

Australian Jewish Historical Society Inc.



 Member of the JCA Family of Communal Organisations

NEWSLETTER

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1. EDGE OF THE DIASPORA: REVISED EDITION LAUNCHED

A new revised edition of the highly regarded history of Jews in Australia "Edge of the Diaspora" by Dr Suzanne Rutland was launched by Rabbi Raymond Apple at the Jewish Museum on Tuesday 25 March 1997.

In a thoughtful and reflective speech which particularly considered the development of Australian Jewry over the past decade, Rabbi Apple paid tribute to the research carried out by Dr Rutland citing her book as a valuable and authentic account of Jewish life in Australia.

The first edition had been out of print for a number of years and the Society has been constantly receiving requests for copies of the book. The AJHS welcomes this new edition and congratulates Suzanne on its appearance.

This edition is published by Brandl and Schlesinger and is available from bookshops and the Jewish Museum for \$29.95.

2. LETTER FROM THE JEWISH HISTORICAL INSTITUTE, WARSAW

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in co-operation with the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Poland, are preparing the edition of the Jewish Youth Autobiographies written in 1930's. The Editorial Board of the edition is looking for any information about the following authors:

Horowitz Zygmunt, born in 1912 in Zakopane, Poland. We know that he survived Holocaust.

Kittenplon Wilhelm, born in 1917 in Sambor, Ukraine, he lived in Drohobycz.

Lieber Maks, born in 1914, he lived in Krasne by Busk, Poland.

Miynarski Dawid, born in 1918 in Sulejow, Poland in the Ger hassidim family. He attended "Metivta" Yeshiva in Warsaw.

Rotfarb Abraham, born in 1921 in Warsaw; his pre-war address: Nalewki 45 apt. 37. He lives now in Israel. He is looking for any information about the fate of his brothers and sisters" Perec (b. 1923), Fajga (b. 1925), Chaja (b. 1927), Lejb (b. 1929).

Stockel Ludwik, b. 1914 in Zofiwka by Biala Czortkowska (Ukraine); he lived in Tluste. In 1933 he studied in Lvov University and was active in 'Poale-Zion'.

Szac A., b. 1915 in Pinsk, he lived in Bezera Kartuska.

Sztolcman Hersz Wolf, b. 1912 in Lazy near Sochaczew; he lived in Warsaw and Sochaczew. We know that his brother Aron Sztolcman (b. 1925) survived. According to the Yad Vashem Archive. Hersz Sztolcman (b. 1 October 1912 in Gabin), emigrated to Australia in 1951.

Szwarc Malka, b 1911 in Vilne. According to Yad Vashem, Malka Szwarc (b. 5 July 1912) was living in the DP's Camp in Bergen-Belsen in 1947.

If you know anything about the above persons, please send the information to:

Alina Cala, tel (48-22) 394126 (home)
 Jewish Historical Institute
 ul Tlomackie 3/5
 00-090 Warsaw, Poland
 Tel (48-22) 8279221; fax (48-22) 8278372
 E mail: zihinb@ikp.atm.com.pl

3. ARCHIVES

- Thanks to Mr and Mrs Sheat of Lower Hutt, New Zealand for information about Jacob Frankel and his descendants.
- Lynette Smith for family tree of Henry and Mary Samuel.
- Noni Guthrie for family tree and photos of Launceston and Hobart Synagogues.
- Hedi Fixel for additional biographical sketches of families and individuals involved in the formation of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation.
- Bruce Bentwich for "Australian War Photographs" signed by Sir John Monash.
- Ruth Mandelberg for photo of grave of LW Jacobs at Gallipoli.
- Miss Esther Cossman for certificate of appreciation to Rebecca Pearlman from the Australian Comforts Fund 1946 and badges.
- Di Jackson of the State Library of New South Wales for the shelf list of the Percy Marks collection of Judaica.

