

# THE JEWISH CONTRIBUTION TO SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY HISTORY AND OTHER INTERESTING FACTS

By W.J.Bergman

A personal view of the Jewish contribution to  
South African military history



1668





to



1998

## Contents

About the Author .....	6
Preface .....	7
An Apology .....	8
Winston Churchill.....	9
The Dutch East India Company (VOC) at the Cape:1669 .....	11
1820 SETTLERS .....	15
1 <sup>ST</sup> Anglo-Boer War 1880 – 1881 .....	17
2 <sup>nd</sup> Anglo-Boer War 1899 – 1902 commonly referred to as “The Boer War” .....	18
Jewish Ambulance Corps .....	20
Russian Jewish volunteers .....	21
Not much is known about the Russian Jews who fought with the Boers.....	21
The first Jew killed in the Boer War .....	22
A note about the Jews in the British Forces who came to South Africa to fight in the Boer War.....	23
Maj (later Lt.Col) Walter Kerri Davies .....	24
Sir David Harris.....	24
WORLD WAR 1 .....	27
General Sir John Monash .....	29
1914 and 1922 REBELLIONS .....	30
Field-Marshal Jan Smuts .....	31
WORLD WAR 2 .....	31
Some notable South African Jewish personalities who volunteered: .....	33
Brigadier (Dr) Jack Penn MBE, SM, FRCS.....	33
Lt Col (Dr) Lionel Meltzer MD, OBE, MC .....	34
Lt Col Cecil Margo DSO, DFC, .....	34
Lt Col Oscar Galgut OBE .....	36
Maj (Dr) Mary Gordon .....	36
Harry Heinz Schwarz .....	37
WO1 Jack Bergman .....	38
Major later Lt. Col Disraeli Hyman (aka” Dizzy”) Levinkind MC, MBE .....	40
Col David Horwich OBE, SAMC.....	40
Wing Cmdr. Lionel Cohen DSO, MC, DFC.....	40
Cpl Wilfred “Wolfie” Tobiansky. ....	41

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH WOMEN DURING WW2 .....	42
The number of decorations and medals awarded to South African Jewish Servicemen and women .....	48
TOBRUK .....	48
CASUALTIES DURING WW2.....	49
Brigadier Frederick Hermann Kisch CBE, CB, DSO.....	50
The Jewish Military Brigade. ....	51
JEWISH LEGION .....	52
Post World War2.....	54
After WW2 an Active Citizens Force (ACF) was established. All white males at the time were enlisted to serve in the ACF. ....	54
The Border War in South West Africa (SWA).....	54
	
S.A. Army: .....	55
	
S. A. Air Force .....	56
	
S.A. Navy: .....	56
	
S. A. Medical Corp.....	56
Military Chaplains. ....	57
Kosher food .....	59
National Service .....	60
The name of the South African Defence Force(SADF) which was changed to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF)as we know it today. ....	64
The South African Jewish Ex-Service League .....	65
Jewish personnel in the SANDF Permanent Force.....	68
Jewish Honorary Colonels.....	69
Jewish Regimental Sergeant Majors (RSM) .....	70
Jewish Sergeant Majors .....	70

OTHER INTERESTING FACTS IN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY .....	71
Lt Col John Henry Patterson DSO .....	71
Maj-Gen Orde Wingate DSO and 2 Bars .....	73
ISRAELI WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.....	75
Israeli War of Independence: The South African Connection.....	77
Maps : History of State of Israel.....	78
TRIBUTE TO SOUTH AFRICAN JEWRY IN THE SERVICE OF SOUTH AFRICA.....	81
In closing :a bit about myself! .....	82
Acknowledgments and References.....	84
SYMBOLS .....	85
GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY USED .....	88

For my family especially for my grandchildren.

A special thanks for the help and encouragement given to me by my wife, Renee, and friends, especially Selwyn and Adelle Rogoff.

### **DEDICATION**

To those Jewish National Servicemen who served under my command during my career in the SADF and SANDF.

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**By Lt Col W.J.Bergman MMM (S.A Army Rtd)**

**A personal view of the Jewish contribution to South African military history**

## **About the Author**

Lt Col William Bergman probably better known as Willie, or Bill, spent 25 years in the South African National Defence Force in the Permanent Force, as the Staff Officer Electrical Engineering Services, firstly with the Quarter Master General and later with the S.A Corp of Engineers at the Formation Headquarters. He is the holder of the MMM (Military Merit Medal) decoration.

He is registered with the Engineering Council of South Africa and is a Fellow of the South African Institute of Electrical Engineers (F SAIEE) where he has also served on the Institute's Council. He was awarded the "SAIEE Engineer of the Year Award" in 2011.

He has also lectured at the University of the Witwatersrand on electrical engineering in the building industry

He is involved with the South African Jewish Ex-Service League and is the Johannesburg and Reef Branch Chairman, hence his interest in South African Jewish Military history. He lives in Johannesburg, RSA, and is married to Renee and has two married sons and grandchildren living in Canada.

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## Preface

I became aware that many people had not known about how much South African Jews contributed to the military history of South Africa. When I started researching this subject I was amazed as to the extent how much South African Jews did contribute. I decided that I would like to bring this to the attention of as many people as possible. I initially presented the information that I found in a PowerPoint presentation, which I prepared as a talk and slide show to various associations and institutions. These included military associations, Jewish religious associations, Clubs i.e. the Rand Club and Probus, genealogical societies to name a few. In all cases my talk was well received and many people came up to me afterwards and commented that they did not know about the contribution paid by the South African Jewish population or that some of the names mentioned were of Jewish people.

It became apparent that this could not be the complete story but I hoped to give some impression of the contribution South African Jews gave through the history of South Africa.

However, I always had to start my talks with an apology, because there were so many prominent Jewish South Africans who contributed to the South African milieu that I had to select only a few for my original presentation, whom I thought would be of interest, otherwise my talk would have lasted for hours!

Later, many people who had heard and seen this presentation suggested that I expound on the talk in the form of a book as I normally elaborate and give more information about each slide when giving the talk.

In this booklet, I have included pictures which formed part of the original talk.

This is then the background to the reason for this small booklet. I hope it will be of interest to readers who are interested in Jewish military history.

WJB

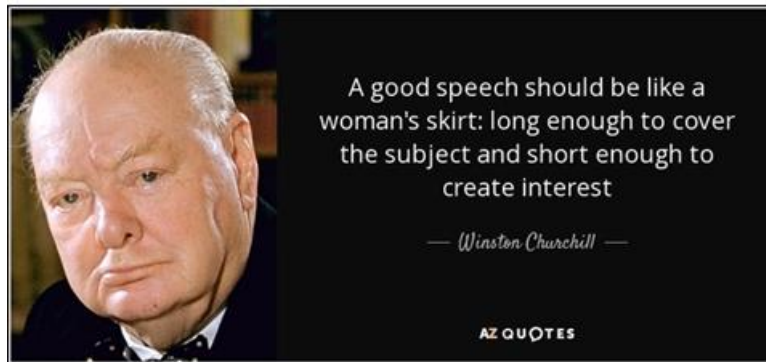
28<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## **An Apology**

- In preparing this booklet I soon realised that there was a lot more information available.
- However, it would be impossible to record everything and to add names of everyone.
- Therefore, I have only included those items and personalities whom I thought would be of general interest and with of whom some I had personally known.
- I have only recorded thumbnail sketches of these items as one could write a book about every person and/or occurrence.
- I have included an outline of the events leading up to the various wars. This is a brief history only, as it would be impossible here to record everything about these wars.
- In the section relating to the SADF/SANDF, I have included names of military personnel that I knew personally or those that I have heard about. Obviously there are lots of Jewish servicemen who served during that period whom I have not included.
- If I have left out some important events, please bear with me.
- If I have left out certain names and people, again this is not intended.
- If you enjoy what I have put together, then I will have achieved my goal.
- Hoping that you find this to your liking.
- Please note that this is a personal view of the historic contribution made by South African Jewry.
- To me they are all heroes!

**Lt. Col. William. J. Bergman MMM (S A. Army)**





**Winston Churchill** made the following comment about speeches and I presume he would have meant the same about the contents in this booklet.

**“A good speech should be like a woman’s skirt, long enough to cover the subject and short enough to create interest”.**

Another quote by a good friend of mine sums up the reason for writing this booklet.

It was inspired by the following quotation by Major Peter Bailey, who researched the amount of information and discovered the lack of information written about the Jewish military contribution generally.

Bailey was an officer with the S.A. Citizens Force Light Horse Regiment. He and his wife left South Africa in 2010 to live in Israel where they still reside. He has written a number of books on military history and other topics.

I was similarly surprised at the want of knowledge that prevailed amongst most Jews and Non- Jews in South African concerning the South African Jewish military contribution to South African and Israeli Jewish military history.

Some of the facts written about in this booklet were supplied by **Maj. Bailey**.

**To quote Major Peter Bailey:**

**Jewish Military History**

“Besides the well recorded and enviable record of the Israeli Defence Force since the establishment of the State of Israel, very little mention is made of the contribution that Jews have made to military history globally”

Major Peter Bailey 15<sup>th</sup> November 2015



### **The Dutch East India Company (VOC) at the Cape:1669**

In May 1488 a Portuguese explorer Bartolomeo (Bartholomew) Dias rounded the Southern end of Africa and because of the stormy seas he encountered, he called it the Cape of Storms. However he did not proceed further up the east coast of Africa and returned to Portugal where he reported his find to the King. The King realised the importance of this sea route and he renamed the Cape of Storms to the Cape of Good Hope, in the hope of finding a route to the Asia.

In 1497 Vasco da Gama, another Portuguese explorer rounded the Cape and sailed all the way to Asia thus opening up a trade route from Portugal to the East. Over time the Dutch East India Company (VOC) realised the importance of having a halfway station to replenish their ships en-route to the East and then sent Jan Van Riebeeck to establish this important strategic colony and thus claiming sovereignty to the Cape of Good Hope.

The Cape Colony was a Dutch East India (VOC) colony established by the VOC as a re-supply and layover port for its vessels who rounded the Cape en-route to the trading in the East. Jan van Riebeeck was ordered to establish the colony for the VOC whose main focus was on making profit from the Asian trade. The colony rapidly expanded into a settler's colony in the years to follow.

Van Riebeeck was instructed to build a fort to protect the colony and this required it to be manned by VOC military.

The VOC army did not allow Jews to be enlisted in their army. However, Jewish soldiers did come to the Cape of Good Hope.



- Jews were not allowed to be in the VOC Army
- but Jewish soldiers did come to the Cape of Good Hope

8



- Dutch East India Company records 2 Jews in the muster of soldiers:



9

It has been recorded that two Jews were in the muster at the Cape. Their names were David Heilbron and Samuel Jacobson.



