



Luba (Gershter) Cesman with her kindergarten pupils May 1936. Judy Rabinovitch is on the extreme right (x marks the spot!)

of which five are Jewish. Ruth Kaatze is the present headmistress and is ably supported by Jane Erlick.

Shabbat is celebrated every Friday and all festivals and commemorative days are observed. Hebrew songs are taught and one has only to enter the school on a festival to know that the Jewish ideals are being upheld.

Education covered many spheres and adults were not excluded. An adult seminar was launched by the Rhodesian Zionist Council in 1955 and it became an established institution in the cultural life of most Bulawayo Jews. Numbers in 1958 were about 300 people each paying 2/6 per lecture. A year later the *Chug Ivri* gatherings began chaired by Mr A Elkaim, which dealt with talks and the playing of Hebrew records. *Histadrut Ivrit* often held special functions such as *Purim* parties where proceedings were held in Hebrew with English translations. *Ulpan* classes were so well attended that fees were put up — costs per term were £2 single and £3 per couple. Bulawayo was the only centre to offer such classes in those days.

Adult education thrived and by 1957 regular classes were being held for people keen to learn Hebrew as a living language. The local *ulpan* was a great success and classes were held, sometimes as many as two a day, every day, weekly.

Today Carmel School has 195 children of whom 21 are Jewish (10.8 percent). Valerie Malcolm is headmistress; Joshua Lepar and Craig Solomon are head boy and deputy head boy; Sarah Chitrin is head girl and Melodie Mwetl deputy head girl. Hebrew, taught by Beilah Bloch, Rosie Shapiro and Miriam Lewin, is compulsory until Grade 4 and after that for those children who show an aptitude for it.

Mrs Malcolm is very proud of the school's new art room and the new computer room which boasts 12 IBM computers. The library has been enlarged and a state-of-the-art computer installed, which benefits pupils and staff. Apart from the high standard of general education, pupils can choose from a variety of extra-curricular activities: tennis, cricket, rugby, soccer, hockey, netball, squash, rounders and aerobics — all ensure that pupils can participate in the sport of their choice while choir, percussion, Israeli dancing, ballet and chess cater to cultural needs.

For a school this size, the selection of activities is amazing. Grade 7 pupils produce and edit their own magazine, *Flash*, which they sell to fellow pupils for a small fee which goes towards school trips.

Aside from school activities, the Grade 6's attend a camp at Nyanga for a week every

year and the Grade 7's go to Willow Park for a leadership course for about 10 days every year. Pupils through the years have excelled academically, culturally and on the sports field, winning many awards and achieving a reputation for excellence.

From eight Grade 1's in a makeshift classroom, Carmel has become one of the most successful schools in Bulawayo. To paraphrase Tirtzah Feigenbaum — the school's light shines bright indeed.

The Jesuits have a saying: "Give me a child until he is seven and I will have him for life." The importance of pre-school education cannot be underestimated and the Jewish community has always been aware of this.

In 1935, a "kindergarten" of 25 pupils was held every morning in the Louis Landau Hebrew School building. The first headmistress was Shoshana Goldsmith-Pines and the first teacher was Miss G Infeld. The present **Hebrew English Nursery School** was constituted in 1960 when the school building and offices were built. There was much consternation the following year when the PTA increased fees from £7 10s to £9 a term. The school filled rapidly and a waiting list was started because of the enthusiastic response of parents. However, two years later, the school reported that, for the first time in its history, there was no waiting list due to the departure of members of the community.

Fortunately, the school was soon back on its feet although the ratio of Jewish children declined steadily over the years. But despite difficulties, the school has kept its Jewish identity. Today it has 50 children



Children from the Hebrew-English Nursery School watch as Dr Solomon Lowy, Director of JNF Jerusalem, clears the Blue Boxes, 1957.

The Board of Deputies also ran a number of adult education programmes in the 1960s. These comprised seminars and lectures by renowned speakers on all subjects from medicine to *Talmudic* studies. These were so successful that they were later offered to the public on tape for a small fee. The *shul* also ran a children's study group under the direction of Rabbi I Zwebner every *Shabbat* after the service.

Competitions were par for the course. These were usually of an educational nature whereby free holidays to Israel could be won based on Jewish knowledge. Then there were also a number of scholarships available such as Bulawayo Wizo's scholarship to any Jewish child who wanted to take up teaching Hebrew as a career. The bursary was valued at £100 a year. ✪

Saone Baron

She became the first woman in Africa to be awarded a fellowship in 1963 to an American University by the American Association of University Women. Daughter of Rachel and Ben Baron.

Lily Fredman

Lily was a teacher at Evelyn High School. She worked tirelessly on behalf of the Zionist cause. During World War Two she produced a number of variety shows known as the "Spitfires". Their proceeds went to the comfort of the soliders. She was past chairman of WZC of Rhodesia and Bulawayo.

Youth Movements provide strength

By Elsa Roth

GROWING up in the Bulawayo Jewish Community was a rare and special experience. A huge part of that experience was that everyone belonged to a Jewish Youth Movement.

As Freda Keet puts it: "Sunday mornings were dedicated to meetings of Habonim at the Guild Hall, and of course we all belonged; there was no discussion or argument about it — that's just the way things were."

The story of the Bulawayo Youth Movements begins in 1933 with the formation of **Habonim**.

Norman Lurie, one of the South African organisers of Habonim, came to Bulawayo to bring the concept here. Sadie Kaplan, affectionately known as 'Kappie', introduced Mr Lurie to Ralph Moss, who was then occupied in scouting, swimming (RLSS), athletics and other activities. Mr Moss was reluctant to give these up, but after long discussions, he agreed to spend one year training leaders roughly along scouting lines to form the first Rhodesian Habonim group.

