

WALTER MONASCH AND THE EXTENDED MONASCH FAMILY HISTORY

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Publius Cornelius Tacitus (56 CE-117CE) wrote in his *Annales I*, that history should be written '*sine ira et studio*' [without anger and fondness]. Australia and in particular Jewish Australia is justifiably proud of the achievements of its Citizen General Sir John Monash (1865-1931) but the thought expressed by the contemporary of Tacitus, namely Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BCE-65CE) '*Audiatur et altera pars*' [listen to the other side of the story] may be timely advice.

This article deals with my father's story, Rudolf Aufrichtig-Arkwright and his second cousin, Walter Monasch (1922-2011). He was part of the extended story of the Monash family. Whilst there has been a lot of focus by historians on the background of Sir John Monash, there has been little research on his extended family. This article seeks to fill the gap and to add further personal detail to Ann Mitchell's articles, published in previous issues of this *Journal*.¹



My Grandmother Emma Aufrichtig (nee Schimmelburg 1861-1938), father Rudolf Aufrichtig (1893 Breslau Germany-1978 Perth WA), and grandfather Isidor Aufrichtig (1856-1934). This photo was taken in 1915.

In the 1920s, my father's first cousin, Irma Futter (1897-1974), married Hans Monasch (1882-1967). Our family was proud of the Monasch connection, although we could not claim any merit for the Monasch family's contribution to Jewish history. Hans Monasch's second cousin, Sir John Monash, the Australian war hero, was not the object of our admiration. We knew very little about Sir John, as Australia was far away. The military leaders, who got the overriding attention by our family in the First World War, were Foch, Haig, Pershing, Ludendorff and Hindenburg. It was the German branch of the Monasch family that influenced Jewish thought, which tickled our fancy.

To the best of my knowledge, the earliest recorded Monasch was Abraham Monasch (1710-1759). Abraham's grandson, Loebel Herz Monasch (1777-1831) was born and died in Krotoschin, an old Jewish community that had its beginning in 1423. This city was, from 1793 until 1918, part of the Prussian Province of Posen. In 1849 Krotoschin had a population of 7,800 inhabitants, of which 30%, 2,327 were Jewish. Jewish learning flourished in this community and many influential rabbis were born in Krotoschin. In 1827, the old Krotoschin synagogue was destroyed by a fire and a new great synagogue was built in 1846, which was equipped with a large pipe organ in 1894.

Loebel Herz Monasch had two sons and a daughter. The oldest son, Baer Loebel Monasch (1801-1879), established a Hebrew printing business of note that produced, amongst other works, the Hebrew Bible with translations in German and Yiddish, rabbinic publications and Hebrew prayer books.² Sir John Monash was the grandson of Baer Loebel Monasch and Hans Monasch was the grandson of Baer Loebel's brother, Markus Loebel Monasch (1814-1883). Baer Loebel Monasch's daughter, Marie Monasch (1826-1900, Sir John Monash's aunt) married Professor Dr Hirsch (Heinrich) Graetz (1817-1891), who was Professor of History at the University of Breslau and Lecturer in Jewish History at the Rabbinic Seminary in Breslau (Fraenckelsche Stiftung). Graetz published an eleven volume systematic history of the Jewish people, as well as many other scientific investigations into Jewish history entitled: *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart* [*The history of the Jews from the oldest times unto the present*].³ He was a Conservative Jew with national Jewish tendencies, which resulted in his being attacked by the Orthodox Jewish Establishment 'as lacking respect for the sacrosanctity of Jewish tradition'.⁴ Heinrich Graetz introduced Raphael Jacob Fürstenthal (1781-1855), a poet and masterful translator of Hebrew texts, to his father-in-law Baer Loebel Monasch. Fürstenthal translated the entire traditional prayer literature into German and Monasch, as editor and printer, produced

the *Minchah Chadasha*, a *machsor* [holiday Prayer book], in five volumes for all the Jewish Festivals.

It is hard to appreciate the significance of this undertaking in our time. At that period of time, to write and speak about Jewish sacred matters in the vernacular was one of the major issues between Orthodoxy and Reform. In the eyes of Orthodoxy, a prayer-book with a German translation was against all Jewish traditional values. Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was attacked for translating the Bible into German; Rabbi Abraham Geiger was vilified for not using the *Lashon Kodesh* [the holy language] for his sermons and now Monasch, by printing prayer books with a German translation, was throwing further fuel into this fiery debate.

The verdict of history was made by the general Jewish public and not by the rabbinate. In the synagogues of today, sermons are given in the vernacular and in the Diaspora most prayer books and Hebrew Bibles are printed with translations. The Monasch prayer book *Minchah Chadasha* had its twelfth edition in 1876, which shows that its popularity was almost immediate.

