

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Member of the JCA Family of Communal Organisations



NEWSLETTER

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1. THE END OF AN ERA.

After eight years as President of the Australian Jewish Historical Society Inc., Assoc. Prof. Suzanne Rutland has decided to step down. Because of University commitments and research she will be overseas for six months of next year, and feels that the time has come to hand over the reins to someone else. It has been a very rewarding time for the Society as we have consolidated our position as the historians of the NSW Jewish community, have supported and been supported by the Jewish Communal Appeal and the Jewish community in general, and within the Society itself, have established a well organised working environment for ourselves and the many researchers who come to us for help. In addition, the JCA has enabled us to keep up to date in this electronic age.

Not all this is due to the efforts of the President alone, but also to the Committee and to past committee members who have since passed on. But our relationship with other Jewish historical societies in Australia has never been better, and we look forward to many years of progress ahead. Suzanne's most outstanding contribution has been to the continuing professional scholarship of the Society, and fortunately this will continue as she will remain as editor of the Sydney edition of the Journal, the one which appears in the first half of each year. Thank you, Suzanne and well done.

2. SOME CORRESPONDENCE:

i. Thank you, Evelyn Platus, for your sympathetic suggestions about attracting more members to our gatherings held about four times each year. (No, I am not going to call them General Meetings ever again... far too boring!). Unfortunately we have to have a venue which is accessible to all our members, and at a reasonable cost, and with facilities which are kosher. We have undertaken to use the rooms of the Centre for the Ageing in Bondi Junction for a year to see how this works out. Here's hoping that there is a record crowd for the AGM and *Sydney Jewish History of the 20's and 30's*.

ii. A letter from our much-valued Queensland correspondent, Morris Ochert O.A.M. reminds us we have a continuing duty. As quoted in Newsletter No.62:

“May I suggest that a report on a damaged Jewish gravestone should always end with the words “....and arrangements are in hand for its restoration.”

Morris himself is in very poor health and we are sorry to hear that. He has written an amazing number of letters and articles for this Society over the years and kept the torch of AJHS burning in Brisbane and Queensland. We send him greetings.

3. PROFILE DR. HARRIS KEITH LEWIS OAM. (HARRY)

Harry was born in Haberfield, Sydney, his family having arrived in Australia from 1890 onwards. His mother's family, the Schapiras, lived in Reid's Flat, near Cowra, and figured prominently in a book about this tiny town which was written recently. The Lewis side of the family started off in Narrabri, Moree and Inverell (all in New South Wales). Both sides of the family later moved to Sydney.

Harry was an only child, and attended Haberfield Primary School, and later Fort Street Boys' High, up to the Intermediate (Year 9). He then transferred to Sydney Boys' High as the family moved to Bondi. He went on to Sydney University where he studied Dentistry and spent a few years in England, later specializing as a Periodontist.

He has always been very involved in the dental profession, holding the position of President of the NSW Branch of the Australian Dental Association, as well as the NSW Council of Professions. He has also been an office-bearer in other dental groups. Although now retired from private practice, he teaches in a voluntary capacity in the Faculty as a Specialist Clinician. For thirty three years he has been the Senior Dental Consultant (N.S.W) for Veterans Affairs. For many years he was Honorary Consultant for the Prince of Wales Hospital and Royal Hospital for Women. He was also an officer in the Australian Army Reserve (CMF) in the Dental Corps. In 1988 he was made a member of the Order of Australia for services to the dental profession.

Since teenage days, Harry has been active in the Jewish community, ranging from the Zionist Youth League (in the heady student days of the late 1940's), to the present, where he is on the Board of Management of the Great Synagogue, having served two years as President. He is a Past President of Masada Unit of B'nai B'rith.

He is also an active Mason and Past Master of Lodge Woollahra.

Harry has been married to June for a very long time, and their two sons Stephen and Michael (who lives in Melbourne) have made them proud grandparents several times over. Harry is one of the kindest and most obliging friends one could possibly have... I remember as teenagers, he used to queue up for hours to buy concert tickets for a whole mob of his undeserving friends who were too lazy to do so! Even now, he is the complete House Husband for June in her illness, and still finds time to take part in so many communal activities. Long may he continue on our Committee.

4. THE SYDNEY YESHIVA.

The Sydney Talmudical College – Yeshivat Metivta Torah V'daat – began with a dispute on Simchat Torah 1955 at the Adath Israel Synagogue, Bondi. The dispute was between the supporters of Rabbi Bernath (then Rav of Adath Israel) and the supporters of the scholarly Rabbi Gedaliah Herc, at that moment on a ship on his way to Australia to expand the Adath Israel Congregation into a Yeshiva.

