

Kimberley Jews and the Second World War, 1939 – 1945

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, with many thanks to the families who have sent stories and photos of the men and women who are featured in this article.

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The iconic picture above says it all. It shows **Ivor Haas** (centre) and other South African soldiers riding on camels before the Sphinx and Pyramids outside Cairo during the war. (Sent by his family)

We know that men of our Kimberley Jewish community went ‘up North’. But what did that mean? We have probably heard the words **Tobruk, Benghazi, Khartoum, Mogadishu, El Alamein, and Monte Cassino**. But where are they exactly, and what was going on? We may have snippets of memory rooted in stories, pictures or films of camel riding in Cairo, a hockey game in Somalia or skiing in Lebanon. We did not ask many questions at the time.

Now, in 2020, as we pass the milestones of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and of VE day, I felt it was worth trying to put together the stories that we can find, to understand what World War Two (WWII) meant to Jewish families in Kimberley.

I believe that fifty young men of our Kimberley Jewish community volunteered to serve in the South African Army. We have received stories about forty-six of them so far. They saw tough action in **Kenya, Abyssinia, Libya, Egypt** and then in **Italy**. Some were wounded, some were captured and spent gruelling times in Prisoner of War camps in Italy or as escapees in foreign countries. Fortunately, **all of them came home** again. Many were changed by their experiences, though few were able to tell their tales. We dedicate this article to those of our community, who did their bit to save the world from tyranny – and those left behind who supported them.

At the end of this document outlining the stories of the Kimberley servicemen and women I have added a transcription from an article in the Diamond Fields Advertiser that I have just come across today (18 June 2021) headed 'JEWISH PERSONNEL WELCOMED HOME Function in Constance Hall' In it my father, Dr Noel Kretzmar, who was Chairman of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation at the time made a speech of welcome and said that their deeds throughout their many campaigns up North, and as part of the Sixth Division **would be written in the annals of the Jewish community.** (How did he know, I wonder, that one day, his daughter would search for and compile their individual stories and make a website to highlight and memorialise their activity, and all the Kimberley Jewish Community?)

The most significant fact for South Africa's Jews in the Second World War, is that they were spared the fate that might have befallen them, had not their impoverished but courageous forebears made that supreme effort to emigrate from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and elsewhere in Europe to come to South Africa at the turn of the 19th/20th century.

Would we, or wouldn't we?

It was touch and go whether South Africa would participate in WWII – and on which side! There were strong feelings, on both sides, within the 'United Party' government of the day, for entering a war on either side Germany or Britain or remaining neutral.



The government of South Africa in 1939 was the 'United' Party. The Afrikaner, 'Nationalist Party' under General Hertzog had 'united' in 1934 with the 'South African Party' under the Pro-British, General Smuts. Both leaders were academic highfliers and lawyers. Both had been Boer Generals fighting against the British in the (second) Anglo-Boer war of 1899 to 1902. But their political ideals were diametrically opposed. It was an uneasy union. In the picture left, Smuts (furthest left) and Hertzog (furthest right) are seen with their wives, about the time they decided to join together circa 1933.

The Peace Treaty of Vereeniging at the end of the Boer War was mainly written by Smuts and Kitchener who respected each other as generals. Smuts saw that the terms were fair to the Afrikaners who were given political autonomy. Smuts always believed firmly that uniting Boer and Briton, and uniting the four provinces of South Africa, was the best way forward for peace and prosperity for everyone in the country. He was all for the Union of South Africa, achieved in 1910. However, many Afrikaners remained nationalistic and anti-British.

As Europe geared up for hostilities in 1938 and '39, the ruling United Party was sharply divided. The Nationalist faction of the party led by Oswald Pirow actually favoured siding with Germany. The Anglophile side of the party under Smuts, favoured siding with Britain. Prime Minister Hertzog withdrew to his farm and kept shtum. He was known to favour neutrality and planned simply to make an announcement to that effect, without recalling Parliament. There would then be no constitutional means of reversing such a decision. A unique coincidence resolved the dilemma. Just after Britain had declared war against Germany, Parliament **had** to be recalled, to extend the life of the Senate. In that brief circumstance, Smuts put forward

a proposal to enter the war on the side of Britain that had to be voted upon. The Smuts group won the vote 80 to 67. Hertzog resigned and his coalition partner Smuts became Prime Minister. Thus, on 6 September 1939, three days after Britain had declared war against Germany, South Africa stood by her side. Smuts was later to become a Field Marshal and was invited to join the British War Cabinet. [See the end of this article for a couple of paragraphs about the remarkable global politician and philosopher Jan Christian Smuts]

Jews were quick to volunteer

Jews, more than others, realised what a calamity a Nazi victory would be. The news of Hitler's troops marching across Poland with its huge Jewish population, some being kith and kin, was particularly painful. Hitler's supporters in South Africa had fuelled a campaign against the Jews. The Jewish community felt it was vital for Jews to be seen to be taking their place amongst their fellow South Africans, in defending liberty.

This need had been similarly felt soon after the Boer War, when a **brass and enamel plaque** had been created with the names of 114 Jewish lives that had been lost fighting for the British Empire in that conflict. Not only was this plaque built into the foyer of our 'new' synagogue in Kimberley (opened in 1902) but a replica was also placed on the outside wall of the Central Synagogue in Great Portland Street, London – to show the British people at home and in South Africa that the Jews had been loyal citizens, and had fought with the British.

Swinging into action

The Jewish community swung into action, diverting their activities and fundraising towards the 'War Effort'. Many women went into the South African Women's Auxiliary Services (SAWAS) and Red Cross Voluntary Detachments. Older men looked after the work of those who signed up. The South African Board of Deputies encouraged and managed the Jewish volunteering process and persuaded businesses and institutions to release their eligible men.



Altogether about 10,000 Jewish South Africans enlisted. They first saw action in East Africa – as seen arriving in Kenya here. They formed 4.8% of the whole army and a bit more than 10% of the entire Jewish population of South Africa at the time. There had been serious talk about creating separate Jewish units, but it was eventually decided that Jews should serve

alongside British and Afrikaner volunteers in the South African Army. 357 Jews were killed or died during the war; 327 were wounded or injured; 143 were mentioned in dispatches. Many were awarded medals.

Kimberley's Jewish contribution

Of the fifty or so Kimberley Jewish men who volunteered for active service, we have so far, received thirty-six stories about how they fared. They are listed in alphabetical order below.

When you have looked at what we have written, and it's all done – I will try to add page numbers. They are categorised roughly under Airforce, Navy, Army and Medical Corps.

Table of Kimberley Jews who participated on active service

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This is what the South African Army was involved in – from Wikipedia

1. The [South African Army](#) and Air Force played a major role in defeating the Italian forces of [Benito Mussolini](#) during the 1940/1941 **East African Campaign**. The converted [Junkers Ju 86s](#) of 12 Squadron, South African Air Force, carried out the first bombing raid of the campaign on a concentration of tanks at [Moyale](#) at 8am on 11 June 1940, mere hours after Italy's declaration of war.^[16]
2. Another important victory that the South Africans participated in was the liberation of Malagasy (now known as [Madagascar](#)) from the control of the [Vichy French](#) who were allies of the Nazis. British troops aided by South African soldiers, staged their attack from South Africa, landing on the strategic island on 4 May 1942^[17] to preclude its seizure by the Japanese.
3. The [South African 1st Infantry Division](#) took part in several actions in North Africa in 1941 and 1942, including the [Battle of El Alamein](#), before being withdrawn to South Africa to be re-constituted as an armoured division.
4. The [South African 2nd Infantry Division](#) also took part in a number of actions in North Africa during 1942, but on 21 June 1942 two complete infantry brigades of the division as well as most of the supporting units were captured at the **fall of [Tobruk](#)**.
5. The [South African 3rd Infantry Division](#) never took an active part in any battles but instead organised and trained the South African home defence forces, performed garrison duties and supplied replacements for the South African 1st Infantry Division and the South African 2nd Infantry Division. However, one of this division's constituent brigades – 7 SA Motorised Brigade – did take part in the invasion of Madagascar in 1942.
6. The [South African 6th Armoured Division](#) fought in numerous actions in Italy in 1944-1945 including the battle of Monte Cassino 1944.
7. The South African Air Force made a significant contribution to the air war in East Africa, North Africa, Sicily, Italy, the Balkans and even as far east as bombing missions aimed at the Romanian oilfields in [Ploiești](#),^[18] supply missions in support of the [Warsaw uprising](#)^[19] and reconnaissance missions ahead of the Soviet advances in the Lvov-Cracow area.^[20]
8. Numerous South African airmen also volunteered service to the RAF, some serving with distinction.
9. South Africa contributed to the war effort against Japan, supplying men and manning ships in naval engagements against the Japanese.



Tobruk:

The most significant and serious event in the entire War for the South African Army was the surrender of almost the entire 2nd South African Army at Tobruk. The circumstances proved that newly appointed General Klopper had had little option. They had been left in a dire

position with insufficient defence and no air cover. This was a pivotal moment in the war as Rommel captured a huge supply stored food, petrol and ammunition. This also gave him a clear run to push the Allied Forces back and to take Egypt. The South African forces, unfairly, suffered a bad reputation - which was only recovered by the bravery and resolve of the 6th Army in Italy.

If you want to read a good account of the South Africans at Tobruk go here:

<https://samilhistory.com/2017/10/24/defeat-is-one-thing-disgrace-is-another-south-africas-biggest-capitulation-of-arms-tobruk/>

The Army the Navy and the Airforce

Our Kimberley young men served with distinction in all three services. Two received medals: Staff Sergeant Cyril B Haberfeld received the Empire Medal (EM) for Meritorious Service and a Military Commendation. Private Solomon Odes was awarded the Military Medal (MM) for Bravery.

The Apter family served in all three: **Lionel Apter** went into Army Medical Corps, **Alec Apter** was a bomber pilot in the Air Force, also flying Spitfires. **Mendel Apter** had an exciting spell in the Navy. You can read the story of Mendel and his entrepreneurial encounter with 'Fresh Lemons' in Malta written by his friend Hector Kleinot, here: [Fresh Lemons](#). After the War, Lionel Apter continued his medical practice in Johannesburg. Mendel and Alec joined the family business helping their father **Solomon Apter** until his death in 1955. See [Apter Family](#)

Jewish Thoughts

One cannot imagine the thoughts that might have gone through the minds of those setting off to a major war in far off countries. Below is a 'Book of Jewish Thoughts'. It contained prayers and sayings to keep the servicemen's spirits up. It was originally created by Chief Rabbi J Hertz of Great Britain for British and American soldiers and sailors of WWI. It was later adapted for more widespread use. The Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation gave one to each person setting off on active service. – and, I think, also to those that stayed at home who gave war service (I have a copy given to my father).

