

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL



VOL XV



PART 2

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

The Australian Jewish Historical Society was founded in Sydney in August 1938. The Victorian Branch of the Society was founded in October 1949. A Branch also exists in Canberra and Western Australia has its own Jewish Historical Society.

The Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal has been published since 1939. From 1988 the production of the Journal has been shared by New South Wales (June edition) and Victoria (November edition).

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A complete list of the Society's office-bearers is printed on the back cover.

The Editors welcome suggestions for articles and manuscripts dealing with any aspect of the history of the Jewish people in Australia. The Journal is national in coverage and deals with the whole sweep of Australian Jewish history from 1788 to the contemporary period.

Material submitted for consideration for publication in the Journal should be presented on a 3.5 inch Macintosh or DOS computer diskette. The data format preferred is Microsoft Word or Microsoft's generic intermediate data format, Rich Text Format (RTF). If you can only supply data as 'text only/ASCII' you must note which platform the data was prepared on (Macintosh/DOS/Windows). The disk should be sent with a double-spaced printout or typescript, and may be accompanied by illustrations. References should be in the form of endnotes rather than footnotes. No payment can be offered for any contribution. No handwritten submissions will be accepted.

For the NSW edition, communication should be sent to The Editor, Dr S.D. Rutland, or Mrs Helen Bersten, Honorary Archivist, AJHS, Mandelbaum House, 385 Abercrombie Street, Darlinghurst, NSW 2008, Australia, from whom information about membership of the Society and its other activities and resources may also be obtained.

For the Victorian edition, communications should be sent either to the Editor, Dr Malcolm J. Turnbull, or to the Honorary Secretary, Mr Ronald Aarons, PO Box 608, Carnegie 3163, from whom information about membership of the Society and its other activities and resources may also be obtained.

Front cover: The late Maurice (Harry) Kellerman past patron of the Australian Jewish Historical Society Inc. Taken at the opening of the Society's rooms in Mandelbaum House 1996.

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*Opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not reflect the
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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

With our entry into the twenty-first century, I am pleased to once again present you with a fascinating collection of articles reflecting different aspects of Australian Jewish life. This issue includes a combination of scholarly pieces, in this case particularly from young researchers whose work in some cases was associated with their graduate studies, and of reminiscences and family history, written by some of our veteran contributors whose enthusiastic and never ending research and writing continues to contribute to our body of knowledge about Australian Jewry.

For the Sydney edition 2000, we only have a couple of entries related to the nineteenth century — now psychologically two centuries away! Lionel Fredman's article deals with the history of Saul Samuel, one of the outstanding Jewish figures of the nineteenth century, whose almost half a century of public life included his initial election as the first Jewish member of parliament in New South Wales, as a minister for a significant period of his parliamentary term and later as Agent-General for New South Wales in London for close to 20 years, from 1880 to 1897. At the same time he was to be also involved with the emerging Jewish community and served for a brief period as the president of the Great Synagogue before his appointment as Agent-General to London. Morris Ochert has provided us with a detailed study of Victorian pioneer and later Brisbane Hebrew Congregation stalwart, Lewis Flegeltaub; while Louise Rosenberg's study of Gwen Green, a Jewish pioneer woman who was born at the turn of the century and who made a significant contribution to rural life and the Country Women's Association, especially during the depression years of the 1930s, adds a colourful dimension to the picture of Jewish women who lived in rural areas. Neville Cohen's article on the rise and fall of the Randwick-Coogee Jewish Social Club is an important contribution about a little known Jewish organisation of the 1920s and will form part of his broader family history.

A number of articles relate to the Jewish refugee experience before and during World War II and then focus on important devel-

opments within Australian Jewry to which the refugees contributed. Astrid Kirchhof's timely study of the experiences of German and Austrian Jewish women refugees who settled in Australia in the late 1930s is an important piece of social history, bringing together findings of these experiences before it was absolutely too late to record these stories because of the passage of time. Too often, researchers (and I hold myself responsible for this as well) concentrate only on the male stories and fail to record the female experiences. As such, Astrid Kirchhof's study fills an important gap, although it is a pity that she does not appear to have interviewed any women or their daughters whose husbands (or fathers') were interned. As the Max Joseph collection in the Archive of Australian Judaica at Fisher Library, University of Sydney, reveals, a number of German and Austrian Jewish men and boys were interned during the war, but the females in their family were not. The problems which these women faced, not only caring for their children but earning an income while their husbands were interned, still needs to be documented. Peter Witting's story of his family's escape to Shanghai and their experiences in Hongkew during the war years is a more personal story, but it helps to illuminate the different refugee experiences. Over 2000 Jewish refugees who spent the war years in Shanghai later made Australia their home, so this episode is an important part of Australian Jewish history.

Finally, issues of communal lay leadership and the development of the Zionist youth movement, both of which emerged during World War II, are the subject of the last two articles. Benjamin Phillips has analysed the workings of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry in relation to the Marriage Act of 1960 while Shlomo Etzioni (Sol Woodman) has given his perspectives on the contributions of the Habonim *shaliach*, Gershie Epstein, who served in Australia in the early 1950s.

The last few months have seen the passing of a number of our communal stalwarts, including our New South Wales patron, Maurice Herman (Harry) Kellerman, Rabbi Lubofsky and in May 2000 John Einfeld. My own memories of Mr Kellerman go back to my very first book, *Seventy-Five Years: the history of a Jewish Newspaper*, which he edited. I spent many hours in his home in Greenwich and I know that I learnt an enormous amount from his many years of experience. Rabbi Lubofsky's great contributions to Australian Jewry have also been acknowledged and I would like to thank Rabbi Apple for his contributions of the obituaries of these two great men of our community.

Once again, the publication of this journal is due to the work of many hands, and I would like to thank especially Helen Bersten,

Gail Hammer and Judy Shapira for assisting with the editing process and proof reading. The wonderful team of voluntary workers which we have in our office at Mandelbaum House in Sydney is greatly assisting in the work of our society.

Morris Ochert in researching for his article on Lewis Flegeltaub, came across these words of the president of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation in its annual report of 1899:

Before closing, I beg to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance I have received from my colleagues, and to express my satisfaction at the manner our Officers have done their work. I hope the New Year and the New Century may be fraught with blessings to our Country, our Community and to all the inhabitants of this land, and I wish you all *Chasima ve'Chasemina Touvo.*

As Morris Ochert commented: 'In regard to the century and the millennium ahead of us (at the time of writing), let us echo his words and let us say "*Omeyn*".'

Suzanne D. Rutland

THE PUBLIC AND POLITICAL LIFE OF SIR SAUL SAMUEL

Lionel Fredman

The first outstanding nineteenth century Jewish parliamentarian in Australia was Sir Saul Samuel (1820-1900) whose public career spanned an almost unsurpassed period of 43 years as a member of parliament, cabinet minister and then Agent-General for New South Wales. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1859, following Lionel Samson who was the first Jewish member of an Australian legislature. Samson had landed in Western Australia as a pioneer of 1829, the year of settlement, and subsequently became a member of the nominated Legislative Council in 1849. This was ten years before the first British Jew, Baron Lionel de Rothschild, took his seat in the British House of Commons in 1858.

Samuel's likeness will be familiar to anyone who walks around the New South Wales Parliament House foyer. During a visit there some months ago, I observed a marble portrait bust of Samuel and also a portrait in oils by John Alfred Vintner done of him when he was Agent-General in London. A full page engraving of the ministry and a good likeness of each member may also be found in the *Illustrated Sydney News* for 28 March 1874.

Initially, before the introduction of responsible government, Samuel was elected to the county-based part-elective Legislative Council where he served from 1854 to 1856. In 1859 he was elected to the Legislative Assembly for the seat of Orange, serving in the third to the seventh parliaments; then he was appointed to the nominee Legislative Council in 1872; and finally from 1880 to 1897 to the office of Agent General representing the colony in London. He served in a total of four ministries, two as Colonial Treasurer initially under Forster in 1859-60 and another two as Postmaster-General initially under Parkes in 1872.

Between 1860, when Samuel became Treasurer for the first time, and 1880, when he travelled to England as Agent-General, the colony of New South Wales grew at an unprecedented rate. Its population increased two and a quarter times, railroad mileage grew

twelve times, letters through the post six times, manufacturing plants five times, coal production increased four fold and wool export expanded twelve fold. Small wonder that government statistician, Timothy Coghlan, claimed that the colony was a veritable paradise in the first volume of his *Wealth and Progress of New South Wales: 1886-87*. As Coghlan stated: 'In no other land can a better-dressed, better-fed and more contented-looking class than the working people of New South Wales be found.'¹

New South Wales was indeed a land of opportunity for Coghlan's 'working people' and those to whom they deferred, such as Samuel, because of their success and by means of the newly perfected representative democracy. In 1856 the first parliament under responsible government was elected for a five-year term (in 1874 lowered to three years), but due to the instability of ministries, patched together by what has been called 'factions', no parliament served its full term until that of George Reid in 1894-1899. Thus, Samuel's parliamentary career was served in an unstable environment only overcome by the new electoral law of 1893.²

Afterwards, London-born Samuel might have expected the familiar, comfortable retirement in his homeland. Instead, he spent many well-noticed years as Agent-General suggested by a long obituary in *The Times* of 30 August 1900 and the 'warm welcome' he promised Parkes in October 1881 when persuading him to visit England. Parkes visited London in 1882 and 1884 and Samuel helped to ensure that he was amply wined and dined.³

Samuel's origins were not uncommon among Jewish settlers, in that he followed a convict relative to New South Wales and sought to maximise colonial opportunities. With the assistance of his uncle, Samuel Lyons, a successful emancipist and his elder brother, Lewis, he commenced his business career by opening a warehouse in Sydney, and then concentrated on pastoral and mining interests in the Bathurst district. Here he began his political career as a prominent opponent of Wentworth's unpopular proposal for a hereditary Legislative Council and as a strong supporter of free trade and public works for the mining regions. In August 1853 he chaired a large public meeting called by Wentworth's opponents in Bathurst. Six years later his enthusiastic supporters in Orange carried their new member around the town. By this time, responsible government and the new constitution were operating.⁴

Within twelve months of entering parliament Samuel had become treasurer with the specific responsibility for settling the final separation of New South Wales and Queensland, completed in 1859. One basic argument concerned the possible renewal of transportation, a matter about which the squatters of the far-North dif-

ferred from the merchants of Sydney.

In December 1865 Samuel resigned as treasurer when he was unable to introduce his financial proposals which required increased indirect taxes on such basic items as tea and sugar. In a long speech Samuel stated that the government must tackle the persistent deficit, avoid the protectionist 'madness' and assimilate their tariff to that of the other colonies pending their future union. He quoted with approval William E. Gladstone, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had stressed that he would dearly love to be the Chancellor who would terminate the unfair, impractical and oppressive income tax. Since Samuel opposed increasing income tax, there was no alternative but to increase the high-yield customs duties and introduce license fees on a number of trades. One night he suffered defeat after defeat when the Legislative Assembly was in the Committee stage, as his erstwhile colleagues were reluctant to support his financial proposals. At the time of his resignation the *Sydney Morning Herald* praised his consistency which was that of a principled mid-nineteenth century liberal.⁵ Five years later in December 1870 his financial proposals brought down the Cowper government.

Samuel attacked the principles of *ad valorem* duties and offered new 'measurement' duties which became lost in a morass of detail, as well as income tax, in an attempt to gain the support of those who said they favoured direct taxes. He carefully spelled out some arguments to encourage the latter such as holders of substantial property impose extra costs upon a government. Yet, in the debate, few supported such arguments as many wished to evade the budgetary problems.

In addition, Samuel had been a reliable supporter of Cowper, now retired, then particularly displeased by the coalition ministry headed by the liberal, John Robertson, and the conservative James Martin in 1870-72. He also had good connections with western mining and pastoral interests and Sydney mercantile interests. While the battle-lines of Protection and Free Trade were being drawn in the 1870s and 1880s who knew that David Syme, editor and proprietor of the *Age*, the most powerful and dogmatic of the voices for protection, had offered Parkes a job in February, 1871.

The election of February-March 1872 was dominated by Henry Parkes who formed his first ministry and ushered in a period of 'transition'. Parkes had good reason to recognise Samuel in his first ministry, appointing him as PMG. Parkes had also recognised free trade as the key political issue of the future and the *Sydney Morning Herald* described Samuel as 'a zealous and uncompromising free trader'. Samuel reminded the electors that he had advocat-

ed a customs union at the Intercolonial Conference in 1870 which he saw as the work of one people soon, he hoped, to be united in one country. The Intercolonial Conference held at Melbourne in June-July 1870 secured agreement on some matters but not about a basis for the establishment of a customs union and intercolonial free trade for Australia. A South Australian delegate described the determination of New South Wales represented by Cowper and Samuel to secure Free Trade and Victoria to secure protection as 'immovable'.⁶ In short, Samuel was an early enthusiast for Federation.

For the election of 1872 Samuel left a safe country electorate, Wellington, to run as a part of a ministerial team against their rivals from East Sydney.⁷ As postmaster general, he opened the first stage of the GPO in Martin Place in September 1874. In a lengthy and perceptive speech, he praised the government architect for creating a splendid building. He also indicated that he was a promoter of modern communications technology and expanding opportunities for women in the post offices which he regularly opened around the countryside. For example, in opening a Mechanics Institute at Wallsend in September, 1879, he praised such bodies for providing education for women.⁸

One key issue at this time was the provision of a subsidised mail steamer service from Europe and America. Samuel took great pride in negotiating such a contract for a steamship mail service to begin in January 1874, operating from London to San Francisco and terminating in Sydney. Victoria had provided the first service but Samuel insisted that the New South Wales arrangement was better and cheaper. In the 1870s his attention was drawn to San Francisco when he learned of Andrew Halliday's patented cable-car which he thought might also serve the steep hills of Sydney. Information about this strange new machine was also sent to Parkes. Unfortunately they were dealing with a thrice-bankrupt crook, Hayden Hezekiah Hall, whose assets were impounded within a year and who never began the service for which he had so cheerfully tendered.⁹

In view of the importance which Parkes attached to his Public Instruction Act of 1880, it is strange that Samuel did not support him with a strong second-reading speech.¹⁰ He did say in a brief and passing statement that he regarded the 1866 Act as 'a fair compromise' for that time, as did Parkes. The 1866 Act continued state aid to denominational schools which the Act of 1880 discontinued.

Members of the Legislative Assembly during the second half of the nineteenth century were notable for their rapid turnover and rapid promotion to the ministry. Samuel was chosen as a minister, though he resigned three times and re-arranged his allegiances.

One reason for the brief periods of service was the severe financial strain in a developing colony which even affected such prominent members as Parkes, Cowper and Robertson. An escape route was the more attractive minister's salary and this might have influenced allegiances. Through his appointment as Agent-General in 1880, Samuel at least escaped the notorious 'bear-pit of Macquarie street' which in the 1880s suffered from the long, vehement speeches and attention-seeking antics of those whom Cyril Pearl has called 'the wild men of Sydney'.¹¹

The election of 1887 was the first in New South Wales to be fought in the modern manner between political parties which had a programme, party labels (including Free Trade) and leaders to identify them inside and outside the parliament. Parkes and his fourth ministry were returned to office. Few people knew of the personal and financial relations between Samuel and Parkes and the rivalry between Samuel and another Jewish politician, Jacob Levi Montefiore, in exchanging favours with the ever-impecunious political colossus, especially for the post of Agent-General. Parkes' debts were inflated by his failed newspaper, *The Empire*, a large family and calls on mining leases. Among the many matters raised in his letters from London, Samuel commented on Parkes' personal affairs. There was a lingering hope that a syndicate to which he belonged might yet buy from Parkes the Jamberoo lease on the south coast with its coal and iron deposits. Samuel gave him help in arranging a book deal for him. Parkes later confided to his memoirs: 'I've known few truer men'. Presumably he kept to himself the criticisms of Samuel by Sir Daniel Cooper.¹²

To indicate how busy Samuel was as Agent-General, he wrote in 1888 that he had raised 30m pounds in loans, bought rail stores free of commission, supervised the immigration of 30,000 persons, negotiated a new mail contract, attended the Imperial Conference of 1887, represented New South Wales at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition and distributed loads of information.¹³ By promptly urging Australasian colonists resident in England to contribute to the New South Wales Patriotic Fund, Samuel enhanced the popular outburst of Empire loyalty. He received official recognition with a knighthood in 1882 and in 1898 was elevated to Baronet.

