

The Dimantshtein Family

Introduction

Samuel ("Sam") Diamond and his wife Devorah ("Dora") were first cousins: Samuel was the son of Getzel Dimantshtein and Dora the daughter of Getzel's brother Reuven Dimantshtein and his wife Hinda.¹ Because their lines converge one generation back, a single ancestry serves them both, reaching from London back through Korsovka (now Kārsava) and Rezekne in Latvia to Polotsk in Belarus, and to an ancestor born about 1770. This compilation sets out that ancestry generation by generation, with particular attention to the siblings of Dora and Samuel and to the husbands and wives who married into the family. Sources are given in the footnotes.

Family origins and character

The Dimantshtein family originated in Polotsk, Belarus, and moved during the nineteenth century to towns in the Latgale region of Latvia: Rezekne (Rezhitza), Daugavpils (Dinaburg/Dvinsk), Riga, Korsovka (Kārsava) and Lutzin (Ludza). The family were Leviim and Chabad Chassidim, and prospered as traders in flax, timber and fish.² From Riga the family built an export trade to Britain in herring, timber and flax; one branch established a fishery and cooperage in Aberdeen, Scotland. Members of the family began settling in London from about 1880, and several branches — including Samuel's — anglicised the surname to Diamond.

Generation I — Zev Wulf Halevy Dimantshtein (c.1770 – before 1839)

The earliest ancestor traced in archival records is **Zev Wulf Halevy Dimantshtein**, born about 1770 in Polotsk and died before 1839.³ He is the 4× great-grandfather of Dora and Samuel's children. His known children were **Greinim** (born 1796), **Eliyahu** (born c.1800) — the direct ancestor — and **Moshe**.

Greinim Dimantshtein married **Rokhla** (born 1800) and his branch remained in Dvinsk (Daugavpils). His children included Shlomo (1819–1858); David (1824–1855), who married Feiga; Shmuel (1836–1865), who married Ester and whose son David (born 1866) was a tinsmith in Dvinsk married to Ginda, daughter of Avraham; Khanah (born 1830); Bentzion (1834–1869), who married Izka; and Zev Wulf (1841–1897), who married first Ester and then Dobka and whose sons included David, Greinim and Nokhum-Leib.⁴

¹Chaim Freedman, "Dimantshtein Family", chfreedman.blogspot.com (2009), and Chaim Freedman, "Dimantshtein Family" descendant report, 21 August 2008 (the family document supplied for this compilation).

³Latvian State Archives, Riga: census and family (revision) lists; researched by Aleksanders Feigmanis, Riga.

Generation II — Eliyahu Dimantshtein (c.1800 – before 1885)

Eliyahu Dimantshtein, born about 1800 in Polotsk, died before 1885.⁵ His children were **David** (born 1823) — the direct ancestor — **Avraham**, **Shmuel**, **Zev-Wulf** (born 1839), **Nakhman** (born 1838) and **Zalman**.

The younger Zev-Wulf married **Khasya** (born 1839) and moved from Polotsk to Korsovka in 1878; his children were Treina (1869), Dveira (1871), Liba (1874), Itka (1876), Avraham (1878), Musya (1883), Eliyahu (1885) and Moshe.⁶ From the line of Avraham or Shmuel descended **Shneor-Zalman Dimantshtein** (c.1865–1935), a butcher in Korsovka, who married first Russia (died 1929 Korsovka) and then Nekhama; several of his children survived the Holocaust by fleeing to Rostov, and his great-grandson David Dimantshtein settled in Beersheva, Israel, in 1972 and became one of the principal family informants.⁷

Generation III — David Dimantshtein and Keila-Tsirel

David Halevy Dimantshtein, born 1823 in Polotsk, died 1901 in Lutzin (Ludza), where his tombstone still stands.⁸ According to the 1889 list of Jews living in the rural areas of Lutzin district he moved to Korsovka in 1872 from Rezhitza, having earlier moved there from Polotsk, and is described as a merchant.⁹ By family tradition he and his wife were farmers and publicans, operating an inn on the outskirts of Korsovka. Why he was buried in Lutzin rather than Korsovka is not known.

