

# Australian Jewish Historical Society Inc.



Member of the JCA Family of Communal Organisations



## NEWSLETTER

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### 1. THE AGM AND ELECTION OF OFFICE HOLDERS

The Society's AGM was held at Mandelbaum House on 6 December 1998. The existing Executive was re-elected, but several committee members have retired and the President, Suzanne Rutland, expressed her thanks and that of the Society for their greatly appreciated contributions over many years.

At the meeting's commencement Dr Rutland invited our Honorary Fellow, Mr Morris Forbes, to speak about our late Joint-Patron, Sir Asher Joel. Members may recall the wonderful speech given by Sir Asher as part of a meeting of the AJHS on 25 August 1992 in the Lord Mayor's Reception Room, Sydney Town Hall, which was held to coincide with the sesqui-centenary celebrations of the City of Sydney.

The Executive and committee of the AJHS is now as follows:

Suzanne Rutland	President	Alec Ferson
Nate Zusman	Vice-President	Julius Mayer
Sophie Caplan	Vice-President	Helen Rasko
Miriam Solomon	Hon Treasurer	Sylvia Rosenblum
Helen Bersten	Hon. Archivist	Judith Shapira
Denise Bluth		Jeanette Tsoulos
Anne Andgel		

The Society is looking for a permanent secretary and with the retirement of genealogist Irene Rothenberg, our honorary archivist is urgently seeking assistance in handling the growing number of genealogy enquiries. Also Treasurer Miriam Solomon would also welcome assistance. As with all voluntary associations, the success of the AJHS is dependent on the support of a volunteer work force. **Please offer your assistance.**

## 2. WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

It is with pleasure that we welcome the following new members who have joined our ranks since last June:

Prof Alan Crown	Louis & Lorraine Rubinstein	Arthur Janks
Rod J Hyman	Don Perlmut and Lynne	Boris & Janice
Hannah Newman	Swarts	Fooks
Mrs R Lenn	Veronica Sumegi	Peter Vickers
Vicki Steigrad	Mr P & Mrs R Lenn	Racheline Barda
Christine Taylor	Erwin & Leah Jutsen	Ruth Lewin
Jack Lang	Dr & Mrs A Frumar	Ellen Meyer
The Hon. Justice M Einfeld	Marcia & Bernard Kresner	Ruth Rosen
Leon Radom	Max and Mrs I Naumburger	Russell Stern
Dr George Swarc	Mr & Mrs H M Shapiro	Mrs T Lowbeer
Alan, Beverley & Derek	Mrs L Cohen	Mr & Mrs M Stein
Abrahams	Joy Tofler	Luiza Kleitman
	Helen & Milton Whitmont	Stella Alexander

## 3. FROM THE ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY

### 3.1 Received with thanks from:

- Rabbi Raymond Apple - newsclippings and journals
- Mr. Morris Forbes - newsclippings, ephemera and journals
- Sophie Caplan - invitations and ephemera
- Ms. Diane Westerhuis-family tree of Moses Isaac Solomon and Julia Moses
- Mrs. Beryl Bauld-papers relating to Rosen, Levy, Cohen, Barnet families as well as Herman, Prussic, Davidson and Goldberg families
- Mr. Geoffrey Moses - family tree of Uriah Moses
- Mr. Ken Ling - information about Solomon family connections with freemasonry in Adelaide in early 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Mrs. Chava Agmon, Israel - photo of Henry Caro's grave in Goulburn and memorial plaque made by Mrs Agmon to be placed in old "synagogue" in Goulburn when restored
- Mrs. Beverly Pryer - booklet compiled for *Two Lands, One Destiny* exhibition at Sydney Jewish Museum
- Please note that we have also received a Chumash presented to Bernard Solomon Cohen by his uncle Woolf and Auntie Rachel on the occasion of his Barmitzvah, May 11th, 1929. Unfortunately, the office was unattended when this was donated and the donor did not leave a name - please contact us again so that we can acknowledge this formally.