As a consequence of this dispute, the irascible Abraham Rabinovitch (who also founded Moriah College and many other educational and religious institutions in Sydney) called together the supporters of Rabbi Herc (whom he had engaged) and allegedly said, "All right, come with me. We'll make our *own* Yeshiva." And so the institution commonly known as "The Yeshiva, Sydney", in Flood Street, Bondi, began.

Until its gates were chained up and locks changed by the Sheriffs of the NSW Supreme Court on August 13th 2003, this institution, -which gave birth to kindergartens, infants, primary and high schools, as well as a Yeshivah Gedolah, Talmud Torah learning and adult education for students of all ages, welfare and outreach organizations, kashrut supervision and many more – not only educated thousands of students and created hundreds of new rabbis, but also changed the face of Sydney and impacted on all Australia.

Unfortunately, during the crisis period last year, following its seizure, many original documents appear to have been lost. (From the street, it appeared that the non-Jewish party that had brief ownership and possession of the Administration Building in Flood Street, threw out many skips full of documents)

AJHS Committee Member Sarah Vorchheimer, who has had connections to the Yeshiva since 1965, took upon herself the task of recording the Yeshiva history several years ago and is currently seeking both original documents (including photographs) and authentic oral history –preferably supported by documents- from persons who can help piece together the jigsaw of 1955 – 2003.

Please send any factual information on the Yeshiva history to:

SARAH VORCHHEIMER

P.O.B. 3166

Bellevue Hill. NSW 2023 or phone 9389 – 3915.

5. FROM THE ARCHIVES -

Received with thanks from:

- Father Terry Lyons: The Launceston Lyons, 3rd edition.
- The archive of the late Sydney Levine: files on early dentists John Emanuel, Simon Lear and Joseph Hyams.
- Sophie Caplan: *Avotenu, a guide to Jewish Genealogy*. Sophie has contributed a chapter on researching Australian Jewish genealogy.
- David Clark in Hobart: diagram of burials in the Jewish section of Cornelian Bay Cemetery as at November 2004.
- Denise Lvoff, Moriah College: photocopies of articles relating to Norman Lapin and family in Bathurst and Sydney.
- Rabbi Apple: newsletters and clippings.

Corrections to corrections.

Col Choat has informed us that the correct spelling of the maiden name of Phoebe, wife of Solomon Moses, was Levy and she was the daughter of Abraham Joseph Levy. After Solomon's death she married Michael Menser.

ARCHIVIST NEEDS HEIR

We are looking for someone to assist our archivist, Helen Bersten, with the idea of being able to take over when she is away and possibly replace her if she really retires. The ideal person would be someone with library or archival experience who would be happy to come into the office one day a week to learn about our collection and our procedures for answering research enquiries. You would be working with a great team of people and doing really worthwhile community work.

6. Happy Birthday Nate Zusman!

Our long-time member, ex-vice-president and recent recipient of the RAHS Certificate of Achievement (for his dedication to the management and records of the AJHS Inc) turns 90 on December 8th. Although he now lives in Perth, his presence is still strong in Mandelbaum House and we wish him well.

7. MANDELBAUM SUMMER SCHOOL IN JEWISH STUDIES 2004

The Mandelbaum Summer School in Jewish Studies is again being held in Sydney on December 26th, 27th, 28th, and 29th December at Mandelbaum House. Exploring universal, classical and modern Jewish themes, it features speakers Rabbi David Freedman, Professor Alan Crown, Monash's Dr Mirna Cicioni, Rabbi John Levi, Selwyn Sack, Dr Jennifer Dowling, Dr Ian Young, Dr Lena Cansdale and Dr Tom Kramer.

For a timetable and more information, email admin@mandelbaum.usyd.edu.au or call Mandelbaum House 02 96925200.

The cost is \$50 per day or \$175 for 4 days, including lunch & morning tea, with a student & pensioner discount of 25%.

8. JCA LIST

The JCA has asked us to provide a list of our NSW members with addresses. As you will realise from our first item, we benefit from their financial assistance. In keeping with our privacy policy, we ask if you do not wish your name to appear on this list, to please notify us ASAP.

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.

This issue (No.66) of the AJHS Newsletter is lovingly sponsored by Helen and Milton Whitmont, in memory of their parents Harold and Madge Bloom and Edward and Miriam Whitmont, all of whom were deeply involved in the Sydney Jewish community of their day. G.R.T.D.S.