

A Private Life



Northdene Estate, c.1920



Vegetable garden, Northdene,
c.1920



Northdene lake, c.1930



Building his ever-growing and expanding business interests – among these the establishment of the Newtown Mill in 1910 – was not sufficiently fulfilling to prevent Joffe Marks from pursuing other, somewhat more extravagant activities. His life away from the machine-clanking noise of his new office and the surrounding dust and foul-smelling carcasses of Newtown began to grow. In the years following the building of the mill in Newtown and the period leading to the formation of Premier Milling, he had become well known for his trips around the suburbs in an elegant cart and carriage drawn by a team of matched horses, which were stabled in Fordsburg. In 1909, he had moved from Belgravia to a small tin-roofed home with a balcony in Yeoville, which allowed him to live even closer to Herman and Dora, and his nephew and niece Harry and Clara. This close proximity to his family was however all to change.

In 1915, Joffe Marks acquired the large country estate of Northdene near the suburb now known as Sunninghill, paying £13,000 for 1,040 acres some thirty kilometres outside of Johannesburg. For Marks, this was an act of great courage that revealed a spirit of adventure that would lead him from Yeoville deep into the Transvaal countryside. With the purchase of Northdene, Joffe Marks – now well on his way to being an entrepreneur with extraordinary acumen – took on an identity of a flamboyant and wealthy bachelor, letting go for once and for all of his old image of *trader-smous*.

The house, designed by acclaimed architect Sir Herbert Baker with black roof tiles, five bedrooms and lavish entertainment rooms, allowed Joffe Marks to set himself up as a country squire with no less than ten employees, among them secretaries, managers, gardeners, maids and housekeepers – many of whom lived on the estate with their families. Two tall, statuesque Zulu men were known to not only work shifts in the kitchen, but also to perform ‘espionage activities’ on neighbouring farms. Gerald Jaffee, Marks’ great-nephew, recalls that there were no fewer than ‘fifteen Zulu men employed at Northdene, with living quarters behind the main house.’

In this unique rural abode, based on an almost Victorian world view and inhabited by people with a colonial passion for taming the veld, Joffe Marks consciously cultivated a lifestyle associated more with the opulence of the mining magnates who, in the main, chose to build on Parktown Ridge, about five kilometres north from the centre of the city. This exclusive area became the first private leasehold suburb, where palatial stone-brick homes were built with leaded windows, tall brick chimneys and shingle roofs with views

as far as Pretoria, but it held no attraction for Marks as he gained prestige with his new mills. His move so far north, some thirty kilometres beyond this ridge, was seen by many as somewhat eccentric and unconventional – the furthest people travelled for Sunday picnic outings was only as far as the Craighall Hotel, just ten kilometres beyond Parktown.

In my mind, I recreate the image of Joffe Marks leaving the mill for Northdene along a narrow and winding pot-holed road. Along the way, he sees horse-drawn carts loaded with churns of milk, ox wagons making their dusty way to the market, carrying pumpkins, mealies and other vegetables. On each side of the crevassed road there is an expanse of grassland, an occasional tree and, as dusk begins to fall, the long orange streaks of flaming light provide a peaceful backdrop to the journey home. A long dirt road lined with gum trees leads up to the house and, passing a large clay dam, the shale roof of the stone house comes into view. Stone steps reach up to the front door, and green creepers cover the lattice-enclosed veranda. Adjacent to this is a thatched rondavel, which encloses the swimming pool and gymnasium, and all of this is surrounded by flower beds blazing with the yellow and orange blaze of zinnias, delphiniums and dahlias.



Northdene, c.1919

Northdene had previously been owned by John Gardiner Hamilton, a Scot who settled on the Witwatersrand and became manager of various mines and then an employee of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines. Hamilton had been responsible for setting up the elaborate recruiting system to import Chinese labour to the mines, which after the South African War were suffering a labour shortage. After his death in 1912, the property remained on the market for three years until it was offered to Joffe Marks. One curious feature of Joffe Marks' purchase of Northdene was that he did not simply take over the property, but everything in it, including the furniture, paintings and household goods. Even the deceased owner's personal effects were part of the purchase. Indeed, Hamilton himself lay buried about 100 yards from the house in a grey-stone grave, with a chain placed horizontally across it. Near

the front entrance of the house was a genuine Shinto arch, presumably presented to Hamilton during one of his visits to the East while acting as a recruiting agent for the mines. Other exotic Eastern artefacts and bric-a-brac were also to be found in a special Chinese Room – through the dining room and along the corridor – occasionally visited by guests but mostly left to gather dust. Here, in glass cabinets, was a range of ceramics, small clay horses and other oriental ornaments. The rooms upstairs, left abandoned by the original owner, were stacked with files, letters from imposing figures from Rand history – Barney Barnato, Solly Joel, and other early influential millionaires of the day – as well as President Kruger and other notable government officials in Pretoria. For years, these documents lay unnoticed as material from which the rats and cats made their nests – until a new housekeeper arrived to clean up, placed the entire collection in sacks and burned them in the yard. In his own bedroom, Joffe Marks had cleared a cabinet in which he stored French perfumes, given as gifts from time to time to the ladies of the family and special female visitors to the estate.

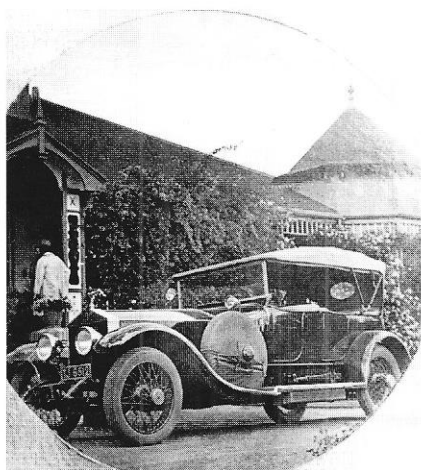
The rondavel-shaped lounge was able to accommodate large numbers of guests, and the long open veranda was often used in the summer for casual social events. Family and friends remember Joffe Marks, well groomed in his Savile Row suit, sitting on a wicker chair on the large veranda, filing his nails. It was here too that he greeted and bade farewell to all travel-tired guests and visiting family.