Baer Loebel Monasch, his sister Rosa Monasch (her married name was Melzer) and his brother Markus Loebel Monasch, had twenty children between them. The details of this large family were covered by Mitchell in the previous issue of this *Journal*.⁵ The loss of the Province Posen by Prussia to Poland in 1918, made most of the Krotoschin Jews immigrate to Germany. The large German Progressive Congregations reformed the prayer book and the Geiger, Sachs, Joel and other prayer book editions superseded the Monasch - Machsor. As a consequence, the Monasch family sought their fortune in other cities of the world such as Munich, Minneapolis, New York, Berlin, Stettin, Breslau, Melbourne and Badenweiler.

Margarete Lichtheim née Monasch (15 January 1881) the sister of Hans Monasch and her son Walter Lichtheim were deported from Stettin to Lodz (25 October 1941) and from there to Chelmno (15 May 1942) where both perished. Margarete's younger son Ludwig Lichtheim escaped the Holocaust on 1 December 1938 with a Children's Transport to England and from there he became one of the *Dunera* Boys settling in Victoria where he died in 1978, having changed his name to 'Louis S. Layton'. Like her brother Hans Monasch, Margarete was a second cousin of Sir John Monash. Margarete's husband Georg Lichtheim (1865-1939) who until his dismissal in 1933 was the Director of Hamburger Wasserwerk, Am Bauersberg, died in Hamburg in 1939.

Hans Monasch, his wife Irma and their children Walter and Eva lived in Stettin (Germany) until 1936, when life under Hitler became unbearable. In this small Jewish Community 2,037 Jews were left in

1937 of the 3100 Jews in 1933. They moved on to live in the Rhineland until 1938, as legend had it, that Germans in the Rhineland were less supportive for Hitler than those in the rest of Germany. The family finally migrated in 1938 to Chicago USA. Should you wish to learn more about the details of the Holocaust experience of this part of the Monasch Family, you can find a very detailed interview with Walter Monasch on the Internet.⁶

May I just quote a few sentences from this interview that may help the reader to understand why many Jews failed to leave Germany in good time: 'I remember sitting in a dinner discussion with my parents and some friends who said: "This will go away. This can't last. I mean this is a passing something. Our Germany can't do this - can't be this crazy. This is inconceivable."'

The son of Marie Monasch and the historian Professor Dr Hirsch (Heinrich) Graetz was Dr. Leo Graetz who was Professor of Physics at Munich University. Leo Graetz (1856-1941) was murdered by the Nazis in the Concentration Camp of Dachau.

Sir John Monash became idolised by the Jews of Australia but he was somewhat neglected by his German family. He made a number of significant contributions to the Allies success during the final months of the First World War and his personal story represents some significant changes in approach. Firstly, he was given command based on ability and not on seniority as was customary in the other Armies of the time. Secondly, he did not stifle the enthusiasm of his troops by persisting with the old parade ground army tradition. Thirdly, he broke the concept that the colonial troops were inferior soldiers, best used as cannon fodder as happened in the doomed battles on Gallipoli. Most importantly, he attacked the German front in a surprise attack at its weakest point. After a four-year stalemate on the Western Front, the first retreat achieved by the Allied forces under Monash's command contributed to the collapse of the morale in the German Army, which was of greater significance than the small amount of ground conquered.

However, Monash's military strategy was not the only factor in the Allied victory. The real turning point in the war, however, came about by 300,000 US troops landing each month from April 1918 in Europe and the single-mindedness in leadership that developed between Petain, Haig, Foch and Pershing. In contrast General Erich Friedrich Ludendorff (1865-1937) was preoccupied with the political unrest that had developed in Germany.

Walter Monasch lived in Chicago after he graduated from high school. Money was scarce for German Jewish migrants and so he started working in a millinery shop in downtown Chicago, making ladies' hats. He also did volunteer work at Hull House in Chicago, an

institution designed to keep the children of Italian, Jewish, Polish and Puerto Rican immigrants out of trouble.

In 1943, he joined the US army and ended up in the CCI (Counter Intelligence Corps). He took army courses to understand the organisation of the Nazi Party, the Italian Fascist Party and the German and the Italian army. He left the USA on a 'Liberty Ship'⁷ and ended up in Liverpool. From there he moved to Europe. He had to learn interrogation techniques in preparation for collecting military and political information. He was well suited for it, as he spoke English and German fluently. After the war, he commented: 'Nobody wanted to talk to us. Nobody ever served in a concentration camp. It was always somebody else. They didn't know that I knew where Mauthausen or where Auschwitz was.'