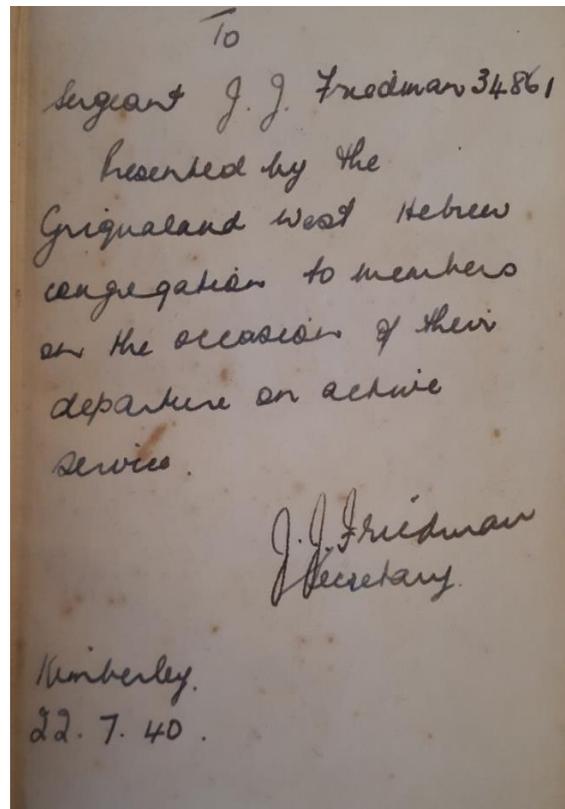
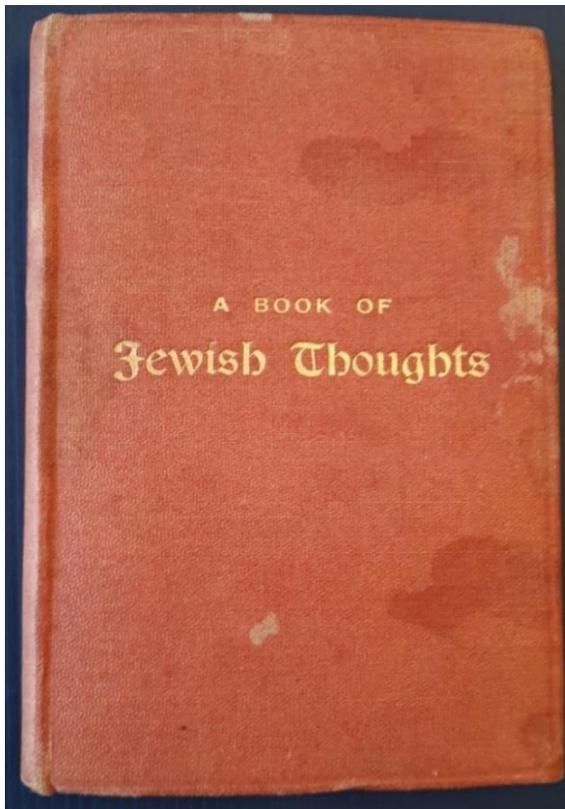
Joe Friedman

Raymond Friedman in Canada sent this illustration below. His father, **Joe Friedman** (above) newly qualified Kimberley Advocate (see his wedding picture to Kate Bergman 1932 on the wedding gallery and read their story here: https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Families_files/Friedman,%20Kate%20Joe%20and



[%20David.pdf](#)) was Secretary of the Congregation. He has inscribed one of these Jewish Thoughts booklets to himself as Sergeant, on his departure on active service in July 1940.

Joe Friedman left Kimberley with the **Kimberley Regiment** in 1940, after training spells in Pretoria and Bloemfontein, he was unable to go 'up North' for fitness reasons.



The army decided to transfer Joe to Durban where he had the position of Judge Advocate for Natal – which meant that he would then preside over all Courts Martial in Natal. This carried with it the rank of Major. At the end of his army career in 1946, Joe decided to re-establish his legal practice in Durban. And so the family settled in Durban after the War. He took silk and was later to become a Judge.

Military Training around Kimberley – 21 Air School

Kimberley played a major role in the training of bomber pilots, navigators and bomb-aimers. South Africa trained 33,347 aircrew for the [South African Air Force](#) and other [Allied](#) air forces. By June 1941, the **21 Air Flying School** near the airport at Alexandersfontein was one of the biggest bomber training schools in whole of the British Empire. Aircraft and other equipment required for training were provided to South Africa free of charge by the United Kingdom. 21 Air School housed **101 Squadron**. Later 121 and 131 Squadrons were also in Kimberley, utilising Airspeed Oxfords, mostly, as bomber reconnaissance planes. Several pilots, trained in South Africa, flew for the Royal Air Force. There were also the **70 Technical Training School** and the **72 Basic Training School** based in the town. The **Cape Corps** Coloured army drivers were trained by driving over the mine dumps in the Dutoitspan and Bultfontein mining area.

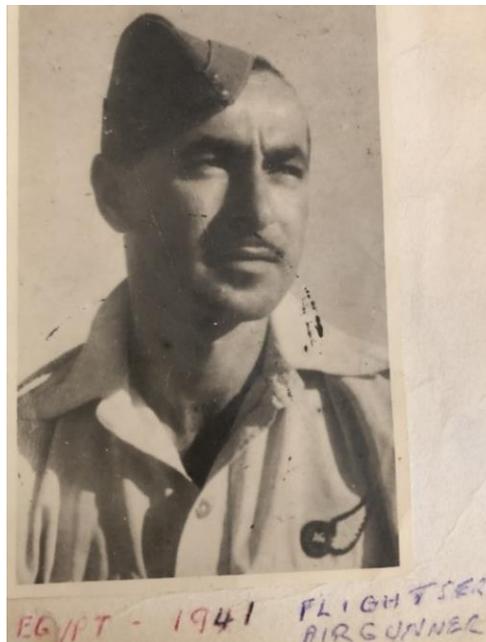
Air Force: Pilots, Bombers and Gunners

Several of our Kimberley Jewish men trained as bombers and pilots including **Mickey Finberg, Alec Apter** and **Vernon** and **Buddy Goldman**.

Mickey Finberg, Airforce Gunner



Mickey's daughter, **Eleanor Kotkis**, née Finberg writes:



My father **Mickey Finberg** was a Lieutenant in the South African Air Force during WWII and operated as a gunner and observer. In these pictures of Mickey Finberg, we see him in his SAAF uniform. On the right he is in Egypt in 1941.

He was sent 'up North' to Egypt. His plane was the only survivor of two major battles called 'Boston Tea Party' and 'Marauder Massacre'. He was in **24 Squadron** from 1940 to 1944.



In **Milton Jawno's** opinion, Mickey Finberg was a war hero having flown very many active missions as a tail-end gunner in Liberator bombers. Milton says, 'I saw his logbook. Please believe me, this modest man was a true unsung war hero.' Below left Mickey is in Italy in 1943, and below right, he is wearing his medals from WW2 at a celebration in 2005 of 60 years since the end of war. He was the oldest soldier at that celebration

Read Mickey's story here: [Finberg, Mickey & Dorothy](#)

Alec Apter, Bomber and Spitfire pilot

Alec's son **Robin Apter**, in Australia says that his dad was in the Air Force mainly as a bomber pilot but with a stint in Spitfires as well.

Robin writes: I have enclosed two photos of my father, Alec Apter in his pilot's uniform. The one on the left towards the beginning of his service and on the right, towards the end!



Robin says: Your newsletters always provide me with wonderful memories of Kimberley – a really great place to have spent one's childhood and school days. With the benefit of hindsight, I would do it all again.

It just reminded me of one of the stories passed down from when Alec was temporarily stationed in Khartoum. In those days he had reason to fly up to Cairo or Alexandria to visit a girlfriend who was a nurse in the armed forces at the time. During those trips he would have occasion to visit the souks (markets).

Many of the South African service men and women in parts of Africa wore 'red tabs' on their epaulettes to signify that they had volunteered and taken the 'Red Oath' to serve in the armed forces. (My understanding is that all South African soldiers were volunteers) Such was the respect accorded these men and women, that even the most hardened of pickpockets in the souks would not thief from them.

[The picture is of a WW2 South African propaganda poster, promoting the 'Red Oath' and the special volunteer epaulette flash worn by all who took the oath and volunteered for service during World War Two.] Read the Apter story here

<https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Apter.html>

Vernon (Tossie) (Left) and Henry (Buddy) Goldberg (Right) Pilots



Vernon Goldman saw distinguished service in World War II, firstly with the **Kimberley Regiment**, and later with **24 Squadron SAAF**, reaching the rank of Major. He was mentioned in despatches. **Buddy Goldman** his younger brother, was a Lieutenant and later

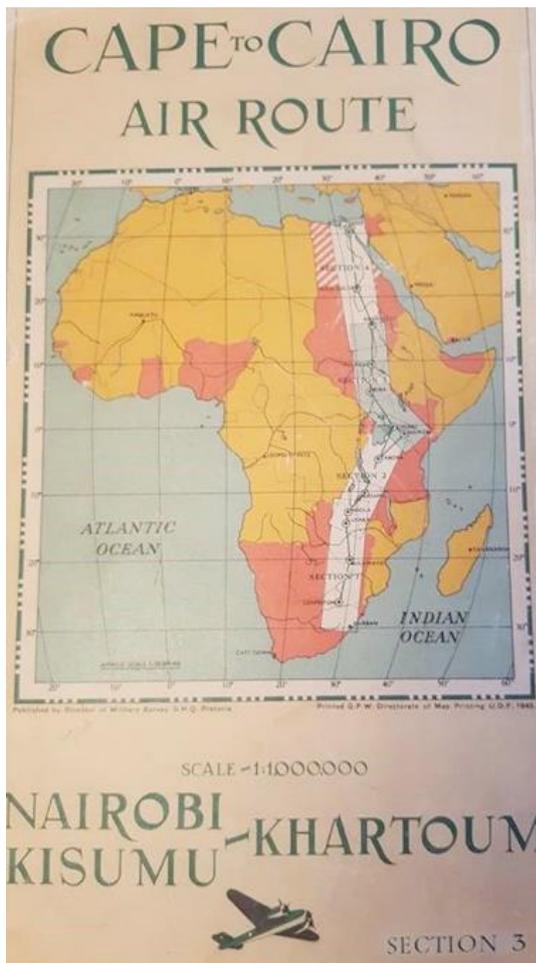


a Captain in the South African Air Force. (Above, they are enjoying a beer together in 1944)

Buddy's daughter, Vanessa Rubin wrote about her father. 'One could say our father Buddy was 'game' for everything. He had a mischievous streak. Buddy certainly was a brave pilot during the 2nd World War. He was captain of his squadron.

He flew troops and ammunition endlessly with great bravado, his cap on the back of his head, up and down Africa, furious that he wasn't at the front. Nevertheless, he had some traumatic experiences during the war, being shot down by enemy fire on the Gold Coast at the tender age of 22 and suffering a bad bout of malaria as well as poisonous spider bites, while living in a tent in those tropical climates. (He always managed to bring some Chanel No 5 back for his little sister, Joy.)' See the story of [Goldman, Buddy](#)

Below are records of Buddy's 'secret' missions and flight routes.



Above are pictures of Buddy's flight bag



After the war, in 1946, **Vernon (Tossie) Goldman** sadly died in a plane crash at Kimberley airport. He was aged 28, piloting a Piper J Cub, flying low, preparing to land when the plane had some fault and went into a spin and crashed – killing him instantly. His friend and passenger, **Joseph Nogid** died of his injuries on the way to hospital. Both the Kimberley families of Goldman and Nogid were devastated! (You can read the story of Buddy under [Goldman, Buddy](#). The crash is also reported under https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Families_files/Harry%20Nogid.pdf on the family pages).



Eric Cohen – Pilot in the RAF

Sheila Grant writes: My Uncle on my mother's side, Eric Cohen was a pilot in the RAF for the duration of the war and flew many missions. Uncle Eric was my mother's parents, Barney and Bertha Cohen's, youngest son. They had six children - Frances Kryn (who was mayoress when Barney was Mayor of Kimberley), Harold Cohen (who had 3 children - Doreen, Valerie and Douglas), Cecil Cohen (see his army service below), Ruth Broude (Barbara's mother), Eric Cohen (who later changed his surname to "Conlyn"), and Anita Frank (my mother). As Uncle Harold's first wife died very young, and his second wife did not welcome the children, Douglas says he knows nothing about his father's wartime history, but I have an idea he did serve in some capacity. Read the story Sheila wrote about the Frank family here <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Grant.html>

Maurice Gluck – Wireless Operator and Gunner

Joseph Gluck says that my late dad Maurice Gluck married to Kimberley's **Anne Nogid**, daughter of Harry Nogid (see [Nogid, Harry](#)) was also in No. 12 Bomber Squadron as a wireless operator and gunner. His brother, Willie Gluck was in No. 2 Bomber Squadron.

