

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
Member of the JCA Family of Communal Organisations



NEWSLETTER

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1. APOLOGY.

In the last newsletter (No. 60) I wrote a short account under the heading "A Great 125 Years" of the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the Great Synagogue in Sydney. In that account I mentioned that Rabbi Apple had stated that the Great Synagogue was one, perhaps the only synagogue still functioning regularly in an Australian city's central business district. This is probably just my perception of what he said, as there are a number of synagogues still flourishing in down-town areas. Thank you to the large number of readers who wrote, phoned or e-mailed to correct the article, especially from Hobart and Brisbane.

Peter Elias writes from Hobart:

"Both Hobart and Launceston Synagogues are in the CBD. We (i.e. Hobart) were consecrated in July 1845, closely followed by Launceston which was consecrated in 1846, while the Great Synagogue was only consecrated in, I think, 1877. According to research by Israeli Ambassador Gabby Levy recently, there are only two synagogues in the southern hemisphere older than ours. They are the Cape Town synagogue (which is only used as a museum) and one in the Pernambuco province of Brazil, about which I have no information."

It is good to know that our readers observe and are protective of the historical importance of accuracy.

2. THE FORGOTTEN ERA 1920 –1940: GROWING UP IN PRE-WAR SYDNEY/AUSTRALIA

At a recent meeting of the Society where Ruth Wirth was speaking about the foundation of B'nai B'rith in Sydney (and Australia), the discussion turned to the topic of how lonely and alienated were the new immigrants in the late '30s and early 40's. There was such a small Jewish community in Sydney with little or no Jewish life or 'culture', and yet most of us had some form of Jewish education, we married other Jews (most of us), and are now committee members of many a Jewish organisation in Sydney, including this one. A very spirited discussion took place, and the idea struck me that this era, the 1930s – 1940's, has been sadly neglected in our annals.

True, we have had articles about the Coogee –Clovelly community, to mention one, Alan Collins has written a book about growing up in Bondi, and Morris Ochert has written about Bankstown and Bondi, but what about the rest of the stories? Do you remember the Bondi butcher "Fred Paul" who had a kosher counter two or three days a week, and delivered kosher meat to the door? Or that the late Mr. Phillip Caplan (Leslie's father) went broke as the North Shore kosher butcher? Later he had a successful butcher shop with a separate kosher counter.

Do you remember being sent out of the classroom in primary school while the class read religious stories? Or Rothie (Mr. Abraham Rothfield) sitting on the table in a hat room teaching the Jewish kids about the Yom Tovim, or reading Hebrew? Or the early GSY dances? The Drama Group led by (the late) Queenie Davis and her husband John Davis, in his warehouse in York Street?

There must be thousands of such stories, and better, and they ought to be recorded, so that future generations can know that before the War there was a Jewish life in Sydney which had to struggle for its very existence through the Depression years. It set up a Welfare Society, the NCJW, the Zionist Movement and WIZO, and an infrastructure to welcome the refugees when they arrived on these inhospitable shores.

PLEASE write down a few words about your memories and send them in to the AJHS NEWSLETTER so that each issue we can have a little section on 'recent' Australian Jewish history.

3. ANYONE FOR A WEEKEND AWAY AT MANDELSON'S HOTEL?

"In 1840, when Nathan Mandelson bought the Goulburn Hotel – which had been built the year previously by a John Cole – it grew in reputation to become renowned for its 'excellence in style and quality'. It was frequented by circuit judges and was a favoured establishment of Governor and Lady Young on their visits to Goulburn. An extract from the *Goulburn Herald* on Saturday August 9, 1851 states :

" To those Gentlemen and Families who have not yet visited THE GOULBURN HOTEL, Nathan Mandelson would beg to state for extent of accommodations. Privacy, comfort and convenience, the house stands unrivalled in Goulburn, and unsurpassed in the metropolis of Sydney".

From 1854–59 the hotel was leased by J.J. Roberts, the mail contractor for Goulburn, Braidwood, Boro and Queanbeyan and surrounding areas, but in 1859 Nathan Mandelson resumed possession and undertook "great alterations to the hotel that included hot and cold shower baths at all hours." (How's that for luxury??)

