

# Jacob and Rebecca Berman and their daughter Sally Robinson

## 'Like Lorries in the Night'



Sally Robinson (above aged 19)

Written by **Colin Robinson** in July 2023  
in loving memory of his mother

**Sally (Sarah ) Robinson 'Eishet Chayil'**  
born Sally Berman in Malmesbury  
and also of his grandparents

**Jacob and Rebecca Berman**

Jacob (also known as Yankel or Jack) and  
Rebeca (Becky) Berman (below)



My mother Sally Robinson's family, the Bermans, lived in Malmesbury from about 1914 when my grandfather settled there.

They left in 1970, a year prior to my barmitzvah. We had close ties with the village and very fond memories. We still visit when the opportunity arises.



On more than one occasion before they passed away, I took my aged parents there where my late mother gave us detailed guided tours of the village of her youth and also laid out a map of where various community members lived.

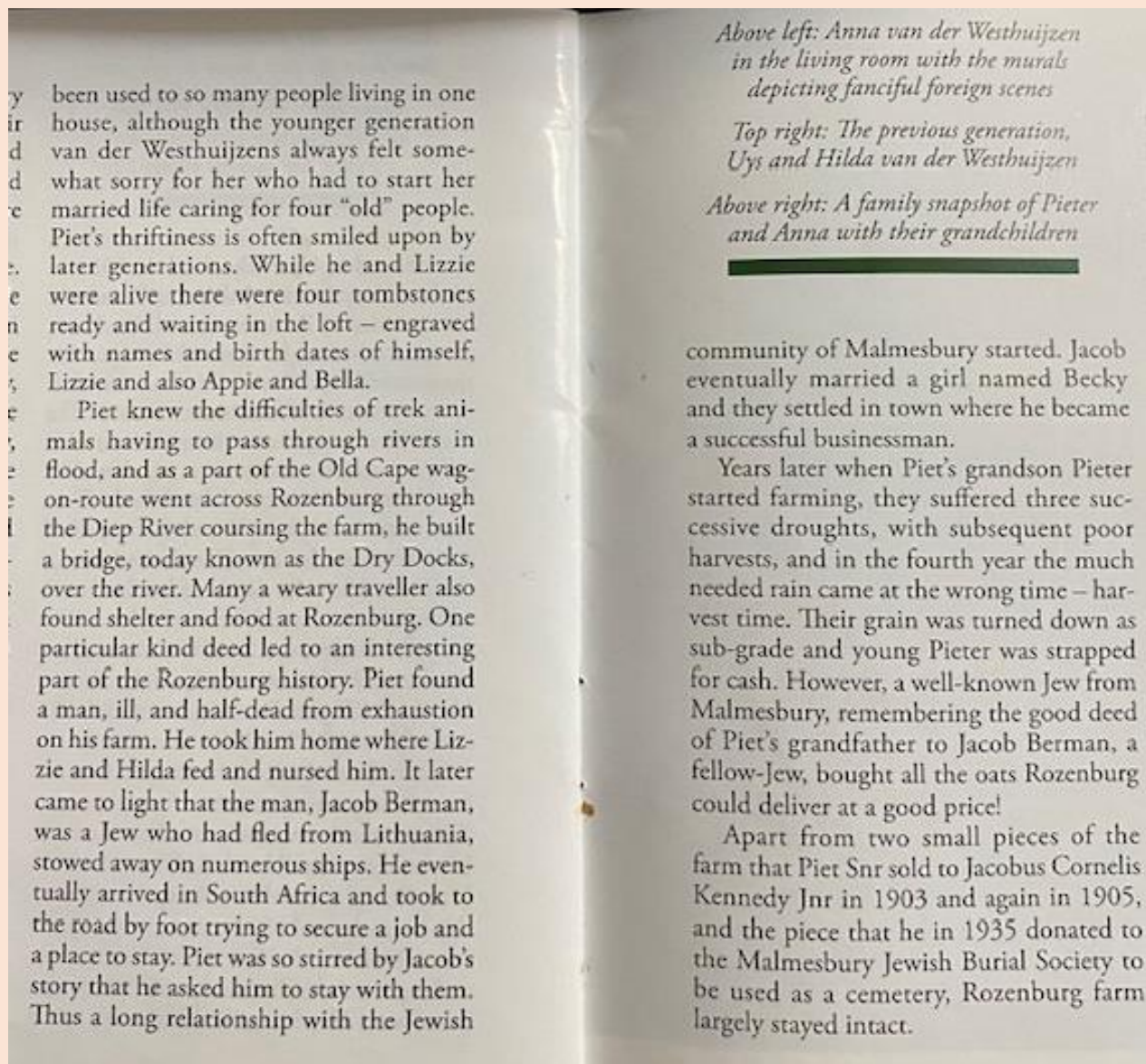
One memorable visit was around 2007. I stopped in at the local tourism office and found a magazine on display which had a cover photo of the Van der Westhuizen descendants explaining their long history in the community. It was a backdate but knowing my mother would be very interested, I convinced the attendant to give me the copy and triumphantly returned to my waiting parents.