Michael “Misha” Lenhoff: Observer Navigator RAF

David Lenhoff from Upington, who went to school in Kimberley, now living in Perth, Western Australia, said: My father **Michael “Misha” Lenhoff**, was an observer/navigator in the RAF Bomber Command. Both his brothers were with the South African Defence Forces in Italy. Fortunately, all three survived the war. My grandfather, Abraham Lenhoff, had a farm just outside Upington in the north-western Cape province which he farmed from early in the 20th century until 1944 when he passed away. Because my father and his two brothers were in the South African Army 'up North' at the time, there was no family left who could take over the management of the farm, therefore it was sold.

David Lenhoff's cousin **Bramie Lenhoff** reminded him that in Upington, outside the Shul twelve trees were planted by the community, one for each Jewish man who signed up and went away on active service. Bramie says, 'I don't remember who all twelve were -- four Lenhoffs, three Hummels, two Kurlands and Lionel Aronson makes ten. I think there may have been a Nurick but I don't know who else. Fortunately, all of them returned home safely after the war. The only casualty I can think of was Uncle Leo Lenhoff, who lost one of his little fingers in the breach of a Bofors anti-aircraft gun'. See our article on the Jewish families of [Upington](#) and the excellent website that Bramie has made for Upington. <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/upington/index.htm>

Abe Toubé no 2 Air Depot, Quartermaster, 21 Air School

[Toubé, Trevor Philip](#)

Trevor Toubé says: Towards the end of WWI, my father **Abe Toubé**, born 1896, had been sent out into the desert in a small commando group (armed with ancient Lee-Enfield rifles) to 'capture German Southwest Africa' – now Namibia. Fortunately, the war ended before they had got very far. When WWII started, my father was already 43 and thus not liable for military service, but he volunteered to serve anyway. He ended up in the **2AD quartermaster's section** at the RAF training base just outside Kimberley. After the war he joined my mother in running the jewellery shops, Blumenthal's, established by her parent's.

An amusing story about 21 Air School



Philip Joseph from Johannesburg (Exclusive Books and Books Etc) who married Pam Horwitz of Kimberley (picture left is them at their wedding) wrote to me in 2013:

Dear Geraldine, I first met you before I met my future wife, Pam. You doubtless remember? The circumstances: I was a **pupil-pilot in the RAF** and received an order to report to the Adjutant to the Commander of 21 Air School. Normally one was castigated by a Corporal, Sergeant or other Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) but by the Adjutant was unheard of in our philosophy and my colleagues thought I would be shot at dawn. The interview was short and pithy. I marched in saluted, stood to attention and awaited sentence. (Someone once equated military justice with civil justice as being the same as the relation of military music to Bach). The command to stand at ease, was unexpected followed by an invitation to join your family for the next Friday night for dinner. I nearly fainted.

Your aunt Ashne (the Adjutant) explained that it would be at the house of her brother and sister (your Mum and Dad). I assented and was dismissed. Was it Carrington Road? You as a toddler and your older brother were there running around. After dinner, your parents asked me whether I would like anything to eat or drink or anything else.

Apparently, I said 'yes please could I have a hot bath'. It was magnificent. I have never forgotten the friendship I received from your parents. Your father took me horse riding on polo ponies, the food was paradisiacal, and I enjoyed several more invitations to Shabbes dinners. The year was 1942. The next time I saw Kimberley was when Pam (née Horwitz, daughter of Polly and Barney Horwitz of 9 Lodge Road) and I were married in 1947. I owe the place a great deal and I do enjoy your emails. With love, Philip (Joseph)

Philip died subsequently. Read his obituary here [Joseph, Philip](#)

Harold (Ikky) Brown – Air Force Photographer East African Campaign 1941



Delia Benn, one of his three daughters, writes: 'During World War II, our father **Harold Ikky Brown** (on the right above) had hoped to become a pilot, but settled for aerial photography instead. He was posted to Kalifi in British East Africa (now Kenya and Uganda) to join a squadron of bombers. [These were the first Allied troops to drop bombs in the War]

Even by Kimberley standards, this equatorial area was sweltering. 'My job was to fly over the Indian Ocean taking photographs of any foreign crafts,' explained my father. 'After a day's work, I would attempt to process the film in the ill-equipped darkroom. The problem was, that the heat was so intense that the emulsion would run off the film. After numerous attempts to cool the chemicals used in the process, any idea of using the developing techniques in the darkroom was abandoned.'

At about this time, he contracted malaria which was endemic in that part of the world. While he was recovering, he was approached to take over the **running of the officers' mess**.

The cooks allocated to him were black tribesmen who had joined the 'Kings African Rifles' in Kenya. Advising his staff as to the menu for the day was somewhat tricky. Since they had no language in common, an alternative way of communicating with them had to be found. Recipes were laid out in picture book form. My father would point to the picture of the desired dish and hope that the result would be edible.

Harold Brown later joined up with the allied forces stationed in **Italy**. While serving with the Air Force in San Severo in Southern Italy, he met Jewish volunteers from what was then Palestine. Being Jewish himself and a Zionist, he became friendly with this group. He was told about a group of people who had converted to Judaism who lived in a remote mountain area. So he and some of his friends visited these people. The photo below is of himself (second from left in top row) with both the group from Palestine and the group they visited in their Italian village.



The name of the village was San Nicandro. The Jews of San Nicandro had an interesting and difficult beginning. As we understand it, Southern Italy was extremely poor and some people were able to get to America in the 1920s to find work. Many returned to their

small towns and brought with them Bibles and ideas about the Protestant sects in the States.

A man by the name of Menduzio was dissatisfied with the prevailing Catholic practice. He did not believe the Messiah had come. He started to study one of the Bibles and came upon the Old Testament. From then he believed in Judaism and felt that he was a prophet. He professed to have visions and through his strong personality, he was able to influence about 50 people in this village. He decided how the religion should be practiced. They lived the laws of the Tanach to keep a Jewish way of life. This was in the 1930s. He didn't know that there were other Jews in Italy. About 15 families made Aliya in 1949 on the ship, Ha Galila.

Helen Brown (née Maresky) Ikky's wife and Shim Maresky (see below)'s sister, volunteered for the Red Cross. (see Harold and Helen Brown's Wedding picture on the wedding gallery for 1940, as well as her Brother Shim's wedding to Rina Cvy in 1952, on [family weddings](#))

Read the Maresky Story Jacob, Shim and Helen and their children here:



https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Families_files/Maresky%20Family.pdf

Issie Goldberg, Aircraft Maintenance Born in Kimberley in 1916, Issie helped his father Solomon Goldberg in his dairy business in Kimberley until he volunteered for service in the South African forces during World War II. He served in the Air Force as an aircraft maintenance sergeant. [Goldberg, Solomon, Deborah & Family](#)



Ivor Haas - Aircraft Mechanic



Ivor Haas, seen, sitting on a camel on page one, was the brother-in-law of Issie Goldberg (see above) and Abraham Goldberg (see later) having married their sister Gertie Goldberg. The photo on the left with the American aircraft at camp in January 1943, is of Ivor Haas, who was sent 'up North' as an aircraft mechanic (on the basis of his training as a watchmaker?). See [Haas, Gertie, Ivor & Family](#) story.

Ivor Haas' son sent these two pictures below. Ivor himself is on the extreme left in each with his comrades in arms in North Africa and the Middle East.

In the picture below, David Maresky recognises his father **Shimon Maresky** on the extreme right. See Shim's story on page 20





In this picture above, Ivor Haas is again on the left. Marshal Hotz recognises his father **Charlie Hotz** on the extreme right and says that next to him is possibly **Harry Klein**. Selwyn Kanushevsky recognises his father **Willie Kanushevsky** standing at the back.

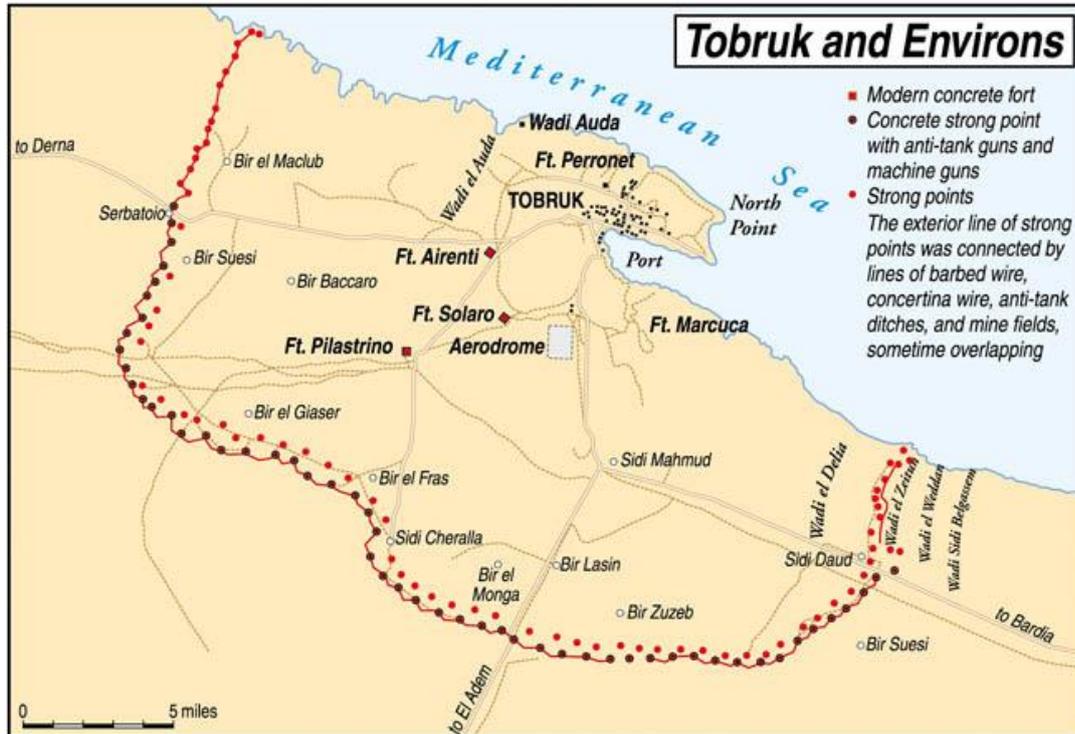
Poddy Shein – 2SAAD Artillery - taken prisoner at Tobruk (June 1942)

June Haberfeld writes: Poddy Shein was 'up North' in the artillery and was captured at Tobruk. He spent time in a prisoner of war camp in Italy and stayed on after the war for two years to help. He returned to Kimberley and married Girlie (Henrietta Haberfeld) on 27 November 1947. He built up a very good business in big whites etc. He passed away June 16th 1998 and Girlie passed away 5 days later. Poddy was a long serving President of the Kimberley Chamber of Commerce. He was also the



Chairman of the SA Perm, a Kimberley town councillor, member of the Kimberley Hospital Board, and an enthusiastic supporter of the Red Cross. He had also served on the committees of the Kimberley Club, Kimberley Regimental Association, the GW Hebrew Congregation and the Kimberley Town Bowling Club. He was a Life member of the bowling club and had been their champion in 1962, 1976 and in 1981. He was an active member of the Rotary Club and was elected a Paul Harris Fellow in October 1992 for his outstanding services to the organization. Always willing to give advice, he was a most charitable individual with a fantastic sense of humour, and in his time, was one of the leading citizens of Kimberley. Read his story here: [Shein, Poddy](#).

Tobruk – the fortified port on the southern shores of the Med



The small port of Tobruk, in Italian Cyrenaica (what is now Libya), had been fortified by the Italians from 1935. Behind two old outlying forts, they constructed an innovative fortification, consisting of a double line of concrete-lined trenches 54 km (34 mi) long, connecting 128 weapons pits protected by concealed anti-tank ditches. But the fortifications lacked overhead protection and defence in depth. Tobruk was captured from the Italians by Australian forces in January 1941 during [Operation Compass](#), the first large Allied military operation of the Western Desert Campaign. Following the arrival of the German Afrika Korps commanded by Erwin Rommel in [Operation Sonnenblume](#) in March, Axis forces retook much of the lost territory in Cyrenaica.