When Joffe Marks took over the country estate, the many years it had stood empty meant that the garden had been sorely neglected, and the flower beds, orchards and vegetable gardens had all become overgrown with weeds. By 1916, Marks had ordered – from the famous Sutton Royal Seed Establishment in Reading, England – an extraordinary assortment of vegetables and flower seeds, tuber-root begonias and twenty-five varieties of sweet peas, which were planted out by gardeners trained at Kew Gardens. By the 1940s, Joffe Marks' Northdene estate was producing a wide variety of flowers, which he regularly presented as gifts to the wives of business associates. Margaret Bloom, the wife of his great-nephew, Joseph, remembers that Marks (although this is at a later stage of his life) often visited with flowers and once told her in his heavy Yiddish accent: 'Do not tell the others, they will be jealous of you.' He would then move on to his next stop at the Parktown home of Mrs Gwyneth Aiken, where he presumably said the same thing to her!

Tree planting remained one of Joffe Marks' great pleasures on the farm, and he maintained frequent contact with the Government Forestry Department on this subject. One typical letter, dated July 1934, still survives in the Family Collection:

I [the Chief Conservator for the Pretoria area] note with regret that many of your pines have died. You state that all dead trees have been felled and you now propose to plant other pines between the stumps. I take it that all trees have been felled and that you do not wish to plant under the shelter of living trees if any are left. If there are any living trees remaining, any young trees planted in the same area will be subject to root competition.

For replanting, I would like to recommend Pinus longifolia, though I am inclined to the belief that, during the early stages, they must suffer from frost. Two hardy pines suitable for you to plant are Pinus arizonia and Pinus engelmani. Owing to the scarcity of seed, however, it will be impossible to supply such a large number as 1,000. During the coming summer, I might be able to let you have say 500 – if you could mix these with more common species to act as a nurse, which can be cut out later on. You can then cover the ground with a pine that should not be affected during dry spells.



Silver Ghost Rolls Royce, 1921

The Conservator also attached a detailed plan showing the recommended pattern of planting.



In 1916, Joffe Marks purchased the 'best motorcar in the world', a Silver Ghost Rolls Royce¹. For a year prior to this, Joffe Marks travelled to his home at Northdene in horse and carriage, taking about two hours to complete the journey from the mill in Newtown. But after the acquisition of the Rolls Royce, it was often

used for special family occasions. Margaret Bloom recalls with great pride that when she married Joseph Bloom in 1937, Joffe Marks supplied all the flowers and dressed up his car with special blue ribbons.

Joffe Marks insisted, in one of the strange moments of economy often spoken about by his family and employees, that the original crate in which the Rolls Royce had been shipped should be preserved and used for the roofing of his stables.

Joffe Marks had many ambitions for his Northdene estate, and many of these were indeed fulfilled. One, in particular, was to have a telephone installed in the mansion. This proved to be no easy matter in those days but, thanks to his business connections and influence with the Post Office, an instrument was duly installed – although it was regularly put out of action by the thunderstorms that plague the Highveld in the summer months.

He also loved animals and here for the first time he could indulge this passion without restraint. Within a short time of moving to Northdene, Marks had no fewer than eleven Great Danes roaming the grounds. At least two of these giant dogs shared his bedroom, but most lived outside and roamed the estate. They always greeted visitors and, when his nephews and nieces visited, the dogs would follow them around the garden.

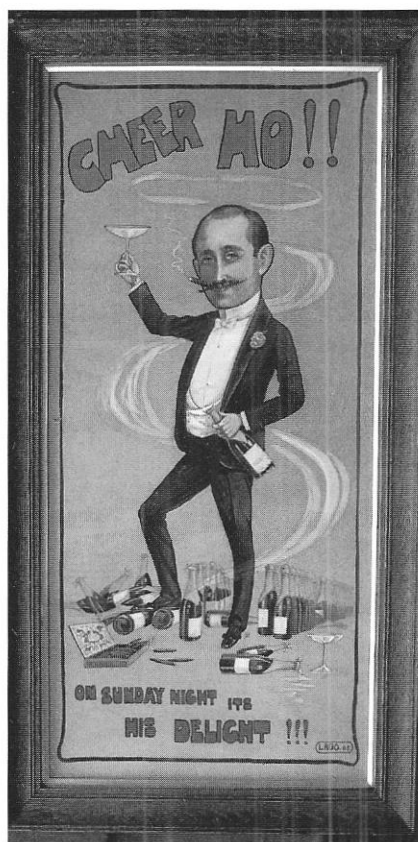
Joffe Marks appeared to use the special pastoral atmosphere and intrigue of Northdene to express a personal and private outlet for his abundant social largesse and zest for life. His small Yeoville home had forced him to entertain his sought-after theatrical friends in public places, and a favorite haunt had been the Carlton Hotel, a luxurious Edwardian structure financed by the Jewish mining magnate Barney Barnato. Built in 1906, the grand hotel boasted 300 rooms, an oak-panelled grillroom, turkish baths and a hairdressing salon, and local industrial and cultural elite – as well as foreign political personalities visiting Johannesburg – used this hotel for both private and business purposes.

Joffe Marks also frequently visited the kosher restaurants that reminded him of his childhood, as well as the popular music halls and mirrored cafés that faced onto the busy thoroughfares of Johannesburg. His Yeoville home, which was close to town, allowed him to stop off, quite spontaneously, at the Frascate Bar in Market Street or to dine at the Toreador at the corner of Pritchard and Rissik streets and although his move to Northdene took him away from this world, he still regularly visited the City, at times spending late nights at the Gaiety Theatre, Johannesburg's only all-night entertainment establishment.

I imagine Joffe Marks, on the nights he chose to return to his old haunts in the City, passing the colourful and ever-growing pageant of underworld characters of pimps, prostitutes and criminals who move in and out of cafés and penny drinking shops. The seedy bars and loose morals that pervade the busy streets remind him a little of the early days of the tented mining town he first encountered on his arrival. He is intrigued by the colour and vibrance of the nightlife, the elegance of the Empire Theatre and its many patrons and the social hub that has taken root in this ever-expanding city. The lights, the laughter and frenetic energy enchant him and he feels strangely at home here, worlds apart from the gentler pleasures offered by his country estate.

Tonight he has chosen to attend a production of *Two Orphans*, starring Freda Godfrey, acclaimed as ‘South Africa’s most popular and brilliant actress’, and he is entirely charmed by the famed Miss Godfrey. Joffe Marks pays 4/- for the seat, and after the show he plans to treat the cast to a meal at the Carlton Hotel.