### 3.2. Purchased:

- *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor* by Elsie Ritchie which includes the Josephson family
- *A Serious Influx of Jews* by Rodney Benjamin (Melbourne Welfare Society)
- *Surviving. A History of the Adelaide Jewish community* by Bernard Hyams
- *Mosaic* by Diane Armstrong (her Polish ancestry)

### 3.3. Available for Sale From the Society:

- *Jewish Sydney - the First 100 Years* by Helen Bersten (1995) \$6.50 [Tapes \$3.50].
- *History of the Western Suburbs Synagogue* by Phillip Barg (1974) \$5.
- *Historical Essays to Honour Rabbi Dr I Porush on his 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (1988) \$10.
- *With One Voice: A History of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies* by Dr Rutland and Sophie Caplan (1998) \$20.
- *Fifty Years of Caring: History of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society 1936-1986* by Anne Angdel (1988) \$10.
- *Edge of the Diaspora* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) by Dr Rutland (1997) \$29.95.
- *The Australian Jewish Experience. A Colloquium.* Papers presented in honour Rabbi John Levi. \$12
- *Rabbi Jacob Danglow* by Rabbi John Levi (1995) \$14.95
- *Papers of 1987 Jewish Genealogy Seminar* \$40
- *Opposite the Lion's Den* by Daniel Huygens with a foreword by Dr. Suzanne Rutland \$15.

Don't forget we have the Society's own books and publications available for sale:

- Journals back copies: vols. 1-9 \$7, vol. 10 \$10, and vols. 11 onwards \$15.
- AJHS Newsletters back copies \$3.

The above prices do not include postage. Please enquire about purchases from the Society on 9518 - 7596 Tuesdays and Thursdays.

**Donations to the Library Fund of the Society are Tax-Deductible.**

## 4. HAY, NEW SOUTH WALES

*The Dunera News*, No 43, October 1998 contains interesting information about the Jewish residents of Hay, the country town that housed an internment camp during the Second World War.

## **5. CHANNUKAH IN THE PARK**

The Australian Jewish Historical Society shared a stall with The Australian Jewish Genealogical Society for this annual celebration run by the Great Synagogue in association with the Australian Jewish News. It was a most successful day for all as well as for this Society and thanks go to those committee members who answered the call to staff the stall. A number of books were sold and some new members signed up.

## **6. VALE JACK EPSTEIN: FROM MORRIS OCHERT**

Jack Epstein was a well-known and respected member of the Gold Coast (Queensland) Jewish Community. He was active in the Liberal Congregation there but his main field of work was with the Gold Coast ex-Serviceman's and Servicewoman's Association, a branch of the Queensland Association (QAJEX). He founded the branch and remained its President until his untimely passing. Regrettably this occurred the day after Yom Kippur whilst on a visit to Sydney with his wife Odette. He was laid to rest in the Gold Coast Jewish Cemetery.

Jack Epstein was a leading authority on the history of Jewish participation in Australia's wars on which subject he was preparing a publication. He will be sadly missed.

## **7. JEWISH MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA**

Our president, Suzanne Rutland, and our archivist, Helen Bersten, went to Melbourne at the end of November for the opening of the Jewish Museum of Australia's permanent Jewish History exhibit. It was a very well attended occasion both at the museum and in the St. Kilda Synagogue in Charnwood Grove. Rabbi Lubovsky and Dr. Helen Light are to be congratulated on the exhibition, which provides a large amount of information in a small space by means of the latest multi-media techniques.

Both our Society and the Great Synagogue provided items for inclusion in the exhibition, some of which will remain in Melbourne until 2001. One of the interesting attractions is a video performance by actress Evelyn Krape as Esther Abrahams.

## **8. ESTHER ABRAHAMS: FROM HELEN BERSTEN**

Recently I was doing some local history research in the Ku-ring-gai Library when I came upon a book, self-published by one James Hugh Donohoe in 1988. It was entitled *The Forgotten Australians. The non-anglo or celtic convicts and exiles.*

Naturally I was curious to see what he had written, since his biography included the fact that he had been deputy registrar of births, deaths and marriages and a president of the Fellowship of First Fleeters. I was a little concerned by his reporting that “all Eleven Tribes of Judah were represented in the First Fleet. One convict from each was landed with the first European settlers.”

