



Perth Jewish Roots

Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society of Western Australia Inc (JHGS-WA)

ABN: 96 870 570 226

Website: www.jhgswa.org.au

E: michelle.urban@jhgsa.org.au

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2025

The heating is on and the days are slowly getting longer. Hope you're rugged up and keeping warm.

EVENT THIS MONTH

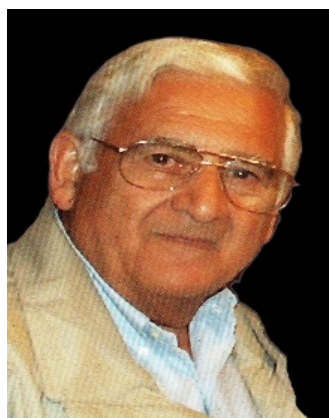


Guest Speaker: David Ganon OAM
Topic: An Early Childhood in Egypt and the Exodus to Australia

Date: Sunday 27 July 2025
Time: 1.30pm – 2.00pm start
Location: Noranda Chabad Synagogue
Entry: Members \$5.00 / Non-Members \$10.00

David has a most interesting story on his family, migrating from Egypt and the upheaval that happened there. His arrival in Australia and Perth, his family, connections, and involvement in the Community.

UPCOMING EVENTS & AGM in AUGUST



Guest Speaker: Mackie (Max) Machlin OAM
Topic: "Machlin familys' earliest history including The Menora Picture Theatre of the 1950s"

Date: Sunday 24 August 2025
Location: Noranda Chabad Synagogue
Time: 1.30pm for 2.00pm start
Entry: Members \$5.00 / Non-Members \$10.00

Max, more commonly known as Mackie, will talk about his family, immigrating from Israel, British Palestine, in the 1920s, life in Palestine. Family background and family life and early memories of life in Western Australia; how he and his brothers helped their father create the Menora Picture Theatre, and Jewish traditions.

2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

It's that time of year again!

Sunday 24 August 2025

1.00pm start

at

Chabad Noranda Synagogue

President, Vice-President & Committee

Positions ALL vacant

Why not participate in the Society's decision-making process and your ability to express opinions on significant issues and make an impact on the future direction of the Society



RSVP: Michelle

M: 0418 910 258 or

E: michelle.urban@jhgsua.org.au

TAKE A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

Can you help with names in this Class of 1936?



Spot anyone you know?

Rabbi David Isaac FREEDMAN: A life of Service and Spirit

On Sunday 22 June 2025 at PHC, a packed audience listened attentively to Rabbi Dan Lieberman give his Talk for the JHGS-WA, on The ANZAC RABBI – The first Chief Rabbi of PHC and First Australian Jewish Chaplain. Rabbi Freedman gained the title of Rabbi while serving overseas in WW1.

Rabbi Freedman was born in Budapest in 1874, moving to London in 1876. He attended Jew's College and University College London and became a Naturalised British citizen in 1889. He emigrated to Perth Western Australia in 1897 to serve as Minister to the small Perth Jewish community and later that year married Anne (Mollie) Cohen and they had 2 sons.



Early on in his Ministry he became known as the Rabbi “that got things done” and he was well known and respected both in the Jewish, non-Jewish and Political Communities. Jewish life was complex in those early days here with a division of Yiddish speaking Jews and English-speakers, but Rabbi managed to make things work. His public Patriotism was displayed very early when in 1900 he farewelled Lt Samuel Harris, the first Jewish officer who headed off to the Boer War. In 1915 he was Appointed Jewish Chaplain to the AIF, was enlisted and embarked on the HMAS Ulysses landing in Gallipoli in December 1915, serving with the Second Division HQ.



He was given the standard Cap badge that carried a Christian Maltese cross on it, but he was **not** happy to be wearing that sign so sought and got permission to wear a Magen David instead. Rabbi Freedman designed a new badge for Jewish Chaplains (still in use today) incorporating a Magen David rather than a cross. This proved to be a “ray of sunshine and hope” to the Jewish Soldiers he met along the way.



He carried out his duties as Chaplain with honour, serving the Jewish soldiers in some of the most notorious conflicts including Gallipoli, as well as on the Somme. Living conditions in Gallipoli were very harsh, dirty, muddy, numerous deaths and serious injuries of soldiers but through all of this Rabbi conducted services for Jewish soldiers including the Zion Mule Corps. Within this Corps he was serving Trumpeldorf and Zabotinsky – famous in the history of Israel.