Walter was assigned to the Texas National Guard 36th Infantry Division. He says he visited the Concentration Camp of Hurlach, a sub-camp of Dachau in March 1944.⁸ In Austria, Walter met Leni Riefenstahl, Hitler's favorite movie director, sunning herself on the deck of a resort hotel. Riefenstahl had made movies about the Nazi Party days in Nürnberg and the famous film of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. She said to Monasch: 'I know nothing; I was in Switzerland during the war. I was just making movies.' Riefenstahl was arrested in 1945. She left Germany, eventually ending up in Africa making movies about African wildlife.⁹

Walter's mother Irma Monasch was able to get in touch with him at his United States Army Quarters in Germany. She had learned that two of her sisters Elli Ritter and Hanna Fröhlich had been seen at a camp in Mauthausen, shortly before the end of the war. His aunt Ellie had lived in Breslau and Hanna had lived in Ratibor. In his interview, Walter related:

I hopped into my Jeep and went down there. I much later found out that two sisters of my father's ended up in Lodz in a transport from Hamburg where they had been living. When I did some work a few years ago in Lodz, I was walking around the central area. I ran into a park, in the middle of which was a large granite boulder with a plaque on it, which says that in this area, several thousand Jews from Hamburg had been shipped in and had then died in that neighborhood— including my two aunts.

Walter Monasch also took the top Nazi Hermann Göring into custody. This is Walter's abbreviated account of this event:

Al Berry was another head of our detachment – we were down in southern Bavaria and somebody comes into the office and says,

‘We just had a telephone call from Hermann Göring. This was a day or two after the end of the war. He wants to surrender.’ ‘Okay’, I hop into my Jeep and Allen Berry is with me. We drive down and we pull up to where we were told he was and there he is—full uniform—the whole shtick. We get out of our Jeep. We walk up and Al Berry says, ‘*Sie sind verhaftet*’ [You are under arrest]. Göring straightens himself out – fat as he was – and says, ‘I’m not going to surrender to a Captain, I want somebody of my own rank.’ Al Berry pulls out his .45 pistol and says, ‘Is this rank enough?’ and we picked him up and brought him in. If you see that in Hogan’s Heroes, nobody would believe it – it’s totally unlikely – but it happened just like that. Full dress uniform, red Marshall stripes, the whole business, with his Marshall baton. Fat as can be. Although he had been dieting—he was not quite as fat as he started out—because he’d also been a little bit off his medicine. I am using the term ‘medicine’ very carefully – his drugs – he was a dope fiend. He had run out of them and that wasn’t very good for him physically. He was pretty shaky.

Walter then stayed in Nellingen in Southern Germany. Field Marshall Erwin Johannes Eugen Rommel (1891-1944) lived for some time in nearby Herrlingen. Herrlingen (3,200 inhabitants) was also a Jewish *Zwangs-Altersheim* [Forced old age home] with 151 Deportees, in preparation for their deportation, and a Jewish Education Home, also used after 1933 for the deportation of young Jewish people, 100 of whom were deported. The first thing he and his American army colleague did when they got into town was to look up Rommel’s house. He had just been made to commit suicide by the Nazis following his implication in the plot against Hitler. Rommel’s son Manfred, at that time eighteen or nineteen years old, was there. Many years later, in 1974, he was elected Lord Mayor (*Oberbürgermeister*) of Stuttgart. Walter considered Manfred: ‘A very solid, very good guy’.

There were some similarities between Sir John Monash and Erwin Rommel. Both were generals: Monash in World War I and Rommel in World War II.¹⁰ Both broke with the established pattern of warfare, using a surprise attack and Blitzkrieg as their *modus operandi*. Both tried to maintain human morality. Rommel refused orders to kill Jewish soldiers.¹¹ Walter Monasch said in his interview:

I come from a tradition that was very—the German Jewish tradition—that was very German, very Teutonic if you will—discipline, strict behavior patterns and so on. Much more so than you would find in the general Jewish community and certainly different from the broad range of American communities. You

walk into a German school room, it's different from walking into an American school room—very different. But, if you've learned to understand that—and work within it and work with it—neither is necessarily right, or wrong. They're just different. All too often, we see things as being right and wrong. If it's our way, it's right and if it's their way, it's wrong.

Walter Monasch was a professional city planner working especially in Chicago and Oregon. He served as National President of the American Institute of Planners (AIP) and he became a Life Member of the American Planning Association. He supported many Jewish causes together with his beloved wife Brenda Gates-Monasch. Among the causes they supported was the 'Shalom Bayit Society' [Society for the Peace in the Home], a society to help Jewish women from being mistreated by violent husbands within the family home.