He is entirely comfortable amid the opulent luxury of the Carlton’s lavish interior, and delights in the company of his theatrical friends, sharing bottles of wine, fine cuisine and lively banter with his guests. He is entertained by the high spirits of the performers and flattered by the attention of the delightful Miss Godfrey, but by the time the night draws to a euphoric close, he is pleased to return to the quiet splendour of his home. Tomorrow, it will be business as usual...



Cartoon of Joffe Marks (artist unknown)

Joffe Marks, ardent theatre patron, used Northdene as a somewhat exotic social milieu to express his own identity, choosing to spend his leisure and social time with theatrical personalities whom he invited out to the estate. The Johannesburg theatre world of the time was vibrant and exciting, with at least half a dozen theatres hosting performances fresh from the London season. Some plays and musicals proved popular hits, with the same leading ladies who had starred on the London stage. The variety of fare was impressive, and the plays of William Shakespeare, melodramas, re-

vues, musical comedies, and ballet filled columns of advertising space in the daily newspapers. Northdene became a place where, for the first time in his life, Joffe Marks could create a private space where he could bring home the fun and frolics that accompanied the world of theatre. 'Why stay at the Carlton when you could stay with me?', he was often heard to enquire of various theatrical companies.²

Tales of the frolics at Northdene were relayed in the music halls and bars throughout Johannesburg. Entertainment on the estate varied in tone and intellect. On occasion, it was a giddy romp, on others music would be made, and every now and then gatherings were sober and sedate. An invitation to Northdene – where women were comfortable showing off their cloche hats and the fashionably rising hemlines of the period – was now much sought after and an important indication of social status in the theatrical and business circles of Johannesburg. Margaret Bloom recalls the reputation enjoyed by Northdene during these early years. 'When I was dating Joe, I was asked "Have you heard of Joffe Marks?" and I said "No, should I have?" And my friend said, "Everybody who is anybody goes to the farm Northdene."'

Not all stage folk who visited Northdene were celebrities, nor were they all glamour girls, but visiting artists began to look out for the invitations and jumped at them when they came. Varied means of conveyance were provided – sometimes horse-drawn cabs, sometimes taxis, and sometimes even bicycles and rickshaws, but only for his particular favourites would Joffe Marks send the chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce. After the final curtain call following some evening performances, the entire company would arrive at 12:30 on Saturday nights and, from then on, the place was a frenzy of excitement, with singing, dancing, conjuring, laughter and general making of whoopee, accompanied by the serving of endless refreshments, from coffee to the famous champagne. 'Women are mischief-makers,' was one of Joffe Marks' sayings, 'and as for friends... I open a bottle of whisky in Northdene and they smell it in Johannesburg.'

Jim Fisher, the young manager of Premier Biscuit from 1926, was invited to Northdene for the weekend. At 11pm, he politely bade goodnight to his host – but Joffe Marks protested 'No, you can't do that! We have people coming.' Time ticked slowly by and it was nearly midnight before a large party of actors and actresses arrived, all in evening dress. Although Fisher was more than a little embarrassed by his weekend flannels, he soon forgot himself when the revels began, and the party continued well into the early hours.

Joffe Marks developed a sound appreciation and knowledge of theatrical matters, along with a considerable sense of discrimination on the merits of various productions.

In earlier days, he enjoyed the friendship of a number local theatrical celebrities, most notably Leonard Rayne, who first arrived in South Africa in 1895 to stage, with London actors, *King Lear* in a very primitive, tin-roofed building. The Guv'nor, as Rayne became affectionately known, started as a call boy on the London stage and not only gained an enviable reputation as one of South Africa's most significant actor-managers but also started his own theatre. His productions of Shakespeare, in which he played the principal male actor with a rich husky voice, are remembered by all. His wife, Amy Coleridge, one of the most loved of the early actresses in South Africa, started the country's first drama school and was also a close friend of Joffe Marks.

Apart from the seemingly endless stream of theatrical characters that filled the halls of Northdene with life and laughter, there were also other visitors who did not participate in – or, in fact, have any knowledge of – the famed Northdene romps. These included both business associates and friends, who were invited out to the estate for Sunday lunches. Regular visits were made by Alexander Aiken, who arrived in a Rolls Royce accompanied by his wife Nancy and their grandchildren. Judy Tren, Aiken's granddaughter, recalls these visits with warm memories. 'I remember sitting quietly in the back of the car on this long journey to Northdene – an exciting place for a child and, at Christmas, he always gave us generous presents.'

Another regular visitor to Northdene was Dr F.E.T. Krause³, and he and Joffe Marks spent many hours sitting on the veranda, reminiscing about the early days of Johannesburg.

Dr Krause, by now a criminal lawyer, must have told Joffe Marks many wonderful stories as they sat talking about life in early Johannesburg. After a typical flash storm that leaves in its wake a musty smell of damp earth, the two men move off the veranda and venture indoors. Joffe Marks calls for a lantern to be lit as it has become dark. Dr Krause, now in his early forties and running a legal practice in the City, tells Marks



Dr and Mrs F.E.T. Krause, 1942

about how his brother, Dr A.E.J Krause, state attorney of the Transvaal, had introduced him to Mohandas Gandhi just before the South African War, and how impressed he had been with the soft-spoken, gentle man who would become a leading figure in the socio-political milieu of his time.

It was during these early days at Northdene that Joffe Marks also befriended Joseph Langley Levy, the versatile, witty and corpulent editor of the *Sunday Times*, one of Johannesburg's first newspapers. One might have thought that Langley Levy's advanced intellect and sound education would only serve to alienate Joffe Marks, but there was something in their approach to life, in their style, their humour and their general demeanor that cemented a unifying bond of friendship that would last for many years, and Langley Levy was a regular Sunday visitor to the estate.

Langley Levy was born 1870 in Liverpool, England, and after editing the *Liverpool Review* for some years, he moved on to become the art critic for the *Daily Express* in London, finally moving to South Africa in 1910, the year in which the Union of South Africa was established under General Jan Christiaan Smuts. Langley Levy was possibly Joffe Marks' most intimate friend, arriving regularly for Sunday lunch at Northdene with his wife Mabel and their three daughters.