In terms of his Jewish contributions, as a stalwart of the York Street congregation, Samuel chaired a public meeting which was held in March 1871 and decided to re-unite the two congregations and erect a bigger and better synagogue. He was among the first donors at the meeting with the substantial donation of 100 pounds and joined the committee to give effect to their proposals. He laid the foundation stone of the building in 1875, was on hand for the

consecration of the Great Synagogue in March, 1878 and served two terms as its second president from 1878–80. He had previously served on the York Street Synagogue board since 1858. In October 1872, the *Australian Israelite* described Samuel as 'a trusted political head of the Jewish persuasion', implying that there was a Jewish vote readily organised and worth winning. But was such a vote so important in the 1870s compared with the other tangible reasons for the favour of Henry Parkes?¹⁴ Samuel's brief intervention in the Education debate in 1880 was a rare occasion when this front-rank politician actually made public mention of his religion.

During the 1880s, Federation was becoming practical politics due to inter-colonial railroad links, the emergence of a new, Australian-born generation, further tariff disputes, and the expansion of French and German interests into the Pacific. But Samuel was fully occupied in London. Who knows what he might have achieved if he had returned home with his London experience to earn him a seat at the constitutional conventions of the 1890s and future recognition as a founding father? But what was 'home'? Samuel had arrived in New South Wales at the age of twelve, a year before his Barmitzvah. Isaacs was Australian-born when Samuel was already a Legislative Councillor and could make enough noise for a dozen Jewish Founding Fathers. Probably the last letter from Samuel to Parkes was that dated 11 June, 1895. It was less than a year before Parkes' death in his 81st year (he was five years older than Samuel). Parkes was conscious of their advancing age and though Samuel had lost heavily in the Depression of the 1890s he decided to remain in his post as Agent-General which meant a smaller cost to the public purse in difficult times.¹⁵

NOTES

1. T.A. Coghlan, *Wealth and Progress of New South Wales, 1886–87* Sydney: 1887, pp. 488–92.
2. A major change in the electoral law in 1893 introduced 125 approximately equal, single-member electorates and a uniform polling day. It abolished plural voting and required written nominations.
3. Parkes Correspondence, (henceforth PC) Mitchell Library, A928, 195–282 and *The Times*, 30 August 1900.
4. *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH), 10, and 13 August 1853; 25 June 1859.
5. *Ibid.*, 30 November, 15 December, 1865.
6. C.M.H. Clark ed., *Select Documents in Australian History, 1851–1900* Sydney: 1955, pp. 86–91.
7. SMH, 20 January 1865; 13 February 1872 and A.W. Martin, *Henry Parkes: a Biography* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980.

8. Ibid., 2 September 1874 and *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 26 September, 1879
9. 3 December 1873, PC. A36, A1887, 28 September 1888, 28 September A928.
10. *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, ser. 1. Session 1879-80, p. 179.
11. G.N. Hawker, *The Parliament of New South Wales*, pp. 23-27, 146.
12. Cooper to Parkes, 9 September 1881, 24 August 1892. PC, A906, A916.
13. *British Australasian*, 2 June 1887. Samuel to Parkes, 5 June 1888, and 2 January 1891, PC, A906.
14. P.M. Loveday, A. W. Martin, *Parliament, Factions and Parties*, Melbourne University Press, 81.
15. Samuel to Parkes, 11 June 1895, PC, A928.

THE BRIEF, BUT EVENTFUL LIFE OF LEWIS FLEGELTAUB

Morris S. Ochert

HIS NAME

'These are the names...' (Exod. 1 — i).

Names are the building blocks of historians and genealogists. Since the dawn of mankind, parents have allocated 'given' or 'first' names to their offspring. However, surnames are a relatively recent innovation. The increase in the world's population and various other pressures has made essential the acquisition of 'family names' or 'surnames.' Over the past one thousand years, the possession of a surname has increased from a rarity to an almost universal feature of life. The change did not come about simultaneously in all places. The movement spread worldwide, town by town, country by country, not following any pattern. As the need arose, so were surnames introduced. In places of closer settlement, in more 'civilised' areas, amongst the 'upper,' more educated and wealthier classes — these people acquired surnames earlier. In more backward communities, amongst the landless peasantry and the labouring classes, change came much later.

Not all people were happy with this innovation, for they felt it was intrusive and often feared that 'if anyone is going to profit by it, it won't be us.' Among the Jewish people the imposition of a surname was particularly resented, for Jews felt that they already possessed adequate and meaningful names. A person whose name was, say, Shlomo ben Avraham (Solomon, the son of Abraham) would insist that he had all the names that he needed. An easy compromise, whether he approved or not, was to recognise him as Solomon Abrahams. Even as recently as two hundred years ago, some Jewish people were without surnames. In Turkey, surnames were still being allotted, as late as 1931!

This is an account of the sojourn of Lewis Flegeltaub in Brisbane towards the end of the nineteenth century. We will never know

whether that name was intended to be derogatory or not. The former Director of the Institute of Modern Languages states that one interpretation of *'flegel'* is 'a retarded or recalcitrant boy,' while *'taub'* can mean 'deaf.' So 'a deaf mute' may be intended. He states that, in a 'live' language, a word may have varying meanings according to who uses it, or when or where it is used. Some other possible meanings of *'taub'* are 'a dove's wing' or 'the wooden paddle used to beat the grain from the chaff when winnowing' or 'something used to dabble with' or 'a large wooden spatula used in cooking.' It is not at all clear, therefore, whether the name was intended to be derogatory or not. If it was meant to be uncomplimentary, it would have been due to the first Flegeltaub having resisted this intrusion in his life.

There have been many who bear that name all over Australia, as well as those who have abbreviated it to forms such as Fleg, Flig, Flegg, and so on. Few are now Jewish. The man of whom I write was born in Suwalki in Russian Poland in 1848, the son of Zarach (Azariah) and Hannah Flegeltaub (née Youdelevna). His given name was Leif. His Hebrew name was Levi. In Australia he took the name Lewis. He was one of six siblings who were taken by their parents to Liverpool, England when young. They migrated to Victoria, Australia in 1864. I will write only of Lewis and leave the overall Flegeltaub history to my colleague of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Travers Herman, of Western Australia. He has an archive of cognate history, which he proposes to record in a manuscript, probably on his retirement. Travers' great grandfather, Aaron, was Lewis Flegeltaub's brother, so that Lewis was his great grand-uncle.

Lewis led a busy and financially rewarding life in Australia. He lived first in Bendigo and Ballarat,² becoming wealthy during the period of the gold rushes as did many others of his kin. It is not recorded whether this was from gold mining or from supplying equipment, food and clothing to the miners. He married Esther Hannah Phillips at the East Melbourne Synagogue on 21 October 1868, when he was twenty-two and she was nineteen. She was the daughter of James Phillips, pawnbroker, and Rosalie (née Sherkovor). Seven of their children were born in Ballarat up to 1879, in which year he was naturalised. By that time, gold production was petering out and they moved to Brisbane about 1880, where their eighth child was born in 1888.

HIS PARNOSSOH

Soon after arriving in Brisbane, Lewis acquired The Goldsmith's Hall, a large jewellery, watch and clock store. It was near the upper end of Queen Street, the city's main thoroughfare, near the Victoria

Bridge. Originally it was No. 44 but, in subsequent renumbering, it became 139 and then 210. No record remains of his experiences in that business, but his opulent lifestyle indicates that it provided him a fulsome income.

After his death in September 1897, his oldest son, Lionel, carried on the management of the firm, aided by his mother. She was in poor health and passed away in December 1902, aged only fifty-four years. Lionel then sold the firm to the Heindorff Jewellery Co. (Heindorff Bros.) after holding a major sale of the stock as per an advertisement, a copy of which has been preserved. It states that the sale was 'By Order of the Executrix in the Estate of Goldsmiths' Hall Co., Established 30 Years.' This indicates that Lewis must have bought the store as a going concern, for he did not live in Brisbane for that length of time. The advertisement appeared in *The Queensland Figaro* of 5 December 1901. Soon after, Lionel opened a jewellery store in Sydney. Included in the sale of The Goldsmith's Hall to the Heindorff Brothers was a giant clock, popularly known as 'Big Ben.' Its story follows.

HIS CLOCK NAMED 'BIG BEN'

In 1890 an elderly Birmingham clockmaker made a very large, two-faced clock. 'He designed the entire movement and hand-cut each item from sheets of the finest brass.' It was a one-off project, which took a year to complete. Lewis imported it and erected it at the edge of the footpath outside the Queen Street store. The case is 3 feet (0.91m) in diameter. The height is 15 feet 3 inches (4.65m), which includes its cast iron fluted column and the concrete plinth at the base. (A plinth was provided when it was erected outside the store and when it was subsequently on display at the International Exhibition and in its present position at Nudgee College). To this day, it is known as 'Big Ben.'

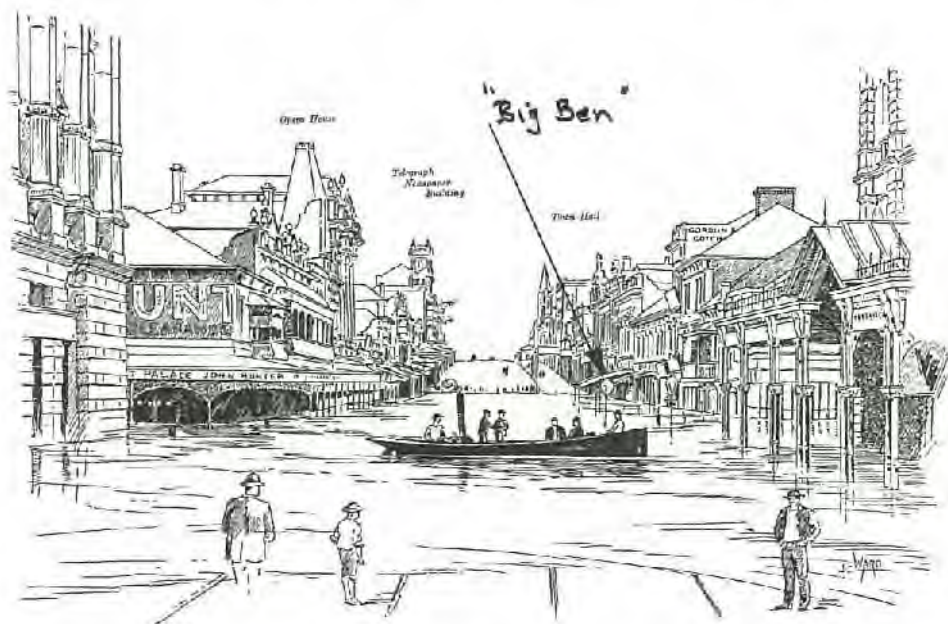
In Queen Street it was a major feature of the streetscape, with one face visible up to Victoria Bridge, while the other face could be seen from the GPO. In 1896 it was loaned to The Great International Exhibition, held to honour Queen Victoria's Jubilee.³ Later, it was returned to its earlier position, where it remained until long after the sale of the firm to the Heindorff Bros. About 1917 the City Council issued an edict that 'all impediments on city streets are to be removed.' The Nudgee Boys' College successfully tendered forty-one pounds for its purchase and removal and ever since it has graced its quadrangle. The movement originally was powered by a falling weight inside the column. Using a crank handle, this was wound back up, weekly. About 1980 that was replaced by radio con-



Big Ben at Nudgee College

trol from a master clock in the principal's office. The old mechanism is held by the College Archivist, Brother Wallis, to whom I am indebted for some of the above data. It runs with great accuracy despite its age. It is kept a quarter-hour early, in keeping with 'College time,' as are the clocks at Buckingham Palace.

A plaque on the base of the clock states that it was brought to Brisbane to be shown at the above mentioned Exhibition. However, photos held at the Oxley Library show it outside Flegeltaub's shop, with the column partly submerged, in the two extraordinary floods of 1893.⁴



STEAMER IN QUEEN STREET, FEBRUARY 19, 1895,

A SCENE OF THE SECOND FLOOD.

Another matter arising from Queen Victoria's Jubilee was that Lewis 'was to be a member of a delegation of Brisbane's Jewish Elders, chosen to wait upon the Governor in order to convey expressions of fealty and a tastefully illustrated address signed by each of them, on the occasion of Her Majesty's Sixtieth Jubilee. This took place at Government House, in conjunction with similar delegations from many other loyal groups, societies, lodges and congregations. The date was to be 24 May 1897, the sixtieth anniversary of Victoria's coronation. They were most cordially welcomed by the Governor, Charles Baillie (Lord Lamington, after whom the Lamington Plateau was named). Regrettably, by that time, Lewis Flegeltaub's health was rapidly failing, his attendance was not possible and he passed away only four days later,' aged forty-nine years.⁵

HIS RESIDENCES

The homes which Lewis and Esther Flegeltaub occupied reflected their wealth, social standing and good taste. No record has been found of those homes in which they lived in the earlier part of their stay in Brisbane. However, details are given below of the last three which they occupied. Of these, the first was *Palma Rosa* in 1889-90.



Palma Rosa, the Flegeltaub's family home, 1889–1890

It still stands.⁶ It was recorded as 'probably the most magnificent residence in Brisbane, designed in the Tuscan Doric order and built of Helidon sandstone, on three levels and with a five-level, 90 foot tower, with vast river views.' The publication *More Historic Homes of Brisbane* states 'it was one of the largest private residences ever built in Brisbane' and it tells of its elaborate design and rich features. The Italian architect, Andrea Stombuco, built it for his family home, but never lived in it. He was bankrupted a few years later due, it was recorded, to 'ill-advised business deals and lavish spending on an opulent lifestyle.'

Stombuco also designed the façade of the Brisbane Synagogue, and this first brought him into contact with Flegeltaub, but he experienced problems with the congregation.⁷ The Brisbane Hebrew Congregation was founded in 1865 and utilised rented premises for its first twenty-one years. Many attempts were made to procure a suitable piece of land and to construct a synagogue, but it was only in late 1885 that they felt they were ready to go ahead. A Building Committee was formed, charged with the task of bringing their dream to fulfilment. Lewis, not yet forty years of age, was its secretary. They proposed to proceed in three phases.

The first phase was to invite architects to submit sketches of their concept of the façade, following the well-known procedure of an 'Architect's Competition'.⁸ The winner was to receive a substantial cash prize. Conditions were that 'all entries were to remain the property of the congregation, which was to be free to do as it wished with them.' Stombuco's sketch, copies of which are still held by the congregation, won the prize, which was remitted to him. (The sketches of some of the other contestants are also still in the archives).

The second phase was fund raising. Realising that all their efforts would be futile if the cost of the precinct could not be met, a circular was sent out to all known Jewish folk in Brisbane, to many interstate people and advertisements were placed in the Jewish press in Australia and in England. With each circular a copy of Stombuco's sketch was appended, to show potential donors the form of the proposed building. (Note that the sketch was their property). The result of this appeal for funds was such that the Committee was encouraged to go ahead with the project. (In fact, when the synagogue was opened in July 1886, it was free of debt).