The Castle of Good Hope

Samuel Jacobson



Robben island

David Heilbronn

11

Samuel Jacobson worked on the fortifications of the Castle of Good Hope, whilst David Heilbron was stationed on Robben Island as a guard.

As the saying goes “Where there is a will there is a way” (or “*where there is a will there is a relative!*”).

In order to overcome the law that Jews were not allowed to serve in the VOC Army:

The year 1669



- 

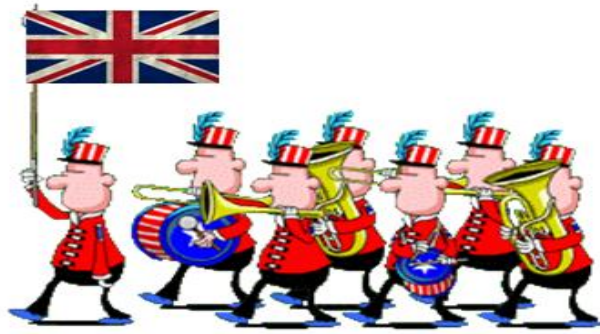
**David Heilbronn**

- 

**Samuel Jacobson**

- Both were baptised on the 25<sup>th</sup> December 1669 because Jews were not permitted to serve in the Dutch East India Company militia.

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Let's march into the next important era

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## **1820 SETTLERS**

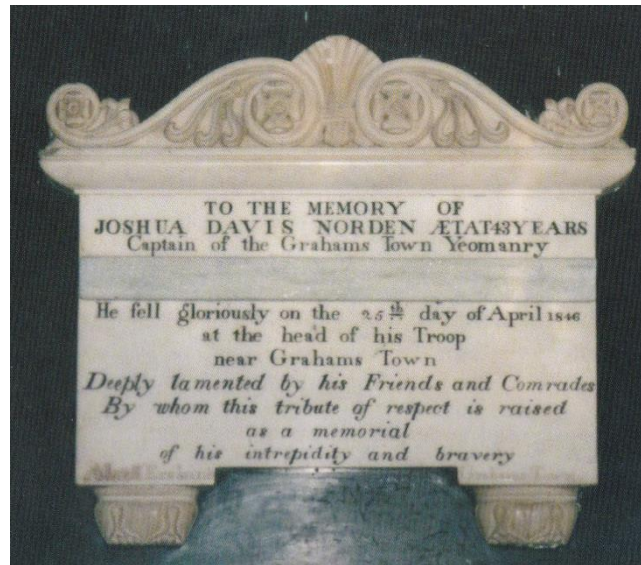
After the Napoleonic wars, Britain had a serious problem with unemployment. Encouraged by the British Government, the first 1820 Settlers arrived at the Cape on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1820. The settlers were sent to Algoa Bay, known today as Port Elizabeth, and were encouraged to settle in the frontier area of what is now known as the Eastern Cape. This was to consolidate and defend the Eastern frontier against the neighbouring Zulu and Xhosa people. Life was harsh for many of the settlers and they went in search of a better life in towns such as Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown and East London.

With the arrival of the **1820 Settlers**, a small contingent of Jews (18) came with the Settlers and took up residence in the Eastern Cape where they played a leading role in military affairs.

A notable 1820 Jewish Settler was Captain (Capt.) Joshua Norden, who commanded the Grahamstown Yeomanry, also known as Norden's Yeomanry. He was killed in action at the Battle of the Axe in 1846 whilst leading his regiment.

Unusually because he was Jewish, a memorial plaque to Capt. Norden was erected in the Grahamstown Anglican cathedral.





TO THE MEMORY OF  
JOSHUA DAVIS NORDEN AETAT 43 YEARS  
Captain of the Grahams Town Yeomanry

-----  
He fell gloriously on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1846  
At the head of his Troop  
Near Grahamstown  
Deeply lamented by his Friends and Comrades  
By whom this tribute is raised  
As a memorial  
Of his intrepidity and bravery

Other Jewish Settlers in the militia were:

**Lt Elias D Pass** who was in the Port Elizabeth Volunteer Force and he later became the Chief Commissariat Officer of all Cape Military. Another well-known name was **Capt. Harry Mosenthal** attached to the Murraysburg Volunteer Guard.



## 1<sup>ST</sup> Anglo-Boer War 1880 – 1881

It is alleged that the war was started because a Boer named Piet Bezuidenhout refused to pay an illegally inflated tax. The Government officials confiscated his wagon and attempted to auction it in order to pay the tax. A hundred armed Boers stopped the auction, assaulted the presiding sheriff and reclaimed the wagon. The first shots were fired when the Boers fought back against the Government troops.

When the Transvaal declared a Republic from the United Kingdom, the war began on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 1880 when shots were fired by the Transvaal Boers at Potchefstroom. The Commander of the Boers was General Piet Cronje.

From the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1880 to the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1881, the British garrisons all over the Transvaal were besieged by the Boers.

However, although called a war, the actual engagements were relatively minor because of the few men involved on both the British and the Boer sides and the duration of the war was 10 weeks.

Jews in the British Forces took part in this war. Amongst the notable Jewish soldiers there was **Sam Fox**. He became an important personality in Johannesburg and some interesting facts about him are that Fox Street in Johannesburg was named after him. His Assistant Quartermaster was **H.E Hollard**. **Fox and Hollard** went into partnership with **H.B.Marshall** and streets in Johannesburg were named after Hollard and Marshall as well.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Anglo-Boer War 1899 – 1902 commonly referred to as “The Boer War”

During this war the largest number of Jews served in the military on both sides.

Approximately 300 Jews fought with the Boers. They became known as the **“Boerejode”**. (When I was serving in the SANDF permanent force, I was also known as the “Boerejood”!)

In an extract from David Saks’ book “The Boerejode”, in 1929 General J.B.M. Hertzog, who was then the Prime Minister of the South Africa, made the following statement at a banquet:



General J.B.M. Hertzog

“Jews like the Afrikaner, were deeply imbued with the spirit of South African nationalism. Amongst the most faithful and trusted men on commando, there was almost everywhere a Jew in the ranks of the Afrikaner” “Boerejode” by David Saks

Two well-known and notable Jewish Boer fighters who served with Generals de Wet and Hertzog were Joseph Segall and Woolf Jacobson.

## This is the Famous Pair

**JAKKALS**

**and**

**WOLF**



Joseph "Jakkals" Segall and his  
father Abraham



Woolf "Wolf" Jacobson

They were better known as Jakkals Segall and Wolf Jacobson!

Not the "Jakkals en Wolf" created by T.O.Honniball!



Ha Ha Ha!

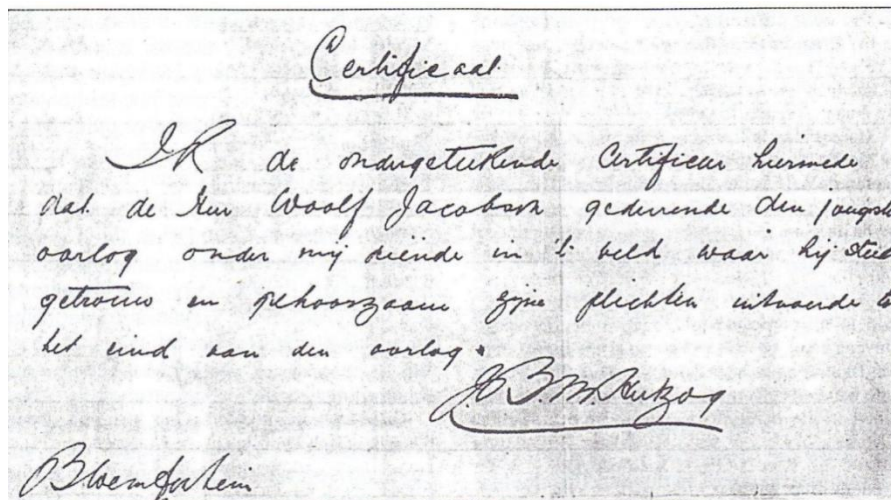


**Nope, that's not them!**

Acknowledgement to T.O.Honniball

Jakkals Segal, together with his father Abraham and his uncle Moses fought with the Boer forces and were captured and became prisoners of war (P.O.W)

A certificate, written in High Dutch, given to Woolf “Wolf” Jacobson by General Hertzog.



Translated as follows:

“This is the certify that the young gentleman Joseph Segall is well known to me, that from my knowledge of him he is honourable and upstanding, and during the recent war he carried out his duty as burgher faithfully and bravely”

### Jewish Ambulance Corps

A Jewish man, **Benzion Aarons**, who was the Chairman of the Johannesburg Chevra Kadisha and a friend of **President Kruger**, established a volunteer ambulance service known as the “Jewish Ambulance Corps”. The Corps set up a hospital in Aaron’s cigar factory. The Medical Officer in charge was Dr David Horwich, who was commissioned as an officer in 1905. This ambulance service saved countless Boer and British lives. Interesting to note that the emblem used on the ambulance was not the Red Cross but a Magen David similar to the one used by the Israeli “Magen David Adom”



## Russian Jewish volunteers



A group of Russian volunteers, including a number of Jews, during the Anglo-Boer War

Russian conservatives were pro-Boer because they thought that the Boers were like Russians who were against foreign capitalists especially Jewish capitalists. However, many Russians came to South Africa and a large number fought with the Boers and a good number of them were Jewish. The conservative Russian nationalists who joined the Boers were anti-Semitic and would not serve in commando units which had Jewish volunteers. So they formed a separate Russian commando unit in the Boer Army and refused to allow Russian Jews to join this unit. Anti-Semitism of the Russian nationalists did not cause any problems with the Boers. Their wounded were cared for by the Jewish Ambulance Corps whilst according to their own reports, they were treated with respect as compatriots by the Russian Jews.

Not much is known about the Russian Jews who fought with the Boers.