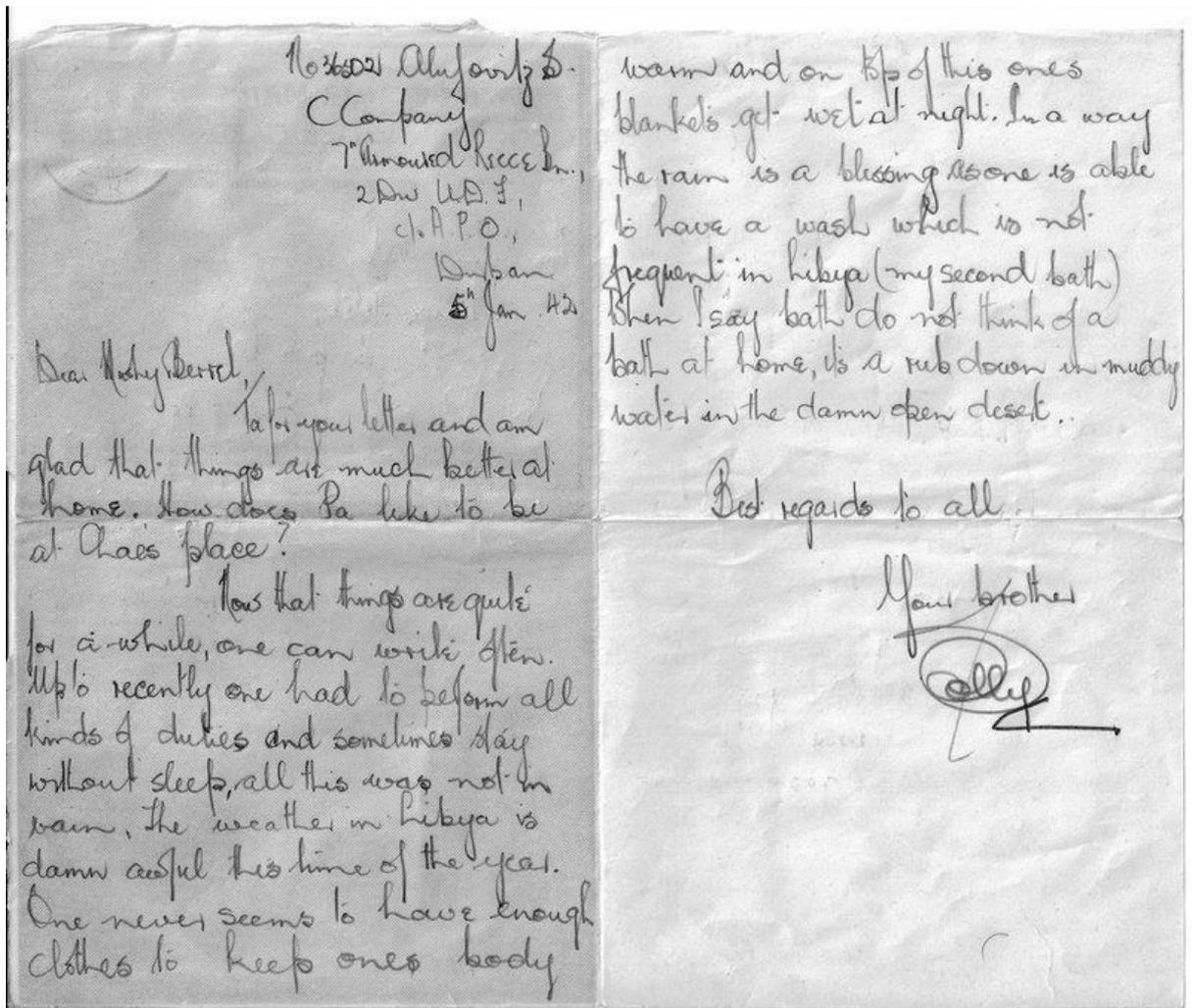


Solly Alufovitz – 2SAAD taken prisoner at Tobruk (June 1942)

Joe Davidowitz ex Vryburg writes: 'My Uncle Solly Alufovitz who was from Vryburg and settled in Kimberley was one of the first to join up. He was in the Tank Corps and was taken prisoner at Tobruk. He was held in a POW camp in Italy. When the Germans decided that the Italians were not reliable, they made the prisoners march to Germany. Solly managed to escape and spent the next nine months hiding from the Germans and their Italian sympathisers. When he eventually managed to get back to the Allied lines, he weighed only 92 pounds. His original weight was 200 pounds. 'He carried a knobkerrie (wooden club) for his protection, on which he carved out a

notch every day to keep account of time.'

Aolly alufovitz's niece Pearly Miron (nee Goldenbaum) sent us a letter from Solly to one of his sisters (her late aunt). The letter is dated January 5th, 1942. He was in Libya at the time.



LETTER FROM SOLLY ALUFOVITZ from Libya (via Durban) to his sisters.

No 366021 Alufovitz S, C Company
7th Armoured Ricce Bn
2 Div UDF, c/o A P O
Durban
5th Jan 42

Dear M & B

Ta for your letter and am glad that things are much better at home. Now that things are quiet for a while, one can write often. Up to recently one had to perform all kinds of duties and sometimes stay without sleep. All this was not in vain. The weather in Libya is damn awful this time of the year. One never seems to have enough clothes to keep one's body warm and on top of this one's blankets get wet at night. In a way the rain is a blessing as one is able to have a wash which is not frequent in Libya (my second bath). When I say bath do not think of a bath at home. It's a rub down in muddy water in the damn open desert.

Best regards to all. Your brother, Solly



South African and Indian Prisoners of war awaiting deportation after their surrender at Tobruk

Solly was also the uncle of Joseph Goldenbaum and his sister Pearly Miron (née Goldenbaum). Pearly adds: There was also a story told about him that he lifted a wounded enemy soldier on his back until they reached assistance. I don't know the truth of the matter but do recall, when I was a young girl, that he was very strong.

On returning to Kimberley Solly Alufovitz opened an outfitting store on the Market Square called 'Markies'. He never married. He gave sterling service to the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation where he served in several capacities, notably in the Chevre Kadisha, and also as Chairman of the Congregation 1965-66 and 1967-72. Solly was also chairman of Griqualand West rugby for many years. He died in Kimberley and is buried in the Kimberley Jewish Cemetery.

Shimon Maresky – Anti Aircraft

David Cvi Maresky writes: My dad was Shimon Maresky ל"ר (as seen in Ivor Haas' picture right) and my mom was Rina Cvi ל"ר As kids we used to journey from Vanderbijlpark to spend our vacations in what we thought was paradise on earth - my Bobba's flat atop



the Sussman butchery on De Beers Road, Kimberley. I was excited to see that one of the photos includes my late dad. My dad has his forage cap angled on his right forehead

Shimon was seriously wounded – some said in Greece. Shim explained to his family shortly before his death, that he had been in Greece developing anti-tank mine technology. He brought this back to Italy with others of the engineering corps.

Shim was wounded in Italy on the Eastern flank outside a city called Urbino. He was shot through the face while deploying propelled anti-tank mine explosives. For this injury, he was later to undergo more than twenty operations – the last one only three years before he died, when a bullet fragment was removed from his jawbone. He explained all this in great detail, mainly for the benefit of his grandsons. David says, 'I was lucky to pick up many titbits on their account since he was generally very reluctant to speak about his war exploits.

'One poignant story he told was that he was walking the floorboards of a makeshift field hospital in Barri Italy in a very despondent state of mind. As he walked past a small enclosure, wheeling his intravenous drip bottle, he caught a glimpse of a wounded soldier lying in a bed. He had recognized his old Kimberley friend Solly Odes! My dad's face was heavily bandaged, and his jaw was wired. He couldn't do more than grunt. Solly had been hit by a shard of shrapnel which had rendered him aphasic. I have heard them both describe how they did do no more than look at each other, and cry...'

David Maresky adds: 'My darling dad spent the last happy years of his life living in Israel - he is buried in Kiryat Gat - and I miss him. I often find my memories drifting back to the 'Grinne' Shul where my brother and I used to daven during the week with my Zeida (Yitzchak Cvi'.(pictures of Rina Cvi and Shim can be seen on [family weddings](#).)

David Maresky sent another picture of the "South African Boys" in North Africa after El Alamein. A friend of my father's sent it to me after he passed away and hence the bold arrow. I think there may be other Kimberley boys in it...



**Solly Odes –
Kimberley
Regiment**

6SAAD

Solly, as mentioned by Shim Maresky above, was educated at Christian Brothers College (CBC) in Kimberley. During WWII he joined up and served with the Kimberley Regiment in North Africa and in Italy. Solly never spoke to his children about his experiences during the war. They would learn a little when overhearing conversations that he had on Friday nights while hosting young Jewish army boys stationed in Kimberley in the 1970s.

The **6th South African Armoured Division** fought some of the fiercest battles of WW2 in mountainous terrain. Between 4 and 7 October, 1944 the ILH/KR was engaged in battles around the small town of Torlai. On the afternoon of October 5, Solly and his section were ordered to protect two immobilized tanks.

Under heavy counter-attack, the enemy penetrated one flank. Realizing this, Solly Odes without hesitation or thought for his own safety mounted one of the tanks with his Bren gun and opened fire. From this exposed position he was able to thwart the enemy advance. He was recognized for his initiative and courage and was awarded the **Military Medal (MM)**. This Medal was awarded to Non-Commissioned ranks for acts of bravery and devotion to duty under fire. On October 22 and 23, the ILH/KR fought to take a key strategic point, Monte Salvaro. During this battle, on the second day, Solly sustained a serious injury. Throughout his rehabilitation period, Solly continued to show courage and determination in learning to talk and walk again and getting back to playing sports.



In 2016 his daughter Gail and her husband Mark Bendix visited northern Italy and took a trip to the area where the 6th South African Armoured Division had fought. She says: We visited the South African War Cemetery at Castiglione dei Pepoli, one of the official Commonwealth War Cemeteries. This cemetery is the final resting place for more than 500 souls. Walking through this cemetery was an incredibly humbling experience. We travelled from Castiglione to Torlai taking the mountain roads. These roads were windy, steep, narrow and very difficult to drive. Driving on these now paved roads brought into perspective how difficult the terrain is and how incredibly brave these soldiers had been. We were absolutely in awe thinking about how these troops would have had to travel across fields, forests and steep mountain slopes, all under fire. What they must have had to endure. See [Odes, Solly, Sheila and Family](#) story here.

Louis David - Kimberley Regiment

Louis David, who had been the Dux Medallist at Kimberley Boys High School in 1918 and who was working with his father in the well-known Kimberley Wholesalers, A David & Co, signed up with the **Kimberley Regiment** in 1940.

When he left home to fight in the war, he was 40 years old and his sons Bob, 12 years old and Aubrey just 10. Louis did not talk much about the war, but Bob said that he was motivated to join the Army because of the terrible news coming out of Europe that Hitler was bent on killing Jews. It's hard to know exactly what the Jews of Kimberley knew in 1940 about the unspeakable tragedy that was to follow, but it was enough for Louis to want to join Monty's Army in the fight against Rommel.