As a young journalist, Langley Levy had written a series entitled the 'Jew in Liverpool', and presumably had a keen interest in Jewish history, which allowed him to enjoy Joffe Marks' unique personality and dynamic entrepreneurship. His wife, Mabel, was an actress and starred in many early South African film productions. In 1925, at the funeral of Leonard Rayne, Langley Levy delivered an impressive obituary and, one assumes, Joffe Marks would have attended this funeral too.

With the likes of the Aikens, the Langley Levys, Dr and Mrs F.E.T. Krause, and Leonard Rayne making frequent visits to the estate, life at Northdene was never dull for Joffe Marks and, yet, despite the endless parade of colourful characters, his most cherished guests remained his extended family, who never failed to enchant and delight him. Memories of Northdene have a very special place in the lives of Joffe Marks' nephews and nieces and their families. As young children, many a Sunday or public holiday was spent on the expensive estate with their uncle and, from time to time, they even spent extended holidays there.



1. Edna and Laurie Jaffee, 1928 2. Joffe Marks on the lake at Northdene, c.1928 3. Laurie and Edna Jaffee, 1928
4. Lazarus Pinn, Nanny Keen, Edna and Laurie Jaffee, and dogs Charka and Bonzo, Northdene, c.1930 5. Children walking
with Nanny Keen and Joffe Marks, c.1928

From the stories I have been told, I gather that the children's visits to Northdene must indeed have been memorable. Arriving after a long journey, the children would be eager to be free of the confines of the car and abandon the clutches of their governess. They would rush in up the stairs to find their uncle. Joffe Marks, now in his seventies, would open his arms to them. 'How are you?' he would ask as they enter the room and, hesitantly, they would give their name, mistaking his heavily accented question to be: 'Who are you?' He would chuckle delightedly at their mistake, gently take the hand of the youngest child and walk to his desk drawer where he kept a supply of Lifesaver sweets. He would then take them outside to play and explore. Up to ten or twelve family members would gather around the large teak dining room table laid with Victorian plates and silver cutlery. A bell would ring promptly at 1pm and a tall and proud Zulu man wearing a pristine white uniform with a red band across his shoulder would serve up to four dark roasted chickens on large silver platters. Also on the menu would be vegetables of every description, crisp roast potatoes, gravy boats steaming with sauces, plates of fruit recently picked from the estate and from time to time there were also baked deserts.

Joffe Marks would do the honours himself and dish up for everyone around the table. After the entire table had been served, he would take a whole chicken and toss it to the Great Dane that had inevitably taken its place alongside Marks' seat under the table. Uncle Marks would then take his place at the head of the table, listening intently to the family's animated conversation. Seldom saying more than a word or two himself, Marks would watch and listen, indulging himself in the lively banter of the children and absorbing the thoughts, opinions and statements of the adult members of his ever-growing extended family. The matter of religion was never raised at the table and only occasionally did the conversation ever turn to politics or finances. Instead, the table chatter would centre on the daily lives of the Jaffees, the Blooms and mutual friends, or recent issues that would effect the milling business and it was the small, everyday details that most fascinated Joffe Marks – the progress of the children at school, their prowess on the playing fields, their parents' visits to the theatre or the race track, or the glittering social functions they attended in the City.

Rowing on the muddy dam in a small wooden boat, afternoons in the indoor pool, adventures in the expansive gardens – all left many precious childhood memories. Gerald Jaffee remembers finding a store of fireworks intended for Guy Fawkes night and, together with his brother Laurie – and without permission – decided to set some off. One of the flaming devices misfired, however, and plummeted to the ground, igniting the dry veld grass. A huge fire broke out and no fewer than thirty farmhands from Northdene and neighbouring estates were called to assist. In the end, the fire was extinguished and Uncle Marks wrote the entire incident off as a simple boyish prank. Gerald Jaffee spent part of his school holidays in the mid-1930s on the farm: ‘I would walk with Uncle Marks down to the lake and around the gardens. He was very proud of his gardens.’



Gerald Jaffee, c.1935

Joffe Marks found great pleasure in the time he spent with his five great-nephews and -nieces, Joe and Norman Bloom, and Gerald, Edna and Laurie Jaffee. It was these children, now well into their teenage years, rather than any religious activity, who brought him comfort. Invitations to Northdene became more and more frequent and he often asked to see the children’s school reports. Although he could not read them, he must have discussed them with their governess or with their parents, Harry and Bessie Jaffee, Clara and Samuel Bloom. On at least three occasions, he took Gerald and Laurie on holiday to Durban where, together with their nanny, they stayed at the Royal Hotel on Marine Parade. ‘When we used to go swimming, I would take a towel and put it over my head and cover my face. I did not want my friends to see me in a Rolls Royce,’ recalls Laurie Jaffee. Joffe Marks always stayed in his favourite suite at the Royal. He walked at least once a day, met with local friends whom he had made over the years, and retired to bed early.

Throughout his life, Joffe Marks was known to be on excellent terms with all his domestic staff and took a genuine interest in their welfare. ‘He was,’ recalls Laurie Jaffee, ‘a man before his time. One might call him “a liberal”.’

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and returned to South Africa. Some time after this, she was introduced to Joffe Marks and although according to his family's tradition a Mrs Ginsberg performed this introduction, my father always used to say that he was responsible.



Dora Linde, c.1930

Dora was originally from Manchester but immigrated with her family to South Africa in 1889 at the age of six and later went to opera school in Germany. Her father, Solomon Trapowski, was a businessman who ran the Danzig Bar in Bree Street, and was also known to be a Talmudic scholar. Dora's first appearances on the South African stage seem to have been at the Durban Musical Association in 1912, and her portrait featured in the weekend supplement of the *Natal Mercury*, with the caption 'Madame Dora Linde, last Prima Donna of the Berlin Opera'. From a programme, we can ascertain that her contribution to the recital was three excerpts from the opera *Samson and Delilah* by Camille Saint-Saens, a piece by Brahms and *A Summer Night* by Goring Thomas. Reviewing the performance, the critic of the *Natal Mercury* wrote:

Madame Dora Linde, the solo vocalist for the occasion, has a handsome platform presence, and is a greater artiste than she is a naturally gifted mezzo-soprano. Her rendering of three excerpts, including the aria 'Softly Awakes' from Samson and Delilah, were in correct style and with alternating emotionalism, but the vibrato which she affects in almost every note she sings enhances for a British audience her intonation and phrasing, especially in rapid passages. Her best effort was Love's Truth by Brahms, this being perhaps accounted for by the fact that the composition was more in accord with her natural temperament.