Habonim SA sent Mr Moss sufficient literature to help him start and the first meeting was held at the Guild. He was initially assisted by two of his Scouts, Sidney Baldechin and David Bernstein, both of whom were later killed in action during World War Two. The first officials were Mr Moss, Harold Fisher, Mannie Glass and Herbert Lassman for the boys,

and Ray Margolis, Mrs Kaplan and Celia Margolis for the girls.

For about four months, the group went into the bush every weekend, mainly to Hillside Dams, where they learned tracking, bush cooking and general bushcraft. Then they began recruiting. New members were kitted out in blue-and-white uniforms and berets.

Habonim held its first parade some six months later in the Guild. Turnout was excellent and parents were supportive, recalls Mr Moss.

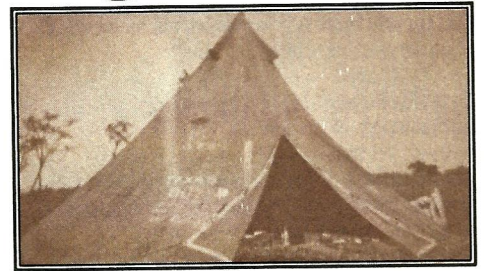
After a year, true to his word, Mr Moss handed over to Mrs Kaplan. "At that stage," he recalls, "Habonim was well established and I was confident the movement would go from strength to strength."

This confidence was well founded and the Habonim motto proved prophetic: *Al Tikra Banayich Ela Bonayich* — "Call us not Thy children, rather Thy builders." Habonim did indeed continue to build itself from that point on.

In 1933 the first Rhodesian Habonim contingent attended the South African *machaneh* at Lakeside. The following year saw the start of the first *gedud* in Salisbury and the next year was marked by the first intertown *chagigah*. In 1937 the Shtilim *shichvah* was formed and in 1938 the last *chagigah* before World War Two was held.

After the war, the *chagigot* and *machanot* resumed in 1947, and the Shomrim *shichvah* was started. Salisbury Habonim celebrated its "Bar Mitzvah" the next year and in 1948 the first Rhodesian Habonim Kinnus was held. The first Habonim Seminar was held in 1949, and the following year Chief Rabbi Brodie of South Africa was entertained by the Movement. Two years later a *manhig* visited Rhodesia for the first time.

By 1958 the Movement had more than 500 members country-wide. In Bulawayo, the *shul* was overflowing with more than 200 Bonim who put on a special



Tent at Machaneh Weizmann, 1950s. Remember how comfortable they were!

celebration to honour the 25th anniversary of the synagogue.

Rhodesian Habonim joined World Ichud Habonim in 1959, creating the largest Zionist youth movement in the world. The 15th biennial *Moetza* of Habonim was in 1961 at which a fourth *shichvah*, Sollelim, was established.

The seventh annual Weizmann Machaneh of Rhodesian Habonim was held in 1962 for which an underground drainage system and a permanent hospital were built. In 1963/64 functions were held to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Habonim Rhodesia. Responding to the call of Israel during the Six Day War in 1967, many local Bonim volunteered.

The foundation of the first effective *Aliyah Chug* was formed in 1968, while the following year the Shomrim Tzeirim *shichvah* was established. The first *kevutzah* of Rhodesian *Aliyah Chug* left for Israel in January 1970 and that year

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Mark Markov meets Prime Minister Menachen Begin in Jerusalem 1977.



In Bulawayo from the start . . .

THE Salomon-Kaufman clan is among the earliest Jewish families to be in this pioneer settlement at its start.

Charellick Salomon escaped from persecution in Rumania, arriving in Bulawayo in 1893. He came virtually penniless but through hard work built up a booming business. Today he is considered to be one of the most successful commercial pioneers of the country.

Soon after he arrived he began to bring out family and friends from Rumania on a patron-client system. These men went into trade serving mainly black rural areas. Mr Salomon himself founded a wholesale "African truck" business. A few years later Oscar Kaufman arrived, also from Rumania and joined "Charlie". In 1900 he was sent

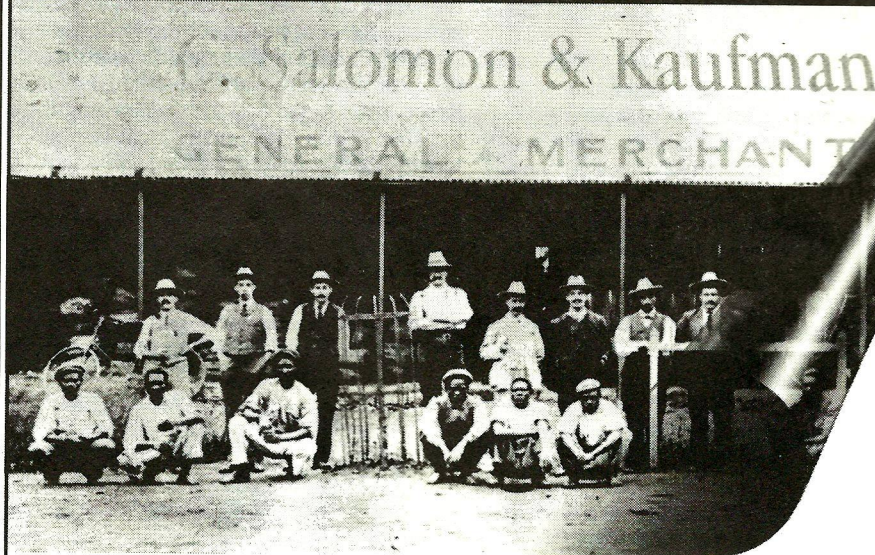
to London to assist in the buying and shipping company that Charlie had started with Oaisis Steinham a few years earlier. Oscar returned to Bulawayo after 10 years and married the "boss's" niece, Rebecca. They produced three children, Ivan, Roland and Basil. All the children were sent to England to be educated.