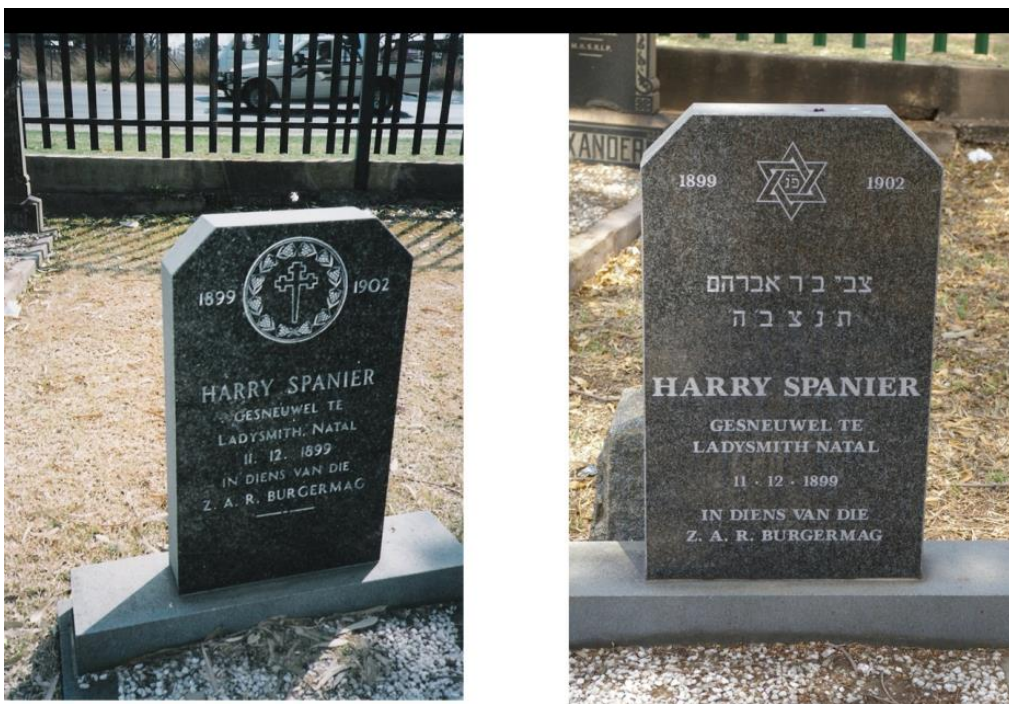
Notably Isaac Herman rose to the rank of Commandant and he commanded his own commando, and a Commandant Kaplan was active in the Northern Transvaal. Two other Russian Jews serving with the Boers were Josef (Jakkals) Segall and Wolf (Wolf: Afrikaans pronunciation) Jacobson who have already been mentioned. They served as scouts and Segal became a special advisor and secret agent for General Christiaan de Wet.



## The first Jew killed in the Boer War

The first Jew to be killed in action was **Harry Spanier**.

Spanier was an American aged 65 when he came to join the Boer forces. He was killed on the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1899 and was buried in Pretoria with a Jewish burial service. However when it was time to erect his grave-stone, it is not certain who ordered the stone, but it was inscribed with a cross as were the other non-Jewish graves in the cemetery. Only recently the stone was replaced by the Pretoria Jewish Community and the Pretoria Branch of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League, with one which corrected the mistake.



**Harry Spanier: the original headstone and its replacement.**

## **A note about the Jews in the British Forces who came to South Africa to fight in the Boer War.**

The British Forces was mainly made up of conscripted soldiers of whom there were about 3000 Jewish soldiers.

Notable Jewish personalities included Maj. Walter Kerri Davies and Sir David Harris. Davies with Sir Aubrey Wools-Sampson, Sir Percy Fitzpatrick and Capt. Charles Mullins, established and formed the Imperial Light Horse Regiment (ILH).



Maj. Walter Kerri Davies



Sir David Harris

**Maj (later Lt.Col) Walter Kerri Davies** born in Australia in 1861. He came to South Africa to forward the family timber business in Johannesburg selling Australian timber to the mines. He was friends with Cecil John Rhodes and was jailed for 2 years because he took part in the failed Jamison raid. He was a controversial figure and was Mentioned in Despatches four times during the Boer War.

**Sir David Harris** was a Director of De Beers Mining Company in Kimberley. He had the rank of Colonel and commanded the Kimberly Town Guard and later the Diamond Field Horse Regiment.

### **AN INTERESTING STORY ABOUT A BOER WAR MEDAL**



**A photograph of three Jewish members of the Middelton Town Guard.**

This photograph names the three as Joseph Bergman, Jacob Bergman and Abraham Perl. Tracing the Bergman's in the photograph, I established that they



were not related to my family, However there is a very interesting twist to the story about them and about a medal which was recently found.

A good friend of mine, Munroe Swirsky, who is a collector of military memorabilia and is a military historian, came across a medal issued during the Boer War with the inscription on the edge of the medal which read “Pte J. Bergman”. Munroe contacted me and said that he had bought this medal recently and that thought that it must be one issued to my father, Jack Bergman, who was also a soldier during his life-time. I informed Munroe that it could not be my father’s medal as he was born after the Boer War. However, between us we decided to trace the origin and family of the recipient of this medal.



It transpires that the medal was issued to the Jacob Bergman in the photograph mentioned previously, of the Middelton Town Guard. Again herein lies another story about the “Bergman” family.

Jacob Bergman was born Jacob Gochin in Lithuania in 1873. In 1892 he left Lithuania and immigrated to South Africa. Here the cousins Joseph and Jacob

bought a general dealers store named in Afrikaans , “Bergman’s se Winkel” in Heidelberg, Transvaal. At the outbreak of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Boer War in October 1899, they decided to move to Port Elizabeth and eventually moved to Middelton, a town near Cradock. By this time the two were known as the Bergman Brothers, so it was inevitable that they changed their surname from Gochin to Bergman. Eventually Jacob started farming in the Uitenhage area and became the first President of the Port Elizabeth Jewish synagogue. He passed away in Uitenhage in 1938. In tracing the family, I knew of the Bergman’s in Port Elizabeth albeit they were not related to me. I knew that there was a lady staying at Alphin Lodge in Johannesburg whose maiden name was Bergman. I phoned Myra Bernstein nee Bergman and asked her if she knew of a Jacob Bergman originally from Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth? She replied that he was her grandfather. When I told her about his medal which had come to light, she was astounded and excited that this had been found. I told Munroe about the family and he agreed to let the family have the medal as a gift. After all these years the medal is now with the Bergman family.

## The Union Defence Force (UDF) and South African Defence Force (SADF)

### WORLD WAR 1

In 1914, what had become known as the Great War, and later World War 1, broke out. This was started with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Serbia. This was also known **“as the war to end all wars”**. However, little did these persons know what was still to come! When the war started the British population said that it would be over by Christmas of that year. The war lasted for four years. The war was fought between the Germans whose Head of State was Kaiser Wilhelm and the Allied Forces who's British King was King George V. Oddly enough both the Kaiser and King George V were related as cousins.

Jewish soldiers were in the German and Allied Forces armies and this was a time when Jews fought Jews. Many Jewish soldiers were decorated in the German army as well as in the Allied forces armies.

3000 South African Jews, who were volunteers, joined the Union Defence Force. This constituted 6% of the South African Jewish population at the time, whilst the approximate volunteer force for the whole of the South African population was approximately 5%.

In this war the number of Jewish South African soldiers who were killed in action numbered 352 whilst 327 were wounded.

## Jewish Soldiers fought in the Allied and German armies



German Jewish soldiers  
celebrating the Jewish Festival  
of Chanukah

44

## German Jewish and Christian War Grave side by side WW1



Whilst not a South African it would be remiss not to mention one of the most famous Jewish Generals in WW1 who was

**General Sir John Monash.**



Monash was an Australian and a civil engineer by profession. He was considered the best allied general of WW1 and most famous in Australian military history. The military historian A. J. P. Taylor wrote “Monash was the only general of creative originality produced by WW1” He was famous for devising the strategy for the Battle of Amiens which took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 1918. This battle led to the German surrender on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

In 1927, Monash was President of the Zionist Federation of Australia.

Monash died in 1931 aged 66 and was given a State funeral where, after a Jewish service he was given a 17 gun salute. It is estimated that 300,000 attended his funeral, the biggest ever in Australian history.

## **1914 and 1922 REBELLIONS**

In 1914 there was a Rand Rebellion also known as the Maritz Rebellion which was the Boer “Bittereinders” revolting against the Union Government to go to the assistance of the allied forces in WW1. It was suppressed and the leaders given sentences of 6 and 7 years and heavy fines.

In 1922 there was an armed rebellion of white miners on the Witwatersrand. The rebels took over the towns of Benoni, Brakpan and the suburbs in Johannesburg of Fordsburg and Jeppe. It was suppressed on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1922. Both these rebellions saw troops from the permanent force and the reserve forces being mobilised. One of the Regiments deployed was the Rand Light Infantry and it is recorded that a Jewish soldier, Private S. Pastoll was killed during this rebellion. He was a despatch rider and was killed when his motor-cycle collided with a car. Whilst there is no record of other Jewish soldiers who participated in the Union Defence Force (UDF) to suppress these rebellions, there must have been Jews in other Active Citizens Force regiments at that time.

Because of the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles, which was signed at the end of WW1, South African **Field -Marshal Jan Smuts** predicted another world war.



**Field-Marshal Jan Smuts**

## **WORLD WAR 2**

As predicted by Field-Marshal Jan Smuts, the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War (WW2) erupted.

In Europe, Germany and Italy started to become more aggressive. In March 1938, Germany annexed Austria. The rest of the world did not respond to this claim. Hitler was encouraged by this and laid claim to Sudetenland which was part of Czechoslovakia. Eventually the British and French conceded this territory to Germany in what was called the Munich Agreement. Subsequently, Hitler started to make speeches attacking British and Jewish “war-mongers”, but secretly started a major build-up of the German forces, particularly the navy, in a challenge to Britain’s naval supremacy. In March 1939 Germany invaded the



remainder of Czechoslovakia. Hitler then delivered an ultimatum to Lithuania and Poland. This alarmed Britain and France who then pledged their support for Polish independence.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. The United Kingdom sent an ultimatum to Germany to cease military operations and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939 when this was ignored by Germany, Britain, France and their empires, declared war on Germany. Being part of the British Empire, South Africa, Australia, Canada and New Zealand joined the war.

After an attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbour on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1941, the United States of America joined the Allied Forces.

When the South African government declared that it would join the Allied Forces, the SA Army consisted of volunteers. The South African Jewish community came to the fore and volunteered for military service. 10% of the S.A Jewish community volunteered whilst the S.A. national average was 7%.

## WW2

When news of Hilter's despicable plan to annihilate the Jews of Europe members of the South African Jewish Community volunteered for military service.



51

Jews served in all the various sections of the Union Defence Force and in all different regiments, notably in the S.A Irish, Rand Light Infantry, Imperial Light Horse, Transvaal Scottish, Engineers and the S.A. Air Force. One of the puns which circulated about the **Imperial Light Horse**, known as the **I.L.H**, is that



there were so many Jews in the ILH that it was became known as **Israel's Last Hope!**

The UDF at the time did not have a Navy at the beginning of WW2 except for a Coastal Defence Unit. In 1941 the S.A. Naval Force was formed (SANF) and a number of Jews volunteered for this Force.

**Some notable South African Jewish personalities who volunteered:**

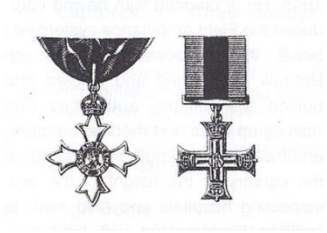
**Brigadier (Dr) Jack Penn MBE, SM, FRCS.**



**Jack Penn** was a plastic surgeon and a member of the S.A Medical Corps. Sir Ernest Oppenheimer gave over his large house and estate called Brenthurst in Johannesburg, to Jack Penn as a hospital during WW2. Penn, who was a pioneer in plastic surgery operated and helped wounded soldiers who needed reconstructive surgery due to war wounds. Jack Penn was also well known as a sculptor and this contributed to his skill as a reconstructive plastic surgeon. After the war, Jack Penn established the Brenthurst Clinic in honour of Sir Ernest Oppenheimer's home in Johannesburg. The clinic still exists to this day.