His wife **Keila-Tsirel** (born 1824) is of unknown parentage; mitochondrial DNA testing of her descendants shows matches suggesting kinship with families of the Vitebsk region such as Popkovitch and Leviyan (Gamerov).¹⁰ She was a short woman of very definite views: she insisted her daughter Rivka learn to milk a cow, and had the maid Marfa teach her. On one occasion an inspector visiting the inn found an insect in a bun; to save her parents from prosecution, Rivka ate the bun quickly, insisting the insect was only a raisin.¹¹

⁶Latvian State Historical Archives, 1889 family list, Korsovka; researcher A. Feigmanis (op. cit.).

⁷Family informant David Dimantshtein, Beersheva, Israel.

⁸Tombstone of David son of Eliyahu Halevy Dimantshtein, Ludza Jewish cemetery, 1901; photographed for Chaim Freedman by Aleksanders Feigmanis, Riga.

⁹Latvian State Historical Archives: 1889 family list of Jews living in the rural areas of Lutzin (Ludza) district, Korsovka; researcher Aleksanders Feigmanis.

¹⁰Mitochondrial DNA testing of Keila-Tsirel's descendants; see Freedman, "Dimantshtein Family".

David and Keila-Tsirel had twelve children, whose birthdates and birthplaces are largely estimated; information on this generation comes chiefly from the Latvian archives and from a family tree drawn up in England in 1948 by Norman Nygate.¹²

Generation IV — the twelve children of David and Keila-Tsirel

1. Zisla (Zissa), c.1844–1932, and Peisakh Gordin

Zisla, born about 1844 in Polotsk, married **Peisakh Gordin** and lived in Berzpils, where she died in 1932.¹³ Their son Yaakov-Zev-Wolf Gordin (1871–1941) moved to Korsovka and married **Batia Nisse** (born 1881 in Balta, daughter of Refael Nisse); both were killed in Korsovka in 1941. Three of their children perished with their spouses: Rassia (1910–1941), married to Yekhiel Ritz of Dvinsk; Zalman (1915–1941), married to Ida Silin, daughter of Moshe Silin; and Mikhail (1918–1941).¹⁴ The surviving children settled in Israel: Gita (born c.1905), married to Hirsh Tsiplovitch; Pesakh-Eliyahu (born 1908); and Liuba, married to a Mr Kalinov. Zisla's sons Mendel and Dan Gordin were killed in Berzpils in 1941 together with all their children and grandchildren. Mendel's son Aba Gordin survived, lived in Korsovka, and organised religious services for the remnant community after the war.

2. Yehudah-Leib (Leon), c.1848–1917

Yehudah-Leib, born about 1848 in Polotsk, died 1917 in Korsovka. His son **Moshe-Eliyahu ("Masey")** (born c.1880 in Korsovka) ran the family trade from Riga and settled in London in the 1920s, where he opened a wooden-barrel factory importing timber from Riga. He married his cousin **Sonia Dimantshtein**, daughter of his uncle Getzel — and therefore the sister of Samuel Diamond (see Generation V below).¹⁵

3. Tzvi-Hersh, 1850–1930, and Leah

Tzvi-Hersh, born 1850 in Polotsk, left Korsovka for Riga, became wealthy, and founded the Dimantshtein export business to England in herring, timber and flax; its expansion drew several relatives to Britain. He married **Leah** and died in Riga in 1930.¹⁶

His son **Bernard** (born c.1875 in Riga) went to Aberdeen, Scotland, to run his father's business, opening a fish-processing plant and a cooperage: barrels made from Riga timber were shipped to Riga, filled with herring, and exported back to Scotland. Bernard changed his surname to **Diamond** — the first of the family to do so. His children were Vera, Freddie, Miriam, Shura, Eliyahu and a second Vera.

¹²Family tree drawn up in England in 1948 by Norman Nygate (grandson of Reuven Dimantshtein).

¹³Family informants Pesakh-Eliyahu Gordin and Gitta Tsiplovich, Israel.