On 5 August 1920, Dora – now well known to local music lovers – gave a recital at the Carlton Hotel and it was here that she may have come into contact with Joffe Marks, who was a regular guest of the hotel.

A few months after their first meeting, Dora and Joffe Marks arranged to meet in the offices of Issy Hayman, Joffe Marks' lawyer.

While the Rolls Royce and driver, Streeter, waited outside, they signed the antenuptial contract that gave Dora £2,000 in cash to secure her independence. After the meeting, they left together in the car and lunched at the Criterion Hotel, which was financed by Joffe Marks and where he had a permanent table available to him.

I can visualise their wedding party at Northdene. It is a hot summer's day in December 1924. The gardens at Northdene are at their most beautiful as the first rains have fallen and everything has turned different shades of green. Surrounding the cultivated lawns, the veld grass is waving golden and thick. Northdene is abuzz with activity as cars and carts laden with crates of food arrive from the Criterion Hotel. The whole place is a frenzy of energy, with more than a hundred people packing, unpacking, setting out tables, organising food, sweeping and mowing. A few days earlier, Dora and Joffe Marks were married at the Courts between Rissik and Loveday Streets.

Now midday, cars filled with guests begin arriving. Women in long dresses, straw hats, men in tails and top hats, others dressed more plainly move from the driveway past the sleeping dogs and into the lush front gardens. Just below the Shinto arch, chairs and tables are set out informally and a large spread of food on silver platters awaits. Next to this is a smaller table with Joffe Marks' famous 'Boer War Champagne'. Shortly after the guests arrive, Dora, dressed in a long, light-beige chiffon dress, and Joffe Marks in a dark grey tailored Savile Row suit walk through the veranda towards the guests. They begin to clap and cheer. Beyond the chatter of the guests can be heard the cries and laughter of Marks' great-nieces and -nephews (Joe and Norman Bloom, Gerald, Edna and Laurie Jaffee) who have been brought to the wedding under the supervision of their governesses.

Dora was short but well built, with a full operatic chest, dark hair and eyes so gentle and mesmerising that they looked as if they were constantly brimming with tears. During the early part of their marriage, they were known to listen together to a collection of classical records played on the new 'electric drives' Dora had brought with her to Northdene. She could also regularly be heard singing from her bedroom window, her enchanting voice drifting westwards over the acres of uncultivated veld of the neighbouring farm.

Dora Marks became respected by all for her charm and ready kindness, always displaying a natural dignity and poise. Like Joffe Marks, she was always perfectly groomed. By virtue of both her own theatrical and artistic background and of her husband's manifold contacts, she was confronted with an endless variety of guests, nearly all of whom left Northdene gratified and content. Dora was particularly faithful to those – both on and off the stage – whom she had known in the days before she met her husband. Fully aware of his strengths as well as his handicaps, she had already manifested an ability to fall in with his moods – although she did not hesitate, on occasion, to tease him as 'my old ostrich-feather *smous*'. For her own reasons she called him 'Jack'.

The day of her arrival at Northdene is recalled by Karl Heidt, then estate manager at Northdene. He was asked to send an ox wagon all the way to the Orange Grove Hotel, where Dora's eight or nine large trunks were loaded onto the vehicle. Joffe Marks brought her out in his Rolls Royce, arriving at the estate some hours before the trunks.

When the trunks finally arrived on the farm, we were all so surprised how alike they seemed to be, and even more so, we learnt through the servants, that most of them had been almost empty. We never quite understood why Mrs Marks brought them along, unless it was to make an impression. In any event, we certainly had a good laugh...

A few days later, the newlyweds slipped away on their honeymoon, leaving Karl Heidt and an individual from Mark's office in charge of the house. 'A few hours later,' continues Heidt, 'we were sitting on the stoep together having tea when, to our astonishment, we saw a familiar vehicle approaching. It was none other than the Rolls Royce with Mr and Mrs Marks inside. Leaving her sitting in the car, he jumped out and we gathered that he had just been hearing the paper read out loud about the big rise in the price of some of his shares. Anyhow, he called out that he must get at his safe immediately and asked whether I had a key, as he hadn't time to find his own. Fortunately I had, but I was considerably embarrassed to discover, when we reached the safe, that it had never been locked. Fortunately, he seemed too preoccupied to worry and, pulling open the door, took out some script and dashed off once more to resume his honeymoon!'

With Dora now resident at Northdene, changes occurred in both the housekeeping and its appearance and it must have been difficult for the large staff to adapt to a new manager. The fittings and the furniture were modernised and some of the rooms entirely redecorated. Dora adapted extraordinarily fast to the perils of life on the veld, an experience that was completely new to her. She loved the outdoors and found peace and tranquility in the gardens of Northdene. Letters arriving at the estate were now addressed to her personally, and although she always shared the contents with her husband, she inevitably took the responsibility for the task or issue at hand. A doctor on a neighbouring farm wrote in 1927:

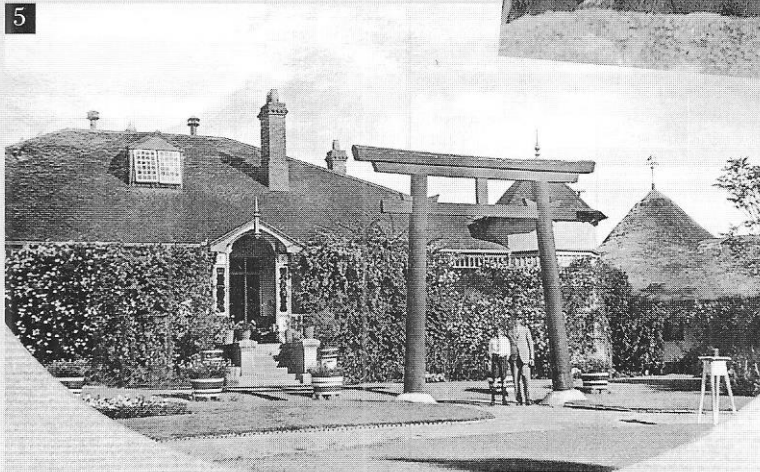
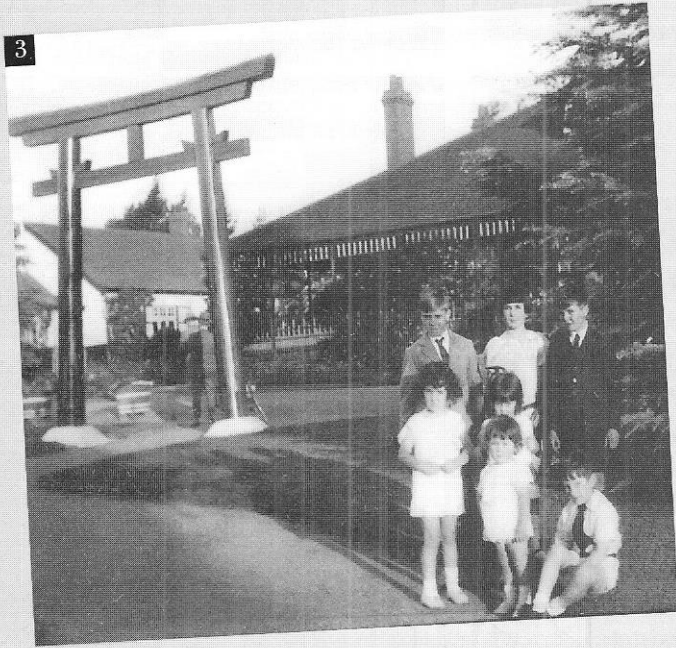
Dear Mrs Marks,

