

# Australian Jewish Historical Society Inc.



Member of the JCA Family of Communal Organisations



## NEWSLETTER

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**Address:** Mandelbaum House  
385 Abercrombie Street  
Darlington NSW 2008

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**Fax & Telephone Nos:** (02) 518-7596

### (A) DONATIONS TO THE ARCHIVES

The Archives has recently received the following donations:

- Ernest Morris: YMHA 1929-1944 with signatures 10 May 1945.
- Rabbi Apple: Rabbinical Welfare Trust papers 1982-1987.
- Margaret Gutman: papers and documents relating to her career as well as B'nai B'rith bulletins.
- Sophie Caplan: short story "Frankie" by Harry Stein with a brief biography of Harry Stein.
- Alan Clark (Nowra): Reflections of the Past - From the camera of Cy Moss. A Photographic Exhibition.
- Alan Clark (Nowra): Council Men - Nowra Municipality 1872 - 1948. Includes Henry Moss and David Hyam.

### (B) NEWCASTLE HEBREW CONGREGATION

(i) Dr Fredman has been seeking information on the family of Morris Light - Bertram, Hilda, Myra and Reta, for Elizabeth Guilford who is in charge of special collections at the University of Newcastle Library. The reason for the interest is that Reta Light, daughter of Morris, left money to set up the Light Memorial Trust for Library purchases. A collection of nineteenth century Australian Poetry has been purchased with trust funds and Professor Fredman has donated two books from his private collection.

Coincidentally, the AJHS Archivist recently received a phone call from Tinny Lethen at the Sydney Jewish Museum to say that a couple was here from the USA seeking information about Morris Light, a Newcastle Alderman.

(ii) In 1977 the Newcastle Hebrew Congregation issued an illustrated booklet history of the Jubilee of their Synagogue erected in 1927. Twenty years on the Congregation is re-issuing a revised and expanded version to commemorate the 70th anniversary and as its contribution to the Bicentennial of Newcastle.

The booklet is an important contribution to the local and religious history of the Newcastle region. The text is by Dr Lionel Fredman, a former Associate Professor teaching history at the University of Newcastle, and first life member of the Australian and New Zealand American Studies Association

Cost: \$5 (members), \$7 (non-members); \$7 or \$10 P&P.

Orders may be sent to PO Box 5222D, Newcastle West, NSW 2302

Professor Fredman has provided the Archives with some information which was too late for his publication. It includes an article (of one and half columns) by the Newcastle Herald in 1900 on the trip round the world by Mr S.S. Cohen. Also the 1916 description by the Herald of the capture of the "Jewboy Gang" at Doughboy Hollow on the 76th anniversary of the occasion.

### **(C) NEXT MEETING OF THE AJHS: JEWS OF RURAL NSW**

The next meeting of the AJHS is to be held on 18 August at 2 pm, Mandelbaum House. Helen Bersten will speak on Jews in Rural NSW.

Back issues of AJHS Journal will be on sale before and after the lecture.

### **(D) GENEALOGY DAY: 10 NOVEMBER**

The AJHS will be holding another genealogy day in conjunction with AJGS on Sunday 10 November at Mandelbaum House from 11 am - 4 pm.

### **(E) SHANGHAI JEWS: A Few Coincidences**

A Dr Maria Ristaino from the USA was seeking information about Jewish emigrants from Shanghai, when Miriam Solomon brought a friend to visit the Archives. The friend's daughter, Dr Antonia Finnane, is about to publish a book on Jewish emigrants from Shanghai. Eighteen months ago we were contacted by a journalist, Eran Nicols, who has nearly completed a video on this topic.

### **(F) HANS KIMMEL ESSAY COMPETITION**

Every year for nearly twenty years, Sophie Caplan has organised, judged and awarded prizes for this essay competition held at Moriah College. She pays for the book prizes herself.

Year 10 students are required to write an essay on a choice of topics:

- \* World War II experiences of family members or acquaintances
- \* Childhood of grandparents
- \* Family connection with an organisation in the Jewish community
- \* Four generation family tree and biographical information

The school has made this a compulsory essay in Year 10 and holds an evening in June, sponsored by the AJHS where the winning students read excerpts from their essays. These excerpts are spell-binding whether they are horror tales from concentration camps or amusing tales from England and Australia.

Members of the AJHS are encouraged to attend these excellent presentation evenings to support the history students and Sophie in her endeavours to encourage young talent in history. The future of the AJHS will very much rest in the hands of these students.

This year there were joint winners: Joshua Goot and Marissa Frydman. Students who shared second place were Dani Lander, Galya Kay, Jordana Ingster and Lisa Klein.

Next year we hope to hold the twentieth presentation at Mandelbaum House on a Sunday afternoon and hope to see a large audience from this Society pay honour to the students and to Sophie, our hard working committee member. A special issue of the Journal is also under consideration.

### **(G) HISTORY AND THE CASE OF THE BALLARAT REGISTER: THE ARCHIVES POLICY OF THE AJHS**

Many of our interstate and overseas members are unlikely to be aware of recent articles in the Australian Jewish News concerning a Register relating to the Jewish Community of Ballarat. This is in the AJHS archives in Sydney. In response to a number of claims and criticisms of the Society's actions and inaction in this matter the Society's President, Dennis Bluth, wrote to the Jewish News outlining the position and policy of this Society. An edited version of his letter is reproduced below.

"The AJHS was formed in Sydney in 1938 by a group of sincere and dedicated Jewish historians and collectors.

As one of its principal obligations, the Society was to collect material considered to have a bearing on Jewish history in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. We have continued on with that endeavour since our inception. We have managed to save and preserve many important items which otherwise may have been lost or damaged.

The Society was the only organisation in this field until 1949, when a branch of the Society was formed in Victoria. In 1988 the Society incorporated and the Victorian branch separated to become the Australian Jewish Historical Society Victoria Inc.....

The Ballarat register came into the possession of the Society at least 50 years ago. It was received in good faith and, like all the Society's archives, it has been treasured and preserved with care and professionalism. There is no evidence that the register, which is a small exercise book, was improperly acquired by the Society or that the Society has retained it unlawfully.

However, as a mark of courtesy, the Society had made and then sent to the Ballarat Congregation a bound replica of the register.

This was rejected, sight unseen, by Ballarat and subsequently retained by AJHS, Vic. without reference to us. When we ascertained that the replica was not held by Ballarat, we then offered to loan the original register to Ballarat. This was on the basis that should at some time in the future there no longer be a requirement for the archival records to be held in the Ballarat Synagogue, the register should revert back to our Society and not be sent elsewhere.

This offer was rejected after having been initially accepted by the executive of the Ballarat Synagogue. I believe that our offer was a reasonable compromise to the problem.

**No archive collection can work on the basis that its holdings, especially after so many years of undisputed and unchallenged possession, can be claimed by others. The policy of the Society is that any material incorporated into its collection will remain there, and no new material will be accepted unless on the basis that it becomes the property of the Society. (Emphasis added.)**

Where material is donated, obviously referable to existing organisations, then subject to and with the donor's permission, we will pass such material onto those organisations. This is provided that such organisations are able, in an archival manner, to properly maintain the material. We will be happy to provide any assistance with respect to the keeping of archives....."

Bruce Le Bransky (Editor)

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER ARE MOST WELCOME AND SHOULD BE SENT TO THE AJHS C/- MANDELBAUM HOUSE