## **Lt Col (Dr) Lionel Meltzer MD, OBE, MC.**

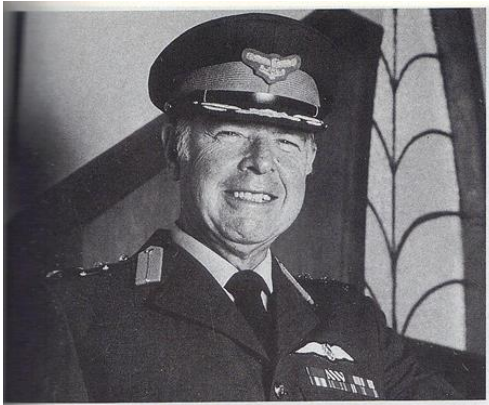
**Dr Lionel Melzer**  
M.D., O.B.E., M.C.



Was a member of the S.A Medical Corps.

He commanded the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance in North Africa and East Africa and the 20<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance in Italy. His courage under fire did not go un-noticed and he was awarded the OBE and MC. A story is told that when there was a shortage of stretcher bearers during one of the battles, Meltzer took off his badges of rank and served as a stretcher bearer under fire. He was also well known as an outstanding athlete and had won many awards whilst at Jeppe Boys High School and whilst attending the University of the Witwatersrand. He was captain of the South African Combined Universities' Team against the touring Oxford and Cambridge Athletic team in 1929. He was a prisoner of war (POW) twice at Sidi Reezegh and was released twice by the Allied Forces. After the war he served in the new-born State of Israel Defence Force as Director of Medical Services. He returned to S.A and started a medical practice in Cape Town.

## **Lt Col Cecil Margo DSO, DFC.**



As a pilot, Margo completed 3 tours of duty and no fewer than 190 strike missions. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) by King George VI and the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

After WW 2 ended, he started a career as a trial lawyer in Johannesburg. In 1948 Bernard Gering, Chairman of the SA Zionist Federation, approached Margo with a personal urgent telegram from David Ben-Gurion asking Margo to

come to Israel to serve as Ben-Gurion's chief advisor on the establishment and organisation of the Israeli Air Force (IAF). Ben-Gurion knew that air power would be critical to Israel's immediate and long range survival. Margo's expertise in air war-fare in both the desert and Europe during WW2 and as Operational Staff Officer in the Royal Air Force (RAF), made him ideal for the job.

He immediately left for Israel with Trevor Sussman, who was also a bomber pilot during WW2.

Margo worked out a visionary blueprint and strategies for a small but highly efficient powerful air force. On this foundation the modern Israeli Air Force was built.

Ben-Gurion who admired Margo's plans for the IAF, asked him to remain in Israel as commander of the IAF with the rank of Major-General..

After consideration, Margo declined the offer and returned to JHB to continue in his law practice.

He, together with Trevor Sussman, established a flying school in Germiston for the training of young men to be pilots for Israel. He remained a staunch supporter of Israel all his life.

After he returned to SA, he built up his legal practice.

In 1959 he became a Queens Counsel (QC) and in 1971 was appointed to the bench as a Justice of the SA Supreme Court.

He was appointed to investigate a number of aircraft disasters such as:

1. The air crash which killed the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold.
2. The loss of the SAA Rietbok off the sea near East London in 1967
3. The crash of the SAA Boeing after take-off from Windhoek in 1968.
4. The plane crash that killed the president of the then Mozambique, Samora Machal.
5. The Helderberg air disaster in 1987.

Cecil Margo received numerous honours during his lifetime:

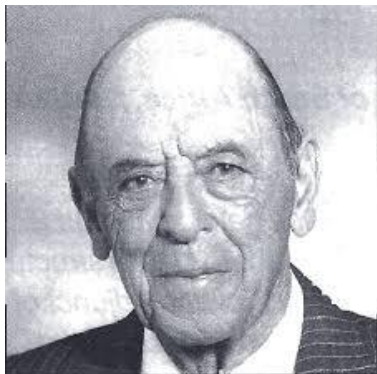
1. He was a Hon Fellow of the Inst. Of Mechanical Engineers
2. Hon. Deputy President of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists

3. Hon. Fellow of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

4. Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

He continued flying into his late 70's and passed away in 2000

### **Lt Col Oscar Galgut OBE.**



Oscar Galgut was born on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 1906. He attended Pretoria Boys High School matriculating in 1923. He then attended the University of Pretoria where he obtained the degrees of BA and LLB. Before WW2, Galgut joined the Transvaal University Air Training Squadron. He was a keen sportsman and was captain of the S.A.A.F hockey team in 1936. As an outstanding sportsman he was awarded colours in cricket, hockey, tennis, and athletics whilst at university.

During WW2, Galgut was the Senior Staff Officer No 3 Wing of the SAAF and later OC of 24Sqn. In 1957 he was awarded the Queen's medal for his services to South Africa. He later became a Supreme Court judge.

Oscar Galgut died in 1999 at the age of 92.

### **Maj (Dr) Mary Gordon**



Mary Gordon was born in 1890 in the Lithuanian town of Telz. She immigrated to Sunderland, England in 1907 and graduated as a doctor from Durham University in 1916. During WW1 she gained wartime experience.

She immigrated to South Africa in 1916 taking up a post at the JHB General Hospital which lasted 30 years. She became a naturalized S.A citizen in 1917. In the 1922 Miner's Strike, she was one of 2 doctors treating the wounded under fire. She was the first female lecturer in medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand from 1923 to 1946. During WW2, as a major, she was the OC Medical Section Cottesloe Military hospital. After WW2 she served in the British Medical Corps in Cyprus and then in the Israeli Army as a consultant. She returned to SA in 1958. Her final post was at Tara hospital. She never married and passed away in 1970 aged 80

### **Harry Heinz Schwarz**



He and his family immigrated to South Africa in 1934, following anti-Semitic uprising in Germany, eventually arriving in Johannesburg. He attended Jeppe Boys School in Johannesburg and after matriculating, joined the S.A. Air Force as a navigator and bomb aimer with the 15 squadron which was nicknamed "The Aegean Pirates".

Because his first name was actually Heinz his Commanding Officer called him Harry because he felt that if he was taken prisoner by the Germans and having a German name and being Jewish, this would be detrimental to his being. Thus the name Harry was adopted and everyone called him by that name throughout his lifetime after WW2. During WW2 he enrolled as a part-time student at the University of South Africa as B.A. student but only graduated after WW2 in 1947. He later obtained an LLB (Law) degree from Wits University. In 1949 he was admitted as an attorney and later as a barrister.

He became interested in politics and was a Johannesburg city councillor for Booysens in 1951. He was elected to the Transvaal Provincial council in 1958. He eventually became a member of parliament and was known for his parliamentary clashes with the government. He was also South Africa's Ambassador to the United States in 1991 to 1995. He was decorated with the Order for Meritorious Service and received several honorary doctorates. He passed away on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009

### **W01 Jack Bergman**



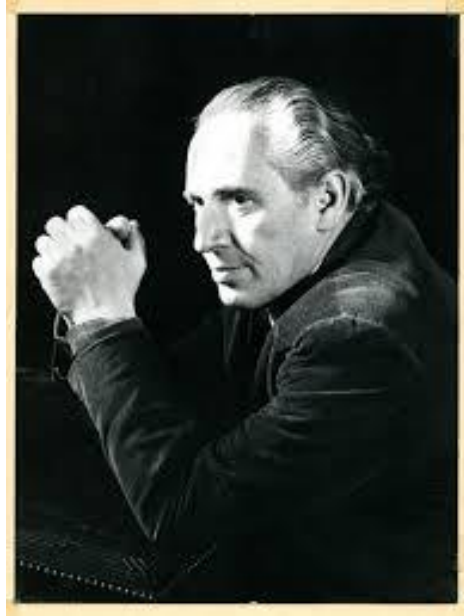
My father.

A special person to me. My father was a soldier's soldier. He started his army career by joining the Rand Light Infantry (RLI) whilst he was still at school during his matriculation year. He eventually completed his Active Citizen's Force period of service in the RLI with the rank of sergeant. At the outbreak of WW2 in 1939 he joined up once again and was enlisted into the Quarter Master General's Section. He saw service in Egypt and Italy and was discharged in 1945. As we were living in Bloemfontein at the time, he joined the ACF Regiment President Steyn and was in the Guard of Honour when the Royal visit took place in 1947



and came to Bloemfontein on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 1947. He eventually retired from the President Steyn.

Another well-known personality from WW2 was the sculptor **Herman Wald**.



During WW2, Herman Wald had the rank of sergeant and was attached to the S.A. Engineer Corps in the Camouflage Unit. This was not surprising as he was an artist by profession. Wald was the designer and sculptor of the Holocaust Memorial situated in the Jewish Section of Westpark cemetery in Johannesburg.



Holocaust Memorial: Designed by Herman Wald

**Major later Lt. Col Disraeli Hyman (aka" Dizzy") Levinkind MC, MBE.**

Born 1894. Qualified as an electrical engineer. During WW1 with the Royal Engineers, he reached the rank of captain and was awarded the Military Cross (MC).

As a veteran during WW2, he enlisted with the Union Defence Force (UDF) in the S.A Engineers Corps where he commanded the 33 Works Company with the rank of Lt. Col. Later he became Director of Engineers in the UDF and promoted to Colonel. He was awarded the MBE. After WW2 he resided in Pretoria, and was vice-president of the S.A Jewish Ex-Service League. Dizzy was a respected member of the Pretoria Jewish community and died in Port Elizabeth in 1972.

**Col David Horwich OBE, SAMC**

Volunteered for service as a doctor and despite being 59years old, was enlisted in the SAMC. During the Boer War Horwich served as the medical officer in the Jewish Ambulance corps. He was commissioned in 1905.

**Wing Cmdr. Lionel Cohen DSO, MC, DFC.** Won the DSO and MC in WW1. As a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps. After completing many operational flights during WW2 with the SAAF, he was awarded the DFC at the age of 69!

**Col Harry Nelson.** Born in 1903. Harry Nelson qualified as a medical doctor. During WW2 Nelson was appointed Director of Hygiene for the UDF with the rank of Colonel. He was a member of the Pretoria Hebrew Congregation and an active member of the S.A Jewish Ex-Service League.