Once sufficient funds had been raised, the third phase was to invite architects to tender for:

- Designing the entire building, to incorporate the façade pictured in Stombuco's sketch. (Again I stress, it belonged to the congregation);
- Preparing working drawings and details of every part of the structure;
- Preparing specifications for the guidance of each trade, such as bricklayer, plasterer, gas fitter, carpenter, painter, glazier, plumber, etc.;
- Taking out quantities to assist in the procurement of materials;
- Submitting to the Committee an estimate of the cost of the project;
- Calling tenders for the construction;
- In conjunction with the Committee, considering tenders, deciding which one should be awarded the contract and placement thereof;
- Supervision of the contractor and subcontractors and inspecting their work and nominating when progress payments were to be made;
- Maintaining close contact with the Committee at all stages of the above; and
- Adjudicating on any claims which may be made during the twelve month's warranty period.

No sooner was this invitation to quote issued to the architects than Stombuco declared that the Committee was acting illegally. He claimed that the fact that his sketch had won him the Façade Concept prize, and that it had been used in the appeal for funds and that the Committee made public (in its invitation to architects to tender, item three above), that his sketch was to be the basis of the design of the façade, that he had every right to expect that the architectural contract would be his without tendering. The Committee met with its solicitors and all agreed that their obligations to Stombuco ended with the payment of the prize; that it was made very clear that 'all entries become the property of the congregation,' that it would not be legal for them to forgo the process of openly-invited public tenders, especially as they were to spend donated funds and that Stombuco was free to respond to their 'Invitation to Quote,' when his tender would receive equal attention to that afforded to his competitors. He angrily rejected these statements, saying he would not tender. He used some intemperate expressions and threatened legal action to recover 'large amounts of damages,' and that he would 'go to the press.' At a further meeting, to which he was invited but which he declined to attend, it was decided to reject his claims outright and proceed as planned. No further contact was made by either party.

The winning tender was from architect, Arthur Midson. In 1986, at the time of the centenary of the synagogue, the Brisbane City Council requested permission to place on the façade an historical plaque, which shows an early picture of the synagogue and a brief account of its design and origin. The wording, which I provided, mentions that 'the façade was designed by Andrea Stombuco, while Midson was the Supervising Architect.' It may be relevant to point out that the synagogue is included in four Heritage Listings, those of the Brisbane City Council, the Federal and State Heritage Departments and the National Trust. Currently, large sums are being expended, some donated by congregants and the balance from outside sources, on major renovations to bring it to its original form. After over one hundred and thirteen years, the synagogue remains in full use.

Returning to the story of the dwellings of the Flegeltaubs, their next move was to Newstead House. It still stands and is now a Queensland History Museum. It is beautifully situated on a high grassy knoll at the confluence of Breakfast Creek with the Brisbane River. The booklet *Newstead House — the History*, describes this home and grounds and states that, in early 1891, 'it had been leased to Lewis Flegeltaub and family. He was a jeweller and manager of Goldsmith's Hall at Queen Street and a prominent member of the Jewish Community.' It described the wedding there of their eldest



*The Flegeltaub family at Newstead House about 1893
From L to R: Lewis Flegeltaub with his daughters Annie, Lily and
Leah, son Alexander and wife Esther.*

daughter, Annie, to Victor Rosenthal⁹ on 15 February 1893, reporting that the proceedings were:

...on an unusually elaborate scale. J.M. Myers (the Rev. Jonas Myer Myers),¹⁰ leader of the Hebrew Synagogue, conducted the ceremony in the drawing room. A string band entertained before the wedding breakfast was served in the dining room. Clearly, Newstead House remains the social centre of Brisbane.

The Flegeltaubs moved to Wickham Terrace in 1894. That move was to the former *Mon Repos*, a large handsome residence overlooking the city. Long ago, it was greatly 'redeveloped' to provide a number of surgeries for doctors.

HIS COMMUNAL SERVICE

The Minutes of the congregation's Board of Management show that Lewis was a Board Member already in 1883; he was its educational superintendent in November 1885 and reported on the satisfactory operation of the *Talmud Torah*¹¹ for some years after. At the meeting of 4 July 1886, just prior to the consecration of the newly built synagogue, he donated a set of engraved *Klei Kodesh*¹² and a large pendulum clock and it was recorded that he had resilvered all the *Klei Kodesh*.



*Klei Kodesh donated by
Lewis Flegeltaub*

In 1890 he became the honorary treasurer and, in 1894/95, he was the president. He opposed the use of a harmonium in the *Kol Nidre*¹³ Services, despite the fact that Rev. Chodowski approved it, if it was played by a non-Jew, but his motion was defeated. (Subsequently that practice was terminated on the instructions of the Chief Rabbi in 1888). During his presidency, he founded and operated the congregation's Benevolent Fund and generously contributed to it.

While he was a Board Member, a scandal broke regarding a forged *Shechita*¹⁴ stamp. In 1896 a wholesale butchery, which had been entrusted with the supply of kosher¹⁵ meat to the congregation, was found to have ordered a copy of the stamp, used to identify those animal carcasses which had been ritually slaughtered by the *Shochet*.¹⁶ This was additionally serious as the Brisbane General Hospital had contracted for 7,000 pounds weight of kosher meat to be purveyed weekly by the congregation. The Hospital Board

believed that their normal supplies of *treif*¹⁷ meat had caused a serious outbreak of food poisoning among its patients. Flegeltaub was placed in charge of the investigation and, though he complained of 'little co-operation from the Police,' he quickly resolved the matter. The butchery was repentant and paid a substantial fine to the Board. It was obvious that the fraudulent stamp had not yet been used¹⁸ and they were allowed to continue to supply kosher meat only under very strict surveillance. Flegeltaub was 'delighted to report that he took the illicit stamp to his home, where he destroyed it by repeated blows with a hammer upon a convenient rock.' (It would have made an interesting exhibit in the Australian Jewish Museum). Lewis served as the congregation's '*Segan*' (second in charge) from 1896 until his death in 1897.

HIS PASSING

Lewis passed away on 28 May 1897, aged only forty-nine years. The cause of death is not recorded. The local press carried lavish tributes to his memory referring, *inter alia*, incorrectly to the fact that 'he had been the President of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation;¹⁹ correctly to his presidency of the Brisbane Congregation; that he had achieved very high rank in the craft of Freemasonry and had been involved in the launching of three new Lodges; that he was most generous towards every genuine cause which came to his attention; that few men in the commercial life of Brisbane held as admirable a reputation as he; that he had helped all who came to him, whatever may have been their need, never expecting or demanding any reward or acclaim; and that he reflected great credit upon his People.' Another paper recalled that 'when much of Brisbane was inundated by the great floods of 1893 (there were two within two weeks of one another) and boats were being used in Queen Street, he gave aid to many who were in distress, despite that the water covered the floor of his store. After it subsided, he helped many to restore their businesses.'

In regard to his family, the newspapers recorded that 'he left his widow, Esther, and their seven children' (though eight children had been born to this couple, one, Sarah, had died in her infancy, in 1872); that the eldest, Lionel, would now take over the management of Goldsmith's Hall assisted by his mother (who was no longer in robust health); that one daughter was married to Victor Rosenthal of Brisbane; that his niece, Juliette Wray, 'is highly successful in comic opera.'²⁰

After the funeral, the press heaped further generous praise upon Lewis. The point was made that 'the huge numbers of Jewish

people who attended, as well as the great contingent of Freemasons (whose colourful funereal rituals followed on after the traditional Hebrew Services), together with numbers of people of all beliefs representing the commercial and religious life of this State, all attested to the high regard in which the deceased was held.' It was reported that the funeral was conducted by the congregation's minister, the Rev. A.T. Chodowski²¹ and that the funeral procession 'moved off from the Flegeltaub family residence, *Mon Repos*, on Wickham Terrace.'

A permanent tribute was erected in the Brisbane Synagogue in the form of a handsome white marble plaque. The Hebrew words read '*Liskor Alom*' (In Everlasting Memory). The English inscription reads:

This tablet is erected by Affectionate Friends in Loving Memory of Lewis Flegeltaub Esq. Who was 'gathered to his People' on the 28th Day of May 1897 at the age of 49 years. He faithfully and earnestly served this congregation as its Treasurer on many occasions and as its President for one year and was intensely zealous for both its spiritual and financial success. He was of a most charitable and benevolent disposition and open-handed to all who called upon him in distress. His last act previous to his lamentable death was the embellishment of the Sanctuary²² and on a prior occasion, the presentation of a pair of silver-gilt bells²³ for the adornment of the Sepher'.²⁴ This is followed by 'Tishri 5660. September 1899'

It is followed by five Hebrew letters, which are an abbreviation of the widely-used inscription 'May he be bound up in the bond of Eternal Life'.²⁵

Subsequently, Lewis was memorialised by the erection of what is still the loftiest monument in the Toowong Cemetery. It is in the form of a high column, executed in red granite.²⁶ His widow, Esther, did not survive him for long, for she passed away on 5 December 1902, aged fifty-four, and was laid to rest alongside her husband.

At the Board Meeting of 13 June 1897, it was resolved to convey sympathy to his widow and children. A most eloquent and sincere letter was sent and a copy was appended to the Minutes. The same was done with regard to the passing of another congregational stalwart, Behr Raphael Lewin,²⁷ who had died on 3 April 1897, only seven weeks earlier. The congregation was deeply shocked at the loss of these two indefatigable workers. In his Annual Report of 1899, the president, A.M. Hertzberg, wrote that marble tablets to the memory of each man had, that year, been erected in the synagogue



Left: Plaque in Synagogue



Right: Monument at Toowong Cemetery

and that 'whilst they mark the Community's grateful recognition of work well done, I hope they will also be as beacon lights to the younger members, and induce them to emulate good examples, left behind by men who were worthy members of the congregation.'

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The archives of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation.

The Courier-Mail.

The John Oxley Library.

The Daily Mail.

The Brisbane Post Office Directory.

Toowong Jewish Cemetery records.

Travers Herman, a great grand-nephew of Lewis Flegeltaub.

Beverly Davis OAM, Archivist of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Victoria.

Queensland Mining Gazette.

Queensland Punch (a company advertisement in 1891).

The Queensland Place Names Board.

Figaro, a Queensland newspaper at the turn of the century.

Week, a social publication, dated 3 March 1893.

More Historical Homes of Brisbane.

John Davis, a descendant of one of the Heindorff Bros.

Newstead House — the History, published by Friends of Newstead.

Brother Wallis of Nudgee Boys' College.

NOTES

1. A 'live' language is one which is still evolving, such as English, as distinct from Classical Hebrew, Classical Greek and Latin, which are static and are referred to as 'dead' languages.
2. Bendigo and Ballarat are towns in central Victoria, which were at the centre of the gold rushes, triggered by major finds by John Hargreaves in 1851.
3. I call attention to note 24 appended to my manuscript 'Darling Downs Jewry and the Toowoomba Hebrew Congregation,' in this Society's Journal, Vol. XIII, Part 4, 1997. I pointed out that the term 'Jubilee,' of Hebrew origin, indicates a fiftieth anniversary, but English usage has widened its application to most significant anniversaries. Thus, the year 1897 was actually the **SIXTIETH** anniversary of Victoria's ascent to the throne, but it universally has been referred to as the year of her 'Jubilee.' When I was at primary and secondary schools in the 1920s and 1930s, 24 May was commemorated as 'Empire Day,' a public holiday with speeches, flag flying, bunting, medal wearing, parades and other celebrations.
4. Many photos are extant, of people in boats being ferried in Queen Street, at that time.
5. In my manuscripts on Cooktown and Toowoomba Jewries, I called attention to the short life spans of many folk a century ago. In the old Toowong Cemetery in Brisbane, are the monuments to numbers of our folk who passed away around the age of fifty. In the Mount Gravatt Cemetery, which was opened in 1968, many of the headstones record lives of over eighty, over ninety and even over one hundred years. Infant mortality has also dropped dramatically.
6. In World War II, it was used as an administrative centre for the US Forces. For a period it was neglected but, since it was acquired by the English Speaking Union, many repairs have been carried out. In 1998, \$800,000 of Commonwealth funds were allocated towards the estimated \$2 million needed for a complete restoration.
7. Ochert, Morris S. (1986). 'Further History of Brisbane Hebrew Congregation', *AJHS Journal* Vol. X, Part 1, p29.
8. Often, architects are initially invited to compete for a prize for the preferred general concept. Subsequently, when tenders are received for the detailed design and the supervision of construction, the con-

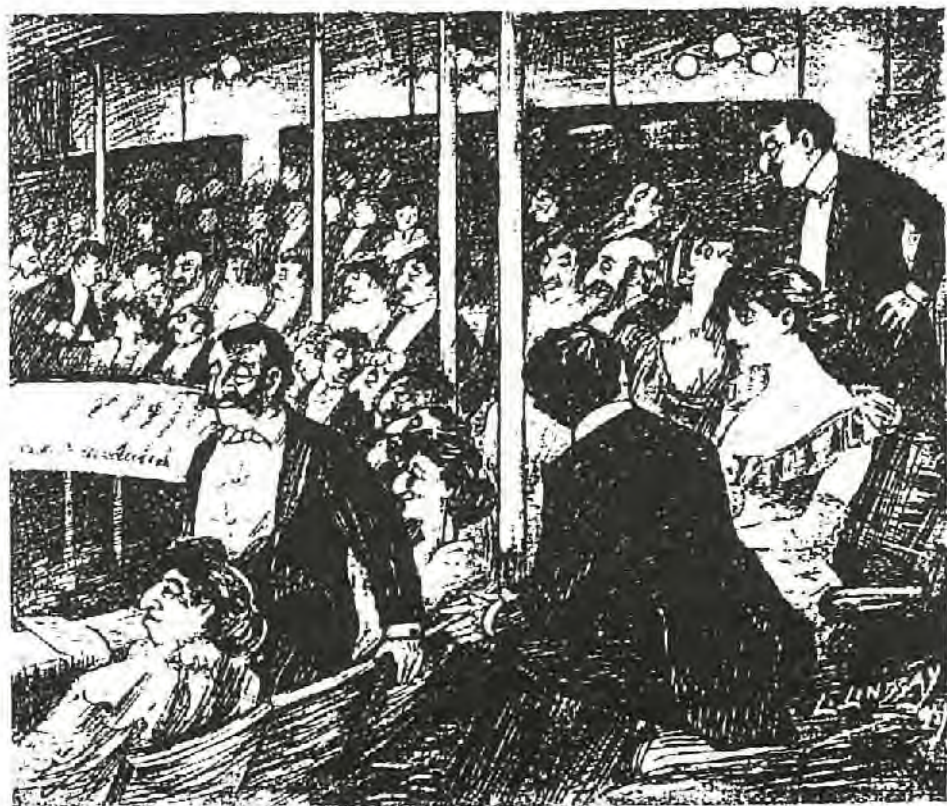
tract may be awarded to an architect other than the one who submitted the winning concept.