Then while Mom popped into the local bakery to buy her favourite *vloorbroad* and *mosbolletjies*, I paged through the said journal – and imagine my surprise when in the interview, the most recent Mev van der Westhuizen included a piece about the *Joodse* family friends, the Bermans. Mom thought I was kidding when I read her the text, and that very evening she had a warm and hearty *gesels* (chat) with these newer generation descendants.

Thus, was revealed the significant story of the Berman's role in how Piet Van Der Westhuizen came to be a close friend of the Jews and eventually to donate a piece of his farm to be the Malmesbury Jewish cemetery. The article which you can read below, says that:

'one particular kind deed led to an interesting part of the Rozenberg history. Piet found an ill man, half dead from exhaustion on his farm. He took him home where Lizzie and Hilda fed and nursed him. It later came to light that the man Jacob Berman was a Jew, fleeing from Lithuania.' ... Piet was so stirred by Jacob's story that he asked him to stay with them. Thus, a long relationship with the Jewish Community of Malmesbury started. The article said: 'Jacob married a girl called Becky and they settled in the town where he became a successful businessman.'

The article goes on to relate how years later, Jacob Berman was kind to the Van der Westhuizen family when they experienced a severe drought and flood, helping to sell their ruined crop at a good price. This was part of a warm relationship between our family and the Jewish



Community, and Piet Van der Westhuizen, which included Piet donating the piece of his farm Rozenberg for the Jewish burial ground and helping to build and maintain it.

Jacob Berman's grandson Colin Robinson continues:

What follows are details of my grandparents along with memories and thoughts that come to mind to flesh out the details. Some of them may not be absolutely accurate but that is how I remember them.

### **Jacob (Yankel or Jack) Berman from Plungyan**

My grandfather was Jacob/Yankel Berman (born Behr, in Plungyan, Lithuania in 1894). He was one of the oldest in his family – many would follow him to South Africa later. Tragically, in 1941, along with their community, his three younger brothers and their families were killed by the Nazis (actually by local Lithuanian 'patriots') in the nearby Kushan forest.

His parents and many other siblings were saved this fate because they had reached South Africa in the years before. These were Singers (his mother's side) and Bermans and Schers (Avra Scher's Bobbe, Golda, was my grandfather's sister. Both Avra and her mother Vicky, recently submitted info to your website on their family in [Durbanville](#)) and many, many others.

Jacob Behr (now called Berman) had been to New York. But he hated the crowded city tenements and decided to head for South Africa in about 1914. He walked from Cape Town to Malmesbury. I have tried to ascertain what drew him there, besides the rural setting which was much like Plungyan. He had no family that I am aware of in Malmesbury although there were a few *landsleit* there. Perhaps he was on his way further north?

As we have read in the magazine article above, he became very ill just outside of Malmesbury and was found near what was called Drydocks – a bridge over the river, on the farm Rozenberg. The Van der Westhuizen family took him in and nursed him back to health. They became lifelong friends and my grandfather later rented a section of their land for his animals, 'Die Kamp' as he called it – near the same Drydocks already mentioned.

I remember the Van der Westhuizens. They even came through to the Gardens Shul in Cape Town for my Bar-mitzvah in 1971. Old Mr Van der Westhuizen also always delivered homegrown roses to my grandmother on her birthday. Not surprisingly then, I grew up with the impression that the Afrikaners were our warmest friends. (I knew the British /English weren't - though our families culturally speaking aspired to imitate their ways. My father, from Kimberley, grew up in the shadow of the Empire!)