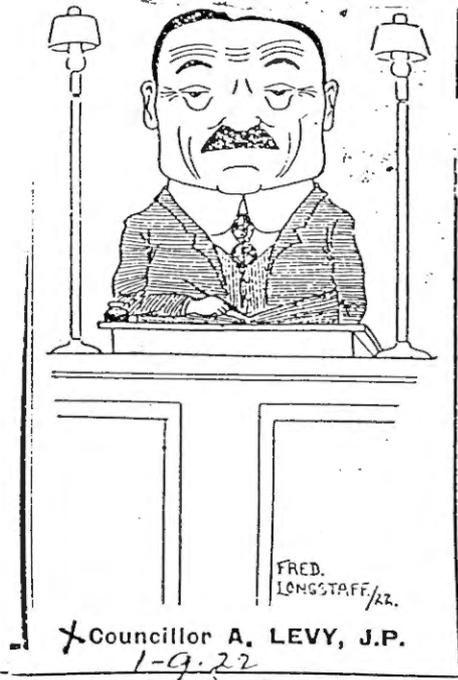
- Rabbi Apple for issues of “Parade”.
- Sophie Caplan for “The Story of Eric Baume” by Arthur Manning.
- To Morris Ochert OAM for:
 - “Sources of research in the special collections division of the Hartley Library, University of Southampton” (a related article about the Mocatta Library will appear in the next newsletter)
 - “A Life of Service: a biographical sketch of Errol Solomon Meyers” by Derek Meyers.
- Land Titles Office for “From Parchments to Passwords: A History of the Land Titles Office in NSW”.
- Terry Newman and Gary Luke for transcripts of registers of Great Synagogue, London.
- Professor Alan Crown for personal papers.
- Leon Price for back issues of the Journal plus other booklets and pamphlets and serials as well as “The Sassoons” by Stanley Jackson and selected Jewish songs for members of the armed forces published by USA Jewish Welfare Board in the 1940’s.
- Miriam Solomon for “The Making of Manchester Jewry 1740-1875” by Bill Williams, Australian Jewry Book of Honour 1914-1918, newspaper clippings about Rabbi FL Cohen’s death, and copies of broadcasts and lectures given by Louis Shifreen 1935-36.
- Alison Davis OAM for information on the Benjamin family which in part corrects several genealogical errors in the recent Melbourne Journal article on the Benjamin Brothers by Dr Rodney Benjamin. Part of this letter will appear in the next newsletter.

4. HISTORICAL EXHIBITION ON JEWS IN VIRGINIA

Anyone travelling to the USA before September should try to catch an exhibition called “Commonwealth and Community: the Jewish experience in Virginia” which will be on until 14 September. It traces the history of the community from 1585 and includes some rare items. Information from Nadja Gutowski, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA PO Box 7311 VA 23221-0311 phone (804) 342 9665.

5. DAVID SWAIN’S TALK TO THE SOCIETY

On 9 March the Society was fortunate to hear an entertaining but critical talk by David Swain on the Depiction of Jews in Australian Cartoons. The extensive use of examples made for a very interesting presentation. Below is an example from my own records (Ballarat 1922):



6. A GOULBURN DEDICATION

With the future of the Hillel Rabbi Porush Kindergarten being in the news of late, I wondered whether any members knew the origins of the following plaque which is affixed to a ceiling beam in my daughter's kindergarten room:

Dedicated to the Memory of the Jewish Community of Goulburn 1835 - 85

7. TOMBSTONE OF MORDECAI MOSES

The tombstone of Mordecai Moses, one-time sexton of Devonshire Street cemetery and shammas of York Street synagogue, is in disrepair, having been attacked by vandals some years ago.

A number of members of this Society, including our Treasurer, Miriam Solomon, are descendants of Mordecai, whose story was told by George Bergman in the Journal in 1977. Quotes have been obtained to make repairs to the gravestone. Anyone interested in contributing should contact Miriam at the Society 385 Abercombe Street, Darlington 2008.

8. LETTER FROM ISRAEL: SOLOMON SOLOMON AT EDEN

We have received the following photograph from Jon Nathan, Ramat Hagalan, of Solomon Solomon, his wife Rachel (nee Abrahams) and family. As far as he is aware it was taken at Eden (Twofold Bay) where the family lived possibly around 1890.

The seated white bearded man is Solomon Solomon, and next to him is his wife Rachel (nee Abrahams). Next to her is possibly Richard B Asher and standing behind him is possibly his wife, Caroline, daughter of Solomon.

Mr Nathan is seeking members' help on the other people in this photo. In the first instance this information can be passed to the Society's honorary archivist at Mandelbaum House.



9. NORFOLK ISLAND AND THE JEWISH CONNECTION (BY HELEN BERSTEN)

I recently spent ten days on Norfolk Island with a Royal Australian Historical Society tour group. I went because of my interest in the island as a convict settlement and its Jewish connection and came back with much interesting historical information as well. Recent newspaper reports have told of the earliest arrivals of Polynesians on the island many centuries ago. Each settlement left the island before the next arrived, so there was no overlapping of cultures. The present inhabitants are descendants of the Bounty mutineers from Pitcairn Island as well as Australians and New Zealanders who have permission to live there as permanent residents. They are governed by their own Administrator and parliament in the form of a Legislative Assembly, but ultimate law lies with the Governor General of Australia. The island even has a New South Wales post code but it is two and a half hours' flying time from Sydney!