The building became the solicitor's office for Mr Daniel Deniehy from 1854 –58 when he resided there, and later became a high school, accepting pupils in 1871. In January 1874 the stables at the rear were destroyed by fire, and later the hotel lost its liquor licence and became a private hotel, slowly falling into disrepair. By the late 1990s it was a very unappealing sight, when it was bought by Noel and Renate Barrett, who spent two years full time peeling back the layers of paint on the deep skirting boards, architraves and grand window surrounds. Now fully restored, the upstairs could be used, as it once was, for balls or a reception area of grand proportions. The sense of history that pervades everywhere is very evident here. The building is a voyage of discovery with tasteful elegance at every turn. Modernisation includes en-suites and an up-to-the-minute kitchen as this wonderful old building is now a B&B and small conference centre, re-establishing in part its original purpose.

Joseph Mandelson could have been writing for the Barretts when he advertised in 1890:

The establishment having been thoroughly renovated, now offers peculiar inducements to parties visiting Goulburn and the proprietor begs to assure families and gentlemen favouring him with their patronage that they may rely upon the utmost attention being paid to their requirements, it being his desire to make his Hostelry Second to None in the Colony.

[Acknowledgements: Some references are from "Hotels and Licences of Goulburn 1848 –1875" by Ian Wood. We have quoted freely from *Highlife Magazine Vol.6 No.4 April-May 2002*. Thanks also to Dennis Bluth who alerted us to the refurbishment of this old hotel and David Ralph of Goulburn who sent the article.]



The original hotel



The renovation today

A tour to the old Goulburn Jewish cemetery is being arranged by FIGS (Friends in the Great Synagogue).

Anyone wishing to participate is asked to contact Ruth Jurke (9314 2019).

4. OUR MEMBERS WRITE....

(i) From Neville Milston.

Anti-Jewish sentiment can be found in unexpected places. My maternal grandfather, Paul Neshling, born in the Austro-Hungarian empire in Lemburg in 1863, lived in London for an unknown time and emigrated to Sydney in 1829, aged 29 and died in Coogee in March 1931, aged 68. He brought with him a book entitled *The Complete Letter Writer for Ladies and Gentlemen*, with the date 2nd July 1892 hand written in it. It contains over 150 letters encompassing many subjects.

Letter LX (60) is a reply to a request for a loan from a new friend. In the short letter the gentleman enclosed the sum required and stated: "I would rather lend a man money on his plain word of honour than see my name bandied about among Jews and scamps of every description!" The *Macquarie Dictionary* gives 'scamp' as 'rascal, rogue', as does the *Oxford Australian Pocket Dictionary*.

It is interesting to note that Grandpa Paul Neshling, on writing to his family in writing to his family in Lemburg to inform them that he was marrying an Australian woman, they thought that his new bride was "a black woman"!

(ii) From Verna Rouvray.

On a recent trip to Geelong and Hamilton in Victoria, Verna and her husband Don were accompanied by her third cousin once removed, Paul Phillips, who was visiting from England. They had visited Rookwood cemetery where he was 'introduced' to some of his relatives, including his great great great grandparents Isaac and Dinah Levey, whose portraits are in the Great Synagogue, among others. Paul's great great grandparents Susan Marks and her husband Philip Phillips had arrived in Australia from UK in 1843 with three children and four more were born in Geelong. While in Geelong, they called in at the Historical Records Centre where a staff member consulted the index of local newspaper articles and produced printouts of all Philip Phillips' mentions, mostly ads for his clothing business. In the burial records of the Eastern Cemetery in Geelong they found an entry "Philip Phillips, 1st January 1851, Jewish Section A31 – first Jewish burial in Geelong". They had been unable to find it on a previous occasion. Another visitor overheard them talking of the Jewish Cemetery and told her about the old cemetery, now no longer in use, and where to find it. The next day they visited the Eastern Cemetery, which is most beautifully kept, but could not find a headstone for Philip Phillips. It is quite likely that his widow could not afford a headstone. The old synagogue, which is now the office of the Environmental Health Service, bears the inscription "Visitors not allowed inside". They went to Hamilton and found the grave of Lionel Phillips, (the son of Philip.)

the only one in the Jewish section, all by itself in a grassy field. The headstone had fallen off its plinth and broken into three pieces, but the inscription was still legible.

This material has been filed in the Susan Marks folder.

