scheme was left too late and war broke out, leaving those who could have come, in the grips of violence.

Despite the opinion that Jews were shirking their responsibility in the war effort, records show that 500 Jewish men and women served in the armed forces, many of whom were killed. William Treger was a famous ace in the Royal Air Force.

However, anti-semitism continued and *The Chronicle* received many letters accusing Jews of exploiting the country. Cecil Jacobs, who was awarded the Military Medal in World War One and was later chairman of the Bulawayo British Empire Service League, did much to dispel anti-semitism.

Although anti-semitism in the country did not reach life-threatening proportions, the number of Jewish immigrants continued to be limited despite proof of the horrific treatment they were suffering in Europe. Other restrictive measures included the limited issue of trading and property licences to Jews. There were only a few reported acts of aggression, such as the daubing of swastikas on Bulawayo Jewish businesses, but this was hastily condemned by the public and the Press.

Immigration quotas remained after the war, noticeably with the Aliens Act of 1946

which made sure the country would not be flooded with European immigrants, so maintaining the British status quo. The Rhodesian Jewish community keenly felt the isolation and oppression surrounding them. This in turn led to a solidarity within the community and a determination to help others.

The Rhodesian Zionist Council and Council of Rhodesian Jewry were founded in 1943 to give a voice to the local community. With the problems in Palestine and the violence of the Irgun, Jews were in a precarious situation and there was an attack on the Bulawayo synagogue in 1947. Israel’s statehood soon brought this hostility to an end.

The favourable economic climate in post-war Rhodesia gave Jewish traders an advantageous position. Their long history of dealing in the rural areas placed them in good stead to enter the urban market in both trading and manufacturing. Bulawayo saw the rise of several successful Jewish businesses, especially in furniture and textiles. Immigration soared with an influx of young, educated Jews many fleeing the political situation in South Africa.

Bulawayo’s community grew considerably and with the respectability generated from the honours many Jewish soldiers received during the World War Two and their

economic advancement, their social and political status improved dramatically. By 1960, the Jewish population in the country had grown to more than 7,000 and the range of professions was wide.

Bulawayo Jews began to take an active role in politics. Abe Abrahamson was elected unopposed to the UFP under Sir Garfield Todd and became one of Bulawayo’s leading Jewish community

figures. In 1958 he was appointed Minister of the Treasury and Local Government in the caretaker government during the rebellion by Cabinet when senior ministers



Emmanuel Basch, 1914, was Mayor four times.



Historic Niche: On April 9 1894 the first European child, a Jew, was born in Bulawayo when Mrs Moses Tempofsky presented her husband with a baby daughter. Mrs Tempofsky occupies another niche in Rhodesian history: A brother-in-law followed her to Bulawayo in 1895 — his name Michael Welensky, and he later had a son whom he called Roy.

Only Children: In 1894 Lily Tempofsky and Albert Peters were Bulawayo’s only babies for several months. Mrs Tempofsky used to go round with little Lily in her arms to see how Mrs Peters’s Albert was doing. Then a return call would be paid; and perhaps in would pop Mrs Colenbrander to ask about the babies. “Just look at the wee darlings,” Mollie Colenbrander would remark. “Of course when they grow up they must marry each other.” But of course they didn’t.

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The growth of the Rhodesian Front, with the failure of the Federation and anti-Zionism amongst the African political parties, resulted in the emigration of many Jews in the early 1960s. Leo Baron, a Bulawayo attorney who was defending black nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo, found his wife attacked at home, and his offices daubed with swastikas and anti-semitic slogans. He was put under house arrest, then jailed and finally left the country. The UFP regrouped under the new banner of the Rhodesia Party led by the former Prime Minister (another Jew), Sir Roy Welensky to fight the UDI issue. The man previously hailed a hero was accused of being a "bloody Jew", a "communist" and a "traitor" and was eventually defeated in the elections. Many Jews opposed UDI fearing economic isolation and depression as well as the drive to limit black political