9. Exactly 107 years after that wedding, another Jewish wedding was held at Newstead House. That was between Michelle Taylor and Guy Kronenberg. The grave of Harold, infant son of Annie and Victor Rosenthal, adjoins that of Annie's parents, but no monument to Annie and Victor is in the Toowong Cemetery.
10. Ochert, Morris S. (1984). 'A History of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation', *AJHS Journal* Vol. IX, Part 6, pp457 onwards re Rev. Jonas Myer Myers.
11. *Talmud Torah* (Heb.). Hebrew and Religious Classes.
12. *Klei Kodesh* (Heb.). 'Holy items.' The silver embellishments with which a Torah scroll is dressed. These usually consist of a breast plate, a pair of bell-crowns and a 'yad,' i.e. a pointer with which the Reader follows the place, when reading from the scroll.
13. *Kol Nidre* (Heb.). 'All oaths...' The opening words of the solemn prayer at the commencement of the service on the Eve of the Day of Atonement Services. This prayer and, indeed, the entire service, is known as 'Kol Nidre.'
14. *Shechita* (Heb.). The term applied to the ritual slaughter of animals.
15. *Kosher* (Heb.). Food which has been prepared in accordance with the Jewish dietary laws and may therefore be eaten by Jewish people.
16. *Shochet* (Heb.). A person qualified to slaughter animals for food, in accordance with the stringent requirements of *Shechita*.
17. *Treif* (Heb.) (torn). The dietary laws forbid, *inter alia*, the eating of meat from an animal which has been 'torn,' e.g. by a wild animal or a fall or a weapon. The term has been expanded to refer to all foods which are not 'kosher,' i.e. not to be eaten by Jewish people.
18. The plot was poorly planned and both the new stamp and the invoice for its manufacture were delivered to Mr Flegeltaub's store, by the stamp maker around the corner. As recorded in the Minutes, 'the cat was then out of the bag.'
19. The archives of the Society in Victoria do not reveal that he was President of the Ballarat Congregation. The Archivist has, however, found a record in Goldman's *Jews of Victoria in the Nineteenth Century*, that he was a committee member of the Ballarat branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association. As he was only thirty-two when he left there, he would have been a very young president of a congregation.
20. Juliette Wray was the stage pseudonym of Julie Flegeltaub. Born in Ballarat in 1870, she was the fourth child of the ten born to Wolf Flegeltaub and his wife, Phoebe Florence (née Goldberg). Wolf was the third child of the eight born to Sorieba Zorach Flegeltaub and his wife, Hannah (née Youdelevna). Leif Lewis Flegeltaub, the subject of this essay, was the sixth child of Sorieba and Hannah. Therefore, Julie was the niece of Lewis. I quote from data supplied by her kinsman, Travers Herman (above mentioned), as follows... 'Julie had a superbly melodious voice and acting flair, which was sprung in a hotbed of musical cultivation at Ballarat, a place which was preoccupied with many

brass bands and choirs, eventually leading to the establishment of the annual Ballarat Festival as a national event. First appearing on stage aged 15 years, she became 'The Darling of Melbourne Jewry' and was acclaimed by critics. She was engaged by J.C. Williamson and became one of their principal singers, touring the Australia/New Zealand circuit.' In the possibility that Julie had a daughter, to whom the surname 'Wray' may have been passed, and that this daughter may have been Fay Wray, the famed actress of the silent screen, I phoned a number of folk with that surname, in Victoria. From one elderly lady I had the reply that her late husband used to say that 'Aunty Julie was a famous singer and Aunty Faigel (Fay, I presume) was a great actress and was known as 'Hollywood's Greatest Screamer'.' (In her part as the female lead in the original 'King Kong,' she had plenty of opportunities to display that talent!). Fay Wray, then 92 years old, was in Israel and Italy in 1999, when she received recognition for her pioneering work in the 'silent' era and in the early days of 'the talkies.'

Anti-Semites are always ready to come out of the woodwork! In my manuscript on 'Dr Fanny Reading Versus *Smith's Weekly*' (in this Society's *Journal* of June 1996), I wrote of the scurrilous libel which was created and bruited about by that ill-famed publication. *The Bulletin*, which commenced publication about forty years before *Smith's* came on the scene, also purveyed anti-Jewish material as seen in a cartoon from the *Bulletin* of 28 September 1885, the caption being 'TRIAL BY JEWRY at Melbourne Princess's dress-circle during the 'Wray' season.' It purports to depict Jewish people, with the features favoured by Julius Streicher, at a performance by Juliette Wray. In the Hilary Rubinstein's *Chosen*, Juliette is mentioned as 'a member of the well-known Flegeltaub family, whose communal importance extended from Perth to Brisbane.'

21. Ochert, Morris S. (1984) 'A History of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation', *AJHS Journal* Vol. IX, Part 7, p509 re Rev. A.T. Chodowski.
22. Sanctuary. The Ark or, in Hebrew, the *Oren Kodesh*, which, in a synagogue, is the repository in which the sacred scrolls of the Torah are kept.
23. Called '*rimmonim*' in Hebrew, that is 'pomegranates,' after the shape in which they are often made. Invariably, small silver bells hang from the *rimmonim*, giving a pleasing tinkle as the Torah is being carried.
24. What seems to have been overlooked is the fact that he also had given a '*yad*' — a pointer used when reading from a Torah scroll. It is inscribed 'Presented to the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation. New Year 5647 (1886) by Lewis Flegeltaub.' This was a few months after the synagogue had been consecrated.
25. These five letters are inscribed on every Jewish headstone.
26. Red granite is the dearest of the granites. A stonemason has estimated that it would cost over \$150,000 to make this monument today.
27. Ochert, Morris S. (1997) 'Darling Downs Jewry and the Toowoomba Hebrew Congregation', *AJHS Journal* Vol. XIII, Part 4, p583.



*"Trial by Jewry: at Melbourne Princess's dress-circle during the
'Wray' season"*

*Caption under this cartoon published in the Bulletin,
28 September 1885.*

GWEN GREEN (née LOEWENTHAL) 1900–1988 CONFRONTING THE GREAT DEPRESSION HEAD-ON

Louise Rosenberg

Gwen Green (née Loewenthal) was born into one of the oldest Jewish families in Australia. Both her parents, Abraham Marcus Loewenthal and Carlotta Miriam (née Cohen), were prominent members of the Jewish community over many decades. In his early years her father was a commercial traveller and her whole background was from pioneer stock.

Gwen Green's maternal ancestry is of particular interest. Her grandmother was Phoebe Isaacs, who married Elias Cohen. Phoebe's father, John Isaacs, came to Australia in the 1840s, and was one of the leading figures in the establishment of an organised Jewish community in Sydney. He was the first treasurer of the York Street Synagogue when it opened in 1844. When two of his daughters married at the synagogue on the same day he donated a silver *chuppah* in honour of the occasion. That *chuppah*, together with other such donations, form part of the treasures of the Great Synagogue. Gwen grew up hearing stories of her great-grandfather's contributions to the development of Australian Jewry in its early days. His daughter Phoebe was, like her father, a 'family legend', although she died in childbirth at the age of 29, leaving a widower and a large family.

One of these children, Carlotta Miriam, married Abraham Marcus Loewenthal. He also was prominent in Sydney during the early decades of this century. Born in Grafton in 1874, A.M. Loewenthal, as he was affectionately known, was a man of great philanthropy. His principal interest was in helping the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children. He was also a leading figure in the establishment and running of the Maccabean Hall, which today houses the Sydney Jewish Museum. His wife Carlotta (Lottie), was also actively involved in communal welfare. She was president of the Scarba Home Committee from 1922 until 1934, and was made an honorary life member. She was a representative on the Board of the New South Wales Benevolent Society. The A.M. Loewenthal family consisted of Gwen, Louis, Charles, Enid, Betty and John. It might be

of interest to note that John became a renowned surgeon, Professor Sir John Loewenthal, who served as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine; his brother, Louis, was a surgeon at the Royal North Shore Hospital.

Gwen, the eldest of A.M. Loewenthal's children, was born in Orange in 1900 during a fierce snow storm. She was very much her parents' daughter; in her teens she had wished to study medicine, but at the time it was not feasible. After the family moved to Sydney in 1915, Gwen immediately headed a committee of children from the Great Synagogue religion classes which organised a bazaar to help the Belgian Relief Fund. On this committee she worked to obtain goods from businessmen in the community — mostly her father's friends and associates. She took it upon herself to approach the Belgian Consul-General to obtain his co-operation. He was greatly impressed by this young girl, and donated a painting by a distinguished Belgian artist to be raffled. This project necessitated the permission of the Attorney-General. It was Gwen who wrote to him seeking that permission. The raffle raised £300. As a result of her efforts she received a letter of thanks from the Belgian King as well as one from the Consul-General.

Gwen Loewenthal married Judah Green, who was also imbued with a strong pioneering spirit. In 1925, after a few years in Sydney, they moved to Leeton in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area of New South Wales, where they opened a grocery shop. At that time, Leeton was flat, mosquito-infested, and hot and dusty in the summer. Its population was made up mostly of returned servicemen and their wives. It was not a prosperous town. The Greens were the only Jewish family in the district. Life was made bearable for the women by the establishment in 1926 of a Country Women's Association (CWA) Branch, which gave the women of the town a meeting place. Gwen Green became its honorary secretary and, in 1933, its president. Through the CWA, she worked hard to help the women on the land. Their goals included establishing better hospitals, maternity centres and baby clinics; holiday homes on the coast for women and children for a break during school vacations; emergency housekeeper services; and arranging rest and play areas for children at country shows. The CWA also aimed to teach the women handicrafts which would bring in extra income. It offered general education projects for women, lobbied for better roads in country areas, got electricity to all areas, and had special carriages set aside for women on the railways and on station platforms. When she was interviewed, years later in her 80s, Gwen said, 'Country women used to help their husbands, as did the children after school. Those women were my friends; their children and mine were at school together.'

One project to which Gwen gave all her thought and energy during the Depression years of the 1930s was to put the products of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, in Leeton, on to the market. She introduced this project when she saw that the previous year's fruits were still not sold 12 months later. She wrote letters to the local newspapers outlining a scheme whereby women could help the economy of the country. Here is an excerpt from a letter she wrote to the editor of the local newspaper:

My idea is to hold a monster rally of women of Leeton and District under the aegis of the Country Women's Association, with the object of petitioning all women's organisations throughout the Commonwealth to join in a campaign to increase and popularise the use of fruit, canned, dried and fresh. This is no job for one person, but there is a little to be done by a great many people before there will be a proven result.

The paper's editor agreed to help and give the campaign as much publicity as possible. The Country Women's Association placed the idea on the agenda at its Conference in Sydney in June 1934, and an appeal to the women of Australia to buy more canned and dried fruits, signed by 500 women from Leeton and surrounding districts alone, gained Australia-wide support. One newspaper reported: 'A little woman of courage, intense enthusiasm and ability has set on foot a movement that, beginning in New South Wales and extending to Victoria will be felt not only throughout Australia but overseas.' Speaking at the Conference, Gwen Green stressed:

Canned fruit buying is wise buying. The fruit is rich in vitamins. It holds all the precious qualities imparted by sunshine, because it is allowed to ripen on the tree. If our fellow women will pledge themselves to use at least two extra tins of fruit or two pounds of dried fruit each month, this will materially improve the situation.

One can feel the urgency of her words. The newspapers reported that her speech 'electrified the Conference and the hall rang with applause.' All the major newspapers in Sydney, Melbourne and in country towns gave the campaign publicity and, as Lysbeth Cohen wrote in her book *Beginning with Esther*, 'Gwen Green found herself a public figure overnight.' The *Murrumbidgee Irrigator* of 9 March 1934, and the *Leader* of 9 June of the same year gave the project maximum publicity. The *Sydney Morning Herald* in its 14

February 1935 issue published a half-page illustrated feature article, reporting that the campaign developed 'with such rapidity into the snowball of enthusiastic activity ... mitigating the immediate position of the Leeton fruit growing and canning industry of Australia on a firmer footing.' In April and May of 1934, the *Herald* featured a Women's Page with pictures and recipes using tinned fruits and dried fruits and, in its issue of 17 July, it reported:

She's five foot nothing in stature, but just burning up with enthusiasm in her self-appointed task, Mrs. Judah Green of Leeton is a shining example of what a lay person, unskilled in the ways of politicians and public platforms can do when she has a mission before her and a stout heart to bring to the job.

Gwen Green also compiled a recipe book introducing tinned fruits for winter desserts, and the Prime Minister of the day, Joseph A. Lyons, wrote the introduction. Two hundred and fifty thousand copies were distributed free. Samples of those puddings and pies were served at Country Women's Association meetings. Radio stations and the Retail Groceries Association helped to promote the scheme. One designated day, every grocer asked every customer to buy one extra tin of fruit. The ABC gave Gwen 15 minutes on air in each State to publicise the 'Eat More Fruit' campaign. She wrote 550 letters — plus sending out two series of 1,500 circulars. In response to all of this she received 800 replies.

The campaign was such a success that before the end of 1935 they were asked to desist — the canneries could not meet the demand! Fifteen thousand farmers, labourers and cannery workers and their families — estimated to be about 60,000 people — had been helped confront the challenge of unemployment and the effects of the Depression. One publication, in its 30 December issue, called Gwen Green 'The Fruit Canners' Joan of Arc .., who lifted local sales by 45 per cent in 18 months.'

The sales to England in 1936 were followed by an exhibit of Australian tinned fruit at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. Gwen Green told an interviewer from the *Sydney Mail* in November 1935, 'I have made contact with 300,000 women in my campaign and 6,000 more cans of fruit have been consumed, since the onset of the campaign.' In 1937, Gwen was awarded the King George 6th Coronation Medal.

As a direct result of Gwen's connection with the Country Women's Association, the organisation was able to expand its premises, enabling a new library, a clinic and rest room, with meeting and function rooms being made available free of charge to local



*Gwen Green with her children:
From left to right: Betty Susman, Robert E. Green, Gwen Green,
Judy Slutzkin and Rosalie Field*

groups. The Australian Canned Fruit Industry Sugar Commission Committee, in appreciation of what Gwen had achieved, presented her with a handsome canteen of cutlery with a brass plaque attached which read: 'To Mrs. Judah Green, from the FISCC in recognition of her Fine Services to the Australian Canned Fruits Industry, 1934-5.' It was presented to her in Canberra by Joseph Lyons.

Gwen and Judah Green and their four children, Judy, Rosalie, Betty and Robert, left Leeton and, after a few years in Sydney, moved to Goulburn. The Greens' home, *Corrinyar*, was six and a half kilometres from Goulburn, and was the scene of many groups of young folks' excursions from Sydney for dances and picnics and other regular social events. The Green family of Goulburn contributed greatly to the term 'As solid as a Goulburn Jew', probably coined by Charles MacAlister, the historian, who recorded his tribute to the Jews of Goulburn thus: 'Goulburn owed much in the formative years to the commercial genius of the Hebrew race.'

In Goulburn, Gwen immediately plunged into communal life. She joined the Soroptimist Club, the Red Cross and the Garden Club. She became president of the Goulburn Country Women's Association

and, before long, she had a weekly 15-minute broadcast over the local radio station women's session, speaking about fashion, cooking and other issues of concern for women during the 1950s. After the death of her husband, Judah, in 1960, at the age of 68, and with all her children married, Gwen moved to Sydney. Here, her strong pioneer background prevented her from 'sitting on her hands'. Always a keen gardener, she began to cultivate African violets, propagating them in pots, until she was able to give friends and organisations vast numbers. On one occasion, in 1984, she estimated those given to the Montefiore Home Fete realised upwards of \$300. Her pickles, chutneys and jams were always the most sought after at fetes. She was made a life member of the Country Women's Association, and she continued sewing and making jams well into her 80s. She helped the National Council of Jewish Women teams' Meals-On-Wheels, and the Woollahra Senior Citizens' Centre. Gwen's unit in Edgecliff Road, Woollahra, was in the same building as that of another well known identity of the Jewish community, Queenie Symonds, who was some eight to ten years her senior. On one occasion, when Gwen was awakened at 2 am by screams of distress, she found a fire, caused by a faulty electric blanket in Mrs Symonds' unit. She broke a window and helped her neighbour to safety, taking her into her own unit and comforting her until the fire brigade extinguished the blaze.