This is Australian Jewish genealogy at its best. [Ed]

5. **JEWISH CONTRIBUTION TO TASMANIA'S BI-CENTENARY (2004)**

By Anne Andgel

A highly interesting historical event took place in Hobart in May (23-25th) when a capacity group of 50 people attended the book launch of *A Few From Afar* by Peter and Ann Elias. This was combined in part with an historical tour of Jewish Hobart, led by Rabbi John Levi AM of Melbourne, consisting mainly of members of the AJHS (Vic) Inc. and co-ordinated by Dr. Howard Freeman. The two functions were independent, as members of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation and contributors to the book were not necessarily in the historical group. The event was so popular that almost as soon as it was announced the numbers had to be restricted to 50. However they did a sterling job as no amount of credit can do justice to the efforts of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation which barely numbers fifty persons.

The activities included a Shabbat service at the Hobart Synagogue led by Rabbi Levi on the Friday night, followed by a "welcome" dinner and the dedication of the Jewish section of the Cornelian Bay cemetery on the Sunday morning.

The book launch was held on the Sunday afternoon at the Hobart synagogue, and was performed by His Excellency the Administrator of the Commonwealth of Australia (Sir Guy Green), (normally the Governor of Tasmania), who made a delightful speech before he and Lady Green personally congratulated all the contributors who were present. Refreshments were then served to a packed attendance.

The book itself is very interesting and a fine contribution to Australian Jewish history. (*Anne contributed one chapter...Ed.*) Personally I would like to say *Kol Hakovod* to the editors of the book, Peter and Ann Elias, to the President, Caroline Heard, and members of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation who have made a remarkable contribution to the bicentenary of white settlement in Tasmania.

6. **THE ALPHA NUMERICAL CODE.** by Morris Ochert OAM (Q'ld)

Set out here is the method whereby we convert the letters in Hebrew, which are used to give a date or age, into the Arabic numerals which we use in everyday life and vice versa. This Hebrew system of letter-numbers is used on Hebrew wedding certificates (Ketubot), some Synagogue records, gravestone inscriptions, and foundation stones.

Units:

1:	א	15:	טו	30:	ל	600:	תר
2:	ב	16:	טז	31:	לא	700:	תש
3:	ג	17:	יז	(etc)		800:	תת
4:	ד	18:	יח	40:	מ	900:	תתק
5:	ה	19:	יט	50:	נ	Above 1000:	
6:	ו	20:	כ	60:	ס	1000:	"א
7:	ז	21:	כא	70:	ע	2000:	"ב
8:	ח	22:	כב	80:	פ	3000:	"ג
9:	ט	23:	כג	90:	צ	4000:	"ד
Above 10:		24:	כד	Above 100:		5000:	"ה
10:	י	25:	כה	100:	ק	6000:	"ו
11:	יא	26:	כו	200:	ר	7000:	"ז
12:	יב	27:	כז	300:	ש	8000:	"ח
13:	יג	28:	כח	400:	ת	9000:	"ט
14:	יד	29:	כט	500:	תק		

Utilising the above code, let us convert the year 5763 from Arabic numerals into the corresponding Hebrew letters. Reading, of course, from the right, it is written ...

ג	ם	ש	ת	ה
3	60	300	400	5000

The numbers correspond to the Hebrew letters in the conversion code. Adding them we get the year 5763.

No Hebrew year corresponds exactly with a year on the civil calendar. The former starts around September-October each year, while the latter begins on January 1st. Thus, 5763 was the period which started September 14, 2002 and ends 26th September 2003.

Note: The letters for 15 (10+5) and 16 (10+6) are not given in the normal way, as this would produce Divine names. Instead 15 is represented by 9+6 and 16 by 9+7.

On practically every Jewish *matzevah* (headstone) the date of death is set out both in Hebrew and in English. Long ago, it seems that it was decided that the "thousand" number (currently 5) could well be left out. This is similar to some people's custom, when writing the civil year, of leaving out the first two digits, for example, instead of writing 1998, they wrote only '98.

So taking the current year which is 5763, one would imagine that only the Hebrew letters for 763 would be inscribed on the headstone. However, a logo is sometimes added, apparently to guide the uninitiated, in the form of a combination of the letters *lamed*, *pey* and *koof* as illustrated below.:



These are the initial letters of *lif'rat katan* (in the abbreviated count). A pair of tiny slashes is incised above the logo, telling that this is an abbreviation.
(Additional information supplied by Rabbi Apple)

7. PROFILE ... HELEN BERSTEN.

Mention the Australian Jewish Historical Society to anyone in the Sydney Jewish community, and they immediately tell you that our greatest asset is Helen Bersten, known to us as our Archivist, but actually the most important member of our committee. Helen works in our office two days per week (Tuesdays and Thursdays), and has been doing so for 24 years! Surely she needs a medal not only for Long Service, but for her amazing ability to run the office, answer all the dozens of phone calls which interrupt her work as archivist, and generally to keep the rest of us "amateurs" on our toes. Without Helen there would be no Society, and I feel it is very remiss of me that I have not yet shown you Helen's profile.