His information about Esther concerns her association with the Irish-born community.

After Johnston’s suppression of the Irish exiles’ rebellion at Castle Hill in 1804, Esther apparently arranged for James Sheedy, who was the secretary of the International Society of United Irishmen, to work on her estates [probably Annandale]. Through her friend, Mary Parker, a fellow shipmate on the *Lady Penryn*, now married to John Small, she apparently arranged for Wicklow rebel, Arthur Devlin to work for the Small family. According to James Donohoe, Esther was able to communicate with the Irish community and the Irish emancipist families through these connections and thus convince them that her husband bore no personal malice towards the Irish. (It is interesting to note that the Catholics were only allowed their own places of worship from 1803).

Donohoe goes on to comment that Esther’s position allowed her to be useful to many colonial women. He says many of her fellow shipmates had married emancipists and officials and these women formed a “friendship network”. He says the partner of every survivor of the *Lady Penryn* still in Sydney in 1808 was involved in the rebellion against Bligh and that some of the wives of the men who signed a petition for Bligh’s removal had been on the ship. He goes so far as to suggest that this “network” of supporters for Johnston in his stand against Bligh was actually orchestrated by Esther.

(It should be remembered that Johnston was part of the Marine Corps on the *Lady Penryn* where he first met Esther. His concern for her may also have extended to other women on board)

Donohoe even suggests that “Esther Abrahams must have set the pace for the relatively stable relationship which Macquarie enjoyed with the settlers for most of his term as Governor”. I think this is a bit far fetched. We know that Esther was given land grants in the name of Mrs. Julian during Johnston’s absence in England. We also know that Johnson became friendly with Macquarie after returning to the Colony in 1813 and that Macquarie finally agreed that Esther and George could marry in 1814 after living together for twenty-five years and he was patron to some of their children.



## **9. SYDNEY MATZO ASSOCIATION**

A development company has bought the building in Regent Street, Sydney, where the Sydney Matzo Association used to bake matzo in the late 1880s. The renovated shop front in Regent Street has the number 137 on the old art deco doors while the awning proudly displays the number 139.

An historian employed by the developers has established that the Association went into liquidation in 1902, seventeen years after its incorporation in 1855 under the auspices of the Great Synagogue. The reason for its liquidation was the fierce competition from the NSW Matzo Co, operated by R. Solomon from 1890. This, of course, is the same Solomon family of today's famous Solomon's Matzo and the ancestor of our members, Terry and David Newman as well as other members of the community. Solomon's establishment moved from Newtown to Camperdown and then to Darlinghurst and is now in Botany.

## **10. HYMAN HERMAN - GEOLOGIST AND ENGINEER**

The history of the brown coal industry in Victoria is indissolubly linked with Hyman Herman's life and work. Born in August 1875 at Bendigo, Victoria, he was the fifth of twelve children of Solomon and Elizabeth (nee Oxlake).

In 1863 his grandfather, the Rev Samuel Herman, had been appointed as Minister at the Ballarat Synagogue by the Chief Rabbi who further permitted the formation of a Beth Din in Victoria to which he appointed Herman as its first Chairman (Ab Beth Din).

Hyman's father had also studied for the ministry in England under Dr N Adler (subsequently Chief Rabbi) but did not complete his qualifications. In Bendigo, Solomon was an active member of its Jewish Congregation and after he shifted to Perth in 1894, he acted as the Perth Hebrew Congregation's Reader and Schochet until the arrival of the Rev David Freedman in 1897 at whose wedding he was the officiant.