In 1980, at the age of 80, Gwen Green made a return visit to Leeton where a welcome reception awaited her at the Hydro Hotel — a Walter Burley-Griffin designed building. She was received with such warmth by her old friends that the occasion is still spoken of today, over 20 years later.

When Gwen died in December 1988 at the age of 87 and a half, she was the matriarch of eight grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. She lived her life to the full; her whole attitude could be summed up with the aphorism 'Do what you love, love what you do, and be honest about it.' She learned early the truth of knowing who you are and what you value.

RANDWICK-COOGEE JEWISH SOCIAL CLUB

Neville Cohen

INTRODUCING THE COHEN FAMILY

For over half a century 'Cohen's The Carpet King' (also known as Herman Cohen & Son) was a prominent feature of George Street North. Founded by my grandfather in 1913, this enterprise was eventually carried on by my father Bernard and myself until 1973, when the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority took over the whole of The Rocks. The Regent Hotel now occupies the site of the family business.

In 1908 Herman and Fanny Cohen arrived in Sydney from London, having spent a few years in South Africa on their way. They came with their four sons: John aged 16, Bernard (generally known as Ben) 14, Donald 13, and Raymond, just 6. Almost within days Herman set up as a dealer in household furniture and furnishings, and also as an auctioneer. Of the four children, John was an accomplished organist and pianist, and went into the retail music business, trading as 'Harmony House', almost next door to our furniture emporium in George Street North. My father Ben was also a musician, albeit part-time, and was equally at home when playing classical violin with the Sydney Philharmonic Orchestra or with his own Jazz Band. Donald was the artist of the family, studying with such prominent figures as J.S. Watkins, A. Dattilo-Rubbo and Joe Wolinski. His undoubted talent in oils, watercolours and black and white sketching was tragically cut short when he died in 1924, aged only 29. Raymond was the only one of the Cohen boys to achieve a tertiary education, graduating as a civil engineer, and spending most of his working life with the NSW Railways Department. He also gained qualifications as an accountant. These talents enabled him to make significant contributions to a number of Jewish organisations as honorary secretary and treasurer.

Although the Jewish population of the Randwick and Coogee districts cannot have been large in the 1920s, nevertheless they were fortunate in having a number of people of great vision and ability in their ranks, and both the Randwick-Coogee Jewish Social



Mr. RAYMOND COHEN, B.E., Hon. Joint Secretary R.C.J. Social Club.



MISS DEBBIE LASH,
Secretary R.C.J. Social Club.

*Raymond Cohen and Debbie Lash, Joint Hon. Secretaries of the
Randwick-Coogee Jewish Social Club*

Club and the Randwick-Coogee Jewish Education Board played a crucial and influential role in Jewish life of the time.

My father, Bernard Cohen, and his brother Raymond, were foundation members of both institutions, and although nothing of the history appears to have ever been written, fortunately quite a lot of material has survived, and provided the inspiration for me to produce this paper. It forms part of a wider 'family history' on which I am currently engaged in researching and writing, and for this reason it must be viewed as a personal memoir rather than as a piece of historical research. I make no apology, therefore, for any perceived bias or lack of objectivity, but all material quoted is original, and either in my files or with Raymond's daughter, Marcelle Marks, or the Australian Jewish Historical Society's own archives.

THE RANDWICK-COOGEE JEWISH SOCIAL CLUB

One of the activities of which my father was especially proud was the Randwick-Coogee Jewish Social Club which he helped to found in the early 1920s, and which played a very active role in Sydney's

Jewish community for a number of years. Ask anyone whose parents were youngsters in those days where their parents met and the answer will invariably be 'at one of the Randwick Club's functions'.

Dad's brother Raymond was also closely connected with the Club, being its first Joint Honorary Secretary, originally with Ettie Barnett, and later with Debbie Lash. He was generally more historically minded than my father; perhaps this explains his son Harvey's interest in tracing our roots. Despite this, for years I begged him to write some sort of history of the Club, and he always said he would get around to it, but of course he never did, and there is no-one of that generation alive now to provide first-hand memories of what was a most influential social force in the local Jewish community.

The Randwick-Coogee Jewish Social Club was founded in September 1922 and a year later produced its First Annual Report which I have reproduced in its entirety as it is of special interest:

RANDWICK-COOGEE JEWISH SOCIAL CLUB FIRST ANNUAL REPORT 1923-5684

The President and Committee of the Randwick-Coogee Jewish Social Club have pleasure in submitting this, the first annual report and balance sheet, covering its activities since its inception.

It is surely a matter for congratulation that the first year has been so successful, inasmuch as it is admitted that the launching of a new project is always one of anxiety and speculation. The results obtained have far exceeded expectations and should be regarded as a happy augury of the future success of this important Club.

FORMATION OF CLUB

The Club was inaugurated on the 26th September at a meeting convened by Mr. A. Sonenfeld, Hon. Secretary of the Randwick-Coogee Education Board. Bernard Cohen, acting as chairman, invited those present to form themselves into a working committee for the purpose of the formation of a Social Club for young Jewish people.

The Club's initial function took the form of a Simchas Torah Dance, held at Cannott's Hall. Coogee — 350 present. Alderman Goldstein, M.L.A. addressed the gathering, congratulating the founders in establishing such an important institution.

LITERARY AND DEBATING SECTION

This important section of the Club held many interesting debates and intellectual treats, embracing a varied range of subjects and resulting in many pleasant evenings. The section presented the Mock Breach of Promise Case which drew an attendance of over 40.

This original libretto, written and performed entirely by members of the section, proved such an overwhelming success that many requests for a repetition have been received.

GENERAL

The objects of the Club, which have been strictly adhered to, are

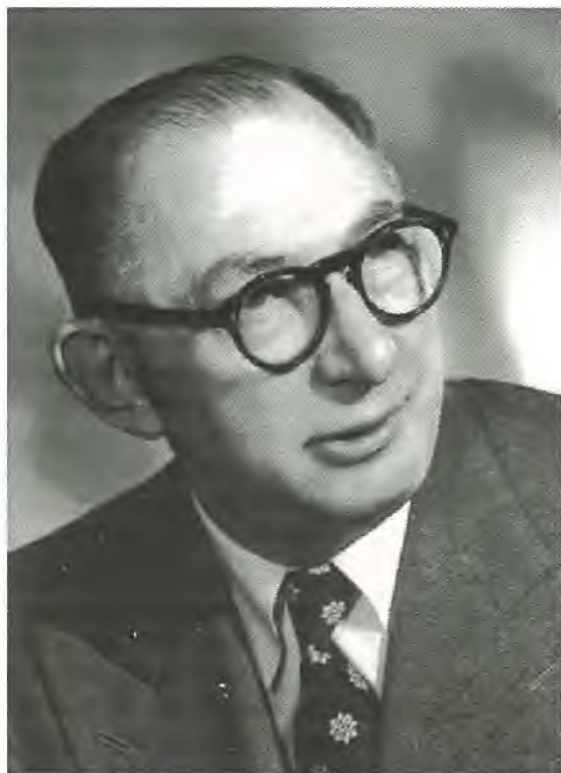
- (a) To promote amongst the Jewish people interest in the club, and to afford opportunity to discuss matters affecting the welfare of the community in general, and the members of the Club in particular, and where necessary, to provide means for action in connection therewith.
- (b) To encourage 'esprit de corps' amongst the members of the Club by initiating and controlling schemes for the social, intellectual, and general advancement of its members.
- (c) To assist, by cooperation or otherwise, kindred organisations in upholding and advancing the rights, privileges, and general welfare of our race.

Pursuing this policy, the Committee, when requested, has at all times acted in conjunction with the Randwick-Coogee Jewish Education Board, and they have jointly undertaken to raise the sum of £40 to provide two windows for the Jewish Communal Hall as a memorial to the Jewish soldiers of Randwick and Coogee who 'answered the call' and 'made the supreme sacrifice'.

Two delegates were appointed and have at various times conferred with the Board with a view to the purchase of a site and the erection of clubrooms thereon. Suitable land being unavailable at the present, arrangements are in hand for the leasing of club rooms until such time as the opportunity shall arise when a permanent building will be erected.

The Committee wishes to place on record its deep sense of gratitude to Mr. Ben Morris for his ever-generous hospitality in placing his residence at their disposal and for his unfailing assistance at all times.

*Bernard Cohen, first
president of the
Randwick Coogee Jewish
Social Club*



The Club is also deeply indebted to the Hon. Secretary, Miss E. Barnett for the excellent manner in which she has conducted her arduous duties as Hon Secretary, and to Mr. Raymond Cohen, Joint Hon. Secretary, and thanks are also due to the Jewish Press for the unstinted support accorded it during the year.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Committee hereby places on record its appreciation of the considerate and unswerving support accorded it by the members, and relying on the results of the past, it can be confidently stated that it will always strive for the attainment of the ideals of the Club, provided it is supported by members generally with an enthusiastic spirit of willing personal service.

BERNARD COHEN,
President
September 17 1923.

The Financial Statement shows a turnover of £109/17/11 for the year, and a balance in the Bank of £23/13/5, plus the large sum of 1/- 'cash in hand'.

No doubt the organisers felt very proud at having weathered the first year, and being able to actually show a profit, but the road had not been entirely without bumps. The weekly dances, which were to prove to be the Club's most popular activity, got off to a bad start. Unfortunately it poured with rain on 12 April 1923, and the first evening was not a great success. Undeterred, they tried again a month later, and this time their efforts were rewarded, and the pattern set for the next six years or more.

The Debating and Dramatics Section was set up, and this also proved popular. In particular, the Debating Team was both active and victorious on many occasions. Judging from the reports in *The Hebrew Standard* and the *Australian Jewish Chronicle*, debating served to expose the Club to a wider audience, and although its purpose was to serve the Randwick-Coogee Jewish community, its fame spread right across Sydney. The rallying point for the Debating Section seems to have been the Blue Bell Cafe in King Street, in the heart of the city. Reading about this reminded me of my own debating efforts nearly 30 years later when we used to haunt Repins, also in King Street.

The big event of the year was the Mock Breach of Promise, which really made the headlines as reported in this extract:

Roars of laughter punctuated the 'hearing' of the breach of promise trial organised by the very active Randwick & Coogee Jewish Social Club. The 'trial' took place on July 5th before 'His Honour' Mr. Sydney B. Glass, and the interest taken in the case was testified by the crowded condition of the Court. The cause concerned the suit of a heart-broken bridegroom to recover damages from a lady who 'refused to toe the mark', and he assessed the damage to his heart — and pocket at 700,000,000 marks, 'or its value in English money of four pounds, nineteen shillings and two pence'. A verdict was given for a whole five shillings.

Besides the judges, the various presentiments (sic) were:- Counsel for plaintiff, Mr. Raymond Rosenberg; counsel for defendant, Mr. Bernard Cohen; junior counsel, Misses Ettie Barnett and R. Chodowski, and Mr. Zukerman; sergeant at court, Mr. A. Cliffe; plaintiff (the would-be groom), Miss D. Lash; defendant (the wouldn't-be bride), Mr. Manny Cohan Green...Jurymen, Messrs. Herman Cohen, M. Rosenberg, M.A. Lieberman and D. Isaacs.



Group photo of Randwick-Coogee Jewish Social Club

All those who took part did what was necessary in an excellent spirit, and with considerable histrionic ability; and they displayed a laudable determination to refuse to take themselves seriously that added to the hilarity of the evening.

Judging by the enthusiastic reviews in the Jewish press every week, the dances and other social activities had started to make themselves felt, and were attracting a good attendance. As one paper tells us:

Later and later have the closing hours of these popular nights become till now 11:00 p.m. still sees many couples on the floor. To keep pace with these hours the Club has made arrangements with one of the bus proprietors to run a bus to the Railway via Darlinghurst from the Club room doors at 11:15.¹

By the end of the second year membership had risen to 278, permanent rooms had been hired at 100 Beach Street, Coogee (a photo of which adorns the 2nd Annual Report), and furnished with tables and chairs. The Report also notes 'Your Committee deemed it pru-

dent to purchase a high grade Pianoforte, imperative for the social environment of the members'. Musical Evenings were held every Sunday, with 'artists, (in many cases world renowned) contributing to the artistic success of the programme'.² It was a busy year — no less than 38 Sunday Socials, a repeat of the highly-successful 'Mock Breach of Promise', dances, picnics, and even after donating £40 towards the opening ceremony of The Maccabean Hall, they finished the year with over £53 in the bank.

Enthusiasm alone does not explain the instant success of this venture. Quite obviously the founders had struck just that 'extra' something as far as young people in the district were concerned. The *Australian Jewish Chronicle* explained the Club's success in the following article:

'Why is the R.C.J.S.C. so successful?' is a question very often asked. Perhaps I can explain. The Club is open every Sunday night for members, and more particularly visitors, who, in the long run, enrol as members.

Unlike the Maccabean Hall, a visitor is admitted without question, and is made extremely welcome.

A visitor can indulge in dancing if it pleases, or listen to the excellent musical items, which is at all times provided.

Every Sunday night the 'Palais de Danse' (as it is more popularly known), is open, and one can be assured of a good night's dancing and entertainment.

A visitor recently attending the Maccabean Hall³ remarked to me upon the different atmosphere of the Mac. Hall in comparison with the R.C.J.S.C.

Once inside the Mac. Hall, you do as you please, go as you like, and nobody interferes. If you don't possess push, you look at yourself all night. On the other hand, at Coogee, the whole retinue of officers are doing their utmost to introduce, and amuse you.

Look at the programme that the R.C.J.S.C. introduce, when we see such well known names as Miss Belle Luscombe, Mr. Abe Selig, Miss Grace Ellis, we do stare!

Then we get Rosenthal's jazz orchestra.⁴ What more could be required? Mr. Charles Aarons has arranged a programme for next week, so you can bet there's going to be some surprises.

Mr. Bernard Cohen, with his violin, is always popular. The President's solos should never be missed.

Visitors! Remember you are specially invited to attend next week.⁵

News of the Club spread, and the Jewish press was very supportive, as can be seen in another extract from the *Australian Jewish Chronicle*:

The benefit achieved by bringing the Jewish people and the young people together has been shown in many ways. One of them was the formation two years ago of the Randwick-Coogee Jewish Social Club...No Jewish Club in Sydney can claim to have been more successful in its objectives than this one. Twelve months ago it was found that the membership had grown so largely (sic) that the Club was able to rent its own club-room. A lease of Cannots Hall was secured and there, every Sunday evening, concerts and dances are held with attendances which are invariably crowded. To the social qualities and energy the President, Mr. Bernard Cohen, the success is due in large measure.⁶

The Third Annual report shows continued growth, the Club's membership having increased to 360. The lease at Beach Street expired and much better accommodation was acquired at 'Alison Hall', in Alison Road, Randwick. As the president reported, these premises contained 'a modern and well lighted Ball Room with perfect dance floor, Supper Room, Ladies and Gentlemen's Retiring Rooms and every convenience to an up-to-date Club'.⁷ Theatre Evenings were organised, as well as no less than 46 social evenings. Over 500 were present at a concert featuring the Lyceum Theatre Orchestra, by far the biggest event ever hosted by the Club. On two successive Sunday evenings members entertained Jewish Officers and Sailors from the visiting American Fleet.

In 1925 Ben took leave of absence while his dance band did a trip to Canada on the *SS Niagara*. A special 'Welcome Home' evening was held on his return. The reporter for the *Australian Jewish Chronicle* pulled out all the purple prose at his command in reporting on this event as follows:

Mr. Bernard Cohen, President of the Randwick-Jewish Social Club, who returned lately from a holiday trip to Vancouver, was welcomed at an 'At Home' held under the auspices of the RCJSC.