In 1931 Oscar and Charlie went into formal partnership, the same year Charellick died. His only surviving son, Jack, took over his father's side of the partnership but he turned out to be the black sheep of the family disappearing with some of the family fortune. What happened to him, no one knows! Oscar remained at the helm and changed the name to Kaufman & Sons, a name it retains today.

Both pioneers left their mark on early Rhodesia. "Charlie came to Rhodesia with only his ability, energy and enthusiasm and it was not long before he had established himself soundly and was always available for advice and charitable consideration," wrote the *Central African Zionist Digest*.

One of his most worthy causes was his donation of £25,000 to build a temporary shelter for new immigrants to Palestine. This also provided Tel Aviv with a small hospital and a soldiers' centre. Mr Kaufman was president of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation for 13 years, he sat on several commissions concerned with economic affairs and did much for the Chamber of Commerce locally and internationally. He lived the rest of his life — almost 40 years — in the country. ☆

Congratulations Bulawayo on the first 100 Years



In 1894 Bulawayo was born. Kaufman Sons & Co. set up shop two years later, and have grown, like the city, to meet your ever - increasing needs.

We hope this is the first of many Bulawayo Centenary Celebrations in which we play a part.

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Free to choose

Jewish Free Masons have been in Bulawayo for as long as the town itself and the Hebrew Congregation have existed.

The minutes of the Bulawayo Lodge, the oldest Masonic Lodge in this town, show that members of all faiths attended the laying of the foundation stone of our synagogue on Sunday June 22 1897, all wearing Masonic regalia.

The name Wallenstein is among the founders of the Bulawayo Lodge and the name Emmanuel Basch also features. Some of those who gave sterling service during those 100 years were: J J Abdela, Nick

Amato, Ben Baron, Abe Bernstein, Eli Chitrin, Effie Cohen, Issy Donsky, Ernie Glickman, Standish Harris, Mike Karol, Cecil Karpul, Lionel Leaf, Richard Lewin, Fritz Lewy, Jack Palte, Max Rosin and Sam Rassiner.

Three officials of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation were known to have been Free Masons: Rev A Weinberg, Rev Dr I H Levine and Rev Sam Kibel. Two Brethren had the honour and responsibility of becoming heads in Zimbabwe of their respective Orders. They were Nick Amato and Richard Lewin, both of whom held officer for more than seven years.

S. MARGOLIUS,

General Merchant.

Telegraphic Address:—"AMBROSIA."
(De Boeren Vriend.)

Market Square, Bulawayo.

LARGE ASSORTMENTS OF
GROCERIES,
SOFT GOODS,
SADDLERY,
IRONMONGERY,
AND FURNITURE.

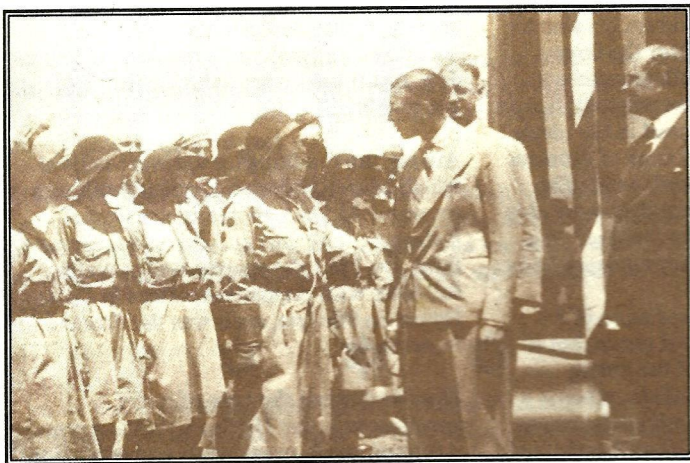
marked the celebration of Habonim SA's 40th birthday.

During the 1970s, the security situation in Rhodesia meant that seminars were now held at the King George VI Centre. These were successful despite problems, and Habonim continued its activities. In 1982 a new national venue for *machanot* was established at Pax Park near Lake McIlwaine.

A *machaneh* is held there year in the April holidays and two seminars are held a year, one in February and one in August. Today there are only 35 Habonim members in Bulawayo, with Natalie Baron as *Bakoach* and Veronica Kaufman as her *Segan*.

The Movement is overseen by Beilah Bloch, whose assistance and enthusiasm go a long way to keep Habonim viable. She says the main achievement of the past decade had been the re-establishing of cordial interaction between the Harare and Bulawayo groups. Co-operation and friendship between them is now excellent.

Although numbers have dwindled and the



Adela Abelman meets Prince George, 1934, in Lusaka with a group of Habonim.

chevra are far younger than is the norm, Habonim continues to uphold its motto and build for the future.



In the early 1950s, three young men inspired by the Revisionist Movement, came together to form the **Betar Youth Movement**. They were Jonathan Pincus, whose father Joel Pincus, was a past chairman of the SA Revisionist Movement, and Herzl and Raphael Melmed, whose father, Dave Melmed, was chairman of the CA Revisionist Movement. Mr Melmed snr acted as adviser and mentor to the fledgling movement and was always offering encouragement. At the same time, Bella Cass established the Salisbury branch and the two sections grew.

It was not all plain sailing. The new movement was strongly opposed by anti-revisionist protesters. A prominent lady in the community approached Joel Pincus to voice her dismay that a group with highly militant and aggressive

ideology should be allowed in Bulawayo. "Madam," replied Mr Pincus, "the might of the British Empire could not bring down the Irgun — how, then, can you stop Betar?"