His grandson **Rick David**, now of San Francisco, said: 'Here is a photo of Louis in uniform from 1943: He received several medals, which he used to show us, but he never gave us any details about the battles and his role in them.' The Wikipedia page on the Kimberley Regiment lists twenty Battle Honours, including Italy 1944-45, and Monte Cassino. There is a very good account of this fierce battle here:

<https://samilhistory.com/2016/05/26/south-african-sappers-at-monte-cassino-one-of-the-fiercest-battles-of-ww2/>

Louis used to attend the Moths (Memorable Order of Tin Hats) parade every year, where no doubt the old comrades reminisced amongst themselves, but, they were a proud and reticent group. I think that part of their honour code was the belief that true heroes don't talk about their victories. See their family story here: [David, Louis and Connie](#)



Cecil Sussman – 6th South African Division – Anti Aircraft

Cecil Sussman who matriculated from CBC joined the **South African 6th Division**. His son, Jeff Sussman from Melbourne, sent the picture, below, of his Dad in uniform with his service medals that they placed in front of the picture. Cecil never spoke much of his service up North and in Italy.

Cecil's wife Natalie (née Kroll) says: '**Cecil Sussman** was in the **Anti-Aircraft unit**. They were shipped out to North Africa to augment the Allied forces fighting Rommel. After a historic victory, his unit was deployed to Italy where Cecil was stationed and spent the next three years until 'Victory in Europe'. Tens of thousands of lives were lost. The Italians suffered greatly and were starving as the Germans had stripped the country of food supplies. The Allied Forces shared their rations with the local population and were warmly welcomed by them. There is no glory in war and Cecil (photo below) seldom spoke of the devastation.

'Two Dictators were defeated at great loss of life. Cecil arrived on home shores in December of 1945 happy to have survived. He then went into the family business of farming and meat production. We went to Italy years later to visit the towns where he had spent his 'leaves' – Florence, Venice, Portofino and of special interest Rome'.



Read Cecil's family story here. [Sussman, Cecil and Natalie \(nee Kroll\)](#)

Mike Senderovitz – infantry

Jane Beth Cantor who grew up in Taung says: 'My mom's oldest brother **Mike Senderovitz** born in Taung (north west of Kimberley). He enlisted in the army during World War Two and was sent 'up North' in a Scottish regiment to **Tobruk**. He was captured when Tobruk fell to the German commander Rommel and was thrown into an **Italian prisoner of war camp**. I have his story and it is fascinating how he escaped just before being hauled off to die in a concentration camp. I want to type this and give it to Yad Vashem because he saved many lives by outwitting an Italian traitor'. See the story of Jane's grandfather here: [Senderovitz, Aaron](#)

[Read here about what it was like, being shipped off to Italy as a PoW. <https://ww2today.com/8th-july-1942-shipped-out-of-tobruk-as-a-pow>]

Cecil Cohen – Kimberley Regiment

At the time war was declared, Cecil was working at the Diamond Trading Corporation; a division of De Beers. At 32 he enlisted with the citizen forces of the Kimberley Regiment (KR) on September 21, 1939. From November 1940, according to his military records, he was in full time service.

Cecil Cohen went 'up North' and then to Italy. He received many medals. Before going on active service, Cecil was first sent for military training. Cecil's sons, Raymond and David recall their father mentioning the Zonderwater and Baviaanspoort, camps near Pretoria. By January 1941 he was a Vickers machine gunner instructor and, by November 1942, an Infantry range-taker Instructor.

On the right we see him with his medals and below with some of his regiment (the Kimberley Regiment). I wonder if any other Kimberley Jewish boys can be recognised?

Cecil Cohen held the successive ranks of **Corporal, Sergeant and Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2)**. Cecil's son Brian has his original wrist band with the leather strap and cloth uniform badge both showing the latter rank.

By 1943 Cecil, as part of the **South African Sixth Armoured Division**, set sail in great secrecy on the Ile de France to join the North African Campaign. Cecil remained in Egypt until 15 April 1944, when they were hurriedly transferred to Italy.

To Palestine?

According to the official records there was a plan to move the Regiment to Palestine. This never happened, as instead, they were moved into the Italian theatre of war. The plan may have been altered to adjust to the moving tide of the war in Italy. There is a theory too, that the Palestine Plan was a decoy to create the impression that additional troops would not be going to Italy. An advance party was sent to Palestine, to scout and research, and Cecil, with his rank of WO2, would have been part of this advance group. We know that he travelled to Palestine as we have a photo of him at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. (right) (Centre back is Louis Toube) Also among Cecil's photos there were some of his Regiment in Tel Aviv (below). This group returned to Egypt prior to embarkation for Italy.

The Italian campaign began for the KR/ILH in May 1944 and continued until the Axis surrender in May 1945. Cecil was part of the group climbing to the summit after the **Battle of Monte Cassino** (1944) in



Southern Italy. The Poles had displaced the Germans who had occupied the ruins of the ancient monastery, after it had been (possibly erroneously) bombed the USA army. The Allies now had the path open to liberate Rome. There were many other more protracted, but less famous, battles which took place up the Italian peninsula. David recalls his father, Cecil Cohen, having a permanent scar on his upper lip from a shrapnel wound.

Cecil Cohen remained in Italy for the last year of the war serving as Warrant Officer with a unit **repatriating South African prisoners-of-war**. In the time his Division was there, he claimed he had walked the length of Italy tracking down South African POWs.

From a newspaper article dated September 13, 1945 Warrant Officer Cohen also travelled to Austria and Germany. He had the opportunity to visit both Hitler's mountain home 'Eagle's Nest' and Goering's home at Berchtesgaden. He happened to be there when General



Marshall and a number of dignitaries were visiting that site. The article reports, 'The Yanks told me to hop on, and I went up too'.

Cecil Cohen was awarded the following medals: **1939/45 Star, Africa Star, Italy Star, Defence Medal and the Africa Service Medal**. He was in military service for a total of 5 years and 115 days. He returned to civilian life in November 1945 and went back to work at De Beers Diamond Syndicate in Kimberley.

Contributions by Cecil's sons, **Raymond, David and Brian Cohen** Compiled by **Adele Cohen**, David's wife, Vancouver, June 2020

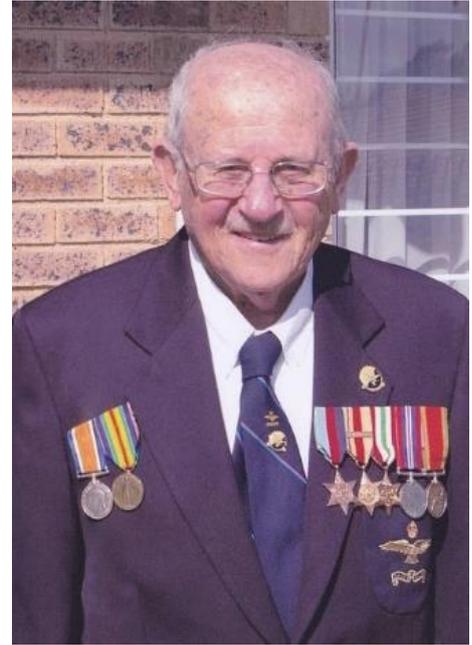
Woolfie Tobiansky

Adele Cohen (wife of 'David Cohen, and daughter-in-law of Cecil Cohen – see his story above) tells a Kimberley related story about her uncle **Woolfie Tobiansky** from Johannesburg (seen right as a young soldier in Cairo, and below in later life with his medals). Woolfie was in Kimberley after the war, responsible for looking after the Italian POWs. He said that the Italians were a talented group of men, who on the whole, supervised themselves. Woolfie could have been be court-martialled for what he



did with them – but in the end he was let off lightly. This is the story of his misdemeanour:

The 21 Air School, Air Force soccer team was at the bottom of the League in Kimberley. Some of the Italian POWs were brilliant international football players. When Woolfie was in charge, he gave them an opportunity to play in the Air Force team. There was a dramatic improvement with the Air Force team suddenly winning several matches. Soon they were near the top of the League. Woolfie said he had told them only to kick the ball – and not to open their mouths in case someone would find out they were Italians. But the story got out and was reported in the local newspaper, the Diamond Fields Advertiser. After much investigation, Woolfie was found to be responsible, and got into trouble. Fortunately, he was not heavily penalised for this offence, and only had to pay a small fine.



Fritz Hecht – Kimberley Regiment 6SAAD

Harold Hecht writes in July 2020: ‘My father, Fritz Hecht joined the Kimberley Regiment in 1941 and attended camps in Windhoek and then in 1942, a training camp at Zonderwater near Pretoria for the Signals Division, before being sent to serve in North Africa in the Battle of El Alamein, and then on to Italy. In the picture right he is on leave in Kimberley to attend the birth of his son Fritz (who looks a bit furry in this picture)

‘I believe he participated in the Monte Cassino campaign before moving to northern Italy.

Below is a war artist’s rendering of the American bombing of the monastery (which was found not to have housed German troops after all). Though after its destruction, German Paratroopers certainly did occupy the ruins and from there played havoc with the Allies’ advances. They were eventually overpowered by the Polish Troops, thus opening the way for the Allies to advance to liberate Rome.



Here
Fritz is
seen at
the
Jewish
club in
Rome.



This is a group photo taken in June 1945 at Lake Como of a Jewish Studies group. Fritz is in 3rd row 4th from the right. It was run by the Jewish chaplain to 6SAAD. I can't identify any other Kimberley-ites on the photo'



Harold says 'Fritz Hecht left among his photos, an 'approved' postcard of the murdered bodies of Mussolini and his mistress from April 1945. See Harold's story here [Hecht, Harold](#)

Roy Horwitz – 6th South African Armoured Division

Roy's son, **Barney Horwitz** (presently the Chairman of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation) and daughter **Brenda (Booth)** wrote: 'Our father, **Roy Horwitz**, who lived with his mother Polly, sister Pam and brother Derek at 9 Lodge Road in Kimberley, was 16 when War broke out in 1939. He was still at school in what we now call Grade 11 at Christian Brothers College in the city.

'He went on to matriculate in 1940 and to serve his Legal Articles with a Jewish attorney, Dave Cohen, who later became the Attorney General of Swaziland. When Roy completed his Articles, early in 1943, he enlisted in the Union Defence Force where he remained until 1946.



'He reported for duty in Potchefstroom early in February 1943 and was absorbed into the Transport Section of one of the South African Infantry Units serving with the 6th South African Armoured Division.

'On 30th April 1943 they embarked at Durban for Port Tewfik in Suez where they arrived some weeks later. He would later recall the constant fear amongst the troops on board of German U-Boat attacks up the East Coast of Africa, the eerie darkness of the night time ban on lights on the ships in the convoy and his first encounter with soya sausages which, with mash, was the staple diet for the duration of the journey. He also related how the troops went absolutely crazy when they crossed the equator.

'Following their disembarkation at Tewfik, they were sent to Khataba, north west of Cairo for eight months extensive training in operational conditions [see picture of training in the desert below, Ed].

'During this time he did get to see the Pyramids and in amongst the rigours of training he always found it strange that in the Western Desert both the Axis and Allied forces listened to the same shortwave radio station – a station in the Axis puppet state of Hungary – and that Marlene Dietrich was as popular with the Allied soldiers as she was with the German troops.

'In April 1944, one year after arriving in Egypt, his unit embarked from Alexandria and arrived in Taranto, Italy about a week later. In Alexandria he and some others had made contact with the local Jewish Community, which was old, established and influential.'



[**Geraldine adds:** The **Jewish communities of Cairo and Alexandria** took on the task of providing comfort and entertainment for Jewish soldiers from abroad. It so happened that one of the leading personalities of Egyptian Jewry, originally came from Cape Town. That was Aaron Alexander, younger brother of Morris Alexander who for more than a generation had been a leader of the community in Cape Town and a member of the Union Parliament. Aaron and his Egyptian wife (a member of the Mosseri family of bankers in Cairo) had already entertained troops in WWI. In WWII, thousands of Springboks, as well as other Commonwealth soldiers, enjoyed their hospitality. General Smuts himself was their guest on many occasions during his visits to the troops in Egypt.]