The function was held at the Maccabean Hall on Thursday evening, August 6th, and was attended by a large number of enthusiastic admirers of Mr. Cohen.

The reception of Mr. Cohen on his arrival at the hall was of a remarkable character. Shoulder-high he was carried around

the room to the singing by all present of 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow'.

The Vice-President of the Club (Mr. Herman Chodowski), who occupied the Chair at the supper table, proposed the toast 'The King', and read apologies for their unavoidable absence from Mr. A. M. Lowenthal, President of the Jewish War Memorial and from Ald. H. Goldstein.

Mr. M. A. Lieberman (Trustee of the Club), proposed the toast of 'Our Guest' in an exceedingly able and humorous speech, remarking that he had known Mr. Cohen for a number of years, and was a fellow colleague of his not only on the Jewish Education Board, but on various other Jewish institutions. 'Mr. Cohen', said Mr. Lieberman, 'was a man not only of words, but deeds'. Mr. Lieberman expressed the opinion that the progress made by the Club and the status it now held was mainly due to the untiring efforts, energy, enthusiasm, and able management by Mr. Cohen. The Club was fortunate indeed in possessing in their esteemed President a man of such pronounced organising ability. He (Mr. Lieberman) felt sure he was voicing the wishes of all present in hoping that his holiday trip had greatly benefited Mr. Bernard Cohen.

Owing to the ovation with which he was greeted when rising to respond, Mr. Bernard Cohen could not make himself heard for some considerable time. When at last he was able to proceed, Mr. Cohen expressed his great pleasure at being once more amongst so many friends and well-wishers. His particular thanks were due to the Vice-President, all the committee and members for their staunch and loyal support which they all had given to the Club during his absence. He sketched briefly his trip, told many well-chosen anecdotes, and made special reference to his fraternal reception by the Auckland Jewish Social Club. Though an admirer of the American girls, those of Sydney, and especially of Coogee, surpassed them all.

In conclusion, Mr. Cohen thanked all present for the magnificent reception extended to him that evening.⁸

Obviously things were going well. Attractive enamelled membership badges were produced, and a logo adopted, which featured on the cover of the Third Annual Report. After a record turnover in excess of £400, the year finished with a surplus of almost £180. This was the last year of Ben's presidency, and on his retirement in 1925 he was presented with a gold replica of the Club's logo and an enamel Past President's badge. He had already received an

engraved cedar-lined Sterling Silver Cigarette Box at the end of his second term as President. All these mementos are still in my possession.

The presidential baton was passed onto Herman Chodowski, previously the vice-president whose father, the Rev. Adolph T. Chodowski, had served a number of congregations in Australia before he took over the editorship of the *Australian Jewish Chronicle* from 1922 to 1925. Although the Fourth Annual Report (1926) appeared buoyant, there were some straws in the wind. Membership actually decreased by seven, but honorary membership had increased from 30 to 37. At the end of his first term the net cash on hand had decreased, certainly by only £20 or so, which may not seem very significant, but it is the first time that no increase of funds had taken place. In 1925 expenditure on rent was £51/10/-, but sub-letting actually brought in £15/10/-, whereas next year's rent was £63/10/- and with no sub-letting offset. Similarly, membership income in 1925 was £180/3/6 but this dropped to £100/13/- in 1926. Of course the new rooms at the 'Grotto Hall', next to the old 'Boomerang' Picture Show in Carr Street, opened on 27 July were no doubt seen as a good move, and the Annual Report confidently asserted that 'The Committee is to be congratulated on securing a Hall...with the gratification of the knowledge that it will prove a social and financial success'. They were to say 'Goodbye' to their old venue with a 'Mock Wedding' on 30 May 1926. Forty two social evenings were held, as well as numerous picnics and other outings, so the Committee had every reason to be optimistic about the Club's future.

During my search through the files of the Jewish newspapers of the time I came across an advertisement for a Miss Fearn. She was a florist, but you didn't want to know that, did you!

During the 1920s the established communal leadership was concerned not to attract too much attention to the Jewish community and they repudiated any activity which they felt might arouse the hostility of their Christian neighbours. This attitude was illustrated over the controversy about holding dances on a Sunday evening at the Maccabean Hall. In 1925, Sunday dances at the Hall were ended in response to protests from non-Jewish neighbours.⁹ Although this policy was criticised by some of the Jewish youth, Rabbi Cohen strongly defended its necessity¹⁰ and this policy was maintained throughout the 1920s. When a complaint was lodged by a Christian minister against the RCJSC holding dances on a Sunday, and the matter reported in the general press, Rabbi Cohen condemned the Club's actions. The Club's leaders were quick to respond as seen in the following letter:

Sir,

The Committee of the Randwick-Jewish Social Club has instructed me, as President, to state the Club's position in regard to the discussion upon Sunday dancing which has recently been conducted in a section of the Sydney secular press. The whole outcry was started on a misunderstanding of the facts, and practically everything that has since been said, including the remarks made by Rabbi Cohen, contains the inaccuracy which naturally follows the wrong foundation.

The Randwick-Coogee Jewish Social Club, being confined in its membership to Jews, has a right to observe Sunday as a secular day, but, in order not to offend the susceptibilities of Christian neighbours, refrains from starting its entertainments, about which the utmost decorum is always observed, until after the services at the Christian Churches are concluded. Seeing the noisiness with which some of the private parties given in many instances by Christian people are conducted on Sunday night, it seems absurd that the quiet function of a Jewish Club should be selected for criticism.

I myself interviewed the Rev. Grant upon the subject of the complaint he had made to the Randwick Council, and discovered that he had acted upon information that the Club admitted to its gatherings, non-Jews, and commenced its entertainments whilst the church services were still in progress. This, of course, is pure invention, and Mr. Grant admitted that if he had not accepted such statements as accurate, he would have taken no action. He agreed that a Jewish Club which merely carried on for the purpose of bringing Jewish people together in healthy recreation on Sunday night must be quite inoffensive — as inoffensive as the broadcasting concerts which hold their radio concerts after church hours, providing their programmes to the homes of even Christian church-goers. He accepted an invitation to attend one of the Club's gatherings to assure himself that they were conducted with all due regard to non-Jewish feelings. It is, of course, regrettable that he did not make enquiries before sending to the Randwick Council the letter which has occasioned all the rumpus, but he no doubt felt justified in regarding the information given to him as authentic.

Rabbi Cohen's remarks were based upon the belief that offence was being caused by Jewish people to Christian susceptibilities, but some of the language he used is as regrettable as his willingness to accept the statement that offence was being caused, without ascertaining whether the whole matter

was not — as it really was — a mere newspaper sensation. He, for instance, referred to the Club as 'an unrepresentative body', — a remark deeply resented by Jewish families who are concerned with it. The Club has not only received recognition from other Jewish organisations, but from the Rabbi himself. On one occasion his decision was asked as to whether a young man, whose father was married to a lady not a Jewess, but who desired himself to be admitted to the Faith, and was taking steps in that direction, might be admitted as a member of the Club. The Rabbi gave his approval subject to his quarterly report as to how the young man was making progress in his study of Judaism. This incident shows the principle the Club observes in carrying on its activities, and that the Rabbi made a mistake in taking the attitude he did upon the newspaper controversy, especially in describing as unrepresentative a body which has had his own recognition.

Yours faithfully,

H. Chodowski (President)

Club Rooms, Alison Road, Randwick 23/3/26.

If this long letter was not enough, immediately following it was this item:

At a meeting of Club members held at the conclusion of last Sunday night's gathering, a motion of confidence in the President was unanimously carried on the motion of Mr. Bernard Cohen. Strong resentment was expressed at the criticism to which the Club had been subjected.

However, the Maccabean Hall continued to maintain its opposition to Sunday dances as seen in the statement of its newsletter in 1929 that: 'No Jewish community enjoys a greater measure of goodwill or higher prestige than ours. Nor can there be any surer means of undermining it than a flagrant disregard for the true religious feelings of our neighbours.'¹¹

In 1928 Nat Lewis, another active member of both the Club and the local Jewish Education Board, was elected as president. The Club had evidently closed down over the Christmas period, because *The Hebrew Standard* of 12 January 1928 reported that 'Judging by the eager and happy faces, Club members had eagerly looked forward to the re-opening last Sunday night after a somewhat lengthy holiday'. The Club was still obviously in good shape at this time, for we read again in May that 'last Sunday night's attendance has been

estimated by shrewd judges to be our biggest and happiest since the inauguration of the Club nearly 6 years ago'.¹²

So what happened next is pretty much a mystery to me — no more printed Annual Reports have come to light, no more weekly notices in the *Australian Jewish Chronicle*, and I have to rely on very skimpy 'diary notes' kept by Raymond Cohen, who was still one of the Club's two secretaries. He recorded that during 1927 about 15 or so meetings were held, one labelled 'Queen Competition meeting at Sol Harris' home'. Unfortunately the Jewish National Fund has lost all its records concerning the early Queen Competitions — perhaps this was the very first one. A dance was held at Paddington Town Hall, and an Eastern Garden Fete extended over three days in March.

Raymond Cohen's entries for 1928 were sparse indeed. In fact according to his notes only two club meetings were held, but of course this does not mean there were not others as indicated by the newspaper articles quoted above. In 1929 there were references to three meetings, but his notes included a couple of other quite fascinating entries. For example, he tells us that on 16 January 1929 the maximum temperature reached was 106.2°F, (equivalent to 41.22°C), and a week later he went to the movies to see Al Jolson's 'The Jazz Singer'. You may be interested to learn that the 16 January heat-wave was exceeded on 22 February 1929 when Raymond tells us that it reached 106.7°F (equivalent to 41.5°C!) He also revealed that on 28 May 1929 his wife, Bessie, learned to play Solo! His notes for 1930 are more extensive, but they are all about meetings held in connection with the newly-established Eastern Suburbs Board of Jewish Education. In fact he records 27 meetings for the 'Tarbuth' School, and none whatsoever for the RCJSC.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to analyse the exact reasons for the sudden demise of the RCJSC after 1928. Perhaps it was due to the effects of the Great Depression of 1929; perhaps it was the rise of other social centres, such as the Maccabean Hall or the formation of the Young Men's Hebrew Association in 1929; and perhaps its active members had married and entered another phase in their lives and there was no effective younger leadership to take their place. However, it seems hard to believe that this once-thriving enterprise could just fade away without trace. Maybe one day other records will come to light, but until then, it seems that we must presume that the story of the RCJSC had come to an end by 1929.

NOTES

1. 'Coogwick' writing in the *Australian Jewish Chronicle*, 29 August 1924
2. Second Annual Report, Randwick-Coogee Jewish Social Club, 1924.
3. The Maccabean Hall was opened on 9 November 1923
4. Minnie Rosenthal continued to entertain at Jewish communal functions and she was still going strong during my teens more than 20 years later!
5. *Australian Jewish Chronicle*, 24 May 1924.
6. *Ibid.*, 7 August 1924.
7. President's report, Third Annual Report, 1925.
8. *Australian Jewish Chronicle*, 20 August 1925.
9. See Suzanne D. Rutland, 'The Jewish Community in New South Wales, MA (Hons) thesis, University of Sydney, 1978, p.66.
10. See, for example, the *Hebrew Standard of Australasia (HS)*, 8 May 1925
11. *Maccabean*, No 23, 24 May 1929.
12. *HS*, 25 May 1928.

FROM GERMANY & AUSTRIA TO AUSTRALIA: EXPERIENCES OF JEWISH WOMEN REFUGEES IN THE 1930s

Astrid Mignon Kirchhof

INTRODUCTION

This article resulted from a Master of Arts' thesis which I completed at the University of New South Wales in 1999 about German and Austrian Jewish women who immigrated to Australia in the 1930s and 40s. The final part of this thesis which discusses the women's experiences after their arrival in Australia, a country of which many of the immigrants only had a vague awareness before they came, is of interest.

Besides delving into the emotional aspect of adjusting to a new climate, language and culture in antipodean Australia, I was interested to investigate the work conditions of the women who immigrated. I wished to understand how their new work experiences affected them and whether they changed their self-image.

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

The main way to learn about the women's impressions and experiences of that time, was through oral history which was the main research technique adopted for this thesis. Altogether I interviewed 14 women. Where it was not possible to interview the actual immigrant women, I interviewed their daughters.

In getting into contact with the women I had many different experiences. In most cases I was accepted, but I did experience some rejections for a variety of reasons. Some women just did not want to or could not speak about this part of their past; others could not imagine that they had anything interesting to say and therefore refused to be interviewed.

It seems that women still underestimate the significance of their lives. One notable example of this attitude was that of a woman who agreed to give me an interview but called me a couple of days later to tell me that her husband had written a book about both their lives

and that she would be happy to give it to me as a present. When I explained that I was interested in her point of view, she referred me again to her husband's book, saying that it explained everything. Indeed, the book is interesting, but it does not reveal the female dimension of their past.

I also tried to prepare myself that I might not be accepted because I am a non-Jewish German. When I actually experienced rejection and I felt it was on the basis of my background, I learned that even when one is prepared to accept being rejected, it is difficult to deal with this experience.

All the women I finally interviewed were welcoming, warm hearted, interested and even helpful when it came to arranging further interviews. The youngest interviewee was 66 and the oldest was 93 years of age. Some I met in a café before the actual interview so that we could talk about the questions I would ask and explain more about my expectations and what I wanted to know about their lives. Others would tell me: 'You can come right away and I will answer you everything I remember.'

Most interviews took place in the interviewee's home, and a few in the Jewish Museum in Sydney. At the minimum I stayed with my interviewees for two hours, but with some I spent a whole day. A few I met again after the interview at a private meeting. The interview itself was held in either English or German according to the preference expressed by my interviewees. Nearly all of the first generation interviewees still spoke German fluently, and had even retained their German or Viennese accents.

When I started working on this project I learned that there were fewer Jewish refugee women from Germany still alive and living in Sydney than I had assumed. The time factor was the major problem. Many women in the Jewish community were no longer alive or they were too old to be interviewed. Since I had initially decided to restrict my study to women who had already married in their home country, the number of available women was reduced even more. Therefore, I decided to extend my interviewee circle to include Austrian Jewish refugee women and women who were children when they arrived in Sydney. In all I conducted 14 interviews, six of them with Austrian and eight with German women. Within the group of Austrian women, half belonged to the immigrant daughters' generation, that is women who were children when they arrived in Sydney. Of the group of German women, I interviewed three daughters talking about their mothers' lives, and five German women from the actual immigrant generation.

For the interviews I developed a questionnaire with two sections: the first dealt with their life in Germany and Austria before

their immigration to Australia; and second dealt with their experiences in Australia immediately after their arrival.

In the text of this article, when I have referred to information revealed in the interviews, I have mainly used the phrase 'The interviewees or their mothers (respectively) expressed that...'. It is always the actual immigrant generation I am interested in. Therefore here, 'the interviewee' refers to the woman who immigrated with her husband in the 1930s. The expression 'or their mother (respectively)' indicates that I interviewed the daughter about their mother's life. Consequently, it was not the daughter's experiences that were examined. Furthermore, for my research it was important to know how the mother felt and coped with her situation in comparison to her husband. Since I did not interview the husbands, the answers were influenced by the wives' or daughters' convictions.

EXPERIENCES OF THE INTERVIEWEES IN AUSTRALIA

a) The arrival

Apart from the fact that in general it was easier for younger people to immigrate and adjust, a majority of 64% of the interviewees stated that they did not feel fearful or timid. On the contrary they were happy to be in the new country and be rescued, and they looked positively towards the future or were 'prepared to make it'. Most women stated that they felt good on the ship and for many of them it was experienced as the only holiday they were going to have for a long time.