By 1916 Rabbi was transferred to Egypt serving soldiers in three main areas whilst travelling by mule, camel and foot. He made it his mission to contact each soldier's family that he met and ensured Jewish graves were marked with a Magen David. In recognition of Rabbi Freedman's work, he was presented with a Sefer Torah by the Jewish community of Alexandria, Egypt. The ancient Jewish Sephardi community of that famous city wanted to show its appreciation for his and the Jewish soldiers' war effort and to do something to protect them. They gifted Rabbi a small travelling Sefer Torah, which is held today in the PHC Shule Ark and he took and carried this with him everywhere he went to minister care.

He also served in France at the Somme and once asked his commander if he could take his Jewish soldiers to Paris to celebrate Pesach. He was told **no** because the non-Jewish soldiers didn't celebrate their religious festivals. He also served at the Battle of Be'ev-Sheva with the 2nd Light Horse division - a very famous battle commemorated to this day in Israel. He was eventually released from duty after countless letters from PHC begging the army to allow their only Rabbi to return to his community.

This happened in 1917 and although he was offered a position in Sydney, Rabbi wanted to stay with the community in Perth and served them happily for 42 years .. quite a record even by today's standards. In 1924, Rabbi became State President of the RSL and when General Monash came to visit they established the Jewish War Memorial in Kings Park which today is the only Jewish War Memorial in the southern hemisphere to be on Crown land. His work-load was tireless, always active, giving and supportive, however his war effort was only recorded in dispatches. In today's world he would have received much higher acknowledgements.



Rabbi Dan Lieberman with the Torah given to Rabbi Freedman in Alexandria, Egypt

Upon returning to Perth, Rabbi Freedman oversaw the construction of the Jewish War Memorial in King's Park (the only one in Australia on public land), with the foundation stone laid by General Sir John Monash; and subsequently, in his role of State President of the RSL, prompting the State Government to build the State War Memorial.

Rabbi Dan Lieberman is himself following in the footsteps of Rabbi David Freedman, recently being commissioned as a Chaplain for the Australian Defence Force.

Without Rabbi David Freedman we would not be here as a strong community in Perth. He embodied faith, dignity, warmth, kindness and support for every soldier he met

during the war and everyone of his Perth Jewish community. It was heartening so see so many of his relatives attend today's Talk which gave testimony to the longevity of his message and value to our community.

Thanks go to CSG and the three young people on duty that day, for their support and commitment.



Frank Paolino-Mt Lawley MLA; Rabbi Dan Lieberman; Ken Kuchel-Ret ADF Chaplain; Dr Gabriele Maluga-German Consul Perth

by *Viv Levin*



FREEDMAN Family – June 2025

Photographer: Sas Saddick

From left to right:

Ian Freedman.....Grandson of Rabbi David Isaac Freedman

Rabbi Dan Lieberman – holding ANZAC Torah

Greg Sevel..... Great-Great Grandson

Viv Wood..... Great-Granddaughter

Jenny Measey.....Great-Granddaughter

Judy Freedman..... Wife of John Freedman who is

Grandson of Rabbi David Isaac Freedman

Anna Freedman..... Great-Granddaughter

Rebecca Freedman.....Great-Granddaughter

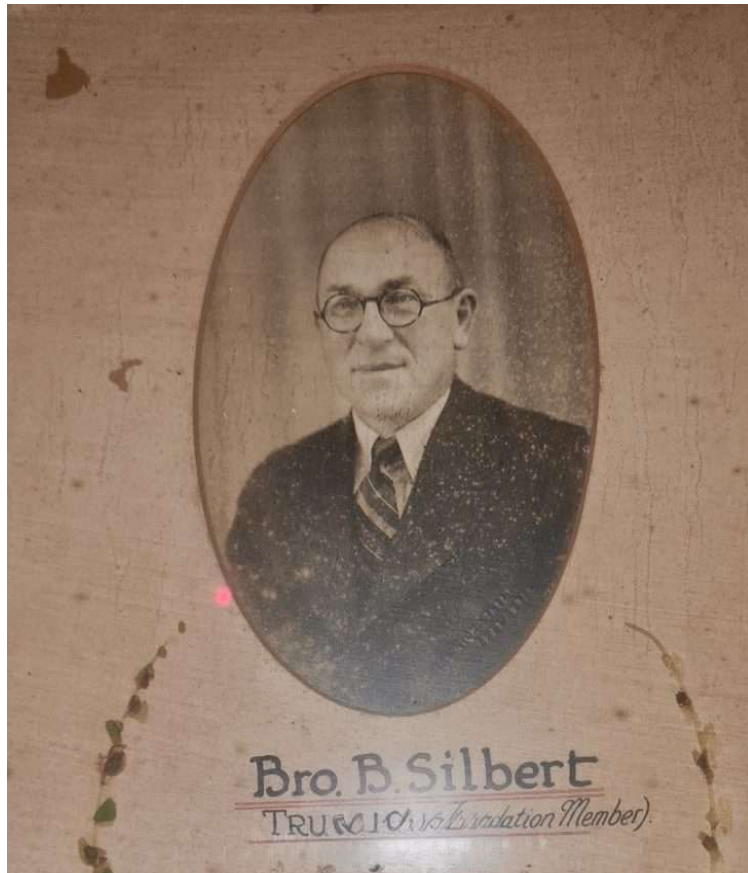
MEET BARNEY SILBERT

Article from the Fremantle Shipping News Edition #227
An online magazine all about Freo
15 May 2025 in “Fremantle People”

*In this article Hilary tells the story of her Grandfather, husband of Minnie Masel.
Minnie Masel 's Story was in the May issue*

Barney Silbert: once a household name, the person and the landmark in Fremantle.

“Meet you at Barney’s Corner” was the familiar cry when Barney Silbert’s Shoe Store was on the then high-profile corner of High and Market Streets, Fremantle.



Barney Silbert

In the mid 1980s, if you looked up to the first floor, you saw the signage “Barney Silbert’s corner” painted in the window, arranged by Barney’s son Eric in time for the America’s Cup Challenge.

Today “Barney Silbert” is immortalized in beautiful terrazzo flooring as you enter the chocolate shop ‘Coal River Farm’.

Chocolate, no longer shoes!

HOT CHOCOLATE



Current image of the corner of High and Market Street, Fremantle

So, just who was the personality behind the name?

Barney, originally Berel, was born in Russia, the youngest child of Tamara and Jacob Silbert. By the age of four, his mother had died. The family lived in the area near the Black Sea and like all people of the Jewish religion, were subject to persecution: they were controlled in where they were allowed to live, what occupation they could participate in, where they were allowed to travel, had compulsory military conscription for four years and were not permitted to be citizens.

As a teenager of seventeen, Barney left Europe alone, to join family members already living in Fremantle. It is believed he began learning English on the ship from an Italian immigrant! His voyage on the 'Karlsruhe' is commemorated on Panel 99 of the Welcome Wall near the Maritime Museum at Victoria Quay.

How 'Berel' became 'Barney' is part of the family folklore: it is believed that young Silbert disembarked in Fremantle and was asked his name. When he replied 'Berel Silbert', Berel being a European male name, the official replied: 'With a name like that, you will need to be able to run or fight'. This not very tall teenager asked what he should be called. The response from the Irish official was 'Barney'.

Commencing work on the Goldfields of Western Australia with his brother-in-law, the owner of Silbert and Sharpe, Fruit and Vegetable Merchants, this immigrant teenager was to become a well-known and popular figure around Fremantle. The first business presence involving Barney was at 94 High Street, on the corner of Pakenham Street, in a shop known as 'Dainty Lady' that sold giftware, watches and even imported china that his fiancée, Minnie Masel, painted to brighten up the plain white crockery of the day.

In 1913, Barney Silbert and Minnie Masel were married in quite the society wedding. In 1920 Barney and Minnie bought land on the south side of Ellen Street and acquired an 80-foot frontage and 3/8ths of an acre to build the Federation style family home that exists to this day.