Roy's children continued: 'Then followed a year of fighting all the way up Italy to Milan where he was in April 1945, when the War came to an end. He was in time to see the bodies of Benito Mussolini and his mistress Clara Petacci, who had been executed by a firing squad of Italian Partisans, hung upside down on a butchers' meat hook on the Piazzale Loreto and displayed for crowds to kick and spit on. Roy confided a long time later, that notwithstanding the brutality of Mussolini and the fighting, this was the most awful sight he witnessed during the 'entire war.

Roy Horwitz had many experiences in his time in Italy including being mistakenly bombed by the US Air Force who had thought his unit was German. As he put it, he and his friends 'broke the speed limit' in digging a trench for cover. He also suffered from the same anxiety that all his comrades in arms suffered – the fear of being captured by the Germans. His own first cousin – **Joe Toooh** had been captured at Tobruk and spent three years as a prisoner of war – not a happy fate for a Jew with a German name.

'When the War ended the 6th SA Armoured Division was not immediately repatriated. South African brigades were then deployed to the Swiss and French borders for frontier duties. It was only in early 1946 that he and his fellow troops were repatriated through Helwan in Egypt, and then by sea to South Africa.

'Roy had some time off in Rome where he and his friends came into contact with members of the Jewish Community who were starving. He could remember they gave them all their rations, and, in particular, they gave the children all the sweets and chocolates they could find. During this time Roy bought two canvasses from an itinerant Italian artist which he rolled around a broomstick for his mother. Today, 75 years later, Barney and Brenda each have one of these framed, and hanging in their own homes. 'Roy was proud of his wartime service but there is no doubt that what he experienced left an indelible mark on his character for the rest of his life'.

From **Barney Horwitz** and **Brenda Booth**, Roy's son and daughter, 12 July 2020.

Joe Tooch – 2nd South African Armoured Division

First cousin of Roy Horwitz – **Joe Tooch**, was captured at Tobruk and spent three years as a prisoner of war – not a happy fate for a Jew with a German name. (more information would be welcome)



Lucien Hertog – Kimberley Regiment

Lucien Hertog (left) was a part of three prominent Kimberley families (**Hertog, Harris** and **Cohen**). His mother was **Lily, née Cohen** from Port Elizabeth. Lucien was adopted by her second husband Charles Edward **Hertog**, after Lucien's father Max Nathan had died. Charles Hertog was a lawyer of Kimberley and legal advisor to the Directors of De Beers. Charles was a widower – his first wife had been Elise Harris, who had also died. Elise was the daughter of diamond pioneer, magnate and distinguished soldier, Colonel Sir David **Harris**

Colonel Sir David Harris – (pictured right) had had an

outstanding military career. From 1876 he was a keen and long-serving Volunteer soldier taking leadership positions in the Kimberley forces including the **Dutoitspan Hussars, Diamond Fields Horse** and **Victoria Rifles**. In 1890 he became Commanding Officer (CO) of the **Kimberley Rifles**, with the rank of Major. He was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in May 1894 and remained CO until December 1895. Harris took part in the Boer War 1899-1902 when he served in the **Kimberley Town Guard**. On 1 January 1903 he was appointed **Honorary Colonel of the Kimberley Regiment** and remained so until his death. (He was also a Director of De Beers Consolidated Mines and a diamond magnate in his own right. He was also a cousin of Barney Barnato.



Read more about him here: https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/David_Harris.html

Lucien Hertog began his education at Christian Brothers College in Kimberley. He was then sent to Cheltenham College in England under the kind patronage of Sir Ernest Oppenheimer. In his final year at Cheltenham he was the Dux student in the Commonwealth – first with 97% overall, amongst 28,000 students!

Lucien in WWII

Lucien's son, Clive Hertog of Johannesburg, sent this picture of his father **trooping the colour** of the **Kimberley Regiment**. Clive remembers: 'My father Lucien volunteered as war seemed imminent, even prior to the outbreak of the War on 3 September 1939 (and before 6 September, when South Africa joined on the side of Great Britain). Clive says: 'I believe, he volunteered together with Harry Oppenheimer. They both served with the **Kimberley Regiment**.

Lucien was promoted to Captain in a very short time – on 30 October 1939. Clive has seen the request for him to be promoted to Major (after the war) which makes reference to the date of his appointment as Captain.

Clive says: 'I recall him telling me that the only reason he became an officer was because he had some experience of drilling troops from his schooling at Cheltenham, England, which had not only a classical education but also a military academy. [I am wondering if his family's distinguished military background and standing might have had something to do with it. Ed]



Above is a group of young recruits: Lucien is seated, front row, third from the left.

Clive believes that Lucien was in an armoured car brigade and part of C Company, with the 1st South African Infantry Division which saw the first service in East and North Africa in 1941. Lucien, took part in various skirmish concluding in the major **Battle of El Alamein** (certainly the second if not also the first battle of El Alamein) and it was shortly after this and at the beginning of 1943, that he returned to South Africa for a short while.

The 1st South African Division then amalgamated with other forces to constitute the 6th South African Armoured Division (6SAAD). At this time, recognition could be given to individual regiments such as the **Imperial Light Horse/Kimberley Regiment**. (ILH/KR) with which Lucien served in Italy in 1943 – 1944.



Clive says: 'He was with the first troops to ascend to secure the **Monastery of Monte Cassino**. The Monastery had, controversially, been destroyed by a massive aerial bombardment by the USA. The ruins were then occupied by German Paratroopers, who had a good view of what the Allies were doing and could direct fire accordingly. The Allies now had to remove them. This was achieved by Polish troops, who overwhelmed the Germans in 1944. Following this my father ascended to the monastery.

The Polish willingly fought for the allies, but were badly betrayed by Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin after the war. They say: The Battle of Monte Cassino was the costliest and most controversial battle of World War II. Churchill was determined to wage this battle, referring to the Italian Campaign as the "soft underbelly of Europe." It was anything but "soft". The Battle of Monte Cassino was regarded an act of insanity - a disaster waiting to happen.

By the end of the Battle, the Allies suffered more than 50,000 casualties as opposed to 20,000 casualties among German troops. The impenetrable mountain ranges of the Italian mainland combined with skilled German defences proved to be formidable obstacles indeed to the Allied multi-national forces. Despite concerted efforts, the Allies could not break through the tough German lines, and after numerous unsuccessful attempts, finally called in the 2nd Polish Corps under the command of General Wladyslaw Anders. The Polish participation in the Battle of Monte Cassino is one of the greatest sacrifices ever made by the Polish people. It is a story of courage and honour of the Polish Armed Forces. The capture of Monte Cassino came at a high price. The total Allied Fifth and Eighth Army casualties spanning the period of the four Cassino battles and the advance to capture Rome on 4 June were 105,000. Of a total of 51,000 Polish soldiers, over 4,000 lost their lives on Monte Cassino.

This paved the way for the Allies to relieve Rome. (There was fierce rivalry as to who should have the honour of capturing Rome. The Kimberley Regiment relieved the City of Florence. Clive sent an article which makes reference to the **Kimberley Regiment** being on the

outskirts of **Rome** but having to wait for political reasons in order to allow the Americans to claim the relief of Rome. Clive says:

'My father told me that they had actually entered Rome, before receiving orders to withdraw in order to permit the Americans to claim the victory. (See the picture, right, of Lucien inside the colosseum in Rome.)'

After the War

Once de-mobbed, Lucien also became an attorney and was a partner in the old firm of Haarhoff, Hertog and (Finley) Mout. Like Charles Edward Hertog, his adoptive father, Lucien became the legal adviser to the Board of Directors of De Beers.

After the war Lucien was made Second-in-Command of the **Kimberley Regiment** and was promoted to Major. He remained active in the Kimberley Regiment until his death on 9 November 1980. Read his full story here:

[Hertog, Lucien](#)



Bob Blumenthal

Trevor Toubé says: 'My uncle Bob, **Robert Reuben Blumenthal**, was the younger the two bothers of my mother **Violet Toubé** (née Blumenthal). Born in 1915. He went to Witwatersrand University and qualified as a mining engineer. He joined up at the start of WWII and was captured in **North Africa**. (There are differing family accounts of when and where he was captured.)

There is a British Army archive record that he was a **POW in Italy** from 1943. I believe he was married when he went to war, and that the marriage ended in a divorce after he returned to South Africa. His experiences during his captivity where many were sent as slave labour in German coal mines, were such that he was unable to go underground again, effectively ending his career as a mining engineer.

Solly Ginsburg

Solly Ginsburg was in Artillery. As he loaded the shells into the cannons, he is reputed to have kissed each one and said: 'This is for you Mr Hitler!'

Haberfeld Cyril – and Gus

June Haberfeld, Gus's daughter-in-law, says that Gus and his sister Girlie as well as his wife Ann, were associated with the Kimberley regiment. Their duties were to the section detailed to protect Kimberley. Gus was sorry that he could not accompany his younger brother Cyril up North. Like others he never spoke to his family about the War. Cyril chronicled the community in his centenary booklet that you can read here.

https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Community_files/Haberfeld%201.pdf

Basil Louis Benjamin – Natal Carbineers



Sandra Meltz, his daughter, writes: My father **Basil Benjamin** (seen on the left in this picture) was in the Natal Carbineers. He was at Cedar College when the war broke out and ran away to join the army. He was sent 'up North' where he fought. Then after that he

was shipped off to Italy where he seems to have walked all the way from the bottom of the toe of Italy – to the top of the boot. He never wanted to walk again after that!

We never learnt much from him about the war. We only knew that not many of his friends in his unit came back. I don't think he ever got over the time he spent in the war. I believe he was a 'sapper' [a soldier responsible for engineering tasks such as building and repairing roads and bridges, laying and clearing mines, etc]. There was a story told that he let some of his men play cards late one evening and they were bombed. I don't think he ever forgave himself.

I think a man called Trevor Sassin came back with him. It is a name I remember. I know he knew the famous Sailor Malan very well. But unfortunately, I don't know any other information, maybe some of your other members can shed some light.' This picture is of Basil, probably somewhere in Italy.





Jack Frank

Jack joined the Kimberley Regiment, and although he did not see active service up North, he became a lieutenant stationed first at Robert's Heights in Pretoria, then in Durban at Snell Parade. Later his partner who was looking after his legal practice died and he was forced to return to Kimberley. He Married Hannah née Bergman in 1939. Above they are seen with baby Alma, born in 1942 and on the left Alma is just 11 weeks old.



Medical Corps

Many **Kimberley Jewish doctors** enlisted and served in the Medical Corps.

Doctors Julius and Noel Kretzmar



Geraldine Auerbach née Kretzmar wrote: My uncle **Julius Kretzmar** (pictured left on the left) was in GP partnership with my father, **Noel Kretzmar** (right) who was his older brother.

Julius went 'up North' as a Captain in the Medical Corp and saw service in North Africa, the Middle East and Italy.

My father, **Noel Kretzmar**, too old to enlist, created and chaired the **Red Cross Medical Depot** in Kimberley (and my mother Beryl led the Red Cross Volunteer Aid Detachment). The South African Red Cross had a major role in the war in Africa – up to and including Egypt. In cooperation with St John's, their role was to raise funds for road and air ambulances and to make hospital supplies for military hospitals. The materials were provided, and local volunteers worked to Red Cross designs. In particular the Red Cross was responsible for secondary hospitals, the 'convalescent homes' and also supplied comforts for invalided soldiers, both White and Coloured. Their aim as to make life as comfortable as possible for men in the fighting line and for casualties. At the end of 1942 both Noel and Beryl were personally thanked by letter for the hard work and time that they had put into making the Kimberley Volunteer Detachment such a success, and for their cheerful cooperation at all times.



As all doctors in Kimberley were keen to serve, they came to an arrangement that was unique and earned the admiration and envy of all doctors on active service in South Africa. This was the **Kimberley Medical Practitioners Pool**, initiated and chaired by Noel. All the practices cooperated and were pooled, with each practice remaining open under its own name. A committee ran the practices with the senior men left behind and with whatever help they could get from young doctors and even those invalided out of the army. All the

doctors' income, military and civilian went into the pool, all the expenses were paid, and each month, the balance was divided equally amongst the firms, so that each doctor, whether on service or at home received the same income as he might have if there had been no war.

