

# Australian Jewish Historical Society Inc.



Member of the JCA Family of Communal Organisations

## NEWSLETTER

Address: Mandelbaum House  
385 Abercrombie Street  
Darlington NSW 2008

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FAX and Telephone Nos: (02) 9518-7596

Internet Address <http://www.zeta.org.au/~feraltek/genealogy/ajhs.htm>

### 1. FROM THE ARCHIVES

Received with thanks from:

- Joan Fisher - copy of Hebrew Standard December 1940 with list of prizes for NSW Board of Jewish Education Chanukah play. (Mrs. Fisher has included married names of some prizewinners)
- AJGS - List of Family Trees Held
- Diana Wright - *Our Jewish Connections*, a family history of the eight children of Moses (Lion) and Deborah Levey
- American Jewish Historical Society - *Facing the New World*, catalogue of Jewish portraits in Colonial and Federal America
- Garry Richards - *Introducing Dudley Glass: A short critical biography*.
- Ros King - copies of letters from Moss Judah Solomon to his son Percy and daughter-in-law Catherine
- Clive Kessler - letters to his father, Samuel, from Sir John Monash and Rabbi Brodie
- Sophie Caplan - photo of plaque erected at Rookwood to show the burial place of tombstones transferred from Raphael's Ground, Lidcombe in 1970
- Rabbi Apple - papers relating to Professor Samuel Billigheimer
- Helen Whitmont - papers and documents from the Jewish Maternity Society (AJHS holds the original 1844 rules of the founding Society, The Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society)
- MUP - *Far From Where? Jewish Journeys from Shanghai to Australia* by Dr Antonia Finnane. This book is dedicated to the author's mother, Patricia Finnane and to her good friend Miriam Solomon (our Treasurer)
- Astrid Kirchhof - disc of her Master's thesis, *Conditions and Experiences of Jewish German and Austrian women immigrating to Sydney, Australia in the 1930s and 1940s*
- Pluto Press - *Cosmopolitan Sydney*

- Popular Press, Bowling Green, USA, *Victims or Villains, Jewish Images in English Detective Fiction* by Malcolm Turnbull (AJHS Victoria Editor)
- Federal Parliament - *Saving our Census and Preserving our History*
- Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs - *Population Flows: Immigration Aspects*

**Purchased Item:**

Per Dr Anthony Joseph: *The Mauritian Shekel - Story of the Jewish Detainees in Mauritius 1940 - 1945*

**Corrections to last Newsletter (February 1999):**

1. Ms Westerhuis's family tree is of Moss Isaac Solomon.
2. The name of Mrs. Louise Rosenberg was inadvertently omitted from the new member's list. She is not the former secretary of this Society.

**2. NEW SECRETARY FOR THE SOCIETY AND NEW ASSISTANTS FOR ITS ARCHIVES**

We are delighted to welcome Raquel Hasofer as our new Secretary.

We also welcome Joe ben Mayor, Max and Yvonne Meyers, Penelope Toltz, Judy Berger and Margaret Serda. All are doing a great job helping honorary archivist Helen Bersten and stalwart Les Belinfante who is cataloguing our serials. Lisa Marx is still cataloguing our books.

**3. ROOKWOOD PLAQUE**

In accordance with a request from the AJHS, the Jewish Cemetery Trust has erected a plaque at Rookwood cemetery in the old burial area where broken stones from the old Raphael's Ground cemetery in Lidcombe were buried in 1970. The Great Synagogue was trustee of the Ground and gave permission in 1969 for the remaining stones at Lidcombe to be removed. It was intended that a plaque be erected at that time and the AJHS is delighted that the area now has a headstone.

Members Louise Rosenberg and Terry Newman will be pleased that the site is finally signposted.

**3. BERRIMA**

A new history of Berrima is being written by Linda Every of Berrima District Historical society. Well-known Jewish residents were Joseph and Lewis Levy, ancestors of our members David and Terry Newman.

#### **4. RANDWICK INSTITUTE FOR DESTITUTE CHILDREN**

A chance enquiry by an historian of the Institute concerning Hebrew teacher David Aaron and a family connection to our member Valda Barton has led Valda to research the names of Jewish children who lived there from the late nineteenth century to 1914 when the Institute closed.

#### **5. JHC SOCIAL AND CRICKET CLUB, SYDNEY, 1922**

Refer last page. Does this photograph ring a bell? Taken by Grendom Studios 182 Castlereagh Street. Who were the members of this club? Was it a Jewish club? Sent by Adrienne Swartz (nee Marks).

#### **6. JEWISH MATERNITY SOCIETY 1844 -1981 by Helen Whitmont**

[Formerly Sydney Hebrew Ladies Maternity and Benevolent Society and Hebrew Ladies Dorcas and Benevolent Institution ('Dorcas Society')]

When it closed in 1981, this Society was the second women's organisation to be registered in Australia and the country's oldest Jewish charitable organisation in continuous existence. [The September 1996 newsletter contains an article by Morris Ochert on the origins of the word Dorcas.]

The Maternity Society started with charitable ladies sewing and knitting layettes etc. to give to pregnant women as they came ashore after nine months on sailing ships, generally living in ghastly conditions. It developed from this charitable 'amateur' start into a wide ranging welfare society, supplying clothing, furniture, food and money to needy Jewish families and women. At times it was also involved in organising work for its clients and education for their children.

Mainly Anglo-Australian Jewish women, some of whom considered themselves somewhat elite, ran the Society. Gradually as the community grew the Society became less well known and its work diminished, its place and work being taken up by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society which developed more professionally. [For a History of the Welfare Society see committee member Anne Andgel's book "Fifty Years of Caring" published by the AJHS in 1988.]