¹⁴Yad Vashem Holocaust Archive, Jerusalem: Hall of Names (witness sheets submitted by Rakhel Meizel, Tel Aviv, and others).

¹⁵Family informant Liuba Krieger, London (daughter of Sonia and Moshe-Eliyahu Dimantshtein).

Two other sons remained in Riga and their households were destroyed in the Holocaust. **Yitskhak** (1879–1941) married **Gittel Kaplan** (daughter of Benyamin Kaplan and Ester); their son Shmuel ("Mula", 1903–1941) married Cecilia Berzin (1907–1941), and Mula and Cecilia's daughters Miriam (born 1934) and Roza (born 1938) were killed with them in Riga in 1941. **Shimon-Leib** (1879–1941) married **Lina**; their son David (1903–1941) married Sonia Kaplan (born 1905, sister of Gittel), and their daughter Paula ("Polly", 1908–1941) also perished.¹⁷ Yitskhak's daughter Rakhel, married to a Mr Meizel and living in Tel Aviv, submitted the Yad Vashem witness sheets recording these deaths.

4. Rivka (Rebecca), 1852/1856–1934, and Mordekhai-Zev (Max) Bull

Rivka, born in Polotsk (her birth year is variously recorded as 1852 and 1856), married in Dvinsk in 1872 **Mordekhai-Zev ("Max"/"Marks") Bull** (1848/1853–1931), son of Nakhum Dov-Ber Bull and Rakhel (Rokhlya) of Levenhoff (Livani).¹⁸ Max Bull was a Chabad Chassid — his tombstone calls him "one of the excellent of Chabad Chassidim" — and one of the first Chabadniks to settle in London, where his home at 73 Evering Road, Stoke Newington, was a centre of scholarship. He ran "M. Bull and Sons", furriers, in Kingsford Road. Rivka was a matriarch and philanthropist, a founder of the Stepney Jewish Hospital; she is remembered for rebelling against wearing a sheitel, wearing lipstick, and smoking a pipe. Both are buried in the Federation Cemetery, Montague Road, Edmonton.¹⁹

Their ten children and marriages: **Yehudah-Leib ("Leon")** (1873/4–1955), furrier, married Betsy; **Haska ("Sarah")** (1876–1975) married Eliyahu ("Elias") Germain and emigrated to New York in 1928; **Avraham ("Ephraim")** (1877/80–1974), furrier in the family firm, married Rose Gunzburg; **Mendel ("Emanuel")** (1881/4–1971) married Breina, then Slava, then Lottie — his son Donald Bull (born 1913) became a screenwriter who wrote the television series "Dr. Finlay's Casebook"; **Leah ("Lena")** (1881/5–1945) married in 1906 Rabbi Yitskhak-Yaakov Super (1881–1961) of Lutzin, later Chief Shokhet and a Dayan of the Melbourne Beth Din for half a century; **Khaya ("Annie")** (1883/5–1972) married David Gold (died 1944) — among their descendants are the actor John Gold and his daughter Louise Gold, singer and Muppets puppeteer; **Elka ("Alice")** (1884/7–1969) married first John Felkov (died c.1930) and then Simon Mindel — her grandson John Gross became editor of the Times Literary Supplement; **Eliezer ("Laurie")** (1889–1975) married Bessie Stitchin (divorced), the singer Anna Phillips, and Margaret Leizer; **Dora Bull** (1892–1985) married Moshe ("Maurice") Sagon; and **Moshe ("Maurice") Bull** (1895–1980) married Brownie Segal in 1920 — their daughter Patricia Levitsky (born 1928) wrote her own history of the family.²⁰

5. Reuven, c.1852–1934, and Hinda — Dora's parents

¹⁸Chaim Freedman, "Mordekhai Zev (Max) Bull", chfreedman.blogspot.com (2009); tombstone inscription, Edmonton; obituary, Jewish Chronicle, November 1931.

¹⁹Tombstones of Mordekhai-Zev and Rivka Bull, Federation Cemetery, Montague Road, Edmonton, London (1931, 1934).