Shortly after its formation, Menachim Begin visited Rhodesia and personally addressed Betar *chavera*, giving them inspiration and encouragement. Further help came from Mark Markov and Lazar Strauss, both of whom played a large part in the success and development of the Movement.

Seminars at Windemere became a popular and regular occurrence attended by Betarim from Bulawayo and Salisbury. Meetings were held in the Guild Hall and by 1962, Betar had a membership of 70.

In 1963, Bulawayo Betar started a Hebrew *chug* under the leadership of *Shaliach* Ehud Federman. It met every Saturday evening. In addition, dancing and choir *chugim* were started. That year 45 Betarim attended the first Rhodesian Betar

Camp at Weizmann during the school holidays. *Chugim* included First Aid, judo, public speaking and sports. This was an experimental camp and it led to many more. By 1964 there were 120 Betarim attending camps.

In 1970, Betar held a camp at Gweno Dam near Gwelo attended by 93 Betarim. Ten of the 12 *madrachim* had attended study courses in Israel earlier that year and a high standard of education was achieved.

Bnei Akiva was established in 1969 and was affiliated with the Central African Zionist Youth Council. When it began in Bulawayo, a temporary *Va'ad*



Habonim, 1937. (Back from left): Adela Abelman (Kamionsky), Sadie Kaplan, Dr Mace David, Becky Friend, Vera Rubenstein. (Front): Haig Kaplan, Norman Fredman, Josie Goldman, Paul Nussbaum (*madrach*).

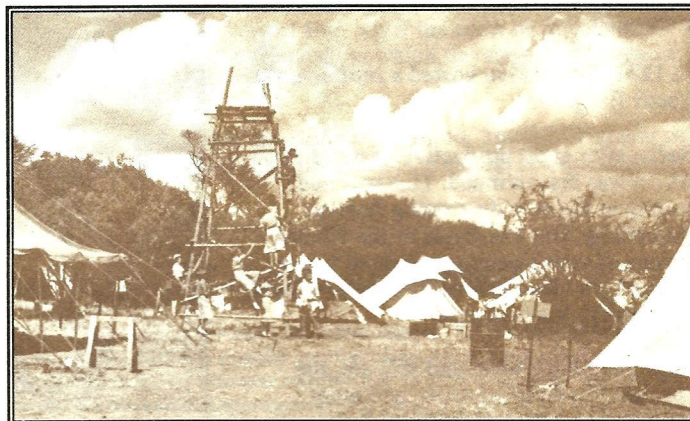
came into being with David Zwebner as acting *Rosh* and Ruth Friedlein as secretary. That year a seminar, to consolidate the Movement, was held at Windemere on the Umguza River. The founder members and

David Yesorsky

In 1964, he was elected chairman of the Students' Representative Council at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland — the first time a Jewish student had held such a position at the college.

leaders of Bnei Akiva were Norman Lobel, David Zwebner, Hilton and Liebe Bik, Hana Sack, Simon Teperson and Brian Sher.

Once established, it ran as a fully functional youth movement, initially drawing *madrachim* from South Africa for the first official seminar in the Matopos at Shalom Camp. (This camp belonged to Conolly's and was available to all denominations.) As well as being a most successful camp, it seemed that the *shadchan* was very busy as Liebe Bik and Hana Sack met their future husbands there!



A typical camp set-up at Weizmann.



Ichud Habonim, Bnei Zion Rhodesia, Mashtelah Herzl 1963.



Bulawayo Habonim boys 1936/7. (Front from left): Isaac Kiwelowitz, Irvine Kaplan, Alec Chadowitz, Roy Friend. (Men in middle): Jossy Goldman and Sonny Fisher. (2nd Row): Manfred Kaplan, David Rosenfeld, Menachim Cohen, Leon Nussbaum, Jack Brenner, Sydney Assman, Judah Kiwelowitz, Raymond Rabinovitz. (3rd row): Mark Grossberg, Leonard Rabinowitz, Marvyn (?) Harris, David Salomon, — Harris. (Top row): Monty Rabins, Sandish Harris, Lenny Favish, Julius Jokaiken, Paul Nussbaum, Arthur Kaplan.

In 1970 the first Rhodesians attended the annual *machaneh* in South Africa at Port Alfred.

Within one year of the Bulawayo group's launch, a Salisbury group began under the leadership of Mike Salem. Soon both were combining for camps and seminars annually. Brian Sher recalls how one of these camps, held at Lobel's citrus farm near the drive-in on the Johannesburg Road, was invaded by ants and had to be evacuated.

In 1974, Bnei Akiva hosted a *shaliach*, Yacov Burgrond.

Sadly, after eight productive years, Bnei Akiva was discontinued. This was due mainly to the ever decreasing Jewish community. But memories of the vibrant groups of young people dedicated to the Bnei Akiva idea of *Torah v'Avodah* (Torah and work) always remain.

Then there have been, and still are, the *Machon Hachoreff* courses, and other similar ones, taken annually to Israel normally in end of year school holidays. These tours, made up *tiyulim* to the Negev,

Jerusalem, time on a kibbutz and study, have led to many youngsters making Israel their home. Most of the participants were, and still are, active members of the youth movements. The purpose of these courses are to provide view of Israel through youthful eyes. Lectures are delivered and discussions held on problems facing Israel and world Jewry as well as *aliyah*.

The **Rhodesian Zionist Youth Movement** was a subcommittee of the Rhodesian Zionist Youth Council. When *madrichim* and members became too old for the three youth movements, those who still had an interest in the ideals and aims of Zionism joined the RZYM. There they were able to be involved as a senior advisory body.