Captain Cook charted the island in 1774 and Lieutenant King was sent there with a garrison and convicts in 1788 to settle it before La Perouse could take it for the French. In March 1790 **Esther Abrahams** sailed there aboard the *Supply* with her de facto husband Lieutenant George Johnston and new baby son. George was First Lieutenant of the marines on Norfolk Island under the command of Major Ross. In May the next year Esther returned to Sydney. When she and George Johnston built their colonial mansion in present-day Annandale in 1799, the beautiful avenue of trees leading up to the house were all Norfolk pines.

There were a number of other Jewish convicts from the First Fleet in this settlement. The first were **Frances Hart** and **John Hart** who do not seem to have been related. Frances arrived in March 1789 and remained until 1792. John arrived the same month but died on the island in 1795, however there is no stone in the cemetery to mark his grave. His wife, **Sara Lara or Flora Laura** arrived in December 1789 and returned to the mainland in 1814. **David Jacobs** was sent to Norfolk in March 1790 and served there three years. **Amelia Levy** lived there four years from 1790 to 1794. **Aaron Davis**, having arrived in 1790, became a merchant and owned land on the island when his sentence was completed. **Simon Solomon or Solomons** was assigned as a government servant on Norfolk Island from 1790 to 1792, but eventually settled in Parramatta where he received a 30 acre land grant. **Maria Israel** was listed as living with Thomas Chapey on Norfolk Island in 1790. They had four children born between 1790 and 1805 who were all baptised on Christmas day 1805. They were living in Hobart in 1811. **Michael Lee** was sent to the island in 1791 and later owned a very large two-storey house there as well as claiming half an acre of land belonging to the Freemasons Society of which he was a member. He was sent to Van Diemen's Land (VDL) in 1808.

Henry Abrams was on the island from 1792 to 1796 by which time he had served his seven years and, as an emancipist, began to supply meat to government stores on the island presumably from his own herd. **John Harris** was appointed a constable in the Norfolk Island convict night watch in 1793 receiving his Absolute Pardon two years later in consequence of services rendered since 1789. He married a convict woman on Norfolk Island and returned to Sydney in 1796. **Bernard Walford**, who arrived in Sydney as a convict in 1791, was allowed to settle on Norfolk Island in 1796 when his sentence was complete. He had a farm allotment of forty acres which he worked until 1807 when he and his family were transferred to VDL where they received ninety acres in compensation. **Joseph Marcus**, later to become famous as the instigator of the first *Chevra Kadisha*, was on Norfolk Island in 1795, returning to the mainland in 1805 where he worked as a constable before becoming a servant to Simeon Lord. **Samuel Israel** was listed at Norfolk Island from July 1799 to August 1801. He had three children with Elizabeth Smith between 1799 and 1801. They were baptised in 1801. **Andrew Levy** was sent to the island in 1803 but transferred to VDL in 1808.

The first Norfolk settlement was abandoned in 1809 when all farmers had been transferred. Only a handful of men remained to slaughter all the animals and burn the buildings to stop foreign explorers settling there. The last inhabitants left in February 1814.

The second white settlement in 1824 was not benign. It was designed to be a terrifying punishment for second and third offenders; there were no convict women, homosexuality flourished and many of the commanding officers relished their sadistic duties. The exception was Captain Alexander Maconochie. He had been at Port Arthur and had witnessed the degradation of the prisoners. In 1839 as the new Superintendent of Norfolk Island he initiated a system of rewards for good behaviour and treated the convicts as human beings. Under his command, nine Jewish prisoners were encouraged to write to the Sydney synagogue in 1840 for prayer books and Pesach supplies (see copy of letters from Bridge Street letter book and from the State Archives of NSW).

The Synagogue sent a box of prayer books, matzo, and a Jewish almanac. Maconochie set aside a special room for the Jewish prisoners to use for their worship. Bergman and Levi in *Australian Genesis*, list the prisoners as **Levy Abraham, Aaron Woolf, Seronic Solomon, James Lawrence, John Davis, Lewis Solomon, John Roberts, Ralph Simmons and Samuel Alexander** (p. 342, n.16). A document in the State Archives lists the number of Hebrew prisoners in 1842. There was one in a shipment of English prisoners and amongst the 'penal prisoners' 8 in January, 7 from February to June with 6 from July to December. No names appear in this document.