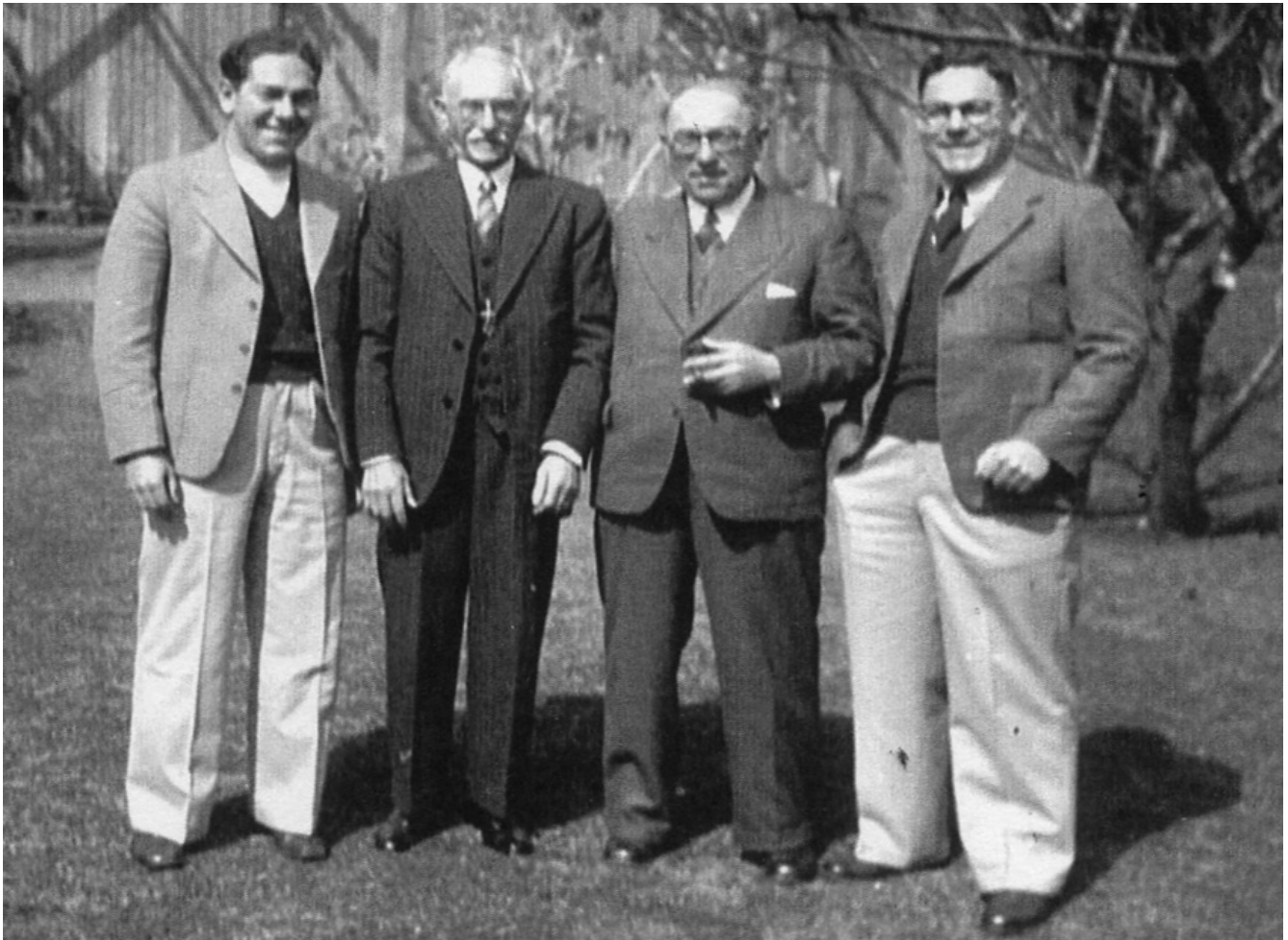


Originally number 74 Ellen Street, it is heritage listed as number 55. Ellen Street House today 2025

Minnie and Barney's second son Eric was born in the front room of the Ellen Street house in 1922. A close friend and Ellen Street neighbour of Barney's was Frederick Samson, with whom he shared an interest in rose growing and together they would purchase the rose bushes for both of these now heritage properties. Fred Samson was to go on to become the long serving Mayor of Fremantle - Sir Frederick Samson – and even donated his Samson House in Ellen Street to the City of Fremantle. Today it is managed by the National Trust.

Barney's son Eric described the Silbert Ellen Street home as being 'surrounded by an English garden of citrus trees, dahlias, grapes, arum lilies, Jasmin, black-eyed susan, german lilac, and 100 roses from Newman's Nursery'. In 1935, Barney was awarded the First Prize for the Fremantle inter Districts Garden Competition.