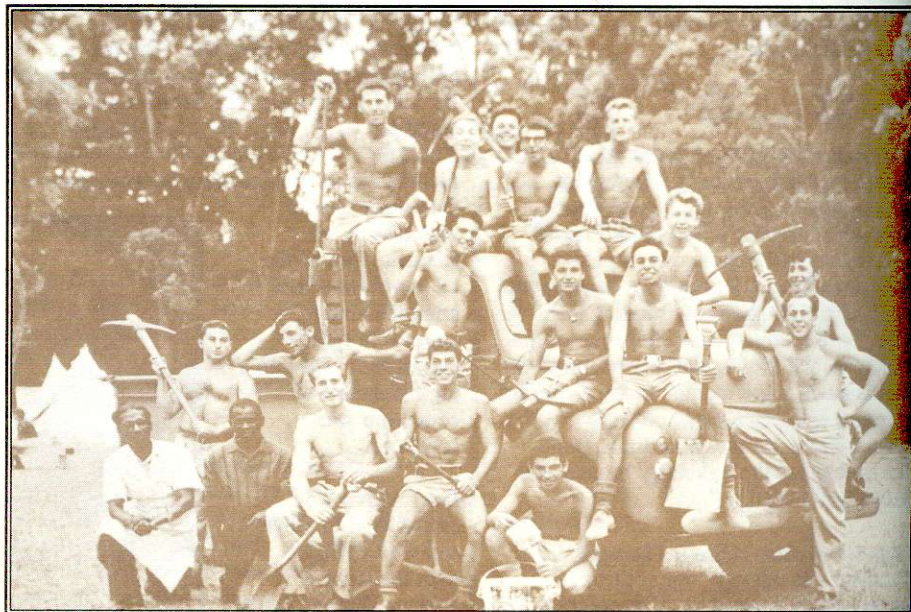
It was more of a social group, but it kept the young people together in a Jewish environment which still embodied the Zionism of the groups from which they had graduated. Indeed, many of them went on *aliyah* or studied in Israel. Members sometimes

attended the annual SA Young Israel Machaneh held at Lakeside. The early 1960s saw a rapid decline of the group due to army call-ups, departures to study and emigration. Eventually the movement ceased altogether and today there are in fact no senior youth remaining in Bulawayo.

A separate social group was the **Rhodesian Zionist Youth Society**, chaired in the 1950s by Robin Mayers. When a new Youth Centre was built in Bulawayo in 1958, the headquarters were moved from Salisbury to Bulawayo. There was no youth *shaliach*, although one had been asked for. Yet the group managed to function. Also calling itself **Young Wizo**, it organised functions for local children. The variety was vast from baby shows to quizzes, talent contests and even a Rock 'n Roll evening. The Youth Centre, funded by the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, was officially opened in 1959 in a new building adjoining the present *shul*, in what we now know as the Cazo building. A *mezusah* was fitted by Rev Yesorsky. The society was open to everyone over the age of 16 and its aim was to contact Jewish youth who did not seem to be active in Bulawayo. They were invited to share their leisure hours with the society. It was dedicated to a spiritual, social and cultural understanding of being a Jew, and it held many talks, dances and get-togethers.

Among the fun things it did were balls at which Miss Rhodesian Zionist Youth was crowned. In 1961 six teenagers from Bulawayo took part and Ethne Sacks came third. By 1963 the society was operating full-time with permanent offices in Colray House on 9th Ave, such was the demand for its services.

Zionism formed the core of many movements in the 1940s to 1960s. Around it formed youth movements and educational classes, both for adults and youngsters. In 1955 the RZC started its "adult seminar" sessions, which rapidly became an established institution in the cultural life of



A-Guard at one of the camps. Can anyone identify the date and group?



Bulawayo Habonim 1993 (From left): Saul Baron, Joshua and Gila Lepar, Natalie Baron, Veronica Kaufman, off to camp near Cape Town.



Kitchen duty.

Burnt Bonim

The 1952 Habonim holiday group on its way to the coast got off to a slow start: Sandra Bloch, then aged 13, reported: "The campers reached Jo'burg after a long and gruelling journey. The train from Livingstone caught fire, the Northern Rhodesia contingent arrived late, we missed our connection to Bulawayo and were hooked on to a goods train and arrived in Jo'burg in the early hours instead of the previous afternoon, 13 hours late! The long Xmas weekend stopped the *madrachim* drawing our pocket money from the bank beforehand and then the East London bank went bankrupt. We were saved by one of the wealthy Jews of EL who lent us about £200."

most Bulawayo Jewry. Attendances in 1958 were about 300 people a time paying 2/6d a lecture. Earlier, in 1957 the RZC inaugurated regular Hebrew classes in Bulawayo for people keen to learn it as a living language. The local "ulpan" was a great success for dozens of students. Classes were conducted at the Louis Landau Hebrew School.

Then the *shul* also ran children's study groups, which soared in numbers in Rabbi I Zwebner's day. Every Shabbat after the service, children from ages 6 to 13 lined up for stories, talks and "to sip the Kiddush wine", recalls one.

There were annual competitions for youngsters, in which they could win free holidays to Israel based on Jewish knowledge. This too was organised by RZC, and out of its successes came the Hall of Books fund-raising project.

Always popular were the Annual Rev MI Cohen Memorial Lectures chaired by the Chovevei Zion Society, and scholarships were offered by Wizo to Jewish children who wanted to take up the teaching of Hebrew as a career. The Bursary was valued at £100 a year.



Also on the social scene although they were a First Aid society was the **Magen David Adom**. It held its first ball in 1952, convened by Mrs L Nussbaum. Proceeds went to the purchase of ambulance for MDA in Israel. Sadie Kaplan wore a different hat here and for many years Irma Weiss was its chairman.