You can read Noel's long family story here: [Kretzmar, Noel](#)



In this picture Julius Kretzmar is photographed in his Army Medical Corp outfit

– with his sister **Ashne Kretzmar** as an Air Force Adjutant to the Commander at **21 Air School** near the Kimberley airport.

Dr Shirley Mitchell Lewis

Raymond Lewis writes: 'My father **Shirley Mitchell Lewis**, born in Kimberley in 1924, was educated at Christian Brothers College. He studied medicine at Cape Town University (at that time going by the name of Mitchell Lewis).

'His studies were interrupted by the war. He served in the Medical Corps in Namibia. In the 1950s he went to London to specialise in haematology. Mitch Lewis had a long and distinguished career as a Consultant Haematologist – working at the Royal Postgraduate Medical Centre, Hammersmith Hospital.

'He served as the **President of British Society for Haematology** from 1983-84, He is especially known as the co-author of the much lauded and revered standard laboratory reference book, *Practical Haematology*.' Read the story of the Lewis and Dr Solomon Zweiback (his uncle) family here: [Lewis, Coleman and Family](#)



Dr Abraham Goldberg

Older brother of **Issie Goldberg** and another brother-in-law of **Ivor Haas** (see above in the Air Force) **Dr Abraham Goldberg** spent time in Italy in the Medical Corps.

Abe's experience, so vividly described by his children, gives us some idea of what war was like 'up North'. Here we see him in uniform in May 1941.

Abe had excelled at CBC in Kimberley and won the second prize for general proficiency across all CBC schools in the British Empire in standard 9. For this he received a leather-bound set of the collected essays of Macaulay which is now being read by the fourth generation of his progeny! Abe studied medicine at University of Cape Town, graduating in 1939, the year after Groote Schuur Hospital was founded. His house jobs were at that hospital and in Pretoria and Botswana (in those days Bechuanaland Protectorate)



It was from there, that in about January of 1941 he volunteered for the South African Army and proceeded to Johannesburg for his basic training with the **Rand Light Infantry**, destined to become part of the **South African Second Division** under General, and then **Field Marshal Montgomery**.



While in training in Johannesburg Abe dated a young girl, Bussie Busansky. On learning in May of 1941 that he was shortly to be shipped out to North Africa he asked her to marry him. The wedding took place on 8 June 1941 in Johannesburg through the indulgence of Abe's commanding officer. He had placed Abe at the head of the African troops who were to be shipped out a month after the Regiment. This afforded the young couple the time not only for the marriage but for a brief honeymoon at the Vaal Dam.

During the very **dangerous journey north to the war front**, with several thousand desperately seasick African troops on board and zig-zagging through the submarine infested waters of the Red Sea, one of the VIPs on board became seriously ill with an infected appendix. The senior officer on board the ship did not feel qualified to operate

nor did the doctors on board a hospital ship accompanying the convoy. It fell to the newly qualified young Abe to perform the emergency surgery in a makeshift Operating Room. He had to train an assistant to administer the anaesthetic. This was the age of ether and urge as he may, he could not persuade the young man to drip sufficient ether on to the mask. So, he was forced to operate with the patient insufficiently sedated and with his muscles extremely tense. The captain had offered to slow the vessel down and cease the zig-zagging during the procedure but with the knowledge that U-boats had been sighted in the area, Abe demurred and proceeded to operate with the vessel in helter-skelter mode. The patient survived and all ended well. No medals however were awarded!

Abe served as a **Captain** and a **Regimental Medical Officer** of the **Rand Light Infantry** (RLI) in North Africa and participated in the difficult evacuation of the forces from Gazala, Libya. He tells of the miles and miles of a single file of vehicles retreating in stop-go fashion down the Gazala escarpment in darkness, potentially at the mercy of artillery and aircraft. This was the cream of the Allies' forces and, were they to have been discovered and intercepted, Egypt would have surely fallen to the Germans, with untold consequences for the war.

Abe remembers that the ambulance in which his unit was travelling inexplicably and suddenly turned its lights on, causing huge consternation. He stopped the vehicle, jumped out and smashed the headlights with an axe!

The retreat wound its way towards the "**fortress**" of **Tobruk** but on arrival there, his group was met by a South African officer who, in a flat panic, pointed to a distant onrushing column of German armour and ordered them to turn and race north. This was what saved them – by minutes – from being caught by the Germans in the Tobruk "fortress" – and joining the other 10,000 South Africans who were captured. Many of those imprisoned never made it back and others who did, suffered terribly after the war from many different physical and mental maladies.

Abe was later at the front in the crucial battle of **El Alamein, Egypt** where the **Rand Light Infantry** was with the Allied forces that drove back the German and Italian divisions. This was the turning point of the war in North Africa and the West.

He ascribes the deafness that he suffered later in life to the terrible noise of the artillery barrage that preceded the battle. The main heavy guns were directly behind his position. He described the noise of those guns with great wonder even 70 years later. Up to the end of his life, Abe Goldberg had vivid dreams of the horror of those days at El Alamein.



He was required to accompany the forward troops as they penetrated the German lines. 'The troops' he explained 'could crawl on their bellies. We had to drive forward in this huge, exposed, unarmoured ambulance, an absolute plum target!'

The South Africans bore the full brunt of the early drive through the German lines until they were relieved after the first 4 days. Their losses were horrendous, and Abe was faced with triaging the worst of them and sending them to the rear.

Abe came back from war a changed person. He became much more serious and while not anti-social, somewhat aloof from society. He remained this way until late into his sixties when he began to relax and enter the social milieu with a greater sense of ease.

After his discharge from the army in 1942, he commenced private medical practice in a tiny Transvaal town, Naboomspruit and then for many years in Brakpan, a small town about 25 miles from Johannesburg. See his story on the family pages here: [Goldberg, Abe](#)

Joe Salkinder

Dr Joe Salkinder served in the Medical Corps in Egypt

Hirsh Jacobson – Army

Hirsh enlisted in the Army, served up North and in Italy but we don't have any details

Sam Ellis – Army

Sam Ellis enlisted in the Army, but we don't have any details

Archie Sandler – Army



Archie Sandler enlisted in the Army, but I don't have any details

Royal Navy

Mendel (Emmanuel) Apter, (1921 – 1975) the second son (of the five children of Solomon and Tetcha Apter – Lionel, Mendel, Alec, Nina and Ethyl) see [Apter Family](#)) was born in Kimberley in 1921. In about 1940, partly against his parent's wishes, Mendel joined the Royal Navy in Simonstown and soon found himself in Portsmouth. Mendel was assigned to crew on



a frigate doing convoy escort through the Mediterranean to Malta. He was a man of great charisma, generosity and ingenuity. You can read of his escapades in the navy in the story [Fresh Lemons](#) by his friend Hector Kleinot, who revered Mendel as a great friend and mentor.

Back in Kimberley having survived the siege of Malta and already proved his prowess at making money, trading in lemons, he and his younger brother Alec joined his father's wholesale business S Apter & Co, Southey Street.



Sylvia Apter wrote

I enclose a photo of my aunt Sylvia (I am named after her) who was killed during her service in the SA Airforce. I have her red cloth and some wonderful photos taken during her time in East Africa. I have tried to find out if there were any other Jewish women serving in the airforce without any luck.

Louis Toube

From the family's recollection:-

Our Dad, Louis Toube was an NCO and volunteered in the Kimberley Regiment. He served in North Africa under Montgomery, was at the battle of El Alamein in Egypt, and was lightly wounded in the leg. He joined with two good Kimberley friends, Les Sullivan (of Sullivan's Bottle Works in Beaconsfield) and Les MacDonald (Estate Agent). All of them returned safely to Kimberley and remained staunch friends.

Louis ended the war as a Sergeant Major (NCO) guarding in a POW camp in Italy. He was related by marriage to Solly Odes who was a real decorated war hero. (Solly's older brother Philip Odes married Louis sister Anne Toube). Louis is first left in this picture





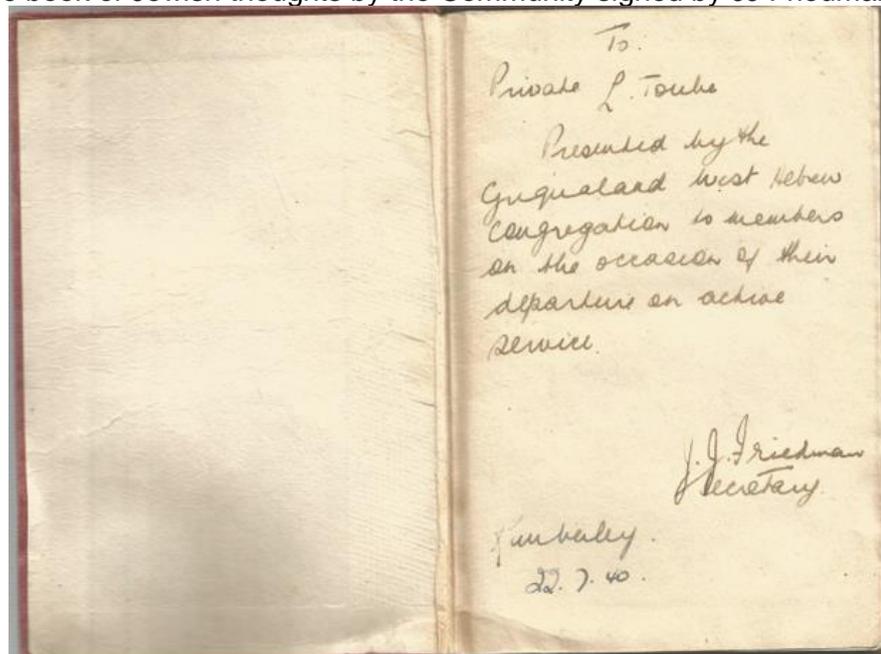
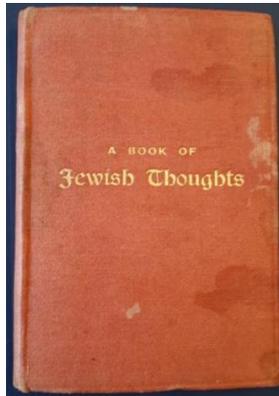
Above Louis taking aim, below are Louis' Medals



South African WW2 Medals are all officially named and their service files are available at the SADF archives in Pretoria Louis' **WW2 Group of Six Consists of:**

1. 1939-1945 Star - Originally Impressed on Reverse: **22904 L Toube**
2. The Africa Star - Originally Impressed on Reverse: **22904 L Toube**
3. The Italy Star - Originally Impressed on Reverse: **22904 LToube**
4. 1939/45 -The Defence Medal - Originally Impressed on the Rim: **22904 L Toube**
5. 1939/45 - British War Medal - Originally Impressed on the Rim: **22904 L Toube**
6. Africa Service Medal (*Sterling Silver*) - Originally Impressed on the Rim:
22904 L. Toube

Louis was also given the book of Jewish thoughts by the Community signed by JJ Friedman



Some words about the ILH/KR in World War Two

The Imperial Light Horse and Kimberley Regiment (The ILH/KR) are both famous South African Volunteer Regiments. The ILH/KR had fought at the battle of Monto Casino and were on their advance to Florence then Rome.

During World War II, the Kimberley Regiment fought in Italy in 1944 and 1945, forming the Motor Battalion together with the Imperial Light Horse Regiment in the Armoured Brigade of the 6th South African Armoured Division throughout the Italian Campaign. Winning Battle Honours and awards for bravery, the Kimberley Regiment also suffered more casualties than any other South African regiment in the campaign.

