

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Member of the JCA Family of Organisations



NEWSLETTER

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1. THE NEW COMMITTEE.

As the end of 2003 draws close and our Annual Meeting approaches, when a new Committee will be elected, we hope that some new names and faces will put themselves forward to enter the life of the Society at a more active level. Being a member of the Committee is not exactly a difficult responsibility, as the Committee meets only on one day per month, generally the first Tuesday, in our room at Mandelbaum House from 11 am for about two hours. Lately we have been having lunch together afterwards in the College dining room, a fully kosher venue, for a very nominal sum and enjoying getting to know each other. It is a pleasant responsibility, not an onerous task, and we do need to hear some new opinions voiced about promoting our Society in its task of preserving the history of Jews and Judaism in Australia. So if you are asked to join the Committee, don't automatically decline... you do not have to be an expert to show an interest in our work. Nomination forms are enclosed with this Newsletter.

2. AVE ET VALE

It is not the policy of this Newsletter to indulge in social chit-chat, but some things need to be reported. It is with regret that we report that Nate Zusman, a former Vice President for many years, has resigned from the Committee and returned to live in Perth, from whence he hailed. He has a brother and sisters there, as well as other family. Nate was always willing to step in to the breach and chair a meeting, or introduce a speaker, and his wide experience in the Jewish community (and outside it) will be sadly missed. We in the AJHS wish him a long and happy life in his hometown.

Sadly we have to report the passing of several stalwart members of the AJHS over recent months. Firstly, Mr Ken Symonds, a long-time member who made aliyah to Israel several years ago, but who retained his membership in the Society, died about two months ago in Israel. We extend sympathy to his wife Mina and children, Yosef (Steven) and Charmaine, and their families.

Then we record the loss last month of Mr. Alan Lesnie, a worthy member of an old established family in the Sydney Jewish community. Our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Shirley Lesnie and her family. This week we heard of the passing of Mrs. Ruth Moss, sister of the late Ken Symonds, and an active member of the Society and the Board of Deputies. Ruth worked hard for the Jewish people in the community who suffered from mental illness. We send our deepest sympathy to her children, Clifford, Denise and Lorraine. Both Alan Lesnie and Ruth Moss were active members of the Society who attended our general meetings. We shall miss them and extend our sympathy to their families.

We would also like to wish a speedy recovery to our longtime former Treasurer, Miriam Solomon, who is now having rehabilitation after an operation. We would like to see Miriam sprinting up the stairs again very soon, and adding her long experience to our discussions, however she has indicated that she does not wish to re-nominate for the committee. We will still be delighted to see her at our general meetings.

On a happy note, we joined with the Great Synagogue in acknowledging, on 17th October, the 100th birthday of Mrs Bertha Porush, widow of the late Rabbi Dr. Israel Porush, a former President of the Society. Mrs Porush lives in Israel where her daughter Mrs. Naomi Liebler and son-in-law Mr. Issy Liebler look after her. Mrs Porush made aliyah a few years ago, and is well and has all her wits about her. Do you remember how hard she used to pinch your cheek to welcome you or to greet you?

3. The 1920's, 1930's and 1940's.

There has been an overwhelming response and interest in my request in the last Newsletter for information about this period in Australian Jewish history. As part of their 80th Anniversary, the National Council of Jewish Women have issued a booklet dedicated to the work of their late founder, Dr. Fanny Reading, and how she initiated the meeting of immigrants on the boats that arrived in Sydney immediately before and after World War II. The new immigrants were taken to History House in Young Street, the NCJW rooms, where they were welcomed, often found somewhere to stay and launched on their new lives in Australia.

Other members of the AJHS have contributed information about all sorts of aspects of Jewish life in that period, (thank you Joe Newman, for remembering the kosher meat counter in Pryor's chicken shop at the top of William Street, Woolloomooloo).

The main purpose in my mentioning this particular period was to see if there was sufficient information amongst our members to make it worthwhile to put together an informal discussion afternoon. Later the information received could be reported either in this Newsletter or, if of significantly new historical value, in the Journal.

I have already received a lovely letter from Betty Neumann, of Bowral, on growing up in Sydney between 1920 and 1940. Another correspondent, Mr. Sydney Levine OAM, has written about the activities which took place in the Maccabean Hall, among other things. The Jewish community at that time, although small in number, was well integrated and looked after itself. Obviously Sydney was not the cultural

centre of Judaism, which many of the European cities were, but there was Jewish life here, and it was neither the desert nor the cultural vacuum which later arrivals (often through lack of knowledge) have been wont to paint it.