Finally, and lesser known, was the **Friends of the Hebrew University** in Bulawayo resuscitated in 1958 by its chairman was Dr L Nussbaum.



Betar 1950s. Can anyone identify the date and event?



Betar 1970s. (Front from left) Leon Perutin (?), Julian Sack (?). (Middle): Michael Fleish, Simon Hoff, Arnold Katzenberg. (Back): Jonathan Kagan, Shelley Rissin, Leonora Rachbind, Arlene Weinberg, Shelley Furman, Julian Perutin.

All the Youth Movements played their parts in the history of the community and almost everyone who lived here was at one time or another a "movementnik". All had high ideals and promoted Zionism and the Jewish way of life, but if the truth be told, most of us probably joined for the friendships which developed and because they were such fun.

Despite many difficulties, we still have a viable Youth Movement in Bulawayo and the future is bright. *Chazak v'ematz. Tel hai. Chazak Batorah!* ☆



Bnei Akiva contingent at machanik, 1969, Port Alfred. (Seated from left): Barry Katzenberg, Hilton Solomon, Lionel Helfer, Rodney Ayl, Michael Bernstein, Mark Sommer. (Ond row): Marion Ayl, Margaret de Haas, Karen Ownes, Anita Gersberg, Marilyn Bik, Gail Helfer. (Back): Ronnie Gershman, Jeffery Sommer, Hilton Bik, Liebe Bik.

Makeup sessions

One of the crazes at the early Habonim camps: "Lipsticking the faces of sleeping members is a popular sport at camp, almost any night would do for this occupation." Another recalled that in 1970 toothpaste became the favoured "schmeer". Unfortunately one gang of girls got their toothpaste mixed up with depilan hair remover, also in a tube. Needless to say a number of boys woke up the following day minus hair on arms and legs.



(Pictured above): Parkview 1920s Revue, "Les Girls". (From left): Di Hurwitz, Deidre Owens, Lili Schneider, May Sher, Isobel Myers, Elaine Lange.

(Pictured below from left): Louis Cesman, Bella Ross Spiro, Luba Gershater Cesman, Nathan Spiro in "The Tailor's Wife" and "The Flour Woman," 1937, Yiddish Theatre.

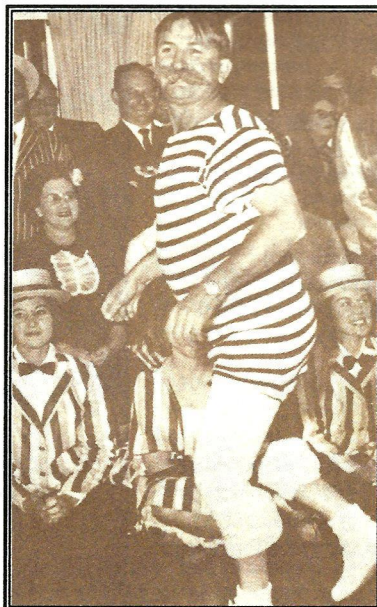


(Below) : What a beautiful bunch — Ian Raizon, Martin Sher, Jessel Mandelsohn, Colin Gordon, Alex Ralstein and Egon Shay turning a fine leg at a Parkview St Trinian's Dance, 1960s.



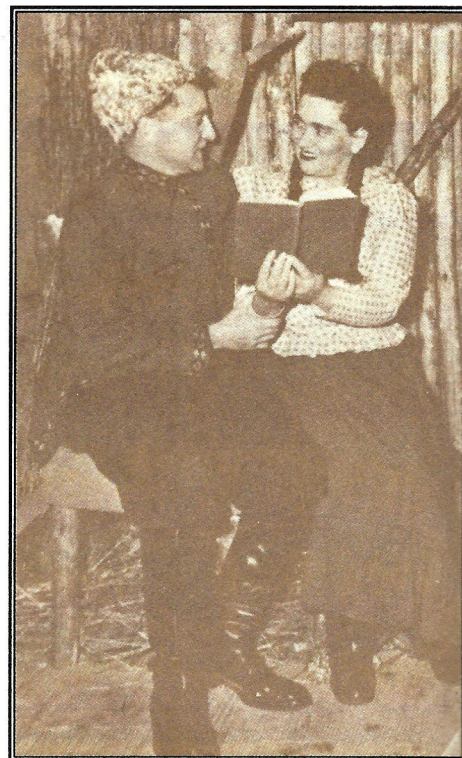
(Pictured right): The popular 1960s band Otis Waygood with Lee Sagar, Allan Zipper, Ivor Rubenstein and Robert Zipper (seated). They played for Bar Mitzvahs and held concerts in the Guild.

(Pictured below): Alec Chadowitz in Parkview's "1920s Review", 1950s.



Spot the difference

The Bulawayo Jewish Dramatic Society produced a play in 1942, which was noted for its sweeping settings. The story rolled from Odessa, Russia to America and finally to a rich man's house in New York City. The set designers were complimented by the critic on the "economy" of their realistic sets ... the Samovar had remained in the same spot throughout the production!



Morris Sack and Friede Strauss in "Tevye der Milcher" (Fiddler on the Roof), 1955.

A Time for song and dance

Behind every successful man you'll find someone who says: "I went to school with him."

Old Joke!

by Ruth Feigenbaum

THOSE were the days my friend...

Almost from the time of the founding of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, there have been those pioneers who brought with them a love of music and theatre. In its heyday, the community could boast productions directed, staged and acted by international and local artists.

Before the turn of the century, the Bulawayo Jewish Guild was established to promote all cultural activities including drama and music. The early settlers tried to bring some of their European cultural background into their country of adoption. In particular they brought that remarkable language, Yiddish, and with it all the rich history of their countries.

