

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Member of the JCA Family of Communal Organisations



NEWSLETTER

Address: Mandelbaum House
385 Abercrombie Street,
Darlington. NSW. 2008

Issue No. 63 Feb 2004
ISSN-0816-714-1

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1. **WELCOME** to the new year and the first newsletter of 2004. I am pleased to say that the Newsletter plays an important part in keeping our members informed about the Society, but it does not take the place of personal contact. With over four hundred members of the Society, it seems incredible that at most of our general meetings only about thirty members attend, irrespective of the subject of the lecture, or the venue. While we realise it is difficult for older members of the community to travel long distances, we only have three or four meetings each year, and most of us have cars, and would be willing to bring other members who live nearby. We hope that more members will avail themselves of our excellent speakers.

2. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS FOR 2004.

At the Annual General Meeting held in December 2003, the following office-bearers of the Society were elected:

President: Dr. Suzanne Rutland
Vice Presidents: Sophie Caplan OAM and Judith Shapira.
Hon Treasurer: Russell Stern
Hon. Secretary: Jeannette Tsoulos.

Committee: Joe Ben Mayor, Helen Bersten, Dr. Harry Lewis, Julius Mayer, Philip Moses, Helen Rasko OAM, Sarah Vorchheimer.

The Committee meets from 11 am to 1 pm on the first Tuesday of each month in our room at Mandelbaum House, and it would be appreciated if members did not make phone calls at that time, which interrupt the business of the meeting.

3. PROFILE ... JUDITH SHAPIRA. (Your Newsletter Editor).

My father's family arrived in Melbourne around 1850, and my mother arrived in Brisbane with her parents and siblings in 1912, so it was obvious that I should be born and educated in Sydney. My father had shops in the city, and my mother was involved with most of the Jewish women's organizations that existed in the 1930's – 40's in Sydney. I attended Sydney Girls' High School, and then did the Leaving Certificate from SCEGGS Darlinghurst, which was my initiation into how 99% of the Australian population thought and felt in those days during World War II.

My Jewish education began at the Central Synagogue (of which my father was a foundation member of the Grosvenor Street shule) and later at the Great Synagogue, where I was Batmitzvah in the late Rabbi Porush's first Batmitzvah class. Later I joined the Great Synagogue choir (then mixed), of which my aunt Ruth Portrate was the leader. I was an active member of the GSY Intermediate Group until I went to Sydney University (1947), when I became involved with the Zionist Youth League, and later Habonim. I did an Arts degree, majoring in English, History and Psychology, never intending to use it. I was going to Israel as a "halutza" (pioneer), and these were heady days in the Zionist world. I spent a year on the Hachshara Training Farm, near Shepparton, (Victoria), where I met and later married the Manager, Miron Shapira. Miron arrived in Australia in 1947, having served three years in the British Army (Palestine contingent), and studied Agriculture at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, from where he became the Farm Manager for the Zionist Federation. Our first child Deborah was born while we lived in Shepparton, and we moved to Sydney to become shopkeepers in a hardware/newsagency in suburban Sydney when our second child Jonathan was one year old. We stayed there for nine years, (another addition to the family, Betsy), and in 1967, I answered an advertisement to "Come Back to Teaching", urging Uni graduates to help relieve the teacher shortage. After one month's training, I was employed as a full time casual teacher at Ryde High School, later completing a Diploma of Education at night. I was appointed Head Teacher of English and History at Riverside Girls' High School, Gladesville, from where I retired after 14 years.

Since retirement, I attended the Yad Vashem course for Teachers of the Holocaust, having been one of the founding members of the group which produced the Teaching the Holocaust Kit for Australian schools. I was the Chairman of the NSW Board of Deputies Education Committee for eight years, and later a member of the Public Relations Committee. I was an active member of the Speakers Panel of the Board, going out to schools and clubs all over Sydney speaking on many aspects of Judaism and Jewish history.

My husband and I have been members of B'nai B'rith for over twenty years, and I was President of the Anti-Defamation Unit for two years. I am now very involved with *Courage to Care* which is a travelling Exhibition to NSW country areas telling of those people who saved Jews during the Holocaust at risk of their own lives, to show that one person can make a difference, and to promote tolerance and anti-racism.

I have been Vice-President of this Society for four years, and this year is my third as Editor of the Newsletter. We have three children and six grandchildren.

4. **AN ADDENDUM FROM MORRIS FORBES.** In vol. XIII Part 2 there is an article by Mr. Forbes on Sir Julian Salmons, which mentions (on page 222) his wit and character. Here is another example of the man's sense of humour. Mr. Forbes writes: "Salmons was a contemporary of Sir Samuel Griffiths, the first Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia. On the publication by Griffiths of a translation by him of Dante's *Inferno*, he gave copies to a number of friends, including Salmons. The translation was not particularly notable, and Salmons recorded it thus: 'I thanked him and told him that I fully appreciated the great honour, but I asked him to inscribe his name upon the fly leaf, with a line showing that he had given it to me, as I told him, I should not like anyone to think that I had borrowed the book, nor should I like anyone to think that I had bought it.' "

5. ON A SAD NOTE... In the last Newsletter, I wrote that we wished our longtime former Treasurer, Miriam Solomon, a speedy recovery from her operation, and hoped that she would soon be attending our committee meetings again. About a week later, we heard that Miriam had died suddenly after a very brief illness. Her son, Rabbi Mark Solomon, delivered a eulogy at our Annual Meeting, and we will print an obituary in the next Journal. I had known Miriam since our days in the Great Synagogue Choir together, in the contraltos. We will all miss her very much indeed. The AJHS thanks Vanda Phillips for her donation in memory of Miriam.