## Cpl Wilfred “Wolfie” Tobiansky.



I must mention about a dear friend of mine who passed away at the age 95. He was in WW2 as an air mechanic with 24 Squadron in the desert under the command of both Lt Col Margo and Lt Col Oscar Galgut. He saw service in Egypt, Italy and Malta. He was very proud of being in 24 Sqdn and never missed a memorial service where he wore his war medals of WW2 and his father's medals of WW1.

## **THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH WOMEN DURING WW2**

One must not forget the important role played by Jewish women during WW2. Very little information can be found about the Jewish women who played a significant part during WW2. Many enlisted in the armed forces and those civilians, who supported the troops who were stationed in South Africa and who stopped over in South Africa on their way to the front. Those who enlisted served in various capacities performing indispensable nursing and clerical functions. Approximately six hundred Jewish women enlisted in the armed forces and they acquitted themselves with distinction. Mention has already been made about Maj (Dr) Mary Gordon.



Many gave their lives. A particular mention is a Capt. Sybil Starfield from Johannesburg who, as a qualified pilot, helped to establish the South African Women's Auxiliary Air Force. When she decided to join the Royal Air Force in England, en route in a ship, the ship was torpedoed and was sinking. There were not enough lifebelts and she heroically gave her lifebelt to an elderly passenger. She was last seen swimming in the icy waters, and drowned, never to be seen again.

One of the first Jewish women who was in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (W.A.A.F) to go "up North", was WO1 (Miss) Sylvia Jocum. She was killed in an air crash on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 1944 and was buried with full military honours.

A significant number of Jewish women became nurses. Many joined the South African Women's National Service League and qualified in first aid.

Later, many served in the general ranks and Jewish units in the Red Cross and the Voluntary Aid Detachment (V.A.D.) as well as in the National Service League. No.10 Ambulance Division of the V.A.D. was entirely Jewish.



V.A.D Uniform

South African Jewish women also served in base hospitals in East Africa and the Middle East. One of four South African women awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal was a Jewish nurse Rose Millicent Vandecar, whose part of her citation read “ giving evidence of remarkable courage and devotion which was an example to all, including her colleagues”.



Florence Nightingale Medal

Many Jewish women held positions of responsibility. Notably there was Capt. Sylvia Rosenberg, who was personal secretary to Mr Robert Casey, Australian Minister of State in the Middle East. Afterwards she served as secretary to Lord Moyne and then in Italy as personal assistant to Generals Wilson and Alexander. She was awarded the M.B.E. and was mentioned in despatches.

Jewish women on the home front during WW2 play a significant role. They organised and participated in tasks such as the knitting of socks, to providing comforts and fund raising. They visited military hospitals and

helped distribute gifts and comfort items to the sick and wounded in the wards.

Jewish women organisations such as the Women's Zionist League, the Union of Jewish Women, the Sisterhood of the Jewish Reform Congregation and Ort-Oze eagerly gave their aid and support.

Head of the War Relief Department of the S.A Red Cross was a Jewess, Mrs Clara Urquhart. The President at that time of the SA Red Cross, Hon. Mr Justice O.D.Schreiner, paid tribute to Mrs Urquhart and presented her with an inscribed silver plaque for her work, not only in the Red Cross, but also in the homes of thousands of people all over the country.

Mrs Inez Jacobson of Johannesburg initiated the idea of the Anti-Waste Organisation. She was also involved in the Voluntary Lift Club and Home Comforts committees. Both Clara Urquhart and Inez Jacobson were brought to the notice of King George VI for their valuable service during WW2 and their names together with Mrs. Sallie Friedlander, Mrs Ann Hepker, Mrs. Gertrude Masur, Mrs. Judith Pinchuk, Mrs Mabel Schlesinger, Mrs Sarah Serebro, Mrs. Annie Shar and Mrs Rita Rebecca Shtein, were gazetted in 1947 and subsequently they were awarded the Protea Emblem.



PROTEA EMBLEM

During WW2 South African Jewry donated ambulances to South African and other Allied Forces. Jewish women organisations also established a number of canteens and clubs for all serving members in uniform, Jewish and non-Jewish. The cost was borne by the Jewish community.

Many Jewish women joined The South African Women's Auxiliary Service (S.A.W.A.S.) who assisted in running the canteens and other services.

These canteens provided hospitality and friendship by establishing billeting, rest rooms, meals and entertainment.



S.A.W.A.S. Badge

Canteens and clubs were established in all the major cities and towns in South Africa. Notably were the clubs established in Durban by the Durban Jewish Club and in Johannesburg by the South African Jewish Ex-Service League in the Jewish Guild building in Van Brandis Street, Johannesburg. A large committee of Jewish women took over the running of the club in Johannesburg. It was estimated that 460,704 meals were served to more than 100,000 soldiers at the Guild.

Tributes were paid by the soldiers, one of which is quoted as writing :

*“I feel that I must let you know how much we men in the Air Force appreciate your services to us. I spent last week-end in Johannesburg and slept at your Jewish Guild hostel on Friday and Saturday. I can only say that the food you supply is excellent and rendered more so by your charming volunteer waitresses. And your beds are so comfy. My reason for writing is that in the past I have times listened to voices of anti-Jewish sections at home,(I come from Brighton, England), but now I feel ashamed of my past and as a Gentile I say “G-d bless the Jews of Johannesburg and may He prosper those working for Servicemen.”*



At the Guild's closing down reception on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1945, messages were received from Field-Marshal Jan Smuts and Mrs Smuts.

The message from Mrs. Smuts read;

*"I visited your Soldiers Rest Room and Recreational Centre at the Jewish Guild shortly after it was started and was impressed by all I saw. Especially by the cheerful faces and kindly voices which welcomed all arrivals and made them feel at home and happy, and I was therefore not surprised how popular the place had become and how many spent most of their leave there"*

The Sisterhood of Reform Temple converted a garage at Herholdt House in Johannesburg, into a dormitory with four hundred beds per night. Each day clean linen was in constant supply and the members of the Sisterhood gave freely of their services.

Many tributes were also received from other well-known military personalities to the various clubs established across the length and breadth of South Africa by Jewish women.

Several other centres, both inland and at the coast, Jewish women ran canteens. These included Cape Town, Durban, East London, Potchefstroom, Bloemfontein, Pretoria, to name a few.

The final word on the contribution paid by South African Jewish women's war effort was said by Mrs Smuts in December 1945, at a formal farewell to a group of enthusiastic Jewish workers:

*“On looking over your long list of activities, including meals and teas, dances, concerts and other entertainments of all kinds, one remembers that all work was voluntary. I think you must feel very happy yourselves to know that you were able to bring joy and happiness to so many of our brave soldiers, who, I am sure, will always think of you with love and gratitude.”*



**“Ouma” Issy Smuts**



**The number of decorations and medals awarded to South African Jewish Servicemen and women is impressive:**

**WW2 DECORATIONS and MEDALS**

awarded to Jewish servicemen and women



**19 MBE's**

Member of the British Empire



**16 DFC's**

Distinguish Flying  
Cross



**7 OBE's**

Order of the British Empire



**15 MC's**

Military Cross



**2 DSO's**

Distinguish  
Service Order



**54 MM's**

Military Medal

**142 Mention  
in Despatches**

62

- 19 Member of the British Empire (MBE)
- 16 Defence Flying Crosses (DFC)
- 7 Order of the British Empire (OBE)
- 15 Military Crosses (MC)
- 2 Distinguish Service Order (DSO)
- 54 Military Medals (MM)
- 142 Mentioned in Despatches.

**TOBRUK**

At the fall of Tobruk, 750 POW's were taken by the Germans. Amongst these were 90 Jews.

There is a story that it is alleged that Hitler gave Rommel an order to execute the Jews but Rommel being a true soldier declared that they were POW's and

would be treated as such. As mentioned it is an alleged story which I cannot verify but it makes for a good story!

### **CASUALTIES DURING WW2**

During WW2 there were obviously casualties and the Jewish personnel were amongst these who died or were wounded.

The number of South African Jewish personnel who paid the **Supreme Sacrifice** was **371** whilst the number of those **wounded** was **320**. Amongst those wounded were my wife Renee's father, **Joe Feldman**, who lost a leg in Egypt and my mother's brother, my uncle, **Leon Aronoff**, who was wounded in a leg.



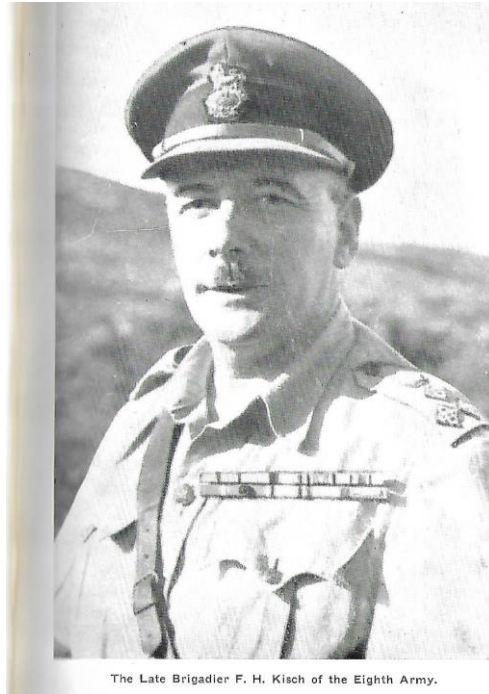
Pvt Joe Feldman



Gunner Leon Aronoff

## More interesting facts about WW2

### The highest ranking Jewish soldier in the British Army.



The Late Brigadier F. H. Kisch of the Eighth Army.

#### **Brigadier Frederick Hermann Kisch CBE, CB, DSO**

Frederick Hermann Kisch was born to British-Jewish parents in Darjeeling India on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1888. The family moved back to England where Frederick went to school and eventually entered the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. He joined the Royal Engineers in 1909 and served in WW1, where he was wounded three times and decorated with the Distinguished Service Order for gallantry. Due to his wounds he was declared unfit for front-line service but served as a staff officer in the Military Intelligence Corps eventually reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col).

After WW1, he joined the Zionist Organisation in 1922 as the head of the political department. Between 1923 and 1931, he headed the Zionist mission for the Jerusalem region.

He was recalled for active service during WW2 and promoted to rank of Brigadier as commanding officer (O.C.) the Royal Engineers in the British Eighth Army.

Kisch was killed in Tunisia on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1943 when he stood on a landmine during the battle of Wadi Akarit and is buried at the Enfidaville War Cemetery in Tunisia.

The moshav Kfar Kisch in Israel is named after him.

### **The Jewish Military Brigade.**



A mention is made here about the **Jewish Military Brigade (JMB)** because of the South African connect to this Unit.

- A special Brigade was formed with Jews living in the Mandate Palestine during WW2. The Brigade saw service in Egypt and was part of the Allied Forces that fought its way across Italy, liberating many Jews.
- The Commander of the Brigade was Brigadier Eric Benjamin, who was a Canadian Jew.
- Majors J. Liebman and K. Keet who served as company commanders were South African Jews.
- Captain G. Kalk from Brakpan was the Brigade Adjutant. He later became an attorney and mayor of Brakpan.
- Rabbi Bernard Casper was the Brigade chaplain. Rabbi Casper later became the Chief Rabbi of South Africa.