Your letter of yesterday to hand. Your boreholes are of course quite safe from any contamination. I wrote you on Jacobs's explanation of the source of his drinking water, but he probably did become infected elsewhere than on your farm or by drinking from the existing dam. I am sure, however, that you may consider yourself free from any menace of bilharzia infection. However, your natives will certainly become infected if they drink from your exposed dam without first boiling the water, as you are no doubt aware.

Any extreme differences between Dora and Joffe Marks regarding the management of Northdene were kept private, and the only difference of opinion of which the staff were aware concerned the vegetables grown at the estate. Dora wished to give away the surplus but Joffe Marks would not even allow the surplus to be sold, and insisted that the people who worked there eat everything.

One of Dora's greatest pleasures, introduced to her by Joffe Marks, was dog breeding, and she even found the occasional opportunity to visit the pedigreed animals at local dog shows. Thus, a letter from T.H. Butterworth of Simon's Town – in the Family Collection and dated 28 March 1931 – replies to an enquiry:

I am able to offer you a nicely-marked Brindle Dane bitch 'Isolda', registered, born 29 March 1930. Very strong and healthy. One of my own breeding, and the winner of First Prize, the only time shown at the Western Province show last month [sic] Full pedigree furnished. Shortly in season. Price 12 guineas. This bitch is well worth showing and, should



1. Dora and Joffe Marks with Bessie Jaffee, c.1930 2. Dora entertaining friends at Northdene, c.1930 3. Edna, Laurie and Gerald Jaffee with friends at Northdene, 1926 4. Joffe Marks, dog Danny and Harry Jaffee, Northdene, c.1930 5. Joffe Marks and young friend

you not require her, please wire me as I intend entering her for the Durban and Maritzburg shows. Entries close on 3 June for the first-named.

Isolda was duly acquired, as were a number of other animals, including Great Danes named Northdene Bonzo II and Northdene Danny.



Both Dora and Joffe Marks loved children and encouraged both their families to visit regularly. They particularly enjoyed watching the youngsters play in the grounds of the estate. Toys, swings and other playthings were obtained on a generous scale and, if they knew of a birthday – whether it was their own nephews or nieces or the children of friends – Dora and Joffe Marks never failed to commemorate it. Although she could not take part in any romps, Dora was always ready to take on her share in table games and similar sedate pastimes.

Leisure time at Northdene was spent discussing the gardens or sitting outside on the veranda where Dora read aloud letters and even literary works, some of which Joffe Marks knew from the local stage. Partners with such different life experiences found a secure friendship and companionship through music and literature. Later, they were known to listen to the wireless, which was kept in the lounge.

Dora grew accustomed to 'Jack' – always dressed in a suit, crisp white shirt and a carnation from the garden in his lapel – leaving at least three times a week for the mill, and her days were spent seeing to the needs of Northdene, visiting her own family, the Trevors, and listening to music. There were also frequent outings to Johannesburg, with its new restaurants, and the now fashionable cocktail parties. (Margaret Bloom recalls having the first 'cocktail wedding' when she married Joe in 1937.) On other occasions, Joffe Marks kept up the routine of seeking out entertainment, but with Dora now at his side, his choice of entertainment would be somewhat more discreet and considerably more sophisticated.

Joffe and Dora Marks leave the Northdene estate at 5pm and head for the City. It is a warm, hazy, sunny afternoon, and the grey pigeons coo

gently in the pine trees under which the car is parked. Streeter, the chauffeur, opens the door of the Rolls Royce and lets them in. Joffe Marks sits in front, Dora – struggling a little as she bends to settle into the black leather seats – at the back. She is beautifully dressed in a long green satin dress with sleeves off the shoulder, her black hair tied back. She carries a white woollen shawl and a handbag to match. Tonight they are not going to the theatre but to the Madeleine for dinner, where they will dine to the music of a large jazz band recently arrived in Johannesburg from England. A suite has been booked for them at the Carlton Hotel and they will not return to their home at Northdene until the morning.

The early years of Dora and Joffe's marriage were also broken up by annual trips overseas, where Dora would – for the most part – leave her husband to continue his business affairs undisturbed. They would however always make sure that they were at home together for the annual year-end holidays. Christmas was a special time at Northdene, and Dora and Joffe Marks made a concerted effort to distribute gifts, cakes and puddings to all the African and European inhabitants of the estate.

Five years into their marriage, this near-perfect life at Northdene was however to change dramatically. Dora's failing health and immobility, caused by rheumatoid arthritis, began to deteriorate rapidly and, for a short time, she struggled bravely to maintain her usual active lifestyle, managing activities at Northdene and offering warm hospitality to Joffe Marks' great-nephews and -nieces – now almost teenagers – as well as her own family. By 1930, however, those who came to see her were shocked by the dramatic change in her appearance. Within a year, she was confined to a wheelchair, requiring the care of a full-time nurse. Joffe Marks was deeply saddened by the plight of his beloved wife and showed enormous commitment and devotion to her by investigating all possible ways to alleviate her pain.