²⁰London Census, 1901 (RG 13); ages of the Bull and Diamond children as enumerated. Latvian record ages frequently conflict with the London census and with tombstone ages; see "Conflicting dates" below.

Reuven Dimantshtein, born about 1852 in Polotsk, was a furrier and the last of his siblings to emigrate, settling in London in 1897. By Maurice Bull's memoirs he was very tall — over six feet — with a large spade beard, and an excitable man who once reacted violently to an anti-Semitic remark in the street.²¹ He married **Hinda** and died in London in 1934. Their children are set out in Generation V below.

6. Zev-Wulf ("Velvel"), 1856–1920, and his wives Gitta and Minna

Zev-Wulf, born 1856 in Polotsk, died 1920 in Korsovka, where he farmed on the outskirts of the town — near the Jewish cemetery and "Naudas Kalns", the site of the 1941 massacre. He married first **Gitta** (died before 1909) and then **Minna**.²²

By Gitta: **Shmuel** (1882–1943), flax and timber merchant of Korsovka, married **Grunia Rozenberg** (died 1953 Riga); they escaped across the Soviet border in 1941 and Shmuel perished in Siberian exile. Their son Eizik (born 1915) survived the Riga Ghetto and Stutthof, was liberated at sea in May 1945, lived in Sweden and settled in Israel as an engineer; his 1987 interview is a principal source for the family's history. Their other children: Khassia (c.1902–1981, Israel), Zhenia (1910–1941) and Gittel (1912–1941), both killed in the Riga roundup of women, Rivka (born c.1913, married Shimon Meirov, returned from exile to Riga), and Zev-Wulf ("Volinka", 1918–1941), killed while a university student in Riga. **Avraham** (1888–1941) married **Liza** (1894–1941); he had travelled to London before the war but returned to Korsovka, where both were killed with their daughter Marita. **Eliyahu** (died 1942 in Kokand, Uzbekistan, of illness in exile) — his daughter Luba-Gitta (born 1915) married Eli Teitelbaum and settled in Netanya, and his daughter Zelda married Khaim ("Harry") Eizenberg, whose five-year-old son was trapped and killed in occupied Riga in 1941. **Eda** married Michael (Silovitch) Silvan and died in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1986. **Sorra-Pessia** (born 1891) married Leib Gruzin of Kreizburg.²³

By Minna: **Getzel** (1919–1944), killed at the front serving in the Soviet army;²⁴ **David** (born 1909), who settled in Haifa; **Yekhezkel ("Khatzkel")**, who settled at Kfar Blum in Israel and took the surname Yahalomi; **Gershon** and **Seeka**, both killed serving in the Soviet and Latvian armies; and a daughter who died in childhood.

7. Getzel, born c.1857 — Samuel's father

Getzel Dimantshtein, born about 1857 in Polotsk, remained in Korsovka. The blog account gives his death as 1890, but the fuller descendant report leaves his death date open, and since his daughter Sonia was born about 1893 the 1890 date is almost certainly wrong (see "Conflicting dates" below). His wife's name has not been recovered. His children are set out in Generation V below.

8. Moshe ("Marks"), 1860–1942, and Kate Usher

²¹Maurice Bull, unpublished memoirs, cited in Freedman, "Dimantshtein Family".

²²Eizik Dimantshtein, Israel; interview by Chaim Freedman (1987), published in "The Pen and the Blade" (1992).

²⁴Soviet military records.

Moshe, born 1860 in Polotsk, emigrated to London about 1880–1882 — by the evidence of the 1891 census the first of the family to leave Latvia.²⁵ A wealthy furrier living in a large house in Hackney Downs, he held a government contract to supply black bearskin hats to the British army during the Boer War. He married **Kate Usher** (born 1864, daughter of Simon Usher). Their London-born children included Emily ("Millie", 1882), Myer (1886), Louis (1887), Betsy (1891), Sarah (1894), Bertha (1897) and Dorothy (1898), with further children Cyril, Gary, Janet, Peggy, Leo, Michael, Marion, Olga, Sheila and Raymond recorded in the family papers.