One woman described her and the other immigrants' feelings as follows:

We were all young. We had the cheapest wine and Arnott's biscuits and we had lots of fun [and] parties. We never took it serious. [...] The climate suited me, I loved the outdoor life, I was an outdoor person. I loved it, we went to the beach. [...] We were both (respondent and husband, A.K) very happy from the beginning.²¹

Even though many praised the beauty of the country, as many as 29% stated that they found the heat was nearly unbearable in the beginning. Some women also needed time to get over the 'primitive' housing conditions they found. One respondent talked about her impressions in the first month after arrival:

...we landed in Kings Cross and we found there a little flat, a unit. And we had enough money to pay a deposit. [...] We were

not used to the heat, and I didn't know how to treat a child in the heat. Instead of putting things on I was taking them off, you see. [...] She (daughter, A. K.) got a sunstroke. She cried and cried, we didn't know. [...] We went in this place, it was a terrible room in Kings Cross. [...] We were there for about a month. [...] We were in this place. It was awful because it had mice and bugs. I've never seen a bug in my life before. [...] We didn't know a soul, nobody who would come to help you or anything.³

While not all respondents particularly answered the question of whether they suffered from culture shock after coming from Europe, at least ten women recalled theirs or their mother's feelings. 29% replied that they found Australia culturally very backward compared to Europe and this had a deep impact on them. They missed the food they were used to, and even if they could buy groceries with the same name as in Europe, it was not of the same quality. One woman even held the opinion that still today the quality of Australian food is lower than in Europe. Moreover, a significant number of the women found that they missed the European forms of entertainment. There were no operas, concerts, theatre or ballet. The only diversion they could afford from time to time was going to the movies. However, 29% of the women interviewed were not distressed by this fact. One woman stated that the family had more important problems to think about than high culture. Another respondent announced an awareness that this was lacking, but in exchange, Australia offered many opportunities that they did not have in Europe. Another respondent remarked that she and her friends just laughed off the bad quality of the food.

b) Settling into Australian life

As Konrad Kwiet points out more than 60% of all Jews in Sydney settled in the Eastern Suburbs.³ Today the women interviewed live mostly in Bondi, Randwick, Bronte, Woollahra or in more expensive areas such as Dover Heights, Double Bay, Rose Bay and Bellevue Hill. Initially many first settled in Kings Cross or even moved to the inner west of Sydney, settling in suburbs such as Enfield or Earlwood. Later on many of them preferred to live in the quieter area of the North Shore on the other side of the Harbour. 21% of the interviewees settled there, most choosing the lower North Shore in suburbs such as Wollstonecraft and Lane Cove.

Until the respondent finally settled in the home in which she was living at the time of the interview, she often moved around within the Eastern Suburbs area. Marion Berghahn relates that a

restless moving had its roots in the deeper feeling of homelessness and the desire to find an agreeable environment. She stresses that the loss of one's home through persecution is one of the most crucial events in a person's life.⁴

Taking the difficulties and problems into consideration, the interviews disclosed that not only the women, but also their husbands, coped considerably well with the situation they were thrown into. Half of all women or their mothers respectively, did not feel desperate or have devastating problems with learning the language or adjusting to their exile from Europe. For some it was also easier because they immigrated with their family and thus, did not feel as homesick and lonely as other refugees.

Those who had problems with settling in mentioned that they were scared of the future, that they felt lonely, or could not handle the loss of status they had suffered. One woman was even convinced that 'er (Ehemann, A. K.) hat sich besser einleben koennen, wie ich [...] weil er intelligenter war.[...] Er hat mehr an sich selbst arbeiten koennen. Ich war mehr verwoehnt.⁵

43% of all husbands coped well enough, so that both spouses gave loving assistance and relief to each other in difficult circumstances. A few times it was stated that the husband soon found a job or that he engaged himself in an organisation or party which helped him to adjust. Sometimes he just had to be stronger than his wife, since she felt more distressed about the situation, or finally, it might just have been that because of his personality he could not let himself down. However, half of all men⁶ were unhelpful or were even a burden to their wives. One daughter remarked curtly: 'My father talked a lot, but my mother seemed to do all the work.'⁷ In one case the father died 'of a broken heart' still in Shanghai, before being able to immigrate to Australia. Another daughter recalled that the father was a pessimist and would put the problems of coping on his wife, because 'my father didn't make changes easily at any time.'⁸ Some German husbands, even after years, felt homesick for Germany and could not adapt to the Australian life properly.

c) Work experiences

It took a long time for the refugees to re-establish themselves in their old professions and often they had to be inventive in building up a new life. In particular, Jewish medical officers and lawyers had to overcome the suspicions of their non-Jewish colleagues. Most academics had to pass their exams again. Some tried to work as scholars or aimed at cultural careers, especially music. Those interviewees who tried to find a job in economics went into the toy or textile industry.

The Australian Jewish Welfare Society (AJWS) settled a number of refugees on small properties that included poultry farms, mixed farms and glass house tomato growing endeavours. The Chelsea Park Training farm, an agricultural enterprise founded in 1938, took immigrants who could not find work in the city. The end of the Second World War concluded the AJWS's involvement in rural issues because post war immigrants had little interest in working on farms.⁹

Most of the interviewees and their husbands managed to find work after arrival in Sydney. In time, only four men (31%), but ten women (71%) had to accept a complete change of their former occupation.¹⁰ 77% of all couples¹¹ worked in the trading business as shop or company owners. They opened grocery and textile retail stores or developed toy, cloth and leather goods companies. 23% of men were academics. Only one immigrant, who practised as a lawyer, could not go back to his occupation and instead built up a cleaning cloth factory together with his wife.

Two couples went to the country to be farmers and sheep shearers respectively, but after the war, opened their own shop. One interviewee remembered their first time on the farm during wartime:

Having the farm was a lot of advantages. [...] We had eggs, we had cheese, we had butter, we had [...] everything, you know, because we had the machines. [...] He (husband, A. K.) made the milk, you know, skim milk [...] and the other things we used up for butter. [...] I helped with the washing of the eggs you know, with the machine. The machine was in the back veranda and I did that and then I helped making the cheese and I tried to cook then you know, I had a "Primus", you know, to cook in the cake. My husband liked apple tarts. [...] We brought "Kuechenwunder" from Germany.¹²

The circumstances of the women who immigrated to Australia varied but there were still a number of surprising constants. One daughter recalled how the mother secured the living after the whole family fled to a camp in Shanghai in 1939. By this time the father was already sick and finally, in 1943, died 'of a broken heart'. Also he was most unhappy that he was not the breadwinner any longer. The daughter reports that the father used to be a travel agent and was unable to work in professions where he was qualified, for example as a tailor or shoemaker. Therefore, he stayed at home while their mother had two jobs. From nine in the morning until two in the afternoon she had a secretarial job at a German newspaper, then she came home and prepared lunch for the children. Her next shift

went from four in the afternoon until eleven at night where she worked as a cook in a restaurant. The respondent explains that her mother's motto was: 'I have to survive for my children'. The daughter married and they finally left Shanghai. In Australia the mother did not work anymore, but was mostly responsible for her grand children and the daughter's household.¹³

Even more women found that their husbands had problems working in any profession other than their trained occupation. One explained: 'he tried but he was such a 100% doctor.' Therefore, it was she who earned the money for the first three years in Sydney, until he passed his exams to requalify as a medical doctor. In order not to have to pay rent, the interviewee had a position as property manager and looked after the unit block in which they were living. Moreover, she had a job as finisher in a clothing company where she had to sew buttons on dresses. She also worked as a hawker and sold ties but admitted in the interview that she found this job troublesome and gave it up after a while. She also rented out one room of the two room flat and had a paid 'Mittagstisch' where she cooked every evening for eight to ten people after their work. Besides being the breadwinner, the respondent was also responsible for the household. She could not speak English, but practised in the evening with a neighbouring woman and otherwise tried to survive in everyday life, while her husband learned both English in a class and at home. Until he was able to practise his profession again he basically repaired things in the house and loved to play chess. After he requalified his wife became a nurse in his practice.¹⁴

As pointed out before, most interviewees worked with their husbands, mostly in the shop they opened together. One woman explained that she used to work in a jointly owned furniture shop with her husband and also was responsible for the household and the children. In the mornings she gave their baby son to the neighbours and afterwards took their daughter to school for which she had to travel on two trams. After that she helped in the shop. In the afternoon their daughter went straight from school to the store and the mother took her home and prepared the family's dinner. Sometimes, when the neighbours called her at the shop because her son had been woken up, she would go home in between to look after him. Even in the afternoons, after cooking the dinner for the evening, she came back and helped in the shop again. They had a tiny flat with a bedroom for herself and her husband, a glass sun-room for the children and a lounge room where all their refugee friends usually met on the weekends and she prepared an enormous dinner for all of them. During the time until 1949, they lived in several flats and finally bought the house in which the interview took

place. It was only in the 1950s that she was in a position to buy a washing machine, and she was the first one among all her friends to do so. She recalls doing the laundry still living in the unit block:

*'Die Waschkueche war unten. Wissen Sie was ich gemacht habe? Wir lachen noch heute darueber: [...] man hat die Waesche gekocht immer in einem copper. Wissen Sie was ein "copper" war? Ein Kessel. [...] Und dann hat man sie (die Waesche, A. K.) mit dem Stock in den sink hinein geworfen. [...] Ich habe von dem copper [...] das kochende Wasser in [...] den Kuebel [geschuettet], den ich dann drei Stock hinauf getragen hab' und hab' das Klosett damit gewaschen. [...] Das kochende seifige Wasser! Heut' spritzt man [den Toilettenreiniger] hinein in das Klosett. [...] Vielleicht hat es das damals schon gegeben, das man [das] hinein spritzt in das Klosett... [...] I wouldn't know [...] I didn't do it.'*¹⁵

Some of the interviewees even tried working in different types of shops or closed one shop in order to open something bigger. One daughter reported that her parents first had a cake shop and then a grocery shop. Finally they opened a ham and beef store. In the last business they lived above the shop. The shop, which was open from six in the morning, was the nucleus of the family happenings. The laundry was next to the shop in the back. Her mother used to work in the store and even if there were customers, she would excuse herself, run outside to the laundry and turn the washing kettle. The daughter related how her mother did absolutely everything. At eight in the morning she came down when the children (there were six) had had breakfast, or sometimes she brought one of the children down when he or she was ill. The father was often ill and could not work as much as her mother could. Finally he developed Parkinson's Disease and only then did he realise how hard the mother was working with the household chores and started lending her a hand from time to time with daily obligations. Nevertheless, the mother loved working and to see success in her work. Moreover, she did not mind working for her husband. The daughter described the relationship as a 'love story' between the demanding father and the devoted mother.¹⁶

Only one interviewee, among those who arrived in Sydney with their husbands, did not work with him because he was an architect.¹⁷ All the other respondents worked in their own businesses. After a few years some worked part time when the shop or company flourished, and they preferred housework to being in the family trade. Staying at home or working part time was the case for 43% of the respondents.

d) Social and political involvement

Getting involved in the Jewish community or in an organisation could help tremendously in the newcomers' adjustment. In general, immigration produced a higher activity rate than experienced in the home country. The interviewees frequently stated that the exile created a higher awareness about being a Jew. As a result of this, they felt an urge for the Jewish community to survive and even extend and grow stronger. In addition, their desire to support religious or charitable institutions and to pass on their faith to the next generation became more obvious.

Over half (64%) of all respondents or their mothers respectively and half of the men (50%) became involved in different kinds of organisations. Either they were active together with their husbands, mainly in the synagogue or in developing the new organisation, *B'nai B'rith*, or they were involved in particular women's or other associations. A few of the women supported an organisation through financial aid, and some couples only attended meetings without engaging any further.

The major Australian Jewish women's organisations were and still are the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), founded in the 1920s, and the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO), founded in the 1930s. Because of effective male resistance, Jewish women in Australia did not play a noticeable role in the organisational and political scenery of community life. Before the 1920s, the only organisations working exclusively for and with women were the Jewish Girls Guild and the Jewish Ladies Maternity Society. Therefore, it was necessary to find another forum where women could become active. As Suzanne Rutland illustrates:

Women were in the forefront of welcoming Jewish migrants, especially from the European continent, at a time when their men-folk were often unwelcoming of such migration and fearful of its impact on their status in Australia.¹⁸

Other associations were mainly interested in the building up of new congregations with which the immigrants were closely associated, such as the Temple Emanuel Guild, which was founded in 1939. Besides contributing financial aid towards a number of Jewish and other benevolent and wartime funds, they also sewed for fairs, had festivities for children in the religious school or gathered for card afternoons. Moreover, they co-operated with NCJW and received lectures on Zionism from WIZO.¹⁹ As shown, those associations basically worked within religious and philanthropic fields. If women were interested in joining a non-charitable women's league,

they had to search somewhere else or even establish a new group if they felt the need for it. One woman described the situation for women when she arrived:

They had no provisions here for childcare, you know, for young children, at all. [...] There were like charitable organisations. [...] I got a group of women around myself here and we started to work very hard [...] to set (a group, A.K.) up [...] here in this area. And the council, the municipal council, they helped us...²⁰

Two women were involved in non-Jewish (women's) organisations. One was active in the mentioned women's group, the Friendship Society, that worked for the mutual communication between Russia and Australia, and she was also active in a peace organisation. The second woman was a member of an international women's association that fought for the right of abortion. Interestingly, both women were the least bonded to the Jewish community of all respondents or their mothers. Two women were engaged in WIZO, and one of them holds a leading position. Two more women pursued different organisations both separately *and* together with their husbands. While one woman had joined a fund raising society, the Jewish National Fund for Israel (JNF), the other woman delivered food for old people since the early 1950s for the organisation Meals on Wheels.

More than half of all active women, or 55%, were solely or in addition to their own activities a member of an association that they joined with their husband, or because of him. Two women were connected to their temple, though only through the activities of their husbands.