Helen has lived in Roseville for the past thirty-three years where she and her husband raised their three daughters. During their schooling she was active at Roseville Public School and Killara High School. At the former, she continued as Honorary Archivist for ten years after her children left. During her children's early years, she also spent a year at the Zionist Federation library. She has worked part time as Honorary Archivist of the Australian Jewish Historical Society for twenty-four years.

Professionally, she is a trained librarian, having gained her Graduate Diploma in Librarianship at the University of New South Wales in 1964. She worked in the research section of Fisher Library at Sydney University from then until 1970 when she left to have her first daughter. During that time she also spent two years in the Rare Book Library.

Her editing and proof reading for the Society have been honed by proofing her husband's books, however she has produced a couple of small booklets herself, on the history of Roseville Public School, the history of Roseville and the first hundred years of Jewish Sydney.

She is an avid writer of letters to newspapers, few of which get published, and is known as the local activist when it comes to battling the local council. She is a Friend of the ABC, a member of the Australian Republican Movement, a member of the National Council of Jewish Women (15 years), and the Religious and Fraternal Society Representative for the Royal Australian Historical Society.

FROM THE ARCHIVIST -

Received with thanks from:

- Yehuda Feher: papers from 1988 exhibition, "Old Songs in a New Land"
- Sophie Caplan: presentation photo of Emanuel School tenth anniversary
- Peter Elias: *A Few from Afar: Jewish lives in Tasmania from 1804.*
- Morris Ochert OAM: copy of marriage record of Sali Mendelsohn and Abigail Rosensweig.
- Anne Andgel: program and photos from Hobart Synagogue book launch, May 25, 2003.
- Miriam Solomon: admission card for Hobart book launch of *A Few from Afar*
- Rabbi Apple: journals and clippings
- Stella Marshall: family tree of Isaac Davis
- David Ralph: Article on refurbishment of Mandelson's Hotel, Goulburn.
- Verna Rouvray: photos and information about Geelong Jewry
- Judith Shapira: program from JCA combined event at Opera House 22 June, 2003
- Sophie Caplan: auction catalogues including information about John D. Altmann's library, John and Rebecca Moses' kethuba, Samuel Lazarus's diary, Julius Samuel Lazarus's notebook, Hubert Samuel

Lazarus's documents. Also copies of *South Australian Jewry* with references to the Victor Ades Memorial Kindergarten. Adelaide.

- Mrs. L. Lesnie: papers from the late Alan Lesnie's service on the Great Synagogue board.
- Marise Brass: copy of letter from Jacob Frankel to members of the Wellington Synagogue (NZ) re non-payment of funds.
- US Holocaust Museum: Michael Berebaum. *The World Must Know; the history of the Holocaust as told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.*
- Mr. M.Z. Forbes: journals and papers, ephemera.
- Russell Stern: brochure from opening of the COA Jack Krygier Centre.
- Greg Patmore, editor: *Laying the Foundations of Industrial Justice.* There is a special chapter on Henry Emanuel Cohen, first President of the Court of Arbitration of NSW.

Purchased:

An Organised Banditti, the story behind the "Jewboy" Bushranger Gang by Colin Roope and Patricia Gregson.

For the answer to our question last issue, we are indebted to John Stanhope:

The "Blue Coat School" – Christ's Hospital

This school was situated in London, and founded on a charter granted by King Henry VIII in 1547. The official name indicates that it was a charitable institution of the established church (Anglican). It opened in November 1552. The uniform was a long blue coat with yellow stockings and white neck bands, and was a badge of "servitude" (meaning charity status). The school was renowned for its Spartan conditions and meagre rations. By 1750 it had become a boarding school for the upper and middle classes. The school was rebuilt in 1825-9, and moved to Surrey in 1893. Among its distinguished alumni were Charles Lamb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was situated in the district of Newgate, about 2km west of Spitalfields.

HISTORY OF TEMPLE EMANUEL, WOOLLAHRA.