My grandfather was an *egte-ware* (real) *Boerejood* (FarmerJew). He never really spoke or read English, but was fluent in Afrikaans (if my memory serves me correctly – without the Malmesbury 'bray' that his children would acquire slightly). The language in the house was Yiddish. The children though fluent in Afrikaans spoke English to my grandmother.

Grandpa did have fields and farmed small crops of mielies and prizewinning *pampoene* (pumpkins) some of which were to be found on the metal *dak* (roof) to ripen in the sun. Besides the rented land at Drydocks on Rozenberg, he also owned a large patch opposite the homestead that still stood open (as was) on my most recent visit about four years ago. For all this he never regarded himself as a farmer but as a speculator, dealing in wool. I remember well

the shearing season and helping to fill the huge sacks by jumping up and down inside! He also held animals, often fattening them for slaughter.

More than once he took me as a child to the *slaghuis* (abattoir) at the entrance of the village (and I saw how they peeled off the *vel* (outer skin) which was quite shocking for a little city child). He also traded in skins some of which were mats in their large house.

### **Rebecca Groll – also from a Plungyan family**

My grandmother was Becky Groll, Z"L also from a family of Plungyanners (Grolls /Shers/ Millers and even Auerbuch). She was born in 1901, soon after the family arrived in South Africa. Her father was a founding father of the original Claremont shul though they moved to Robertson a year or two later.

She met and married my grandfather in 1921. They bought a house on the verges of Malmesbury village on the old Piketberg Road (later Voortrekker Road) just next to the *tronk* (jail). They especially wanted to be within walking distance of the shul/cheder for the future children of which there were two, **Harry Berman**, born in 1924 and then my mother, **Sally Berman** born in 1929. (Mom passed away in Cape Town in 2009)

My Mom Sally Berman married my Dad **Ralph Robinson** from Kimberley in 1953 in the Gardens Shul in Cape Town. The Bridesmaids were L-R Sheila Kramer (later Sofer, in Malmesbury) Ethel, sister of Ralph, and Katie Menn (later Schweyd) childhood friend of Sally (her grandparents are buried in the Malmesbury cemetery).



Dad, **Ralph Robinson**, born in Kimberley in 1919 to Lithuanian/Latvian parents who met and married in Philadelphia (No, not the village between Cape Town and Malmesbury, the bigger one in the USA! ) Under the name Robinson, my father was accepted by De Beers for a scholarship (Jews were usually excluded from consideration) and he studied engineering. During the war he was posted to Cape Town as an engineer watching the coast for German U-boats! He settled in Worcester and met my mother who was visiting her family in nearby Robertson. (Dad passed away 2012) They lived in Worcester for a few years but then moved to CT where their three children were born. And so, I was raised in Green Point /Sea Point within the Jewish community and schooled at Herzlia Jewish School - along with my sisters - Fay (born 1956) and Ellen (born 1959). I was the middle of this sandwich, born in 1958.

We were city kids but enjoyed going out to visit my grandparents at least every fortnight, either for weekends or on a Sunday and then almost always for all the major Yomtovim. Though this was already at the tail end of the community's 'glory days', we enjoyed wonderful times there often with our cousins Ivan, Hazel and Clive Berman - the children of my mother's brother, Harry. He had preceded my mother's departure to Cape Town by a few years and married my aunt Ada Levinson, living in Tamboerskloof where he had an electrical business.



In this picture taken in 1958 are Hazel Berman, Fay Robinson, Nanny holding Clive Berman and Ivan Berman. Ivan is holding me, his little cousin Colin Robinson (my sister Ellen was not yet born)

As children we had free range in Malmesbury in and around the farmstead, and often accompanied either grandparent in their daily activities. In our time this would be going out to the camp in the *bakkie* (truck) with my grandfather or more often walking into the village with my grandmother. Here we would go to the bank (my grandmother did all the business accounting) go shopping, running errands and to the tearoom with my grandma. where she 'held court' with her friends. The Janolises (?) the Greek tearoom owners, would serve us children 'Coke floats' - ice cream in Cola – a welcome treat and quencher of the thirst brought on by the heat of late mornings in the Swartland.