I met Walter Monasch in Breslau just before he immigrated to the United States. He visited our family in general, but in particular he came to Breslau to say good-bye to his favorite aunt, Ellie Ritter (7 August 1888 to October 1944). Ellie was also my father's first cousin. Walter was looking for Ellie when he returned to Germany as an American soldier, as he mentioned in detail in his interview.

Ellie Ritter was befriended by Dr Siegmund Hadda (1882-1977), a surgeon at the 450-bed Jewish Hospital in Breslau. When she was to be deported to a concentration camp, she deliberately fell and broke her hip. Dr Hadda operated and certified Ellie to be unfit for transportation to the camp. Ellie and Dr. Hadda repeated this procedure until she finally got deported from Breslau to Theresienstadt with Transport IX/4 (her Transport Number was 904) on the 2 April 1943. Her determination to survive delayed her transportation from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz for extermination until the 23 October 1944 (her Transport Number on this transport was 1005). Our aunt Ellie Ritter (Walter Monasch's aunt and my second cousin) was only 56 years old and she missed Liberation by merely a few months. Late in November 1944 the Nazis converted the Auschwitz Crematorium I into an air-raid-shelter and they dismantled the Crematoria II, III and IV in preparation for surrendering Auschwitz to the Russian Army.

My father's other cousin, (Walter's mother, Irma Monasch née Schimmelburg 1897-1974) and members of her family visited us in Perth Western Australia. At the same time, Irma also made contact with members of her husband's Australian Monash family.



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(1) Walter Julius Monasch 1922-2011 with his mother Irma Monasch nee Schimmelburg. Irma Monasch is the wife of Hans Monasch, who is the Second Cousin of Sir John Monasch.

(2) Eva Therese Monasch 1925-2014 the daughter of Irma Monasch and sister of Walter Julius Monasch.

The Monasch family and I shared some of the same ancestors. Our common ancestors lived in Oschersleben, a small town in Germany, as *Schutzjuden* [Protected Jews] since 1648. They were horse merchants and they were allowed to build a house in the centre of the town that still stands today. They were given full citizen rights from the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm III on the 11 March 1812. This was conditional on their serving in the Prussian army in case of war and that they would keep their business records in the German language (Not Judeo-German).

Leiser Schimmelburg (1791-1838), who was my great-great-grandfather and also Walter Monasch's, served in the Prussian Cavalry in the Wars of Liberation from Napoleon, 1813-1814. Leiser was awarded a recommendation for bravery by General Count Friedrich Heinrich Ernst von Wrangel (1784-1877) and he was allowed to keep a captured French Cavalry Pistol as booty. This pistol was in our possession and I played with it as a boy until Hitler prohibited Jews from owning firearms in the 1930s. Wrangel was born in Stettin, the same town as Walter Monasch. Our shared great grandfather, Jacob Schimmelburg (1823-1907) also served as a volunteer with distinction in the Prussian Cavalry in the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-1871, that established the 'German Empire'.

My father Rudolf Aufrichtig-Arkwright (1893 Breslau – 1978 Perth WA) served in World War I for four years in the German Army on the Eastern and Western Front. He was wounded three times und decorated with the Iron Cross. Approximately 96,000 German Jews served in the German Army in World War I and more than 80% of them served in front line service. They were cared for by 30 army rabbis and an



Jacob Schimmelburg (24 September 1823-15 June 1907). He is the great-grandfather in common to Kenneth James Arkwright (1929 to date), Walter Julius Monasch (1922-2011) and Eva Therese Monasch (1925-2014).

estimated 9500 were killed in action. My father and his first cousin Hans Monasch were in the trenches opposite their second cousin Sir John Monash. The present German Army (*Deutsche Bundeswehr*) together with the *Centrum Judaicum* in Berlin published a 630-page volume in 2013 on the German Jewish involvement in World War I.

This book established another Jewish World War I connection between Germany and Australia. Rabbi Jacob Sanger (1843 Bingen/Rhein-1938 Breslau) was one of the 30 World War I German Army Rabbis. Jacob's son Rabbi Dr Hermann Sanger (1909-1980) fled from Nazi Germany arriving in Melbourne in 1936, where he became senior rabbi of Temple Beth Israel. He played a central role in the development of Progressive Judaism in Australia.