9. Shaya (Yeshaya), 1860–1933

Shaya, born 1860 in Polotsk, arrived in England about 1900 and made a living as a tallyman (draper). A member of the Jewish Socialist Bund in Russia and an ardent Zionist in England, he wrote a ballad in memory of the victims of the Kishinev pogrom of 1903. He was an active shadkhan (matchmaker) in London, once conducted a Kabbalistic exorcism on his grand-niece Betty Sagon, whom he believed possessed of a dybbuk, had a tenor voice, acted as chazan on the festivals, and played the violin at family celebrations. At a family wedding — possibly that of Dora Bull — he danced the Russian kazatchka and died of a heart attack, aged seventy-three. His widow then joined their only daughter in South Africa.²⁶

10–12. Zalman ("Solomon"), Meir, and Barukh

Zalman (born 1865 in Rezhitsa/Rezekne, died 1937 in New York) had daughters Dora and Dolly. **Meir** (born 1865 in Rezhitsa) lived in Riga and never married. **Barukh's** identity is unclear: Patricia Levitsky's family history counts him a brother of Rivka Bull, but Lloyd Nygate's tree omits him, and he may in fact have been a brother-in-law.²⁷

Generation V — the households of Reuven and of Getzel

The children of Reuven and Hinda (Dora's siblings)

Yehudah-Leib (1880 Korsovka – 1929 Jerusalem). Raised on "Torah and Chabad Chassidism", he came to London at seventeen when his father emigrated, laboured alongside him, studied under the Gaon Moshe-Avigdor Chaikin, and finally realised his lifelong wish to settle in Eretz Yisrael in 1922. In Jerusalem he lived in poverty, prayed with the Chabad community, and worked at the Diskin Orphanage. His first wife died in London; in Jerusalem he married **Minna Moseieff**, of an old Hebron family related to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The marriage was unhappy; even the Rebbe Yosef-Yitskhak Schneersohn, visiting Jerusalem, could not persuade him to grant a divorce. Minna was killed in a car accident early in 1929, and that August Yehudah-Leib was mortally wounded in the Arab attack on the Diskin Orphanage in Givat Shaul, dying four days later; both are buried in the Chabad

²⁵London Census, 1891 (RG 12).

section of the Mount of Olives cemetery.²⁸ Their son **Avraham** (born 1925), orphaned at four and raised in the same orphanage, took the Hebrew surname **Yahalomi** ("my diamond") and settled in Beersheva; his children are Danny, Minna, Iyal and Liat.

Shlomo ("Solomon") married **Khante-Khaya ("Annie")**. Their children were Esther, Gerald, David, and Alice, who married a Mr Devon and had daughters Mavis and Cynthia.²⁹

Devorah ("Dora") — the great-grandmother of this line; see Generation VI.

Sarah (c.1896 – 1968, London) married **Yaakov ("Jack") Nygate**, originally of Grodno. Their children: **Norman Nygate** (died 1988, London), who married Doreen and had children Merle and John — it was Norman who drew up the 1948 family tree on which much of this genealogy rests;³⁰ **Sheila**, who married Philip Sattin (sons Paul, David and Jonathan); and **Yehudah-Leib ("Lloyd")**, who settled in Beersheva, married Sarah ("Sylvia") Lansman, and had four sons: Yosef-Aharon (Joseph Allan), Moshe-Yaakov (Martin Julian), Reuven-Yitskhak (Richard Ian) and Daniel Refael.

The children of Getzel (Samuel's siblings)

Sonia (c.1893 Korsovka – 1986 London) married her cousin **Moshe-Eliyahu ("Masey") Dimantshtein** (son of Yehudah-Leib, no. 2 above), the London barrel-factory proprietor — a marriage that doubly bound the family together. Their daughters were **Liuba**, who married a Mr Krieger (children Alan, Rachel and Zoe) and was herself an informant for this genealogy,³¹ and **Rachel**.

Shmuel ("Sam") Diamond — the great-grandfather of this line; see Generation VI.