In this picture above, taken on the driveway of their home in Malmesbury circa 1964 we see Jacob and Becky Berman with five of their six grandchildren: L- R Colin (b.1958) and Fay Robinson (b. 1956) Hazel Berman (b. 1955) and her brothers Ivan (b. 1953) and Clive (b. 1957) (my younger sister Ellen Robinson (b.1959) is absent for some reason.)

My grandmother, Rebecca, though fluent in Afrikaans, styled herself more as an 'English lady' and this included her parasol for those walks into the village. She also held afternoon tea meetings with various women of the village on different days of the week. These included the Jewish women of the village, speaking Yiddish with the older *vibbe* (wives) and in English with the younger generation with whom she had equally comfortable interactions. (I may be wrong, but they seemed to be drawn to her as the dowager sage of the much-diminished community )

On other days the Afrikaner *tannies* (aunts) would come to tea. Even, to my mother's chagrin, her old teachers, a Mis Van Niekerk and the formidable Mis Luyt. Granny, as we called her, was an avid fan of the weekend newspaper puzzle, and a follower of her shares on the stock market. But by far, her favourite pastime /obsession was knitting and crocheting – another reason many women sought out her advice. As a child I never once bought a jersey even as part of our ubiquitous school uniforms, they were all grannymade, around her tea table. The only time she ever stopped knitting was just prior to shabbes, when all such hand work was put aside even though she was not strict about other shabbat observance. (Similarly, my mother kept an odd tradition of locking the piano shut on late Friday afternoon for the same reason !)



The walk down the gentle hill to the village would also allow us to pop in at various *shopkes* – Mr Brenner ? the watchmaker; the Indian Grocers; the Meyers brothers, Harry and Cyril who were General Dealers that carried everything imaginable: brooms, bicycles, sacks of grain. (There was always more than one mouse scampering about. I can still remember the unique, musty smell of the *Algemeene Handelaar*. What interested us most, were those square glass bottles of penny sweets. (The walk back to the farmstead was uphill and always very slow with grandma.)



Then there was the post office: and the Sternbergs shoe shop near the village tearoom. A highlight was a 'modern' department store, called *Handelshuis?*, where payments were cabled in chutes to a central teller. This was fascinating and unusual to us children in the 1960s and definitely not seen by us in Cape Town. (Probably long outmoded ) .

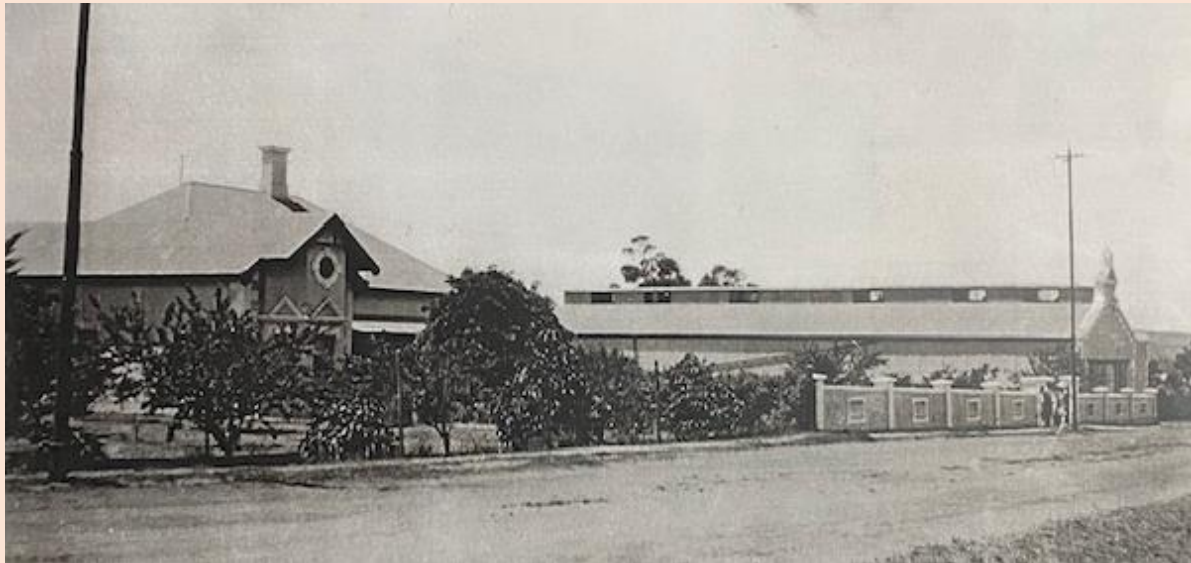
I do not recall especially my grandma's cooking and baking – but then she had maids to do this. Recently I even asked my mother's cousins if they recalled her dishes. She certainly knew how to cook and bake -especially *yomtov gerichten* (and pre-Pesach saw a veritable home industry of *pletzelach*, *taigelach* and *pomeratzen* etc ) but I struggle to recall

her flavours and the smells of her kitchen.