## **JEWISH LEGION**

The Jewish Legion (1917 – 1921) is the unofficial term used for the five battalions of Jewish volunteers being part of the Battalion of Royal Fusiliers, who fought against the Ottoman Empire in WW1

In February 1915 a plan was approved that was put forward by Ziev Jabotinsky and Joseph Trumpeldor to establish a unit of Russian Jewish volunteers that would participate in seizing Palestine from the Ottoman Empire.



Ziev Jabotinsky



Joseph Trumpeldor

The British Army at that stage could not allow a unit to be formed consisting of foreign nationals to bear arms as a fighting force. However, the British army did form a volunteer force of 650 Jews into a group called the Zion Mule Corps. of which 562 served in the Gallipoli Campaign. During this campaign, a Distinguished Conduct Medal was awarded to Private M. Groushkosky who, even though he was wounded in both legs, delivered the ammunition to the British troops with the mules whilst under fire.

Its commanding officer was Lt Col John Henry Patterson DSO, an Irish Protestant, and his second-in-command was Captain Joseph Trumpeldor.

Patterson wrote “ Many of the Zionists whom I thought somewhat lacking in courage showed themselves fearless to a degree when under heavy fire, while Captain Trumpeldor actually revelled in it and the hotter it became the more he liked it.....”

The Zionist Mule Corps was disbanded in 1916 and the formation of Jewish Legion was formed and was designated as the 38<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Royal Fusiliers.

Jabotinsky and Trumpeldor served in the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the London Regiment at that time between the disbandment of the Zion Mule Corp and the establishment of the Jewish Legion. In 1919 Jabotinsky was awarded the Order of the British Empire decoration (OBE) for his services in the British army.

In 1919 the Jewish Legion was reduced to a battalion called the First Judeans and was awarded a cap badge in the shape of a menorah with the motto Kadima (Forward) in Hebrew.



- “Former members of the Legion took part in the defence of Jewish communities during the Riots in Palestine of 1920, which resulted in Jabotinsky's arrest. Two former members of the Legion were killed with Trumpeldor at **Tel Hai**. One former member of the Legion was killed in Tel Aviv-Jaffa during the Jaffa riots of 1921. Some members of the Jewish Legion settled in **Moshav Avihayil**. Another former member died in service in World War II” *Wikipedia*

## **Post World War2**

After WW2 an Active Citizens Force (ACF) was established. All white males at the time were enlisted to serve in the ACF.

When the change of Government took place in 1948, the Government of the day established a ballot system in which white males were selected by means of a ballot system to serve in the ACF.

However following the Sharpeville uprising, the ballot system fell away as the military need escalated and full National Service was re-introduced and all white males over the age of 18 who had completed their schooling, were conscripted. Exemption was given to those males who were not physically fit for duty and for those who continued their Tertiary education after school by attending a university.

## **The Border War in South West Africa (SWA)**

One can say that the South African Border War had its beginning following WW2. During WW1 South Africa (SA) defeated the German colony of German South West Africa and the League of Nations awarded South Africa the mandate to administer the territory until its inhabitants were ready to govern themselves.

Following WW2, by a United Nations (UN) Trustees Agreement, SA refused to surrender SWA and instead requested that it be incorporated into SA as a fifth province with the right to elect representation in SA parliament.

In 1962, the South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) was formed to resist SA's rule and with the support from Russia began training guerrillas and from 1962 frequently attacked SA police and army. The conflict escalated and from 1966 to 1990 the Border War took place. The war entered a new phase in



1975 when Angola became independent under a communist government. SWAPO had bases in Angola and was supported by Angola against SA. Cuba sent troops to SWA to fight with the Angolan government against SA.

In 1988, SA, Angola and Cuba signed a Tripartite Accord for peace in the region provided Cuba and SA withdrew from SWA. SWA gained independence and was renamed Namibia in 1990.

Conscripted Jewish males served in all Arms of the Service during this war.

- Army
- Air Force
- Medical Corp
- Navy

They were posted all over the republic as well as SWA Operational areas, i.e. Grootfontein, Ondangwa, Oshakati, Rundu, Katima Mulilo, Mpacha, Oshevello, Windhoek to name a few.

Obviously there are a lot of names of Jewish servicemen who served during this period but for interest, I have named only a few who I knew about and those whom I had the honour of knowing personally.



### **S.A. Army:**

- Col. Basil Ginsberg : Senior Commando Officer at Witwatersrand Command
- Cmdt. Errol Kristal : O.C. S.A Irish Regiment
- Cmdt. Jacob Hirschman : O.C. 31 Medium Workshop
- Lt. Col. Hilton Marx : O.C. Light Horse Regiment
- Maj. Peter Bailey : Light Horse regiment : O.C. Oshivello Area SWA
- Maj. David Katz : Transvaal Irish Regiment (Still serving!)
- Maj. Marcus Goldring : S.A Artillery
- Pipe Major Munroe Swirsky : Transvaal Scottish Regiment

- Capt. Neville Klein : 1 Parabat Battalion
- Lt Hilton Kaplan : Paymaster
- Lt Steven Bergman : Northern Logistic command/ JHB Regiment
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Len Gronemann : Johannesburg Regiment
- WO1 Selwyn Rogoff : RSM Rand Light Infantry (RLI) Regiment.
- Signalman Mark Bergman : S.A. Corps of Signals



### **S. A. Air Force**

- Capt. Scully Levine
- Alan Lurie
- Harry Barnett
- L/Cpl Darryl Egdes



### **S.A. Navy:**

- Capt. Lawrence Schechter : O.C SAS Donkin Port Elizabeth
- Cmdr. Ronnie Slender : SAS Rand and Israeli Navy
- Cmdr. Dave Kaufmann : O.C. SAS Rand
- Cmdr. Michael Newman : Simons Town Naval Base



### **S. A. Medical Corp**

Maj(Dr) Felix Mechanik

**Just a note about the ranks as shown above.**

**The abbreviations are as follows:**

- Colonel : Col.
- Captain (S.A Navy) : Capt. (SAN) Equivalent rank of Col. in the Army.
- Commander : Cmdr. (SA Navy)
- Commandant : Cmdt. rank name prior to 1998.
- Lieutenant Colonel : Lt. Col. after 1998. Form of address is Colonel.
- Major : Maj.
- Captain : Capt. Used in all the Arms of the Service except Navy.
- Lieutenant : Lt
- Warrant Officer First Class : WO1.
- Pvt : Private

**Military Chaplains.**



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**SADF Jewish Chaplain Collar Badge**

One must not forget the important role of the Jewish chaplain.

To name a few who served during WW2:

- Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz who later became S.A Chief Rabbi.
- Rabbi W. Hirsch
- Rabbi Sydney Katz (Father of Rabbi Michael Katz)
- Padre Itamar Romm

- Padre Simon Weinstein

Those Chaplains who served during the time of the SADF National Service, again to name a few:

- Rabbi Lawrence Sandler
- Rabbi Rubenstein
- Rabbi Ron Hendler
- Rabbi Michael Katz ( Son of Rabbi Sydney Katz: WW2)

The reason for Chaplains who were known as padres was that they were not fully qualified as Rabbi's but were well versed in Jewish religious principles and rules.

During the era of national service, a Chaplaincy committee was formed. This Committee looked after the wellbeing of the Jewish servicemen and if any incidence relating to anti-Semitism was reported, they would take this up with the Defence Force. Furthermore, the committee ensured that the servicemen were catered for over Yomtovim and Holy Days. They also supervised the distribution of kosher food.



Chanukah service in Italy during WW2 conducted by Padre Itamar Romm.

## **Kosher food**

As an important point of interest, the SADF was the only Defence Force in the world with the obvious exception of the Israeli Defence Force, which established kosher kitchens to supply kosher food to troops who only ate kosher food.

Kosher kitchens were established all over the Republic as well as in the SWA Operational Area. I remember kosher food which was prepared in the kosher kitchen in the Grootfontein camp, being flown up to the base camps on the Border i.e. Rundu, double wrapped with a Kosher Hechsa seal. Kosher food was also given to Jewish patients in hospital.



Kosher Seal (Hechsa)

## National Service

Sixteen young Jewish national servicemen (NSM) paid the supreme sacrifice during the time of national service.



Their names are perpetuated on a special Role of Honour plaque on the South African National War Memorial, situated in the Jewish section of the Westpark cemetery in Johannesburg. This memorial also has the Roles of Honour for those Jewish South African servicemen and women who paid the supreme sacrifice in WW1, WW2 and Israeli wars. There is also a plaque to remember an Unknown Soldier whose name may have been missed when the Roles of Honour were compiled. Another plaque is also in place to remember the Victims of the Holocaust, whom we believe to be soldiers of Hashem.



An Annual Act of Homage and Memorial Service are held at this memorial by the **South African Jewish Ex-Service League (SAJExSL)**. Traditionally, this Service takes place annually on the Sunday between Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.





Parade at the Memorial Service of ExServicemen



**Parade at the Memorial Service of ExServicemen from variuos Veteran Organistaions**





WW2 Veteran Barney Gordon paying Homage to those who fell during WW2



WW2 Veteran Zelik Bedel, a South African Jewish Ex-Service League stalwart, who was the Banner Bearer at the memorial service for many years.