Generation VI — Samuel and Dora Diamond

Shmuel ("Sam") Diamond, born 1886 in Korsovka,³² settled in London, where he was in business as a fur dealer — the trade of his uncles Reuven and Moshe and of the Bull family. He married his first cousin **Devorah ("Dora")**, daughter of Reuven and Hinda. Sam died in London in 1978.³³

²⁸"Yizkor Am Yisrael et Kedushei Tarpat" (Berzin and Weiss, Jerusalem 1930), entry for Yehudah-Leib Dimantshtein.

³²London Census, 1901 (RG 13).

Sam and Dora had three daughters:³⁴ **Beatrice ("BT")**, who married **Louis Gibson; Gladys**; and **Cynthia**, who married **Nat Stern**.

Generation VII — the Gibson line

Beatrice ("BT") and Louis Gibson had two children: **Garry**, who married **Adele** (née Rosenthal), and **Hilary**, who married **Tony Sinclair**.³⁵

Garry and Adele Gibson had two sons: **Stephen**, who married **Susan Conroy**, and **Gavin**, who married **Hayley** (née Greenfield).

Stephen Gibson and Susan Conroy have three sons: **Jonathan, Jacob** and **Benjamin** — the eighth generation in descent from Zev Wulf Halevy Dimantshtein of Polotsk, and, through both Getzel and Reuven, doubly the great-great-great-grandsons of David and Keila-Tsirel of Korsovka.³⁶

Conflicting dates — a note of caution

The Latvian revision-list ages, the 1889 rural district list, the London censuses and tombstone inscriptions frequently disagree by several years — the compiler flags this explicitly for Rivka Bull, Max Bull and most of the Bull children, whose births carry double dates (e.g. 1881/1884) for this reason.³⁷ Two discrepancies bear directly on this line. First, Getzel's death: the published blog gives c.1890, but his daughter Sonia was born about 1893, so either the death date or the birth estimate is wrong; the 2008 descendant report prudently records no death date for him. Secondly, birth years for the Korsovka-born generation (including Sam, born 1886) rest on ages self-reported in the 1901 London census and should be treated as approximate until confirmed by a Latvian metrical record or a British naturalisation file.

British records: the 1891 and 1901 censuses and naturalisation

What the censuses already show

Two census returns underpin the London side of this genealogy. The 1891 census records Moshe ("Marks") Dimantshtein in London and indicates immigration about 1880, making him the first of the family to leave Latvia;³⁸ he appears as a furrier, later of Hackney Downs.

³⁴Family information supplied by a descendant of Samuel and Dora Diamond, July 2026.

The 1901 census supplies the recorded ages of Sam Diamond (pointing to birth in 1886), of Dora Bull, Maurice Bull and their siblings, and of the household of Max and Rebecca Bull.³⁹ The original enumeration books (series RG 12 for 1891 and RG 13 for 1901) are held by The National Archives at Kew and are searchable by name, with images, on the subscription services Ancestry, Findmypast and MyHeritage; the returns give address, relationship to head of household, age, occupation, and place of birth (typically rendered "Russia" for this family). Addresses worth searching directly: Hackney Downs (Marks Dimantshtein's household), 73 Evering Road, Stoke Newington (the Bull household), and Kingsford Road (the Bull furrier business). The 1911 census, the 1921 census and the 1939 Register would extend the picture to Sam and Dora's married household and their daughters.

Principal sources

The genealogy above rests on: Latvian State Archives revision and family lists researched by Aleksanders Feigmanis of Riga; the 1889 family list of Jews of the rural Lutzin district; the London censuses of 1891 and 1901; tombstones at Ludza and at the Federation Cemetery, Edmonton; Yad Vashem's Hall of Names; the JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry and Family Tree of the Jewish People; the 1948 Nygate family tree; the memorial book "Yizkor Am Yisrael et Kedushei Tarpot" (1930); Soviet military records; the memoirs of Maurice Bull and the family history of Patricia Levitsky; recorded interviews with Eizik Dimantshtein, Luba Teitelbaum, Liuba Krieger, David Dimantshtein and the Gordin family; and the published research of Chaim Freedman, including "The Pen and the Blade" (1992) and his Dimantshtein and Bull family articles.