Lee Simmons writes from Adaminaby where he has laboured lovingly for several years to produce this history:

"The book, entitled *Kehillat Emanuel*, is a comprehensive reference work of some 1,000 pages covering the 62 year history of the Temple Emanuel Congregation from its very beginning, at a meeting in an office at the corner of King and George Streets on the 27 April, 1938. From there, the Congregation was established some weeks later, at the Maccabean Hall and the Congregation was named "Temple Emanuel", the founding Rabbi Max Schenk was engaged, and the congregation moved to Woollahra once the synagogue was built in 1941.

The book is divided into four parts being the rabbinates of the Congregation's four Senior Rabbis: Rabbi Max Schenk 1939–1949, Rabbi Dr Rudolph Brasch 1949–1979, Rabbi Brian Fox 1979–1999, Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins 1990–2000

There are extensive sections concerning the Congregation during the Second World War, its post war years and building programs. The setting up of the North Shore Temple Emanuel under the Rabbinat of Rabbi Dr Brasch, the establishment of The Emanuel School under the Rabbinat of Rabbi Fox and the founding of Temple Emanuel's Conservative Congregation by Rabbi Kamins are all included.

The book was launched at the Temple on Sunday August 23rd. The First Edition is a limited printing of just 100 hardcover books, bound in dark blue leatherette embossed in gold of which, only 90 will be offered for sale at \$125 each. Each book will be individually numbered and signed by the author and an accompanying certificate issued: A great collector's item. Subsequent editions will be soft cover.

The cost of producing the first edition is being met by the author with the total of the gross sales going to an endowment fund at Temple Emanuel.

If anyone would like to have a copy reserved, I am only too happy to oblige."

Darling Point Cemetery

The Murrumbidgee Council recently contacted the Chevra Kadisha, asking to have restored to their jurisdiction a section of a country cemetery called Darling Point. Records apparently showed that the trustees were Henry Emanuel Cohen, Louis Phillips and George Myers. The Australian Jewish Historical Society confirmed that these three worthies had indeed been office bearers of the Great Synagogue which acted as Trustee for Jewish sections of many country cemeteries.

However records from the Jewish Cemetery Trust in the AJHS archives showed that the area had already reverted to the Murrumbidgee Council 93 years ago in March 1910! The ball is definitely back in their court.

Jewish Communal Appeal

As our members know, we have for many years benefited from being part of the JCA Family of Community Organizations, receiving support for our library and archive from the donations of the community. The JCA requires volunteers to help with its telephone campaigns and asks benefiting societies such as ours to help with this task. In past years a few members of the committee have volunteered, but the number has dwindled.

We are now asking you, as members of this Society, to please volunteer for this important task. Please let us know if you can help. (9518 7596 Ph/Fx or email: ajhs@ozemail.com.au)

Stanley William Harris

Another letter has arrived from someone visiting war cemeteries in Europe, this time in Flanders. The grave of Lance-Corporal Stanley William Harris is in Tyne Cot cemetery in Belgium where he was buried in October 1917. He lived in Glebe Point in Sydney with his mother, Mrs. E. A. Harris and enlisted in the 20th Battalion Australian Infantry. The letter writer was interested to inform any relatives or descendants.

Myriam Segre

A number of people are searching for a woman who was rescued from the Nazis in Italy as a young child and cared for by a neighbour until she was adopted by a Jewish family and taken to Australia. They arrived in Melbourne on the "Re d'Italia" in 1927. Myriam married, settled in Sydney and had four sons.

If anyone knows of this family, please contact the AJHS office.

Jewish Convicts at the Barracks

There will be a series of lectures at the Hyde Park Barracks in September and October in conjunction with an exhibition called "Convicts: Life at the Barracks". Bookings are essential (9518 6866) however almost certainly you can attend lectures individually. The first is at 3pm Thursday 11th September, the second is Sunday 21st September at 2pm and the last is Thursday 9th October at 3pm. The exhibition is of course open to visitors without prior bookings.

GREETINGS: President Dr. Suzanne Rutland, the Committee and especially the editor of this Newsletter would like to extend to all readers our best wishes for the New Year 5764, and hope that it will be a year of peace for all mankind.

Judith Shapira, Newsletter Editor

Contributions to the Newsletter are most welcome. They should be sent to the Honorary Archivist, AJHS, Mandelbaum House, 385 Abercrombie St., Darlington, NSW 2008.