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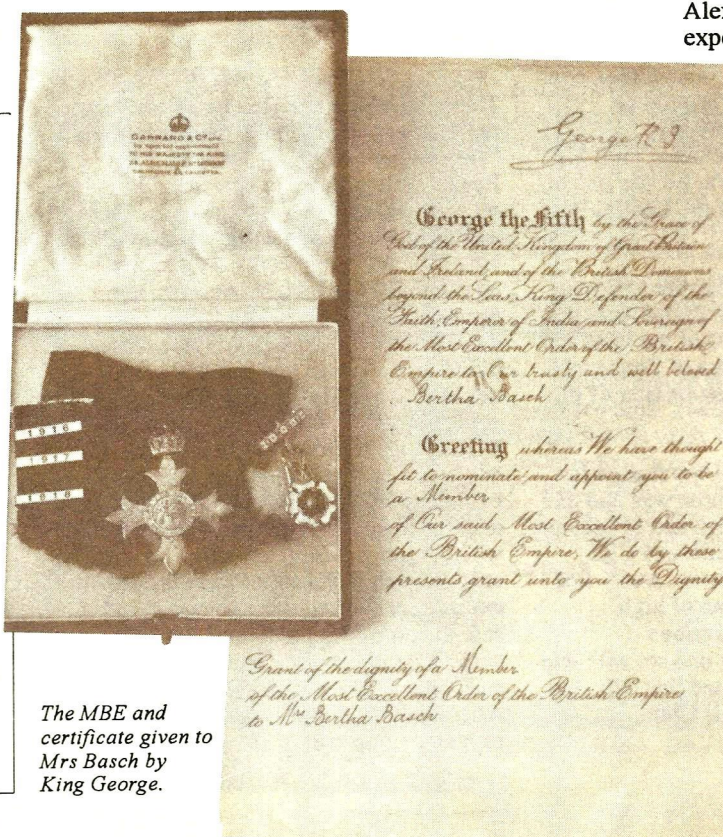
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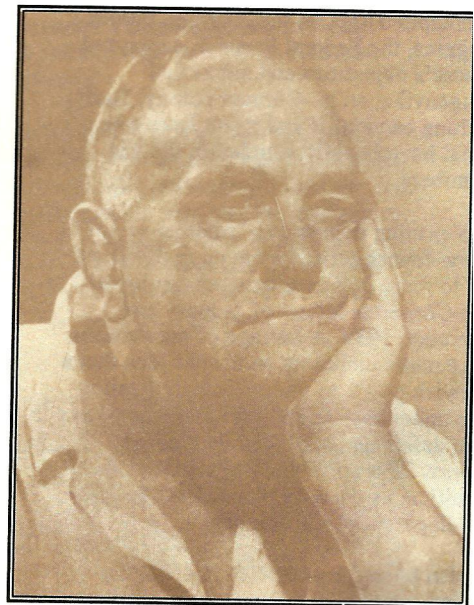
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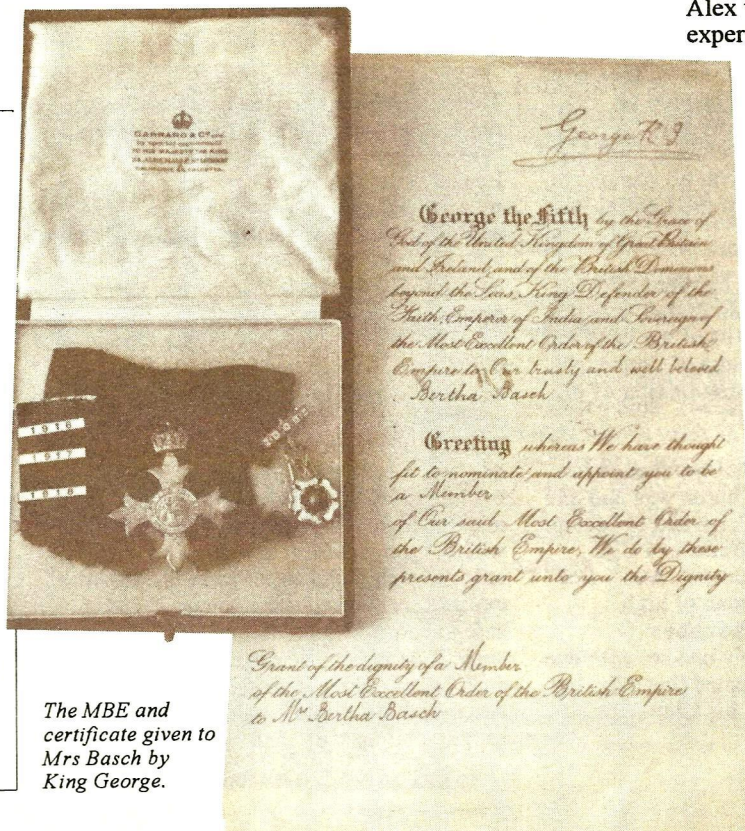
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