## WORLD WAR 2 CEMETERIES

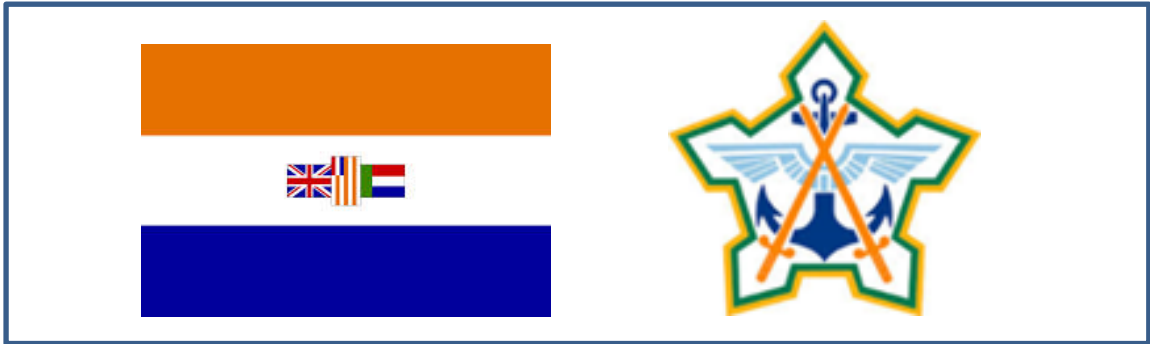


Military Cemetery in Italy

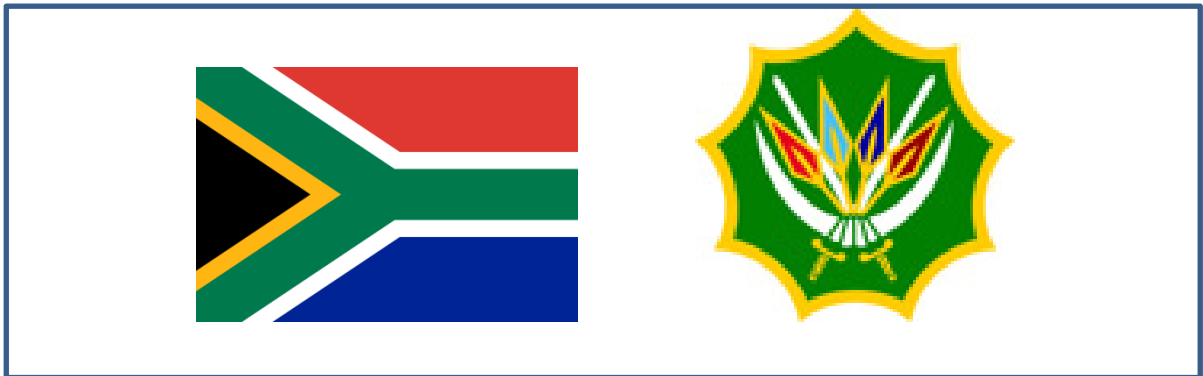
**Headstone to a Jewish Soldier**  
**Pvt. S. Pogrund killed 13<sup>th</sup> Oct 1944, aged 24**



The name of the South African Defence Force(SADF) which was changed to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF)as we know it today.



**South African Defence Force ( S.A.D.F.)**



**South African National Defence Force (S.A.N.D.F.)**

## **The South African Jewish Ex-Service League**

Partly from a resume written by Mr. Sheppy Astrofsky



After WW1 , a number of Jewish Ex-servicemen got together and established "The Association of Jewish Soldiers". Among them were Abe Klipin, Harold Miller, Major Summerfield, Michael Kam and Mrs Klipin. The Association had the blessing of the Jewish Board of Deputies. During WW2 the Johannesburg Jewish women rallied to a welfare call and made the Jewish Guild building in Van Brandis street, Johannesburg, into a place where Jewish servicemen and women could have a home from home. Thousands of meals were served as well as social activities being arranged by a Hostess Club.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1944 a special meeting was convened in Johannesburg and the **South African Jewish Ex-Service League** was established to take the place of the Association of Jewish Soldiers. On the 25<sup>th</sup> May 1946 the Johannesburg (JHB) Branch came into being. The headquarters of the League was in Johannesburg whilst branches were also established in other areas such as Durban, Cape Town, East London, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria.

The objective of the League was to look after the welfare of Jewish Ex-Service personnel, particularly those who may have fallen on hard times. Furthermore, for the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, because of the large number of ex-servicemen who could not be accommodated in established synagogues in Johannesburg because of non-membership or lack of financial resources, the League organised shul services over the High Holidays, firstly at the Jewish Guild in Van Brandis Street and when that building was sold, then at the Zionist Centre and finally at the Poswohl Shul. The Poswohl shul was declared a national monument in May 1981 and the League participated in the

ceremony. The shul became the League's shul where not only the High Holiday services were attended but they also used to hold regular Shabbat Friday night services.

The League had a special bond with Israel and in 1969 the Johannesburg Branch became the South African Trustee for the Welfare of Soldiers in Israel. The JHB Branch of the League never failed to welcome Israeli military personnel who visited Johannesburg. It also established a contact with the personnel in the Israeli Embassy in Pretoria.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> June 1967, the JHB Branch changed its name to the Johannesburg and Reef Branch of the League.

Various social events were organised for League members and an annual Chanukah magazine called "The Judean" used to be published. An annual Chanukah service was organised at the Wolmarans Street Great Synagogue, where military and civic dignitaries were invited.

Tributes to the South Africans who paid the Supreme Sacrifice were not forgotten and after WW1 a plaque was unveiled with the names of the Fallen at the Jewish Guild Memorial Building by the Governor-General of SA, the Earl of Athlone. After WW2 an additional plaque was added and both these plaques were then erected in the Zionist Centre building, and consecrated by Chief Rabbi Casper, who was a member of the League. Eventually an updated Role of Honour, which included the Israeli wars was erected in the grounds of the Jewish Guild Country Club. This was unveiled by General Magnus Malan who was then Chief of the SADF.

Following the sale of the Club and inspired by my father, Jack Bergman, a committee was formed and a new site at the Jewish section of Westpark Cemetery was found to erect a National Jewish War Memorial.





This ground was under the control of the SADF who gave permission to have the Memorial built. A South African National War Memorial was consecrated by Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris and unveiled by the Councillor Les Dishy, who was the Mayor of Johannesburg, on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 1993. The memorial then included the names of Jewish South Africans who fell in WW1, WW2, the Border War and the Israeli War of Independence. Two other plaques were also added, one for the Unknown Soldier and one for the Victims of the Holocaust. As already mentioned, an annual Act of Homage and Memorial Service is held at this monument on the Sunday between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

During the years of national service conscription, the League's branches used to entertain and look after the welfare and religious needs of these servicemen.

Unfortunately the League is made up mainly of WW2 veterans and a few ex-national servicemen. Because of the span of time, it's membership has dwindled and many branches have to close down. It is a fact of life that the League will eventually disappear because membership is made up of persons who have served in a war or who have been in any armed services. This should hopefully come to pass as it means that there have been no wars for people to fight and peace will prevail.

An interesting occurrence involving the two plaques which were first unveiled in the Jewish Guild Memorial building in van Brandis street, then in the Zionest Centre after the Van Brandis Street building was sold. These plaques seem to have disappeared for years after the Zionest Centre building was sold.

After many years, one of the League's stalwart members, Mr. Zelik Bedel contacted me and said that he was selling his business and that he had the memorial plaques stored in his workshop. He wanted to know what he should

do with them. I contacted the Curator of the SA National Military Museum, Major John Keene, who immediately made arrangements to have these plaques erected on a wall in the museum's grounds. They were reconsecrated by Rabbi Harris and now are displayed at the Museum.



**WW1 and WW2 Memorial Plaques at the  
Ditsong National Museum of Military History  
Saxonwald, Johannesburg**

### **Jewish personnel in the SANDF Permanent Force (PF)**

As far as I could ascertain at the time of writing this booklet, there were few Jews who served in the SADF and the SANDF permanent regular forces. Again to name a few:

- Brigadier Bryan Slater : O.C. South African Defence Force Institute (SADFI)
- Commander Michael Newman : Simonstown Base Operations Office



- Lieutenant Colonel William Bergman : Staff Officer Electrical Engineering Services

## **Jewish Honorary Colonels**

There were many Jewish Honorary Colonels in the past. However, there are two who deserve mention as they are still active:



Col Larry Nestadt  
Hon Col Air Command SAAF



Col Basil Herzov  
Hon Col 21 Squadron SAAF

## Jewish Regimental Sergeant Majors (RSM)



**WO1 Selwyn Rogoff, RSM Regiment Rand Light Infantry (RLI) with the winning Gold Cup Shooting Team 1982**

## Jewish Sergeant Majors



**WO1 Jack Bergman : Regiment President Steyn : Royal Visit Guard of Honour Bloemfontein 1947**

## **OTHER INTERESTING FACTS IN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY**

- **Non – Jewish Military Personnel**
- **Zion Mule Corps – The Zionest Legion**
- **Israeli War of Independence**
- 

### **Two interesting Non-Jewish personalities who influenced the State of Israel**



Lt Col Patterson



Maj-Gen Wingate

#### **Lt Col John Henry Patterson DSO**

Lt Col Patterson, who was not Jewish, was appointed by the British Army, as the OC the Jewish Legion, also known as the Zion Mule Corps. During Patterson's lifetime he maintained a close relationship with the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's father, Professor Ben-Zion Netanyahu. Prof Netanyahu named his eldest son after Patterson. He was Jonathan (Yonatan) Netanyahu

who was the commander of the Israeli commando unit and the sole Israeli military casualty at the 1976 Entebbe Raid.



**Col. Yonatan Netanyahu**



**Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu**

Patterson spent most of his later years actively campaigning for a Jewish homeland. Unfortunately he died in the USA a month before the State of Israel was proclaimed. His wish was that he was to be buried in Israel and he and his wife's ashes were reburied on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014 at Moshav Avihayil, where many of his Jewish soldiers who served with him in the Jewish Legion are also buried. The Israeli Government paid tribute to him when his ashes were reburied in Israel.



**Israeli tribute to LT Col Patterson**





Reburial of Lt Col Patterson and Mrs Patterson at Moshav Avihayil

### **Maj-Gen Orde Wingate DSO and 2 Bars**



**Orde Wingate** was the son of parents who were from a strict Christian sect called the Plymouth Brethren. He was well versed in the Old Testament and particularly taken with the Biblical Warrior generals such as Gideon, Bar-Kochba and Joshua. He was fluent in Hebrew and Arabic

Wingate organised the Special Night Squads and trained the Hagenah in commando tactics, surprise attacks and mobility. The Hagenah was a clandestine Jewish unofficial army at that time.

Members of the Hagenah included **Moshe Dayan** and **Yidal Yadin**, who both became generals in the Israeli Defence Force.



Moshe Dayan

Yidal Yadin

Yadin said that “Wingate was the perfect example of a military man being excellent in the combination of artist and scientist”.

Wingate was killed in an American aircraft crash in Burma and buried there together with the crew of the aircraft who also perished in the crash. His ashes and that of the crew were later reburied at Arlington Military Cemetery in the United States.

## **ISRAELI WAR OF INDEPENDENCE**

At the end of WW1 in 1918, The Ottoman Empire conceded to the terms of the League of Nations for the Palestine and Transjordan mandate to be administered by Britain. The mandate was enforced from 29<sup>th</sup> September 1923 till 15<sup>th</sup> May 1948.

“The British Government issued the Balfour Declaration in November 1918, promising to support the establishment of a Jewish Homeland in Palestine. Due to the insistence of South African General Jan Smuts, the Balfour Declaration was embodied in the 1919 Versailles Peace Agreement and subsequently in the 1920 San Remo Resolution, which established the terms of the mandate to be held by Britain and France over the Ottoman territory in the Middle East.

The San Remo Resolution was in turn enshrined in the Founding Statement of the League of Nations. Neither Britain nor France observed the mandate conditions, removing the Golan Heights from the potential Jewish Homeland as well as all the territory east of the Jordan River.

The Golan Heights became part of Syria while Palestine east of the Jordan River became Transjordan.