Some of these convicts were most unusual people. One **Levi Abrahams**, born in England in 1798, was a prisoner on Norfolk from 1839 to 1844 as punishment for robbing a shop. Another **Levi Abrahams** born in Italy fourteen years earlier was also on the island in 1840 but was back in NSW in 1844 and a prisoner at Cockatoo Island in 1845. As the letter in the Synagogue letterbook is signed **Levi Abraham**, it is uncertain just which one signed the letter. **Aaron Woolf** was sentenced to ten years on Norfolk Island for theft in 1839, having committed a number of prior crimes as well as previously being freed! He was sent on to VDL in 1845.

James Lawrence, whose diary is in the Mitchell Library, was *persona non grata* in the 1840 letter, but he had played the leading role on Queen Victoria's birthday in May of that year when Maconochie allowed the prisoners to perform a play. By 1844 he was in Hobart and died in a Melbourne prison in 1863. **John Davis**, sent to Norfolk for five years in 1839 was returned to the mainland but came back to Norfolk in February 1840 for a further five years, convicted of "being at large with firearms". Lewis Solomon was sent to the island in 1836 with a life sentence for stealing a horse, however in 1845 he requested mercy and was allowed to return to NSW as he had not re-offended. **Samuel Alexander** was sentenced to death for smuggling but was reprieved and sent to Norfolk island in 1834 for ten years. He had already been labelled as "incorrigible".

Rabbi Levi's excellent *Forefathers* gives us some other names as well. **Joseph Abrahams** was sent to Norfolk Island in 1825 and returned to the mainland in 1829. He obtained his freedom in December 1831 but was convicted of receiving stolen property in 1835 and sent again to Norfolk Island for fourteen years but his sentence must have been commuted as he was on Cockatoo Island in January 1840. **Mordecai Woolf (also known as James Woolf)** who arrived in VDL in 1828, had actually served his original sentence and become free, however he stole again and kept escaping from custody until he ended up in 1841 on Norfolk Island where, after an attempted seizure of a boat, he was sent to Port Arthur as punishment. He again attempted to escape and after further convictions was sent back to Norfolk in 1845. He was still there in 1848. **Samuel Lewis** was listed in the 1828 census as being on Norfolk Island serving a two year sentence. **Abraham Davis** arrived in NSW as a convict in 1820 but escaped two years later on an outgoing ship. He was captured and sent to VDL. After yet another escape attempt he was sent to Norfolk in 1828 where he worked as a constable (!) returning to Sydney in 1831 where he worked as a boxer. **Israel Levy** arrived in 1829 sentenced to seven years for re-offending. He worked as a convict overseer from 1832 to 1835. In 1845 he was in Maitland.

Daniel Garcia arrived for a three year sentence in 1832 after a number of previous convictions. **Solomon Moses** came in 1833 after very many prior convictions. He received his Ticket of Leave in 1837 when he was allowed to return to NSW. The last Jewish convict on Norfolk Island was **Isaac Levey** who won his freedom in 1854.

In 1856 the prisons were closed forever and the Pitcairners were brought over to make the island their home.

Information from Levy, *The Forefathers*; Levy and Bergman *Australian Genesis*; Donohoe, *Norfolk Island 1788-1813*; Dalkin article in *RAHS Journal September 1971*; State Archives of NSW.

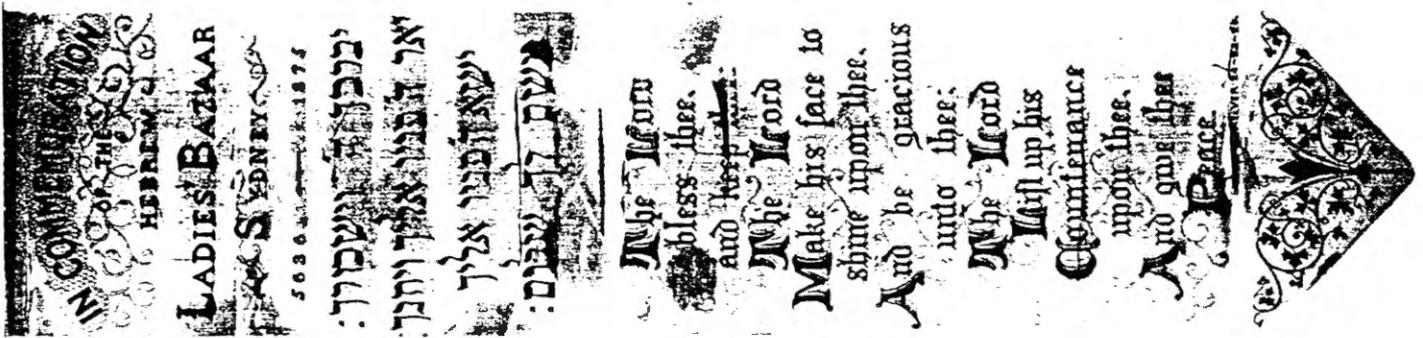
10. THE BLESSING ON A BOOKMARK (BY MORRIS S OCHERT OAM)