Our archivist, Helen Bersten, informs me that there are already many reports in our archives about this period including information from Julie Morris, the late Ruth Moss and photos which have been sent in by our members. We have the Tip Topper and Sydney Musical Society programs as well as Maccabean Hall material. We will be happy to add your letters and mementos to this collection. Also a number of articles have already appeared in the Journal, notably ones by Morris Ochert OAM.

4. CONGRATULATIONS TO DR JOHN RASKO.

It has been some time since a Jewish doctor has hit the headlines, but the announcement recently of the award of the RPA (Royal Prince Alfred) Foundation Medal for “excellence and outstanding achievements in medical research “ to Associate Professor John Rasko has changed all that. It has also recognised the changes now possible in medical research since the discovery of DNA structure and its application to stem cell research. Dr. Rasko, the son of our Committee member Mrs. Helen Rasko OAM, also received a healthy cheque for \$50 000 as reward. Congratulations from us all.

5. ERRATA IN NEWSLETTER 61

- i. We inadvertently quoted Norman Milston’s paternal grandfather’s date of arrival in Sydney as 1829, and it should have been 1892.
- ii. “Lemburg” should have been “Lemberg”, now Lviv, formerly Lvov.
- iii. The note about Darling Point cemetery inadvertently lost its “ton”. It is actually **Darlington Point**, a country cemetery, current postcode 2706.
- iv. Myriam Segre did not arrive in Australia in 1927, but after World War II.

5. FROM THE ARCHIVES... Received with thanks from

- Louise Rosenberg: a copy of a third class passenger ticket on the “Giant’s Causeway” in May 1863, for the Knopp family.
- Pamela Zopf: booklet on the family of Benjamin and Sarah Cohen of Hobart.
- Blair Stead: family trees of Samuel Solomon, Hyam Hyman, Nathan Cohen of Paddington, Emanuel Hyam Cohen of Brighton.
- Stella Marshall: family trees of Isaac Davis of Burrowa, Philip Joseph Cohen, Esther Hart.
- Mark Braham: *Jewish Life in Turkish Buda* by Tamas Raj and Peter Vasadi.
- National Council of Jewish Women: *Meeting New Migrants on the Wharves*.

6. MYRIAM SEGRE

In the last Newsletter, a request was made for information about Myriam Segre. Our Senior Vice-President Sophie Caplan OAM writes:

“I was on the wharf at Darling Harbour in January or February 1949 when Myriam Segre arrived on the “Tidewater”, on which my aunt was also a passenger. Myriam was a Shoah orphan from Italy, and Mrs. Porush asked Mrs Nathan Haneman of

Kogarah to take her because the Hanemans spoke Italian, having lived in Italy in the 1920s. Myriam lived with the Hanemans until she grew up, or until Mrs Haneman died. The Haneman's son was Dr Ben Haneman.

Myriam was a member of Habonim in Sydney during the 1950's, but she married outside the Jewish community. Unfortunately the three children of Nathan Haneman and his wife have all died, but the widower of the elder daughter, may be able to provide further information.

7. THE GRAVE OF MORDECHAI MOSES... AND OTHER GRAVES

Rabbi Apple has given us the form of Hebrew to use on the graves of Mordechai and his wife Abigail, so now we are waiting to see if the Jewish Cemetery Trust can get a grant to repair the headstones which have been damaged for some time.

Speaking of graves, my comment at the end of Verna Rouvray's article about her trip to Geelong and Hamilton, in Victoria, stirred the ever-watchful Morris Ochert OAM in Brisbane. I said that finding long-lost graves was Australian Jewish genealogy at its best. Morris pointed out (correctly) that finding them is only the first half of the deed. The gravestone should be reported to the relevant Cemetery Trust so that it can be repaired and restored. Morris himself has given attention to every known damaged Jewish grave in Queensland, from Cooktown in the far north to Barmah in the south.

"It does not mean that I personally carry out the repairs, but I find ways of getting it done. In remote Hughendon, two Catholic priests restored a spectacular Jewish monument in the middle of nowhere. When I read of two Montefiore monuments in Rookwood, which were lying shattered on the ground, I did not rest till I had succeeded in getting the Art Gallery Trust to arrange for one restoration and the Sydney Jewish Cemetery Trust the other... On Mount Scopus, overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem, the Australian Memorial to the dead in World War I was in a poor condition structurally. No one seemed to think it was their responsibility. After a year of negotiation, I had this huge restoration done by the British War Graves Commission. In the case you mention (the broken headstone of Lionel Phillips at Hamilton), I have brought the matter to the attention of two Melbourne brothers, and I am awaiting their response."

Well done, Morris. Where there is a will, there is a way.
We have also had further correspondence from Verna Rouvray on this matter.

Judith Shapira, Newsletter Editor.

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