The atmosphere at Northdene slowly began to change and although it remained a carefree environment where long sunny Sundays were spent with children roaming the grounds, playing tennis and eating large meals, there were strained undercurrents. Dora was absent from most family gatherings and although Joffe Marks was always present, he was often preoccupied and slightly withdrawn. Laurie Jaffee remembers well how, during her confinement, Dora would greet guests on their arrival. 'She was brought downstairs

for tea in a huge wheelchair carried by two Zulu men. Her tremendous pain made her somewhat surly and uncomfortable to be with.' At other times, she would rally for a short while but the world beyond the walls of the Northdene estate rarely saw her and Joffe Marks would spend long evenings alone after she had gone to bed. For nearly eight years, he arranged for her to go annually to England for treatment. 'I am going abroad for treatment,' she once told Jim Fisher, 'and you must promise to stay with Jack – even if I don't come back.' With trunks of clothes, jewellery and the Astin Martin Joffe Marks had specially adapted for her, she embarked on her sea journey from Durban, accompanied by her nurse and, occasionally, friends who also travelled regularly to the British capital.

In mid-1938, Joffe Marks took what was his only pleasure trip with Dora to the Far East, including India, Malaysia and Japan. Medical reasons, however, demanded that Dora return almost immediately, and she once again left for additional treatment in London, where her usual headquarters were the Cumberland Hotel. From here she received treatment and visited well-known Harley Street doctors. From the *Athlone Castle* on 26 November 1938, she radioed: 'Had comfortable journey. Cold much better. Everything perfect on board. Look after yourself. Rosa and Joe Frankel send regards and love.'

On 1 December 1938, Dora was again in touch with her husband: 'Having quiet and pleasant journey. Weather beautiful. Miss you. Dearest love.' Almost immediately upon docking, Dora's health began to deteriorate. 'She had,' said Joseph Frankel from London, 'a fairly comfortable voyage across, except for a few days when she felt rather seedy. At Madeira she bought herself some fresh fish and vegetables, which helped a little, for her main difficulty was the food she got on the ship, which she could not enjoy.'

A second cable reported: 'Mrs Marks rather weaker. Otherwise unchanged.' Just before Christmas, on 21 December 1938, Dr Pettavel cabled: 'Patient is weak. Unable to take nourishment. Keeping her strength exceptionally well, but I cannot say for how many weeks. I am leaving for 10 days.'

On 4 January 1939, Dora Marks died from pneumonia and breast cancer. She was only 52.

'She was laid to rest,' wrote Dr Harvey, 'at a service, starting at the nursing home, and then continuing at the New West End Synagogue.' In accordance with the usual Jewish custom, her wedding ring remained on her finger. By all accounts, the service was a particularly beautiful one, although only three people were present. There was not enough time for Joffe Marks to get to

London in time for the funeral, so he was represented by his great-nephew Gerald Jaffee, Dora's cousin Daphne Trapowski, and a friend of Joffe Marks who was in London from Australia at the time of the funeral. The death of his beloved devastated Joffe Marks and although he did not speak much about his deep sadness, he forbade the playing of music at the Northdene estate.

Among the personal items she left behind were three fur coats, two fox stoles, three white ermine capes and jewellery worth over £2,000, but one curious fact emerged in the administration of the estate. This was recorded in a letter – held in the State Archives, Pretoria – from her solicitors, Godfrey & Sanderson, to the Master of the Supreme Court in Pretoria on 16 February 1939.

IN ALL THE AGONY AND SUFFERING



of Israel's tragic history, the Jewish people have never faced such a crisis as now.
War, persecution, hunger and disease are decimating European Jewry. Only the communities of America and the British Empire still live in freedom.

OUR FREEDOM INVOLVES TREMENDOUS OBLIGATIONS

On our sense of responsibility, on our preparedness to make sacrifices on an unprecedented scale depends the future of many of our brethren. We are still free to help those refugees and war victims who have escaped from their horror into neutral or allied territories. We have also obligations to our own men and women in the fighting forces, which we must meet.

THIS IS THE TESTING TIME!

YOU Must Respond through the
S.A. JEWISH WAR APPEAL

Jewish Affairs, October 1942

The surviving spouse's correct name is Joffe Marks. For some reason or other, the deceased always called herself Dora Jaffee-Marks, quite incorrectly, but as you are aware, she was entitled to call herself anything she liked. If you will refer to the Will, you will see that she signs 'Jaffee-Marks', and her banking account was opened in that name, as also was her Saving's Bank account and her Post Office Savings Bank, Pretoria.

Dora had decided to call herself by Joffe Marks' original surname but, for legal reasons, could not dispense with the suffix 'Marks'.

Dora's death also coincided with the outbreak of the Second World War. Letters to both Dora and Joffe Marks from Dora's relatives in Germany had, during the 1930s, forewarned of what was to come. An excerpt from a letter in the Family Collection sent to Dora and Joffe Marks by Karl Heinz, Dora's nephew, who lived in Berlin, makes it very clear as to what was taking place.

The Jewish emergency has begun. We, as foreigners, should not have been involved, but in spite of this Papa obtains no permit anymore to import foreign goods. Papa has been obliged to give up his business as from 1 January 1933. So, too, we

received notice to vacate our dwelling from 1 April 1933 merely because we are Jews. Then, on top of this, I was forbidden to attend school for a week...

This letter, which went on to request money to pay for an apprenticeship at Armstrong Siddeley Motors in England, was received along with other requests for financial assistance to allow relatives to flee an increasingly hostile Germany. Throughout this time, Joffe Marks and Dora assisted wherever they could and once Dora died Joffe Marks continued to keep in touch with her relatives who fortunately escaped.

I imagine Joffe Marks during the time just after Dora's death hearing of the street clashes that had taken place between Nazi supporters and young Jews from the Jewish Workers' Club⁵ (Yiddish Arbeter Clubs) on the steps of Johannesburg's City Hall. Although unfamiliar with the individuals, these incidents brought the War close to home and was of some concern to Joffe Marks. His anxiety increased when he received regular updates on the situation in Europe from Harry Jaffee, who regularly attended report backs from the Jewish Board of Deputies as they received information from similar organisations throughout the world. Joffe Marks became anxious that a situation would develop which would make all South African Jews vulnerable. He was also distressed to hear informally that some of his Afrikaner friends had joined the Nationalist Party and appeared to be taking anti-Semitic positions.