The Maternity Society had a proud tradition of daughters following mothers on the committee. However there was no limit to their time of service either as committee members or executive members. Together with a tradition of not contesting annual elections, this meant that committee members often stayed on into their late seventies. As fewer younger professional women were interested in joining the Society, its membership stagnated and income diminished. The Society's ability or desire to change was also inhibited such that it decided to close in 1981 and donate its assets to the Montefiore Home.

Unfortunately all of the early records of the Society were kept in the basement of the Great Synagogue and were lost when the basement space was built into halls in the 1950s. I have the following list from scrappy notes, some in my mother's (Madge Francis Bloom wife of Harold Maurice) writing and some in mine. For other names and some of the Society's history see the article written by Rabbi Dr Israel Porush on the Society's Centenary in the AJHS Journal Vol II Part II.

- 1919 Kate Lion (Mrs AL) became Treasurer; President in 1945
- 1922 Mrs FL Cohen (wife of Rabbi Cohen) was President. Mrs Raphael Rosenthal was Vice President and Mrs HI Wolf, Honorary Secretary
- 1922/3 Mrs David Benjamin joined, became Treasurer in 1926 and President in 1947.
- 1927 Mrs John Goulston joined and became Vice President in 1938
- 1927 Stella Abrahams (Mrs Leonard S) deputised to replace Mrs AH Phillips
- 1928 Stella Abrahams became a full committee member
- 1929 Olive Blashki (wife of Dr Eric) deputised
- 1930 Olive Blashki became a full member, Honorary Secretary in 1939
- 1932/4 Mrs Z Lazarus joined
- 1937 Madge Bloom joined, was Honorary Secretary 1939 - 1952/53, President 1952/53 - 1966, Vice President 1966 - 70. Resigned 1970
- 1939/40 Lena Rosenberg (Mrs Ray) joined, became Vice-President in 1967
- 1940 Lorna Symonds (Mrs Saul) joined
- 1940 Alene Cohen (Mrs LG) joined and became Vice President in 1942
- 1944 Esther Owen (Mrs Alan) joined
- 1945 President Mrs AL Lion, Vice Presidents Mrs John Goulston and Mrs Lewis G Cohen, Treasurer Mrs D Benjamin and Honorary Secretary Madge Bloom (Mrs HM)
- 1946 Rube Saulwick (Mrs Joseph) joined. There was much controversy over this as she was the third of three sisters [Esther Owen and Lena Rosenberg nee Solomon, daughters of Samuel and May] and there were fears they could vote as a block and dominate the Society
- 1947 Helena Sofer Screiber joined. Her mother, Miriam Whitmont (Mrs EE) had been a member
- 1950 Myra Greenberg (Mrs Rupert) joined
- 1952 Esther (Mrs EA) Davis joined
- 1953 Mrs Frant joined
- 1958 Mrs Harry Castle joined
- 1958 Miss Grace Hillman joined
- 1958 Nora (Mrs Douglas) joined. She followed her mother Mrs Phillips
- 1962 Helen Whitmont (Mrs Milton J) joined and became Honorary Secretary until the Society closed. Both her mother and mother-in-law were members, Madge Bloom and Miriam Whitmont
- 1962 Joyce Feller (Mrs Raymond) joined. She followed her mother, Ruby Lesnie (Mrs Harry)
- 1963 Merre Cohen joined
- 1970 Nancye Goldstein (Mrs Hal) joined. She followed her aunt and stepmother, Myra

No one else joined the Committee from then until it disbanded.

[It may be of interest that Morris Ochert recently sent an article from "The Queenslander" dated 18 June 1870 (largely reprinted from the Sydney Morning Herald dated 8 June). The article concerns a meeting held at the York Street Synagogue to consider the advisability of forming a Society for Portioning Poor Jewish Maidens. The intention was for it to provide dowries of not less than 50 pounds to encourage marriages within the Faith. The Rev AB Davis was elected President of the Society. It is reported that in his speech he noted members of the Ladies' Dorcas Society were against the proposed Society but that he felt they were mistaken in their opposition.]

## 7. The Opening of the Great Synagogue Sydney from Morris Ochert

I have come across an article on the Great Synagogue's opening in the old Brisbane newspaper; "The Queenslander" dated 23 March 1878.

It tells of a magnificent Byzantine architecture "slightly modified with a dash of the Gothic element, and the facade is admitted to be the most beautiful of any building in Sydney."

The cost of the building was stated to be 30,000 pounds, only 1000 pounds remaining to be raised. Reference is made to that being "a large sum to be raised from so (comparatively) small a section of the community as members of the Hebrew persuasion. The entire Jewish population of Sydney at the present time does not exceed 1500. In 1861 there were not 1800 Jews in all NSW and .....probably the number now does not exceed 3000. But what they lack in numbers they make up in wealth and liberality..."

The building held about 2000 for the opening ceremony. On the following day, a double marriage was celebrated when "two Hebrew sisters were made the wives of well-to-do Jewish citizens, but the affair attracted a crowd that acted in a most objectionable manner. Prurient, uncouth individuals stood upon the beautifully polished furniture with hob-nailed boots to get a sight of the happy couples and did about 50 pounds worth of damage." By comparison the reporter told of a pleasant feature that afternoon when a function was held in the Roman Catholic GuildHall.

## POSTSCRIPT

Congratulations to Elliot Le Bransky, son of our newsletter editor Bruce and his wife Denise, on his recent bar mitzvah.

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## FUTURE MEETINGS FOR YOUR DIARY:

**AUGUST 15** ~~22ND~~. Miriam Walter speaking on anti-Israel activities on university campuses during the 1970s.



J H C SOCIAL & CRICKET CLUB 1 Nov 1922

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