Oliver Ransford in his *Historic Battleground of Rhodesia* wrote that Bulawayo, almost from its inception, enjoyed a cultural life which was remarkably rich and virile for its size. "A disproportionate contribution was owed to an extraordinarily talented and dedicated Jewish community, some of whose members had come without means to the infant town from as far afield as the Baltic states and eastern Europe."

The Yiddish Cultural Society started in 1939 and reached its peak in 1952, when Schmuel Gotz was chairman. It presented numerous lectures, concerts and other functions. The club, affiliated to the Jewish Board of Deputies, held regular functions every year. One of its mainstays was Mark

Markov, who directed, acted and was an accomplished Yiddish folk musician.

Markov spent some 27 years in Rhodesia before going on *aliyah*. He had his early theatrical training at the Russian Theatre Academy in Riga, where he was born. After a few years on the Russian stage, he joined a government-sponsored Yiddish Theatre in Riga, where he acted regularly for 12 seasons. He often visited neighbouring Lithuania and appeared with many leading Jewish actors of the time including Bertha Gerstein, Ida Kaminsk, Celia Adler and Paul Baratove.

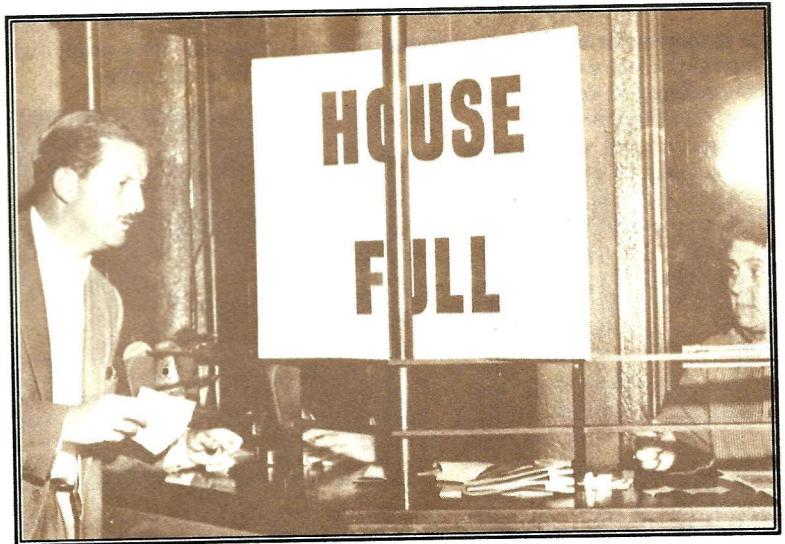
In 1938 he and his wife Etta Topel, an polished actress in her own right, were engaged by the famous Yiddish actor Maurice Schwartz for two seasons in Paris and London. The outbreak of World War Two upset all their plans.

Later Markov accepted an invitation to take charge of London's Yiddish Theatre and, with the support of Miss Topel, presented 10 seasons of plays right through the grim and harrowing days of the Blitz. In 1950 the pair were invited to South Africa

by African theatres. When their successful season ended, they made their home in Bulawayo.

From 1950 to 1960 they took the lead in stimulating local Yiddish Theatre. They were responsible for a large number of presentations in the city. Markov's extensive repertoire included *Mirelle Efros; God, Mand and Devil; Kreutzer Sonata; The Dubbuk; Tevia and the Milkman; and Motke the Thief*.

But Markov's interests went beyond theatre. He took an active role in Zionist and local communal affairs. He was prominent in the Rhodesian Revisionist Party and was largely responsible for the Betar *Maoz* in Bulawayo. He also served on the Zionist Council, was a member of the Rhodesian Jewish Board of Deputies?



Dr Bernie Tatz at the Guild production of "Anything Goes", the first American musical in Bulawayo.



Mark Markov in his most well-know production which he produced, directed and acted.



Becky Nussbaum and Esther Lacey in duet.



The Guild Committee, 1935, which organised many events. (Top from left): Alex Ralstein, Esther Gordon, Evelyn Ruda, Gus Fredman, Lydia Ralstein, Arnold Feigenbaum. (Seated): Sam Fisher, Esther Rubenstein, Jose Rabins, Max Gordon, Sadie Kaplan, Leslie Thal, Hetty Radowsky.

Executive, and was on the executives of Cazo, Chovevei Zion, the Board, and the Hebrew Congregation. His light guided us during the *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* functions each year.

But it was for his work on the Yiddish Cultural Society's Committee, and his showmanship on the Yiddish stage, that Markov most endeared himself and for which he is best remembered.

There were many others involved in the Yiddish club, writes Luba Cesman. Charlash, who had been a member of the "Bund" in Poland and who was a founder of the Yiddish Folkshul in Johannesburg, was waiting for an immigration visa to South Africa. At the same time, Jacob Weislitz, an actor-producer, was in Bulawayo. The two got together and produced many Yiddish evenings. Charlash lectured in Yiddish on Yiddish and Russian authors. Members attending paid a small fee to listen to the brilliant talks. After the war he again visited Bulawayo and in his lecture predicted Jews would return to Germany. The audience wanted to "stone" him but he was right, says Luba. He left finally to live and lecture in the USA. Weislitz produced *Zwei Mol Hunaert Toysent* (200,000) and *Der Singer Fun Sein Troyer* (The Singer of his Sorrow). He trained local youths who came from eastern Europe and the performances were done very professionally.