¹ In 1999, a feature in *Car Magazine* (September 1999) revealed that Joffe Marks' beloved Rolls Royce is still in existence and belongs to a motoring enthusiast in Simon's Town, Cape Town, who has painstakingly restored the vehicle to its original state.

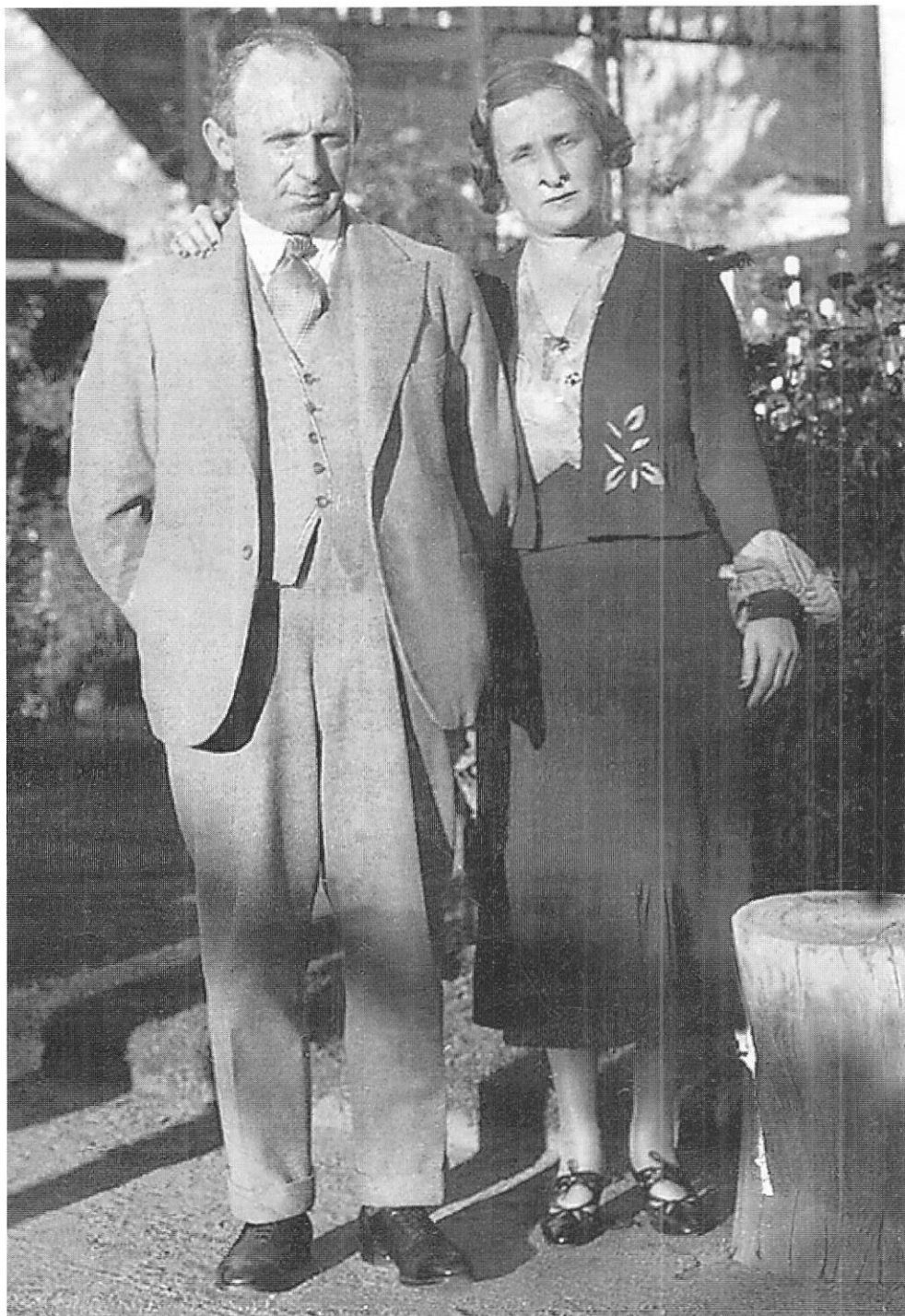
² Eric Rosenthal, unpublished manuscript.

³ Frederick Edward Traugott (F.E.T) Krause was born in Bloemfontein and educated at Grey College in Bloemfontein and then did law at Stellenbosch University in the Cape. After spending some time in England as an advocate, he served as junior prosecutor in Johannesburg and was then appointed Chief Prosecutor and, later, Acting Attorney General. During the South African War, he was a leading figure in saving the South African gold mines from being demolished to prevent them from falling into British hands. It was Krause, too, who officially handed Johannesburg over to Lord Roberts on 31 May 1900. Shortly afterward, he became a prisoner of war on parole but, owing to ill health, was eventually permitted to return to England. On his arrival in London, he was arrested and charged with high treason for relaying information requesting the arrest of J. Foster, who had transmitted information to the British which he had illegally obtained from the prosecutor's office.

In 1904, Krause returned to South Africa, but Lord Milner refused to allow him into the Transvaal and he was only admitted to the Transvaal bar in 1905 after a long and arduous struggle. He served on the Johannesburg Town Council and became a member of the Transvaal Legislative Assembly representing Vrededorp. Pardoned by King Edward VII in 1909, he consequently built up a large practice specialising in criminal cases. During the 1922 miners' strike, he defended Taffy Long and other strikers and, in 1933, was appointed Judge President of the Orange Free State, a position he held until his death in 1959.

⁴ Rudy Frankel *Tiger Tapestry*, page 28

⁵ The Jewish Workers' Club was formed in Johannesburg in the late 1920s. It provided a meeting place for immigrant workers, where they could speak Yiddish, make social connections, involve themselves in culture and art and, more importantly, continue the rich Socialist tradition that had begun with the formation of the Bund in 1897 in the Pale of Settlement. Bringing these traditions with them, Jewish immigrants gave support to working-class activities, strike funds and to other left-wing and labour organisations. From the mid-1930s, the members of this Club were active in countering anti-Semitism, which was developing apace in the country where Jews were being blamed for being Communists and exploitative entrepreneurs. At times, Jews were openly attacked by the right-wing Greyshirts or by members of the Ossewa Brandwag.



Harry and Bessie Jaffee, Northdene, c.1930