What I do recall well are the maids cleaning of the fish on the backyard wall – scales flying in all directions and the cats hungrily awaiting bits. Also of course I remember the defeathering of the chickens – the ones we had seen fattened up in special little chicken coops that resembled miniature metal houses (death row) – and the maids taking the clucking chickens in dish-cloth covered baskets down to the shochet and bringing them back with their heads dangling out in eerie silence, from under the cloths. There were plenty of fresh laid eggs and fresh vegetables and fruit such as citrus, apples and almonds from the small orchard.



There was no shortage of cakes and chocolates . Home-made ginger beer we would get from other sources, our foods on the farm in Malmesbury were very traditional Jewish and fairly plain. I remember asking my grandmother why we didn't *braai* food as was the custom all around and certainly on weekends in our own home. Grandpa turned up his nose and said it was uncivilized much like *potjie kos* (stews) and *pap* (porridge) which were prepared for the laborers.



These are pictures of my grandparents, Jacob and Rebecca Berman's Farmstead on Piketberg Road circa 1920's.

A word about the old house. It was Victorian though changes had been made over time. It was accessed down a long drive and the front door stood open with a flynet cover door. The front door was only locked at night. The original front door on the other side of the house remained closed off as did the *voorkamer* (lounge) for guests. It was probably used when my mother grew up in the house but while it retained fancy art decor furnishings and antique paintings – in my experience it was only occasionally used as an extra bedroom when needed. This was probably for convenience when it was just my grandparents living there.



In our time, front door we knew, was actually the equally imposing heavy oak side door, that led into the 'office'. This was more like a cozy parlour where we would gather to eat or sit when guests arrived. There was a round teak table with four chairs that fitted under it neatly. This was known as a 'railway table', popular with card players.

We would use this room most often even if we needed to squeeze people in on the couch or extra chairs. There was an old rather delicate antique writing desk which was one of the few items my sister Ellen asked to inherit as a reminder

of the house.

It held the Hermesets sweetener my grandmother popped into her tea. I, as a little child once hid in the corner popping a few of these pills into my mouth thinking they were like sugar grains - I still feel ill thinking about the lingering aftertaste that didn't leave my system for hours and 'scarred' me for life.



Besides the large bedrooms, and there were many, the one I slept in adjoined my grandparents' room and was locked whenever my grandmother left the house because it housed the huge very solid safe. It also had a dangling cord that allowed one to switch off the electric central light at your bedside. This was the source of many games swinging it widely. I kept the large old wooden switch as a reminder of the times it came flying back in a pendulum movement and bonked me on the head. It did prove to be more efficient at mesmerizing a child and inducing sleep – more than counting sheep as I was often told to do, which in my child's imagination meant literally going out in the dark to the shed or field to find our sheep!

My favourite room was the large central dining room which was kept in semi darkness during the day and was guaranteed to be cooler than the rest of the house. It housed the twelve-to-fourteen-seater dining table used for meals when the 'clan' gathered and on *yomtovim*.

The kitchen had the open space where the original woodburner, stove had been, but which now stood empty because the new electrical stove needed to be near the plugs across the kitchen. Behind the kitchen was a *spens* (pantry) filled with groceries on shelves and where the fridge stood - replacing the old ice cupboard that my mother would tell us about.

We were kept out of this room which always smelled a little *mif* (stuffy) and had supplies of preserves but also powder jelly which we were wont to secretly open and spoon out - later blaming it on mice.

Behind the house and to the sides were the fields but first one had to pass the laborers' rooms and the old barn and alongside this the servants' toilet, which may have remained a '*langdrop kleinhuisie* or perhaps had running water.