We were also saddened to learn of the death of Peter Elias of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation. Peter had, with his wife, recently completed the history of the community and had welcomed many Society members to the celebrations in Hobart in May, 2003.

6. RESTORATION OF MONTEFIORE HEADSTONES by Morris Ochert OAM

There have been several references to the achievements of the Montefiore family in the AJHS Journals, especially Vol.8 Part 4 – 1977 by Ruth Faerber which also had a photo of the monument of E.L. Montefiore, No.402 in the old Jewish Section of the Rookwood Cemetery. A subsequent photo showed that it was in an enclosure in which was the headstone of his wife, Esther Hannah. On her grave is also a “footstone”, rarely provided; in this case it is a small version of her headstone with only her initials and the date of her death, as follows: “E.H.M. 1882”. All three stones needed attention.

More recently I found that, in the years since the photo was taken (1977), no action had been taken to restore the monuments. It cannot be ascertained for how long before 1977 they had been neglected. Though I am diffident about interfering in interstate communal affairs, I decided that the memorials must be restored. My letters to people in Sydney, whom I thought would be interested, brought no results. I then approached a member of the Montefiore family in England for the necessary funds and was advised to “contact family members in Australia.” However I recalled the negative response I had from them years ago when I sought data for my research on “The Montefiore-Rothschilds of Queensland and decided to spare myself any repetition.

The Trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, of which Eliezer was a founder, agreed to fund the restoration of his monument, while the Jewish Cemetery Trust funded that of his wife. I express my appreciation to both Trusts. They have each performed a Mitzvah.

The work was carried out in late 1997. I hope, if the monuments of other Jewish folk are seen to need restoration that people of goodwill will come forward and attend to them. Who knows whether any of us, now living, may need some kindly attention to our monument, in years to come?

This article is particularly relevant as we are about to have the grave of Mordecai Moses restored, having recently received the correct Hebrew inscription for it from Rabbi Apple.

7. THE 1920's, 1930's and 1940's. What a wonderful article I have received from Julie Morris, telling of the Jewish Guides she helped found, and Jewish life in general in the 1920s and 1930s. This article can certainly be a feature of the history of this era. Please keep that material coming in.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

22ND February 2004: Lee Simmons will speak on the History of the Temple Emanuel, Woollahra.

28th March 2004: The first of a series of three papers on the history of the recent immigration waves to Australia... the Russian immigrants.
Speaker: Vladimir Dubossarsky.

2nd May 2004: The Israelis in Australia. Speaker: Ari Levartovsky.

June 2004: The Hans Kimmel Awards at Moriah College.

1st. August 2004: The South African migrants. Speaker: Brian Levitan.

THESE MEETINGS WILL BE HELD AT MANDELBAUM HOUSE on Sunday afternoons, (except the Hans Kimmel Awards) at 2 p.m. Please put them in your diary, and plan to come.

9. FROM THE ARCHIVIST: Received with thanks from:

- Lee Simmons: *Kehillat Emanuel*, a history of the congregation of the Temple Emanuel, Woollahra.
- Sydney Levine OAM: *The Dunera Internees* by Benzion Patkin;
- *War Letters of General Monash* ed by F. M. Cutlack;
- *John Monash* by Cecil Edwards;
- *An Unpromised Land* by Leon Gettler;
- *With the Zionists in Gallipoli* by J. H. Patterson.
- Joe Kensell: Rabbi Rogut farewell brochure, November 2003.
- Rev Samra: photos of the memorial to Sir Isaac Isaacs at Yackandandah, provided by the Menorah Jewish Community of Albury Wodonga and the AJHS, with the help of the Indigo Shire Council.
- Sophie Caplan OAM: chapter on Australia for *Avotaynu Guide to Jewish Genealogy*. A very comprehensive covering of available Australian archival and genealogical resources. **Copyright.**
- David Lesnie: papers of Harry Lesnie connected with the Australian Jewish Welfare Society.
- Rigby publications: *The Dunera Boys* by Robyn O'Sullivan

Purchased: *The North Shore Temple Emanuel*, a living history, 1956-2003.

10. SOME GOOD NEWS AND CONGRATULATIONS. MAZELTOV!

- Our President, Dr. Suzanne Rutland, has been promoted to the position of Associate Professor, Dept. of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies of the University of Sydney.
- Mrs Louise Rosenberg, Honorary Historian of the AJHS, will be celebrating her NINETIETH birthday in a few weeks. (February 19th)

11. APOLOGY: In attempting to correct errors, we often make more, as was the case in the last newsletter. The correction should have related to Neville Milston's maternal grandfather.

12. RESEARCH: Sarah Vorchheimer is writing a history of the Yeshiva from 1955 to 2003. She welcomes contributions: PO Box 3166, Bellevue Hill, 2023.

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.