Hyman's education was supported by scholarships at Gravel Hill State School, Sandhurst Corporate High School and a final year at Melbourne's Scotch College in 1890. In 1891 he commenced engineering studies at the University of Melbourne where he specialized in mining and metallurgy. Upon graduation he commenced work as a junior field assistant in the Geological Survey of the Victorian Department of Mines and Water Supply.

Reflecting his brilliance he was selected by his Minister to be Victoria's mining representative in London at age 23, but Premier Turner considered him too young.

In 1904 (and apparently to much amazement) he refused to accept the Directorship of the Geological Survey but instead left to become assistant manager with the Mt Bischoff Tin Mining Co at Waratah, Tasmania. There he was responsible for Tasmania's first west-coast hydro-electric scheme which enabled the declining mine to treat its ore at lower cost.

In 1907, Hyman started his own practice in Queen Street, Melbourne. He was active in many fields of mining activity both as a company director and as a consultant mining engineer particularly in Queensland tin and copper mines, Newcastle coal mines and the Kalgoorlie goldfields. He was also a regular writer for the Australian Mining Standard. Typical of his work was his investigation of the Cheriton Golden Mile Mining Company which had been floated in Melbourne to acquire leases in Western Australia. He spent 10 days near Southern Cross conducting surveys and undertaking sampling on behalf of some Melbourne stockbrokers. His adverse report created a sensation and according to the Perth Sunday Times "... they say he knows the game of snide sampling backwards, and can smell a crook show a mile away."

Importantly it was during this period that he became convinced gold-mining could never be re-established as the key to Victoria's economic growth. Perhaps with this in mind he accepted the position of Director of the Geographical Survey in 1912. Thereafter he became the leading advocate of the potential in Victoria for the exploitation of brown coal for electricity generation and the production of briquettes on a national basis.

In 1916, Herman built a brown coal research station in North Fitzroy and in 1917 was appointed Chairman of the Brown Coal Advisory Committee. "It was the adoption of this Committee's report by the Government that was the basis of the original legislation constituting the Electricity Commissioners." (Twenty-second annual report of the SEC of Victoria marking the occasion of Hyman Herman's retirement.). Herman's leadership of this Committee is regarded as his most important contribution to the development of Victoria's brown coal industry as it created the blueprint for future development of the Latrobe Valley. The report envisaged three major operations: open-cut mining in the La Trobe Valley; the establishment there of a large power-station and briquetting factories; and statewide distribution of electricity.

In 1919 the legislation to establish a State power system was passed. On 1 October 1920, Sir John Monash assumed the position of General Manager and Hyman Herman was appointed Engineer in Charge of Briquetting and Research, a position he held until his retirement in 1940.

In 1931 and 1933 he was a Royal Commissioner appointed to investigate the running of the Collie coalfield in Western Australia where he again displayed a flair for exposing mining scandals. In 1934 he advised the South Australian Government on the use of their brown coal resources. In 1936 he was the Commonwealth Government's representative at the International Chemical Engineering Conference in London and the World Power Conference in Washington.

The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy bestowed on Herman the Institute Medal for 1938: *In recognition of his services to the Commonwealth and the States of Victoria and Western Australia in the development of their mineral resources; for his achievements in connection with the brown coal deposits of Yallourn, Victoria, and generally for long and valuable services to the mining industry and to this Institute.*

After his retirement in 1940 Herman remained consultant engineer to the State Electricity Commission for a further 15 years. His most important task was to convene an inquiry (1943) into the means of securing Victoria's total independence from black coal imports, which recommended the expansion of power generation and briquetting facilities at Yallourn, hydro power in Northern Victoria and the manufacture of town gas from brown coal. All were implemented by post war governments.

Herman received no civil honours yet at the time of the publication of his book "Brown Coal", the SEC Magazine (September/October 1952) in a lengthy article described him as a "legend in his own lifetime". The State Electricity Commission subsequently decided to rename its central scientific laboratories in Richmond as the Herman Research Laboratories.

### **Bruce Le Bransky**

#### **(Newsletter Editor)**

Contributions to the Newsletter are most welcome and should be addressed to the Society C/- The Honorary Archivist