The Light Horse Regiment (LHR), formerly the Imperial Light Horse (ILH), is a reserve unit of the South African Army. The regiment is an armoured car reconnaissance unit. It is part of the South African Army Armour Formation and is based at Mount Collins in Sandton, Johannesburg.

World War II

At the outbreak of World War II, the 1st ILH was brought up to strength and the 2nd ILH reformed. Although both units were infantry battalions, 2 ILH was soon transferred to the **South African Tank Corps** in order to form the 13th Armoured Car Company, which in turn was amalgamated with Royal Natal Carbineers in order to create the 6th Armoured Car Regiment. This unit later amalgamated with the 4th Armoured Car Regiment to form the **4th/6th Armoured Car Regiment**.

The 1st ILH sailed from Durban to Egypt on 10 April 1941, as advance guard of the South African 2nd Infantry Division. Less than a year later the Regiment, as part of the 3rd Brigade of the South African 1st Infantry Division, played a crucial part in stopping Rommel's Afrika Korps during the First Battle of El Alamein. The unit subsequently took part in other fighting in North Africa, including the Second Battle of El Alamein.

The Regiment was subsequently shipped to South Africa where it was reorganized - 1 and 2 ILH Regiments were amalgamated with the Kimberley Regiment to form the Imperial Light Horse/Kimberley Regiment (ILH/KR). This combined Regiment sailed for Egypt again in September 1943 to join the South African 6th Armoured Division in the role of a motorized battalion under command of Colonel R. Reeves-Moore, DSO, MC.

In April 1944 the Division sailed for Italy, disembarking at Taranto on 21 April where the ILH/KR was attached to the 12th South African Motor Brigade, which was operating on a front in the mountains above Monte Cassino. After a series of battles north of Rome the Regiment entered Florence on 4 August 1944, then as part of the 11th South African Armoured Brigade.

The South African 6th Armoured Division was then placed under the command of the United States 5th Army and was given the task of attacking the Gothic Line, which culminated in the capture of Monte Porro del Bagno in September 1944. During the heavy fighting almost, a quarter of the Regiment was killed or wounded. After taking part in other actions, including breaking through the German defences at Bologna, the Regiment fought its last serious engagement at Finale south of Venice. The ILH Band led the Allied victory parade at Monza on 14 May 1945. The ILH/KR were then occupied with guarding duties in northern Italy and returned home in August 1945 for demobilisation.

The 6th South African Armoured Division was the second armoured division of the South African Army and was formed during World War II. Established in early 1943, it was based on a nucleus of men from the former 1st South African Infantry Division who had returned to South Africa after the Second Battle of El Alamein in late 1942. The division was initially transferred to Egypt for training, after which it served in the Allied campaign in Italy during 1944 and 1945. In Italy, the division was initially deployed as part of the British Eighth Army, under command of Lieutenant-General Oliver Leese, and was then transferred to the U.S. Fifth Army, under Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, for the remainder of the Italian Campaign. The division operated as a strongly reinforced division and was frequently used to spearhead the advance of the Corps and Army to which it was attached. They returned home after the end of the war in Italy and were disbanded in 1946.

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## **The Union of Jewish Women involvement in the War**

The Kimberley Branch of **The Union of Jewish Women** was established in 1939 just when war was looming.

They immediately went into war support mode, as their report stated: 'At our very first meeting we were addressed by Mr **Harold Sagar** (see the Sagar story under 'Families') representing the British Empire Service League (BESL) explaining the National Emergency Service and it was unanimously resolved that the Union of Jewish Women as a body would offer their services to the Mayoress for National Emergency Service. For most of the following years our Branch was actively concerned with War work. Groups joined SAWAS (the South African Women's' Auxiliary Service) doing canteen duties, others joining sewing groups and knitting groups. Our fundraising was mainly for war funds'. In the minutes of later meetings, we see too, that fortnightly dances for soldiers were held at the School Room

which were very well patronised. The conveners were the Lincow sisters, **Sadie David** and **Hilda Hotz** and two different women were in charge each time. Gifts were given to Jewish soldiers leaving for the North.

You can read the full history of the UJW in Kimberley from 1939 to about 1986. [UJW History of the Kimberley Branch.pdf](#)

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Conclusions

Dave Apter, son of Mendel and Winnie says: My mother told me that, as a young lady, the WWII years in Kimberley were fantastic with all the young men from around the world visiting for training as pilots ...

However, there is no doubt that Kimberley suffered, but then with the world at war, it was to be accepted, and there were many other towns and cities far worse off than the Diamond City. There was a semi-military takeover of Kimberley that did ease cash-flow matters somewhat and keep the coffers ticking along. There were many training schools, especially the pilots and bombers school near the airport. The entire Alexandersfontein Hotel too, was donated to the Union Defence Force by De Beers Consolidated Mines. It was utilised as an officer's mess. (It still is today). [Read my article on [Alexandersfontein](#) Kimberley's fashionable resort. Ed]

The Mint – the munitions factory started by De Beers engineer George Labram during the siege of Kimberley – employed many of those disadvantaged by their colour, and they pushed out countless millions of shells, bullets, and for some time, barrels of guns. An amazing fact is that at its peak of production the Mint put out some 20 million bullet components per month for the .303 round. – as this South African World War II poster circa 1940 shows. [George Labrum, who had designed and made 'Long Cecil', the gun that stands on the 'Monument' was ironically killed in the Boer War, when a shell from the Boers' 'Long Tom' exploded in his room at the Grand Hotel. Ed]



During the war years 1939-1945 **shops were closed on Thursday afternoons** to allow shop assistants to participate in voluntary war work. About 68% did take up War work but by February 1945 most thought that Thursday afternoon was a holiday. As a result, they played sport or lounged at home. Thursday afternoons off, soon reverted to work time.

The war proved to be an **economic stimulant for South Africa**, although wartime inflation and lagging wages contributed to social protests and strikes after the end of the war. Driven by reduced imports, the manufacturing and service industries expanded rapidly, and the flow of blacks to the towns became a flood. By the end of the War, more blacks than whites lived in the towns. They set up vast squatter camps on the outskirts of the cities making improvised shelters from whatever materials they could find. They also began to flex their political muscle.

They all came home again....

The Jewish boys of Kimberley who had served 'up North' and in Italy, all came home again. They took up or renewed their professional and business activities and got on with their family lives. They hardly ever spoke of their harrowing experiences. At least now we have some of their individual stories and a better insight as to what they went through, to save the world from Hitler's tyranny.

Here is a transcription from an article that I found just today, 18 June 2021, in a box of my father's memorabilia. It is from the Diamond Fields Advertiser undated but probably in 1946. It is headed

JEWISH PERSONNEL WELCOMED HOME

Function in Constance Hall

Jewish men and women from Kimberley who had returned from active service were welcomed home last night at a social and dance in the Constance Hall which was attended by a large crowd of Jewish friends and relations of the serving members. The function was organised by the Union of Jewish Women.

In welcoming the returned soldiers, Dr Noel Kretzmar, Chairman of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation last arrived which they six years, the day they home' to the large who had been away on joy in their hearts and that all had come safely years of war and grim be with their friends and

ANSWERED THE CALL

During the past few Europe for freedom-become less and less had become precarious, war came the Jewish call to arms, not looking for excitement were convinced that or freedom for anyone, while tyrants were Europe. It was a tough with courage and 'and our hearts went mentioned in been decorated for



said that the day had at have been waiting for, for could say 'welcome number of Jewish people service. They said it with with great thankfulness through the hazards if six fighting and were able to families once more.

years, he said, space in loving people had and even the right to live especially for Jews. When men had answered the because they were and adventure, but they there would be no peace and least of all for Jews, allowed to reign in job, and you went into it determination' he said, with you. Many had been dispatches, others had gallantly in the field, and

those at home had been very proud of them'

THE HOME FRONT

Those who had not been able to join in the active fighting had carried on at home. The men had filled jobs on the home front and had joined the National Volunteer Brigade. The women had been magnificent. He paid a warm tribute to their work. A large number he said had joined the women's forces and had served in the Union, while some had gone up North; many were still there. Others who had not been able to join up for full time service had worked continuously with the various women's organisations and had devoted much time to war charities and also to the Jewish cause in Palestine and overseas.

Mrs Fanny Brown, Chairman of the Union of Jewish Women, also welcomed back the troops. 'We rejoice to have you with us again and we wish you the best of luck in your return to civilian life,' she said.

Mr Louis David, replying on behalf of the Jewish soldiers and ex-soldiers, paid a special tribute to the women and said they had done a grand job of work and by their efforts at home had done much to keep up the morale of the men at the front. 'We thank them, not only for what they have done, but for the spirit in which their task was performed' he added.

My father finished his speech by saying 'They formed part of a young force and were comparatively lightly armed, and they faced an enemy seemingly oblivious to the rules of international warfare, **but their deeds throughout their many campaigns up North, and as part of the Sixth Division would be written in the annals of the Jewish community.**

How did he know, I wonder (or did I know for that matter?) that one day, his daughter Geraldine would reach out and compile the stories of those individual soldiers, from memories and pictures contributed by their children and grandchildren, and that she would one day make a website to highlight and memorialise the 'annals of the Kimberley Jewish Community!'

If you want to read more about the North African Campaigns on Wikipedia – look here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_African_campaign

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_North_African_Campaign_battles

see below for a short sketch of Genera Smuts – and some feedback.

Jan Christian Smuts

I think it's worth spending a minute or two looking at the remarkable career of Jannie Smuts, and the way his philosophy of making things whole and putting parts together to make wholes has changed the world. He was born on a farm near Malmesbury in the Cape in 1870. He started school only at age 12, when his older brother, who was the only child to be educated died. He progressed rapidly, got distinctions in Literature and Science at Victoria College, Stellenbosch, and won a scholarship to Cambridge where he got a double first in Law. This is what Wikipedia says in brief about his world-encompassing achievements:

Jan Christian Smuts (aka Jan Christiaan Smuts), [OM](#), [CH](#), [ED](#), [KC](#), [FRS](#) (24 May 1870–11 September 1950) was a prominent South African and [Commonwealth statesman](#), military leader, and philosopher. He served as a Boer [General](#) during the Boer War, a British General during the First World War and was appointed [Field Marshal](#) by [King George VI](#) during the Second World War. In addition to various [cabinet](#) appointments, he served as [Prime Minister](#) of the [Union of South Africa](#) from 1919 until 1924 and from 1939 until 1948. From 1917 to 1919 he was one of five members of the British [War Cabinet](#), helping to create the [Royal Air Force](#). He played a leading part in the post-war settlements at the end of both world wars, making significant contributions towards the creation of the [League of Nations](#) and the [United Nations](#). He did much to redefine the relationship between Britain and the Dominions and Colonies, leading to the formation of the [British Commonwealth](#).

Feedback:

Rick David says: What an extraordinary group of people. I am in awe of them! South Africa was their adopted country, and there were Nazi sympathizers and appeasers there, as there were in the US and the UK. German South West Africa was right next door! So, I think they were fighting for an Allied victory over the Axis, and at the same time fighting to save the lives of their fellow Jews in Europe.

David Lenhoff says: What is curious is that when you met the people mentioned in your article and other returned service people, they seemed so ordinary with so few knowing what they had achieved during the war and the sacrifices they made to do that.

Natalie Sussman says: Dear Geraldine, not only do you have a gift of reaching out to people, but you have a gift of telling their stories and giving us all a treasured family history for our grandchildren and great grandchildren to pass on to future generations. In my family, I have a 16-year-old and a 14-year-old fourth generation. My 9-year-old is learning about the war and very proud to tell her class about her Oupa Cecil and now thanks to you she has a photo and a story. Thank you for your dedication and the many hours you devote to this project. I know it is a labour of love for our hometown and the Jewish Community, and I feel sure you know how very much we appreciate your outstanding talents as our historian.

Kimberley Jews and the Second World War, 1939 – 1945

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, September 2020 updated September 2021, from stories and photographs sent by family members of those who served, and with added research.