The Book of Numbers, contains instructions to the Cohanim and the Levites. Inter alia, Moses tells Aaron, who was the first High Priest, how he was to bless the Israelites. He was to do so with the words laid down in Chapter 6, verses 24, 25, 26
“The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance unto thee and give thee peace.”

To this day our Cohanim, the male descendants of the Aaronic clan, give their benediction using that Priestly Blessing. The late Chief Rabbi Dr JH Hertz wrote that ‘it may only be done by a bona fide Cohen in the Hebrew tongue, while standing, sober and with outstretched hands’. His open palms are to be turned towards those being blessed, while the fingers are extended in an esoteric Cabalistic configuration.

The organisers of the historic “Hebrew Womens’ Bazaar” of 1875 chose the above blessing when designing the souvenir bookmarks which they issued to mark that occasion. The illustration is of one of those bookmarks which I recently found. It is worded “In Commemoration of the Hebrew Ladies Bazaar, Sydney 5636 - 1875”. The blessing then follows, in Hebrew and in English. Then, in tiny print “Numbers, Chapter 6, ver 24, 25, 26.” The material was originally white, but it has yellowed, so that it is difficult to see the intricate pale gold floral background design. The wording and the decorative stitching are in red, purple and green. The bookmark is of Grosgrain, white satin medal ribbon.

Helen Bersten, the Hon, Archivist of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, in her monograph “Jewish Sydney, The First Hundred Years” records that the construction of Sydney’s Great Synagogue commenced in 1874. To raise additional funds, the abovementioned bazaar was staged on a massive scale. It was so successful that it continued for an additional week. Nearly £5000 were raised - this would equate to nearly one million dollars today! To gauge the effectiveness of the good ladies’ fund raising, one needs to realise what £5000 would have paid for in 1875. The Brisbane Synagogue also in Byzantine architectural style (but smaller than “The Great”) cost about £6000 to build just ten years later.



11. ADDENDUM: MORRIS LIGHT OF NEWCASTLE (BY LIONEL FREDMAN)

Further search and checking into the Directories and Municipal Minute books has yielded that bane of biographers, inconsistencies in the career as disclosed (see January 1997 Newsletter). Morris Light advertised in the Civic Week "Souvenir" in 1929 that his firm had 35 years "of uninterrupted progress (as) complete house furnishers." But in 1901 he is listed as a "draper, Cowper Street" (Carrington) and for the first time in Newcastle, as a draper, in 1903. He presumably moved there in 1902 when he stood unsuccessfully as a candidate though he continued to attend Carrington Council until 1906, hence "overlapping" his election to Newcastle in 1904.

The first change is "House Furnishers" in 1910 and the "People's Provider" in 1915. In 1920, he moved to his splendid mansion in Ocean Street, Merewether (overlooking Dixon Park Beach) and in 1922 and 1923 advertised "M Light & Son, House Furnishers" adding "M Light, Financier" and 575-83 Hunter Street, West, indicating his large new store and his attention-gaining credit.

Enough has been said about the election of 1925 and the Civic project except to add that Light chose Harold White as an experienced theatre architect against the opposition led by Bert Wheeler, a prominent Newcastle solicitor. Wheeler wanted a local architect, who would have been cheaper of course, and a competition, to ensure a mediocre result ("Newcastle Herald" 14 July 1925). Ironic is it not that Wheeler gave his name to the Place outside the Civic Theatre which is once again, following the refurbishment completed in November 1993, the main entrance.

12. CORRECTION

With apologies for the typo in the last newsletter, it is of course the ANZAC Plaque.

Bruce Le Bransky (Editor)

Contributions to the Newsletter are most welcome and should be sent C/- of the Hon Archivist, AJHS, Mandelbaum House.

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