Through plays promoted by the Bulawayo Chovevei Zion Society, such well-known personalities as Berele (Barney) Katz and Rene Abramson rose to stardom. Popular prices were 5/- for reserved seats, and 3/- ordinary. Other local actors were: Boris Mirbach who arrived from Lithuania in 1936 and started a photographic shop. He took a great interest and played a leading role in the Yiddish Cultural Society and Yiddish Theatre, producing and acting. He was also well known for his recitations in Yiddish at various functions; Bella

Ross-Spiro, Luba Gershater-Cesman, Meier Treger, Nathan Spiro, Louis Brenner, Rosie Meyers, Ethel Keet, Louis Cesman and others.

During World War Two, a number of young men came to train as airmen in Rhodesia for the RAF. They had "Palestine" on their shoulder bands. The local community did not think they were Jewish, but on inquiry found out they indeed were. Most of them could speak only Hebrew, some German. They joined in the fun by entertaining the locals. Among them were Uri Bryer, Treuherts-Zur, Gideon Shochat, Mike Majus, Ezer Weizmann (later to become President of Israel) and Eli Loewenstern, who specialised in teaching youngsters long jump, high jump and Hebrew folk songs!



Baron Jaffa with a portrait of Cecil Rhodes made of postage stamps, 1952.

Many cultural functions were promoted by the IUJ and JNF. *Chanukah* socials were held as well as banquets, such as the one in 1951 to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the *Keren Kayemet*. There was the grand JNF Ball in 1953 and the glittering Debutantes' Ball in 1957. The anniversary celebrations of Israel's independence were, and still are, a special occasion as was the Diamond Jubilee banquet of the Chovevei Zion Society.

A living newspaper, "The Guilded Times", 'edited' by Adela Kamionsky was held yearly and a selection of readings, English plays, film evenings and quizzes were all part of the cultural fabric of Bulawayo Jewry.

Others who made names for themselves include: Carol Baron, a soloist with the Bulawayo Philharmonic Orchestra in 1981; Anna Romain Hoffman, a theatrical producer and actress who worked in Johannesburg for 17 years before arriving in Bulawayo in 1952; David Barnett from Glasgow, who became well-known as an amateur and professional actor here; Baron P Jaffa who created landscapes and portraits with postage stamps. Some of his works now hang in famous galleries around the world, including the Knesset.

Talented artist Marshall Baron, son of Rachel and Ben Baron, was our own home-grown product. Although gone these 17 years, he is still a strong presence. His art works are known internationally.

Marshall was profoundly philosophical and analytical of what was happening around him. It was these feelings he poured into his paintings while his stereo blared out classical music. Throughout his philosophical researches, Marshall's Jewish inheritance remained dominant and many of his paintings reflect this.

These are only a few of the cultural and artistic talents Bulawayo has fostered.

Today, although we are a much smaller community, there are still *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* celebrations with the Carmel School choir and dance troupe entertaining their audiences. A number of our members still promote the arts, such as the work done by Rhebe Tatz who is chairperson of the Bulawayo Art Gallery and Shelley Lasker her assistant. Bulawayo Jews are actively promoting and attending film, concert and theatre productions, such as

the most recent, "A Matter of Choice", written, produced, acted and directed by our talented Pat Schmulian.

Although many have gone, their works live on physically and in our memories. ✨



Actors, 1936. (Back from left): S Lieberman, Rose Myers, J Weislitz, Bella Spiro, B Pockey, Luba Cesman. (Front): Harry Weinstock, Louis Cesman, Ethel Keet, Nathan Spiro.

Old Joke

During the production of another play, the actors got their lines muddled and they went like this:

The elderly lady was heard to say to her even more elderly husband on his birthday, "A happy birthday mine darlink, may you live to be a hundred and nineteen years."

"Why a hundred and nineteen years? Why not a hundred and twenty," the husband responded.

"Nu," she replied, "Let me live for one year like a mensch."



Actors meet in honour of visiting professional Esther Stein (centre). (Front from left): Rabbi Yesorsky, Mrs Stein, Morris Myers. (Back): A Marsicano, Luba Cesman, Frieda Strauss, Judah Kowelowitz, L Strauss, Max Gordon, S Lieberman, Myer Treger.

"The Singer of His Sorrow" (Yiddish Theatre) 1938. (Front from left): Louis Cesman, Jacov Weitzlitz, Luba Cesman. (Middle): Boris Mirbach, Rose Meyers, Emma Abdeles. (Back): Meyer Treger, Sholom Lieberman, Nathan Spiro.

Another group of actors meet Mrs Suckever, a well-known Yiddish writer, 1950. (Top from left): J Shapiro, Mrs Stere, Suckever, Mrs Pockey, Luba Cesman. (Front): Mrs Stere, Mr Pockey, Morris Pockey, Beryl Pockey, Matle Kaven.



"Musical Map" produced 1935 by Rae Liptz for the Guild. (Standing from left): Ivan Feigenbaum, Arthur Sarif, Celia Margolis, Daphne Rubenstein, Helen Gerber, Esther Gordon, Rae Liptz, Harry Gerber, Joe Rabins, Hetty Radowsky, Joyce Favish, Max Gordon. (Seated): Hilda Barnett, Ivan Kaufman, Osrin, Jack Margolis, Mimi Lassman. (Front) ? Harris, ? Kowelowitz.

Put his foot in it

In a memorable performance of a Yiddisher play, "His Wife's Husband", a certain Barney Katz had to go quickly to the footlights to perform a comic song in the middle of a dramatic climax. During the dress rehearsal, this fine actor did not see a pot of paint standing next to the "dead hero". He slid all the way to the front of the stage with one foot stuck in the paint pot. As he was trying to regain his composure and stand up, the beautiful heroine rushed up to him and said (ad libbing), "You should sue them for damages." Barney drew himself upright and said: "Damages? I don't need any more damages. What I need now are repairs!" He got wild applause.