On the other side of the house was the large shed and the stable. (seen here in closeup)

We had endless fun in the shed which besides the vehicles, also stored the huge hay bales and the wool weights and scales and packing area. Following past the shed was the back lane, which may well have been a public passageway, but which my grandfather had blocked off with a gate. This driveway led off the road and followed the *sboot* (riverbed). It was where we would go down into the murky often foul smelling river to collect tadpoles or better still to collect

*potklei* (mud) which we would roll into mudballs and press on to the end of willowy sticks to flick retaliation missiles at the local kids if they came *soeking* (seeking) a battle. 'Dis nie jou *oupa se land* nie' (This drive doesn't belong to your grandfather!)

No one ever got hurt in these battles, but it made it all the more fun especially because we could seek cover behind the old, dilapidated horse wagons that were lined up on this drive. My sister Ellen an avid admirer of pottery, reminded me that she began her first 'lessons in art' moulding that same *potklei* into bowls and vases and putting them to dry in the branches of the Bluegum trees that also lined the *sloot*.

Across the *sloot* was the Malmesbury High school and nearby, beyond the jail was the newer drive-in movie house which although only a stone's throw away from my grandparents' home, often had us driving there - it was a drive-in afterall! 'Ag please daddy won't you take us to the drive-in' was for us, more than just a happy jingle! I might add that in daylight it was a very odd and surreal sight to behold, a field amongst real agricultural fields, and with designated parking bays each with its white speaker pole - a little futuristic for sleepy Malmesbury!



My grandparents purchased many farmhouse products /furniture/fashionable art deco. Today I still have numerous pieces – the old milk stool, and some oak cottage furniture.

I also have some treasured items that originated in Plungyan and survived Malmesbury. These include our samovar, mortar and pestle, even a duck-feather *perene* (quilt) my grandfather's tefillin and other artifacts.



In my early years my grandparents still had a crank telephone and we would have to speak to the operator to connect us to their phone for our almost nightly calls from Cape Town. The operator knew us well and would even have a little chat waiting for the connection. I don't recall the eaves-dropping famously connected this old system of the partylines. Later they would have the newer self-dial phone.

There were other changes by the time we entered the scene. There were taps and flushing toilets – though for some reason my grandparents still kept the old washstand with tiles, bevelled mirror and basin with the towel rail on the side. It was in the room leading into the new bathroom.

This room also had the framed photo of General Smuts whom my grandparents supported politically or did they? (It was after all the back room of the house next to the bathroom? And previously, their huge copy of King Edward VII and his queen had been relegated to a maid's room!) As for Smuts it was probably an autographed photo. Prime Minister Smuts was born 'up the road' in Riebeeck Wes 'of is dit nou Riebeeck Kasteel'? I couldn't tell the difference though I travelled with Grandpa in his bakkie to many of the surrounding farms and often enough through these villages on his many trips scouting for sales *en om die hekke oop te maak*. My job was hopping out to open and close farm gates. Switching into Yiddish, Zeide would reward me for my efforts in these towns by asking –'Du wilst a kola trinken?' (Would you like a Coke?)

Little as I was, with memories from around the age of four, we were aware of changes and 'progress'. Picketberg Road was renamed Voortrekker Road and so on. Writing of this main road, I recall the dramatic events of the night of the earth tremors (1968?) when in the wee hours of the morning (*douvoordag*) the tremors began. I was alone with my grandparents at the farmstead during a school holiday in the room adjoining their bedroom. Grandpa said we should ignore the rumbles, he called to me '*Dus net die lorries op hul pad nord toe*' referring to the big trucks travelling through the night that regularly rumbled past. When the rumbling got worse and pieces of the wall plaster above the interleading door actually cracked and fell, Granny called, 'Colintjie, come climb into our bed because if we are going to *vrek* then let's *vrek* together!' (*vrek* of course is vernacular Afrikaans and usually used for animals dying ) (Ever the lady, a twinkle in the eye, she would later always deny having said this!)

It was not that my grandmother was a prude. She had a wonderful sense of humour.... AND she had a copy of the banned book 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' on her bookshelf, probably the only copy in the entire Swartland!!!! She was also happy to share with her grandchildren that she used to sometimes chew dagga *twak* – fed sometimes to the horses to encourage them to improve their ploughing. It was apparently recommended by her doctor (Dr Myers or Dr Druker) for her heart condition. We city kids knew that she was very progressive, savvy but also 'very cool', and always 'the lady'.