Jacob Sanger is buried in the old Jewish cemetery in Breslau (now Lotnicza Street, Wroclaw). His grave was vandalised and the gravestone has been removed. Not far from his grave are the graves of Heinrich Graetz and Marie Graetz, nee Monasch. A little further are the graves of my great-grand-parents Emanuel and Caecilie Aufrichtig.

It was Albert Einstein who wrote in 1934 in his book *Mein Weltbild* [*My view of the world*]: 'God has a wicked sense of humour'.



Rabbi Jacob Sanger (24 June 1878-25 June 1938) (Feldrabbiner [Army Chaplain], German Army 1914), father of Rabbi Dr Hermann Max Sanger (03 July 1909-24 January 1980), spiritual leader of Temple Beth Israel, Melbourne, Australia

A little further on in the same cemetery is the grave of Siegfried Haber (1841-1920) the father of Fritz Haber (1868-1934) the Nobel Prize Winner (1918) for Chemistry. Fritz invented the poison-gas used in World War I and the Haber-Bosch process to synthesise ammonia from its constituent element. This process helped Germany to survive World War I long enough for Sir John Monash to come into play. Haber's wife, Clara Immerwahr (1870-1915) a pacifist, shot herself because she found the use of poison gas on people unacceptable. Clara's father Philipp Immerwahr (1839-1908) is also buried near Marie Monasch/Graetz. Both Fritz and Clara had converted to Christianity, but that did not stop Chaim Azriel Weizmann (1874-1952, the first President of Israel) from offering Fritz Haber the Directorship of the Sieff Research Institute (now Weizmann Institute) in Rehovoth. Haber accepted, but he did not get to the Institute as he died suddenly of a heart attack/stroke.

Not far from the Monasch and our family graves are the graves of Siegfried Stein (1844-1897) and Auguste Stein (1849-1936) the father and mother of Edith Stein (1891-1942). Edith Stein is now better known to the world at large as Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. She was gassed in Auschwitz. The gassing of a Catholic Saint of Jewish descent indicates that the Holocaust was not about religion but about ethnicity.

The above may not entirely conform to the present mood of hero-worship of the World War I and II Australian Jewish war history, but

it is an attempt to respect the wisdom of the ancient historians as pointed out in the beginning of this article, to write history 'without anger and fondness' and 'to listen to the other side'.

ENDNOTES

1. Ann M. Mitchell, 'Monasches and the Holocaust: Family migration history and threatened lives', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, Vol. XXII, Part 1 (November 2014), pp.102-118 and 'Monasches and the Holocaust: Family Stories Part I', *AJHSJ*, Vol. XXII, Part 3 (November 2015), pp.395-449.
2. For more details, see Geoffrey Serle, 'The Focus of his Family', *John Monash: A Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002).
3. Most of the volumes were published by the Institut zur Förderung der Israelische Literatur, (Leipzig: 1853 to 1870).
4. 'Die Konstruktion der jüdischen Geschichte', [The Construction of Jewish History], *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judenthums*, 1846.
5. Mitchell, 'Monasches and the Holocaust'.
6. Interview with Walter Monasch, 10 February 2008, by Rowan R (2008), Joren D (2009), Rory H (2010), Emma (2010). Andrea C (2010), with Howard Levin, <http://www.tellingstories.org/liberators/wmonasch/index.html>. All subsequent quotations come from this interview.
7. 'Shipping out was interesting because most people ended up on Liberty Ships which were these things they were building out here in Richmond. They were big tug boats stuffed with bunks', Walter Monasch TV Interview.
8. This date is more likely to have been 1945 since the Hurlach Concentration Camp was liberated on 27 April 1945 and no US soldiers were in Germany/Austria prior to D-Day, 6 June 1944 when the Allies landed in Normandy.[Ed.]
9. The historical record indicates that it is unlikely that Riefenstahl was in neutral Switzerland during the war. After the war she was in Germany. She 'escaped' into an attic flat in Munich and resurfaced a year later from her self-imposed exile. A denazification tribunal imposed a professional ban upon her, but in the 1960s she resumed a film/documentary career.
10. Rommel was a Field Marshal, a superior rank to General. Monash should have been made a Field Marshal, but did not have the support of Billy Hughes, Australia's Prime Minister.[Ed.]
11. One fact that can be cited, in respect to Rommel's attitude to Jews, is that the number of Jews who were living in the areas occupied by his *Afrika Korps* between 1941 and 1943, did not alter significantly. However, both Algeria and Morocco were under Vichy rule and only Tunisia was occupied by the Germans. Concentration camps were established there with the intention of carrying out the Final Solution, but was only under direct rule for six months before Rommel was defeated. See http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/newsletter/25/algeria_marocco.asp, accessed 28 May 2016, [Ed.]