From the verandah the Silbert family could see the port, and could use WA's largest playing field, Fremantle Park, which included the croquet, bowling and tennis clubs. They could also hear the sounds of residents in the nearby asylum, now the Fremantle Arts Centre.



3 Generations - Eric; Grand-father Jacob; Barney; Keith Silbert c.1939



High Street Fremantle back in the day. Barney Silbert's on the right. Source Freetopia

Barney and Minnie successfully ran Barney Silbert's Shoe Store, that they had expanded from the original boot grinders acquired from the widowed older sister of Minnie, Fanny Breckler.

Fanny had married Yoel Breckler who was in business with his brother on the corner of High and Market Streets. With the death of Yoel, Fanny joined the business and then decided all the action would be in Perth. So, she sold to her young sister Minnie and brother-in-law Barney Silbert.

The business was first Breckler and Silbert, then Barney Silbert Shoe Store. Minnie and Barney were business partners in the store, equally involved in the business.



Barney Silbert c.1920s aged 30years

They succeeded in business, surviving the Depression, World War 2 and had even grown the business by expanding into neighbouring spaces within the Manning Building: all this despite Barney having received very little formal education, little English language on arrival and no formal business training.

He was a foundation member of the Fremantle Businessmen's Association in 1919, becoming treasurer, and was actively involved with the Ugly Men's Association. This was a uniquely Western Australian charity group who raised funds and built houses for World War 1 widows.



Trustees Antediluvian Order at Buffalo Club

Barney was also a Trustee and Foundation member of the Fremantle Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffalos; a lodge still located in High Street. After World War 2, Barney was involved in the Advance Fremantle Association.

His business also sponsored a yacht race off Fremantle with the 'Barney Silbert's Cup', and sensibly, both the South Fremantle and East Fremantle Football Clubs. Barney had been a roller-skater and a rower and then joined Fremantle Bowling Club as a keen and competent player, only having to walk across the road from his home to bowl. He joined in 1919, was in a team that competed in NSW in 1931 and won the Glick Trophy in 1935.

His passion for lawn bowls saw him design a new item of clothing, a sleeveless pullover that he interested a manufacturer in and had them made in cream for bowlers. A first in fashion! He sold them in other colours in the shop, for general wear.

Barney was one of the first people in the metropolitan area with a car - a Wiley's Overland Tourer, number 124, which he drove as an ambulance during World War 1. Cars and their owners in those early days were listed in the newspaper of the day.

Barney was a personality. Customers went to the Silbert Shoe Store to buy a pair of shoes and stayed many hours listening to his stories. His sense of humour had him walking into the street from the store one day and looking up. Passers by joined him also staring into the sky. When he had attracted a goodly sized crowd, he walked back inside! He would park his car outside the shop and when the policeman told Mr Silbert there was a No Parking sign, Barney apparently bent down and asked – ‘Who wrote that sign under my car?’.



Barney Silbert c.1930s aged 40years

Barney Silbert was also known for his empathy and decency. The Wilson family in particular. Ken Wilson, who managed the shoe store for many years, was the seventh child of a family of nine. The Depression and his father Alexander's poor health meant that in 1935, aged 14, he had to leave school to become a shop boy for Barney. Ken, who borrowed shoes for his interview, has recounted that his employer was a good businessman and excellent tutor, often kind to him and his family. In 1938 when Ken's father died suddenly, Barney opened the shop on that Sunday to dress the family for the funeral and then paid Ken an extra five shillings a week. This extra money in the little yellow pay envelope was given to Mrs. Wilson by Ken. When she saw the extra, she told Ken to take it back as he had been overpaid. He hadn't and Barney insisted.

World War 2 saw both Barney and Minnie's sons, who had joined the shoe business, serving their country and were absent for many of the war years. On their return, Barney aged 60 announced his immediate retirement. He was to die only nine years later in 1954.

So, one colourful character was Barney Silbert. Very much part of the fabric of Fremantle.

I'm sure he would be amused to step over the terrazzo floor and the words -

'Barney Silbert'

and into the current store, to buy a hot chocolate!



Terrazzo Flooring

by Hilary Silbert

Hilary is the Granddaughter of Minnie and Barney Silbert and daughter of Eric Silbert