From my earliest memories (in the early 60's ) I remember the cows in the barn being milked and the thick cream in the buckets which could be cut once cooled - but with progress we moved on to bottled dairy milk and that milk stool became a favourite spot in the kitchen, now years later is still with me! And along with their own cows' milk, went the homemade white cheese made in flour bags hanging from the tree. In more recent years to try to capture that special taste, I once tried using bottled milk – but being so dilute it produced just a few miserable crumbs of cheese that anyway lacked the taste and flavour!

And so, the years pass by, with diluted memories but enough to sustain us when we gather and reminisce and when we go out to visit what is left of that era. Fortunately, the shul, now the village museum, is there to remind us of our *yomtovs* in the small warm community so very different to our Great Synagogue in Cape Town – where different and other memories are conjured up such as my short-lived career as a choir-boy.

In Malmesbury in my time everyone counted – quite literally – because if someone was late or out 'on a smoke break', we would be without a minyan! The 'Choir' here was made up of the voices of those few in the rather forlorn, empty pews. The heyday had passed for the community, even with a temporary Shaliach Tzibbur (usually a retired Rov/Chazan from the city).

In shul we would meet the other families of this ever-dwindling Jewish community many of whom we would visit, especially those living on their farms. These were the Goodmans (Katie and Sam) Their son Leon took our favourite, very professional and amazing photos of us children in Malmesbury! There was the Stoch clan – Sammy and Susie and their boys – Cedric and Arnold who were most often barefoot but did wear shoes to shul! You could see Table Mountain in the far distance from their farm!

There was Sammy's brother Benny and his wife Miriam. Their son Likkie was much older than us, and his sister Delia who used to entertain us with her accordion and beautiful voice. She would lovingly herd us children around and was our local beloved *madricha* – like

the *madrichot* (youth leaders) in the Zionist youth movements in the city. Their uncle Morris ('Korte Morris' Short Morris) and his wife, Anita and children sometimes used to come through from Darling and we would all go swimming at uncle Sammy's pool. Their son Jack, today a dentist in Sydney remains a lifelong friend, and we still share *lekker gesels en grappies - in die taal!* (good chat and jokes in Afrikaans).

There were also the town dwellers such as the Davidowitz family who had the bottle store and lived near the station. They had three sons. And the Sternbergs of the shoe shop and their son, Paul. The Shandlings, Irene and Norman and their children. They also had a wonderfully, cooling pool. Moira their daughter, and my sister Fay used to get up to mischief like when they put spells on us younger siblings in gibberish. There was no defence against this especially when they were delivered in strange voices from their hiding place under the boughs of the 'speaking' lemon tree!

The Schapiro s (Barry and Judy ) and their two boys lived near the Shandlings, as did the Sofers. Robin Sofer used to treat me to a wild and noisy drumming session in their back rooms, and his older brother, Ivan would marry my grandmother's niece, Sheila from Robertson - which brought her to Malmesbury for a few years. There were other families like the Beinarts who lived over their shop in the town, but it is the ones with children our age that we naturally, best remember. We also used to sometimes ship the hostel dwellers from Malmesbury, back to the city at the end of the weekends - those who were weekly boarders at city schools like Good Hope Seminary (Delia and the Beinarts) and Herzlia School (Allen Schapiro).

I would be remiss if I didn't add another lifelong friend, Ryan Linde whose family were also Kosher and housed the latter day bachelor rabbonim of the village. Ryan was a mystery figure because I never met him in Malmesbury. His family had moved there from Paarl, but our paths never crossed until much later because each weekend/*yomtov* he was literally going in the other direction to visit his grandparents in the city as we were coming to visit ours in Malmesbury. When I eventually met him at summer camp, I refused to believe he was from Malmesbury – '*Jy lieg ,het ek gese!*' Afterall, I knew all the children from the shul (or so I thought) and was not going to accept this imposter! Jack Stoch was there to verify... and 50 years later, we all remain close buddies. Put any of us together and within a short while the magic name of 'Malmesbury' will arise , bringing back a flood of happy memories from our childhood!