Following the Second World War and the establishment of the United Nations (U.N.), which embodied the League of Nations Founding Statement, in its Founding Statement, again on the insistence of General Jan Smuts, a new vote was taken on a Jewish Homeland. The portion (partition) allocated to a Jewish Homeland was once again reduced.

The Jewish Agency, representative body of the Palestinian Jewry, accepted the new partition in the interest of peace, while the Arab League and the Arab residents of Palestine chose not to accept the U.N. decision.

Britain announced that it would end all its responsibilities under the Mandate on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1948, prompting the Jewish Agency Chairman, David Ben



Gurion to proclaim the establishment of the State of Israel one day earlier, on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1948.” (Maj Peter Bailey)

Violence from the Arabs had broken out almost immediately after the UN announcement of partition on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 1947. The first phase of the war lasted from 29<sup>th</sup> November 1947 to April 1948, with the Palestinian Arabs taking the offensive with help from neighbouring Arab states. The Jews suffered severe casualties and most major roads were disrupted. Prior to the Israel’s Declaration of Independence, on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1948, the Arab Legion under the command of a British officer, General John Bagot Glubb, attacked kibbutz Kfar Etzion. They were turned back by the defenders of the kibbutz but the Legion returned two days later, better equipped, and overran the kibbutz. Many defenders were massacred after the surrender. The UN blamed the Arabs for the violence but the Arabs were blunt in taking the responsibility for starting the war.

Before leaving Palestine, the British encouraged the Arabs to go to war, as they believed that the Arabs would use their advantage in manpower and weapons, many left by the British, to launch a lightning attack to seize control of the whole of eastern Palestine. Thus the War of Independence was started, with Israel fighting for its very existence with limited resources except the will to defend the Jewish right to have a Homeland.

“The three Jewish paramilitary groups, the Haganah, the Irgun and LEHI were placed under a joint command under the umbrella of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and succeeded in stopping the Arab offensive.” ( Maj Peter Bailey)

Israel called upon the Jews of all nations to volunteer to help in the War of Independence and South African Jews heard the call.

“The South African volunteers, mainly from WW2 veterans, were the 2nd largest group of volunteers, outnumbered only by the approximately 1300 volunteers from the United States, with its immensely larger population” (Maj Peter Bailey)

On hearing about the plight of Israel, South Africans volunteered to serve with the Israeli forces.

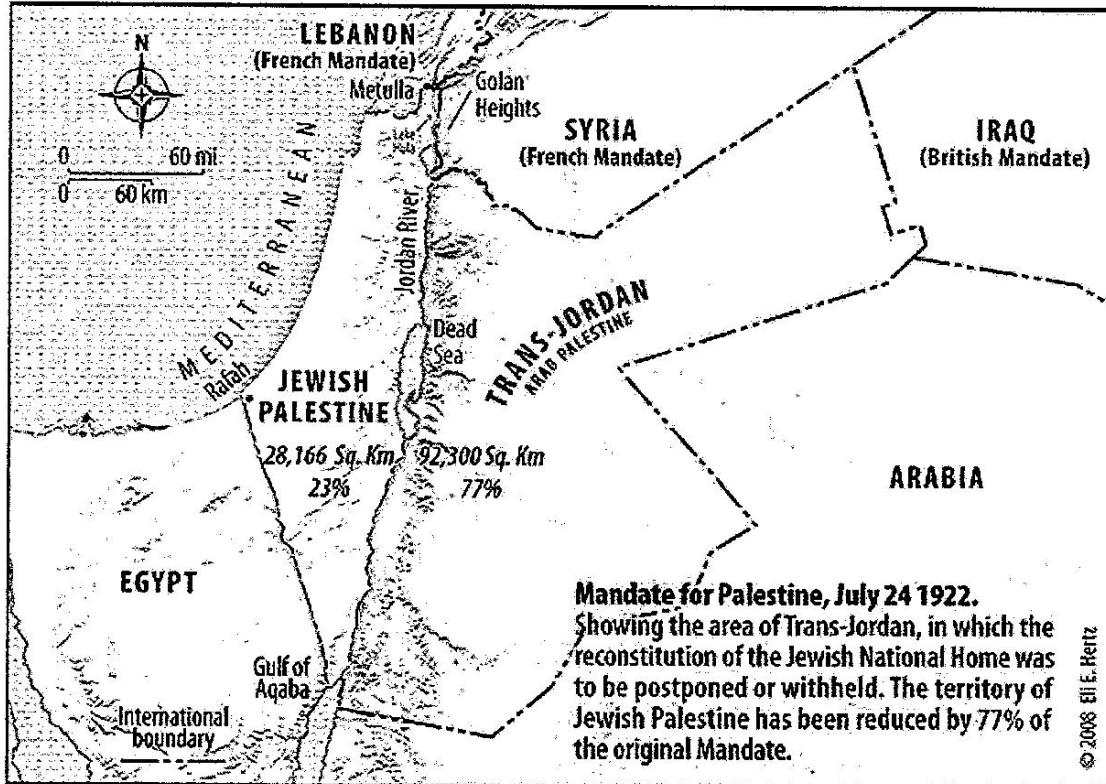
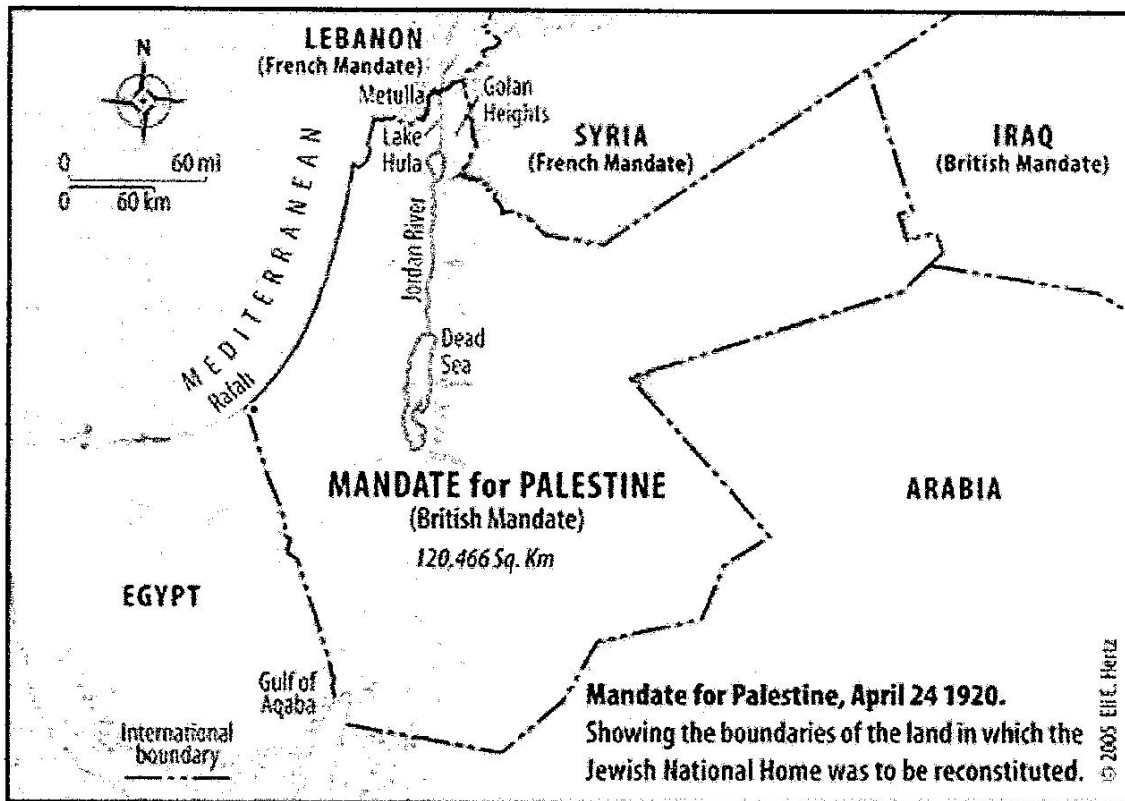
## **Israeli War of Independence: The South African Connection**

The independence of the State of Israel and the subsequent War of Independence resulted in 803 South African Jews volunteering and taking up arms in defence of the newly won independence of Israel.

Notably **Cecil Margo**, who together with **Ezer Weizman**, later President of Israel, was responsible for establishing the **Israeli Air Force (IAF)**, and together with another South African, **Smoky Simon**, who became Chief of Air Operations, flew the first combat mission against the Arab attackers.



## Maps : History of State of Israel



(Maj Peter Bailey)



(Jewish Virtual Library)

### Secret Language?

The South African pilots during the Israeli War of Independence used a secret language so that the enemy could not understand their action plan.

(Can anyone guess what it was?)

**AFRIKAANS!**

*(Boerejode maak 'n plan!)*

## **TRIBUTE TO SOUTH AFRICAN JEWRY IN THE SERVICE OF SOUTH AFRICA**



SANDF



The South African Jewish Community has given unstintingly of its sons and daughters in the Military Service of South Africa in keeping with the traditional patriotism found in all walks of life amongst South Africans.



ARMY



AIR FORCE



NAVY



MEDICAL

65

***We are proud and indebted to them***

**In closing** :a bit about myself!



**Ha Ha Ha!**



**I always wanted to be soldier!**



And I did!



**South African Engineers Formation HQ**  
**Corps of Professional Officers**

93

## **Acknowledgments and References**

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## SYMBOLS



South African National Defence Force



South African Army



South African Air Force



South African Navy



South African Medical Services



Israeli Defence Force



Israeli Air Force



Israeli Navy



Israeli Medical Corps



Israeli Advocate General



Dutch East India Company Flag



Dutch East India Company Symbol



South African National Flag prior to 1998  
Prior to 1998



South African National Flag  
after 1998



South African Defence Force Symbol prior to 1998



PRIOR 1932 - 2000



EXISTING MODERN DAY FROM YEAR 2000

### SOUTH AFRICAN COAT OF ARMS

## GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY USED

***Chevra Kadisha*** : Jewish charitable and burial society.

***Chanukah*** : Jewish Festival of Lights and Dedication.

***Hashem*** : Jewish name for the Almighty.

***Kibbutz*** : Collective farming with an emphasis on community labour , unique to the State of Israel, where the profits are shared amongst all members of the kibbutz, which also looks after their welfare. The residents of the commune share everything and work as members of a collective.

***Moshav*** : The moshav is similar to a kibbutz, . But in contrast to the kibbutz, farms in a moshav tend to be individually owned but of fixed and equal size. Workers produced crops and other goods on their properties through individual or pooled labour with the profit and foodstuffs going to provide for themselves. Farming implements can be shared.

***Rosh Hashanah*** : Jewish New Year

***Shul*** : Synagogue

***Yom Kippur*** : Jewish Day of Atonement.

***Yomtavim*** : Jewish religious holy days.