Cedric Stoch would blow the shofar (I seemed to recall he had made his own one) his cousin Delia would sing a solo to end the service, we would later gather outside at the river's edge (we always called it *die sloot*). This spot on the *Dieprivier* was opposite what had been Roer's butchery and we would gather for *Tashlich* to cast away sins! Some of them were the newest transgressions such as laughing at the older folks in shul struggling up the steps of the womens' gallery or smoking cigarettes around the corner of the shul. I remember one year when I had already been punished from On High, when, competing to jump off the steps in front of the shul entrance, I landed face first on the metal mat, which left me with a scar across my upper lip. Malmesbury has for better or for worse, certainly marked me for life!

Three decades later, when visiting with my Mom, she met some of the old villagers at the local boere clubhouse, they of course didn't recognize her at first. One remembered that she was his classmate, Harry's sister. Another added that they remembered her parents, the old man was remembered for driving his Bakkie very *skeef* (crooked) a result of losing an eye when a bull gored him in 1957! They also remembered that old *tannie* Berman had taken her husband, Mr Berman (please roll that 'R' in the middle to get the boer's authentic voice!) to retire at the sea

in Cape Town, but it killed him!! (Grandpa did in fact pass away within a year of moving from his much-loved Malmesbury)

When my mother, **Sally Robinson**, passed away in 2009 we inscribed her *matzeivah* (tombstone) in the Cape Town Jewish cemetery with the well-earned words of Eishet Chayil, but under her name we felt it appropriate to add the words '**born Berman in Malmesbury**'. She would have totally approved and been even more touched that we called on pallbearers – four of whom were **Malmesbury 'boys'** – my good friend Ryan Linde – one of the last Jewish matriculants in the village (and at the same school my mother attended - just over the *sloot*); our cousin Sheila's husband, Ivan Sofer (Sheila Kramer was my grandmother's niece and had followed in her footsteps coming from Robertson to settle in Malmesbury; and the brothers Cedric (the shofar blower who still farms on his family farm *Droee-rug* (dry back) and Arnold Stoch who lives in Cape Town (and who became a mainstay of the choir of The Great Synagogue!)



My much-loved grandparents, **Rebecca and Jacob Berman** (this picture is of me with Granny Becky in 1980) are not buried in Malmesbury, though they spent the major part of their lives there. They are buried in the same cemetery as my mother and her brother, in Pinelands, Cape Town, but across the road ..... there, **where the lorries sometimes rattle past** and shake up the resting spirits, and other dormant memories!

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The Berman Family Story, Compiled and edited by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London from stories and pictures sent by Colin Robinson July 2023

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PS: Colin says: I want to add that my Mom saved everything and would be thrilled to know the bits are being given a new life through this CHOL Malmesbury website – so much so that I half suspect she will try to also tap into the new Website from *yenne welt!* (and with tears flowing -

she cried easily. For instance, she cried each time I boarded the train or my ride to my grandparents in Malmesbury – so definitely she would cry on this journey into the past too !) For an example of her collections, thanks to Mom I have both the original veil and top hat in the photo of Jakob and Becky's wedding!

It is with the greatest affection and respect for my mother, that I submit all this information. And I do want you, Geraldine, to know how much I appreciate your amazing efforts to preserve all this, both for myself and my family, and also for Malmesbury. I am relieved that thanks to you and the CHOL initiative, all this rich material and history presently squirreled away in my files and my head, will not be lost.

### **The Malmesbury Jewish Community**



My mother had this picture of the Malmesbury Jewish Community at the farewell party to Dr Harry and his wife Dinah Myers in March 1935

On the following page she has attempted to number and name all those she could remember. Perhaps there are those amongst you who might know some others?

MALMESBURY  
 CRITERION HOTEL  
 FAREWELL PARTY  
 FOR  
 DR HARR & DINAH MYERS  
 MARCH 1935

Back Row ?? A.B. Mann, Rabbi E. From, Friedhaas, Misner, ? Dr. Levi Goldman, ???  
 end of row Lily Mann,  
 Nai Mrs Misner 2 Molly (Dinah Myers Sister) 3 & 4 Dinah Hazy Myers  
 5 Minnie Zurnamer (Myers) 6 Becky Berman, 7 Sara Luntz, 8 Rachel Travis,  
 9 Mr Travis, 10 Sarah Myers (Schick) 11 Dan Belmont, 12 Greenblo?  
 13 Bertha Cohen (Bass) 14 Sammy Gershen & 15 Gershen Gimmys Father  
 16 & 17 Mrs Gershen & Mrs Greenblo