Yet, the women were mainly involved in developing the newly established *B'nai B'rith*, an important European Jewish service group,²¹ which was dedicated to the principles of 'benevolence, brotherly love and harmony' and was transplanted to Australian shores by the German and Austrian refugees. The father-in-law of one of the interviewees from Vienna was central in the establishment of *B'nai B'rith* in Sydney. A number of the Jewish refugee women I interviewed took over social obligations in *B'nai B'rith* and one was a secretary. The first women's *B'nai B'rith* chapter in Sydney was established in 1945.²²

In a little more than a decade from its inception in Sydney in 1944 *B'nai B'rith* had spread to all major Jewish communities in Australia. It became involved in aspects of public relations, the Hillel foundation and assisting the underprivileged, especially with

the *B'nai B'rith* Mothers' Help Scheme which was established in Melbourne in 1951 and in Sydney in 1956. Rapid expansion took place in the mid 1950s and in 1956 the first interstate *B'nai B'rith* Conference was held in Melbourne with representatives from the three Australian Lodges. Following the creation of five new lodges in 1957 the Australasian *B'nai B'rith* Council was formed as the roof organisation of *B'nai B'rith* in Australia. This Council held its first general meeting in Sydney in March 1958, by which time there were eight lodges, with a total of 700 members, Women's and Young Men's chapters and youth groups — the Australian AZA (*Aleph Zadick Aleph*), which had been formed in 1953. There is no doubt that *B'nai B'rith* played a central role not only in strengthening Jewish life in Australia but in assisting the German and Austrian Jewish refugees to integrate into Australian Jewish society. The interviews I conducted with German and Austrian Jewish refugee women and their daughters has verified the importance of *B'nai B'rith* in this integration.

e) The women and their marriages and friendships

As mentioned before, immigrants more frequently joined organisations in exile than in their home countries. Marion Berghahn also points out that refugees tended to associate with other refugees because they tried to create a substitute 'for the lost home, thus providing them with a degree of emotional security.'²³

All of the interviewed women or their mothers respectively found friends in time, but nearly all of them stayed within the Jewish refugee community. 71% stated that they were involved in the Jewish community, if not through organisational work, then because all their friends were Jewish. However, only two women had separate friends from their spouses.²⁴ All other women shared friends entirely with their husbands. One respondent reported:

[We] never did anything separate. No never. Only I did, during the day, with Freundinnen. *Aber weekends immer nur zusammen mit den Freundinnen ihren Maennern. Damals waren ja noch alles lauter Ehepaare mit lauter kleinen Kindern...*²⁵

Out of ten women, who replied to the question of whether role models within Jewish families have changed, nine answered positively. However, this obviously did not affect the women's self image. Only 21% agreed to the statement that her or the mother's self-confidence has changed.²⁶ One daughter reported that the mother loved the father, put him before herself, and would do anything for him until his last breath. Another interviewee explained that she has not

changed, but accepted the distribution of duties. Similar to this, a respondent from the daughter generation held the opinion that even though her mother had always worked in Australia and might have experienced a rise in self-esteem, she still would never have questioned the gender roles in her marriage. One daughter recalled that the mother became forceful in exile, but this did not extend to the parents' relationship. One of the oldest respondents had the interesting observation that she did not change because of her work or the many other responsibilities she had. She started to question her husband's position rather because of a general transformation in society. She reported a dialogue about this with her daughter:

"Susie, auf einmal gehoere ich jetzt auch zu den Frauenrechtlern." "Was machst Du Mama?" Sag' ich, "ich mach' nicht mehr die Garagentuer auf." Sagt sie: "Mama, dass ist ein grosser Fortschritt." Weil ich immer alles gemacht hab'. Mein Mann und ich zu Hause: "es ist kein Salz am Tisch", hat er eventuell gesagt. Die letzten Jahre habe ich gesagt: "es ist kein Salz am Tisch? In der Kueche", hab' ich drauf gesagt. [...] Die Zeit hat mir auch geholfen in der Beziehung. [...] Warum soll die Frau die Sachen machen und dann wird noch auf sie herunter geschaut, dass man nur a Hausfrau ist. [...] Es hat mir viel nicht gepasst, aber immer sagt man nicht alles. [...] Ich hab' ihn ja sicher sehr noch immer behandelt nach der alten Art. [...] So mit der Garagentuer, das war mein Anfang."²⁷

Nearly all interviewees outlined that they or their mothers did not feel suppressed or that they did not have to stand back in any way. The mothers described their marriages as happy. Nevertheless there were incidences that were raised in the course of the interviews such as reports about the fathers interfering into the wife's or daughter's life. There were narratives about the daughter who was not allowed to get the education she was aiming at and a statement about the father who subdued the mother's artistic inclination to paint. Also, reports were given about the father who could not handle the loss of authority resulting from not being the breadwinner any longer, or the husband who interfered when the wife went out without him. Yet, rarely the interviewees were as outspoken as the following woman:

When he decided to propose and I accepted I was told that I was making the biggest mistake of my life, which I did. But of course, having a missionary sense, I didn't think anyone could

stay with me for any amount of time and not change, you see, which is all wrong. Because you can't change people. [...] He was not a man to marry. [...] He would have been much better off with a housekeeper and a dog.²⁸

CONCLUSIONS

It appears from the interviews that both the husbands and wives coped considerably well, however the women's lives changed more than the men's as a result of the immigration. The situation in exile drew women back in terms of gender relations because to survive, the families had to stick together and function as a unit. The women had to care for the children and household, which previously was the responsibility of the servants or maids. Furthermore the women worked in Australia with their husbands in the same business whereas previously they had had different occupations, so as a result they became less independent than before the immigration.

As much as oral history is a very vivid source that removes the history from the realm of the abstract, one also has to be aware of the sometimes uncertain results of this technique. In my case, the time in question was exactly 60 years ago, which brought back a period in the interviewees' lives that they might not or would not want to remember in all its detail. The time that has elapsed lies like a filter over the past and might have changed the notion of what had actually happened. A problem with the interviews was that in some cases I did not interview the actual immigrant, but the immigrant's daughter who gave me their view of their parents' lives. The fact that this was a daughter talking about her mother's life was a complicating factor when analysing the interviews.

Looking back at the actual interviews I realise that I learned a considerable amount, and not just about Jewish refugee women or how to conduct interviews. I also felt a growing fascination in the project and a sense that my mind was opening to a wider experience. Overall using oral history was an interesting and effective approach to analysing history.

NOTES

1. Interview with H. C. on 12 August 1998.
2. Interview with B. B. on 26 July 1998.
3. Konrad Kwiet, 'Die Integration deutsch-juedischer Emigranten in Australien', in *Hamburger Beitræge fuer Sozial- und Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 22, (1986), p 316.

4. Marion Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England*, New York 1984, p. 128.
5. Interview with L. G. on 30 July 1998: 'he could adjust better than I [...] because he was more intelligent. [...] He could work on himself. I was more spoilt.'
6. Thirteen women, including the wife of an immigrant who died in Shanghai, made a definite statement about their husband or father's adjustment.
7. Interview with H. Z. on 1 July 1998.
8. Interview with B. S. on 27 July 1998.
9. See Anne Andgel, *Fifty Years of Caring. The History of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society 1936-1986*, Sydney, 1988, pp. 50-68.
10. The number referring to the women includes also former housewives, who then had to work.
11. Since one husband died in Shanghai the number of men was reduced to thirteen. The fact that they were able to work in the same professions again is a general statement. In Germany the husband might have had his own company, in Sydney he and his wife were shop owners. Thus, he remained in the trading business. Yet, still seven husbands managed to go back to exactly the same occupation they had before the immigration.
12. Interview with E. B. on 17 July 1998.
13. Interview with G. J. on 7 July 1998.
14. Interview with E. Z. on 15 July 1998.
15. Interview with I. S. on 31 July 1998: 'The wash-house was downstairs. Do you know what I did? We're still laughing about it: [...] people used to boil the laundry in a copper. Do you know what a 'copper' was? A cauldron. [...] And then you threw it (the laundry, A. K) into the sink with a stick. [...] Out of the copper [...] I [poured] the water into the bucket, which I then carried up to the third floor and cleaned the loo. [...] The boiling soapy water! Today you squirt [the toilet detergent] into the loo. [...] Maybe they even had it then, that you squirt [it] into the loo... [...] I wouldn't know [...], I didn't do it.'
16. Interview with C. Z. on 3 July 1998. More biographies in Australia can be found for Germany with five memoirs of female refugees in John Foster (ed.), *Community of Fate*, Sydney, 1986, and Karl Bittman (ed.), *Strauss to Matilda. Viennese in Australia 1938-1988*, Maryborough, 1988, with at least twelve biographical notes about Austrian women.
17. As described above there was another interviewee who could not work with her husband, since he died even before coming to Sydney.
18. Suzanne D. Rutland, 'The Changing Role of Women in Australian Jewry's Communal Structure', in W. D. Rubinstein, *Jews in the Sixth Continent*, Sydney, 1987, p. 116.
19. See Temple Emanuel Women's Guild. *Annual Report*, 1940, 1941, AJHS, file S 14.
20. Interview with B. B. on 2 August 1998.

21. *B'nai B'rith* was founded in New York in 1843 with its first overseas lodge instituted in Berlin in 1882.
22. Claudia Prestel, 'Weibliche Rollenzuweisung in Juedischen Organisationen. Das Beispiel des Bnei Briss', in *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Institutes*, 1990, (85), pp. 51-80. In Germany the lodge was disbanded on 10 April 1937. See Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Die Juden in Deutschland 1933-1945. Leben unter nationalsozialistischer Herrschaft*, Muenchen, 1989, appendix, p. 744.
23. Marion Berghahn, *op. cit.*, p. 134.
24. These were the same two women who were not actually involved in Jewish, but in different political affairs.
25. Interview with I. S. on 31 July 1998: '...during the day with lady friends. But on the weekends only always together with the husbands of the friends. At that time there were married couples all with small children...' (Translation by author.).
26. Here, the daughters' generation especially had a firm opinion. Nearly all of them saw their mothers as being less liberated as a person and in their marriages after immigration.
27. Interview with I.S. on 31 July 1998: ' "Susie, suddenly I became a feminist." " What do you do, Mum?" " I said: " I don't open the garage door any longer." She says: "Mum, this is great progress." Because I always did everything. My husband and I at home: "there is no salt at the table", he might have said. In the last years I said: "there is no salt at the table? In the kitchen", I responded to this. [...] Time helped me in this respect. [...] Why should the woman do all these things? In the end she is discriminated against for being only a housewife. [...] Many things I didn't like, but you don't talk about everything. [...] Certainly, I still treated him in the old way. [...] The garage door, that was my start.'
28. Interview with R. C. on 28 July 1998.

**EXILE TO SHANGHAI AND FINDING A
HOME IN AUSTRALIA — 1939–1947**
**A firsthand account of my experience as a
Central European refugee in Shanghai**

Peter Witting

BACKGROUND

I was born in Gleiwitz, Upper Silesia, Germany, in 1928. My sister Marion was born a year later also in Gleiwitz. Both my parents originated from the German province of Posen (Poznan) which, following Germany's defeat in World War I, was ceded to Poland in 1922 under the Versailles Treaty. People living in that province were given the choice of remaining German citizens and moving to Germany proper, or becoming Poles and remaining. My parents' families decided on the former option, moving to Berlin. Because of endemic antisemitism in Poland, this was the course of action adopted by most, if not all, Jews living in the German areas which were ceded to Poland. Furthermore, my father's parents and family changed their name from Witkowski to the more German sounding Witting by deed-poll in 1923. Some family members in the USA changed their names to Witt.

In 1925 my father was appointed as an executive in the forwarding department of a large coal mine and hence my parents moved to Gleiwitz where I attended primary school and then the Hermann Goering Realgymnasium. I was the only Jew at the latter and was subjected to abuse, beatings and negative school reports. This antisemitism culminated in an incident when I was nearly drowned in the school swimming pool. Whilst we were learning to swim suspended from a rope fastened around my middle, the teacher just let me go in the middle of the pool and I nearly drowned. One of my school colleagues eventually pulled me out. This incident, together with the increasing antisemitism in that small city and the fact that my father was sacked due to the 'aryanisation' of their firm, induced my parents to move back to Berlin in early 1938.

In Berlin my sister and I went to a Jewish school whilst my parents went to a trade school for *Umschulung* (retraining). My father did a course in drycleaning and cooking whilst my mother did a hatmaking course. This, my parents hoped, would help them when

emigrating to some other country. It had become clear to my parents that there was no future in staying in Germany and this was confirmed by the events on *Kristallnacht* — the night of the broken glass on the night of the 9–10 November 1938 — a euphemism for the largest pogrom in Germany when the Nazis went on a well-organised rampage in Germany and Austria. They destroyed over 1,000 synagogues and other Jewish properties by setting fires, smashing windows of shops, looting the contents, attacking Jews on the streets, killing many, and arresting some 30,000 Jewish men in their homes and taking them to concentration camps. My father had been warned to stay away from home that night by a friendly neighbour. He spent the night travelling around on the circular subway line and thus escaped getting caught.

I still vividly remember walking to school with my sister Marion, who is a year younger than me, on the morning of 10 November 1938 and seeing the shattered shopfronts, people being beaten and lead away, graffiti on Jewish shops and homes such as 'dirty Jews', 'Jews perish' and so on. It was a frightening experience for us kids of 9 and 10 which we shall never forget. When we got to school we were sent home again as some of the teachers had been taken away and nobody knew what would happen next.

These crimes were committed in full view of the German public yet most Germans remained silent, either because they were paralysed by fear or indifferent to the plight of the Jews. The German goal was to make Germany *Judenrein*, to free Germany, Austria and other countries they had occupied of all Jews. As a further irony, Jews had to pay for the removal of the rubble from the properties damaged in the crystal night pogrom. Jews were eliminated from the German economy; they were excluded from schools, universities and public facilities; and all their business enterprises and property — including jewellery and works of art — were transferred to Aryan hands. All insurance payments due to Jews for their damaged properties were confiscated by the State. Wealthy Jews were held to ransom and the Jewish community was collectively fined one billion Reichsmark as punishment for their 'hostile attitude towards Germany and their abominable crimes'. To prevent Jews from taking their assets out of Germany, bank accounts were frozen, property was confiscated and emigrants were subjected to various taxes such as the *Reichsfluchtsteuer* (exit tax). Jews were required to list all their possessions.

After this, my parents redoubled their efforts to escape from Germany somehow, but this was very difficult as there were literally hundreds of thousands of people looking for asylum and most countries shut their doors or only let in relatively small numbers of

Jews. The free world's unwillingness to accept Jewish refugees provided Hitler with another excuse to do with them as he pleased. The pre-war Jewish population of Germany was about 500,000, representing about 0.8% of the total population of some 60 million.

We had relations in the USA, South Africa and Australia, and our parents explored these and other possibilities. The decision was made to emigrate to the USA and an uncle of my father's provided an affidavit. However, the problem was getting a visa because of the long waiting period, in some cases years, due to the restrictive immigration quotas imposed by the US Government. These quotas were based on immigration figures into the USA from different countries during a particular period of time from the late nineteenth century before the large-scale immigration from Eastern Europe began. Furthermore, the US authorities classified all people who had been born in the German areas which had been ceded to Poland as Poles. The Polish quota was very small, a discriminatory measure which affected a lot of Jews who wanted to leave Germany. As both my parents had been born in a part of Germany which had subsequently been ceded to Poland, the Polish quota applied to our family and prospects for obtaining a visa were dim with an estimated waiting time of at least one year. So rather than wait for this visa in Germany, our parents decided to go to some other country in the meantime. They had also considered sending my sister and myself to Holland with a children's transport, but decided against this as they did not want to be separated from us.

Shanghai appeared to be the only place one could emigrate to with a minimum of formality because it was an open port which allowed free access to anyone, at least up to a certain point of time. Hence, it became a haven for refugees and criminals of all types. Shanghai was only intended to be an interim stop until our visas for the USA came through, as my parents did not want to stay in Germany any longer than necessary.

OUR JOURNEY TO CHINA

On 7 May 1939, just four months before the outbreak of World War II, we left Berlin by train for Trieste, Italy, via Munich and Milan, where we were to board the *Conte Verde* for Shanghai. The farewells from our extensive family in Berlin were heartrending as nobody knew whether we would see each other again. On 9 May we boarded the ship and left Trieste. My parents had a luxury cabin; my sister, a girlfriend of my mother's who looked after us, and I had a first class cabin. As it was not possible to take out any money from Germany apart from 10 Reichsmark (US\$2.50) per person, our par-

ents paid for the best cabins they could get aboard ship. It was indeed sheer luxury and a stark contrast to what we were to experience in Shanghai. The *Conte Verde* was a luxury liner owned by the Lloyd Triestino Line and was on the India/China run, carrying mostly Jewish refugees (520 on this trip) together with its sister ships. We stopped at Venice, Brindisi, Port Said, Massawa, Aden, Bombay, Colombo, Singapore and Hong Kong and arrived in Shanghai on 4 June 1939.

On arrival in Shanghai we were picked up in flat-top trucks and taken to the Ward Road Heim (camp) in Hongkew, set up by Jewish communal organisations. We were assigned beds in a room with 34 other persons — men, women and children. Beds were arranged in double-decker style, in some cases partitioned with bedsheets from adjoining beds. There was very little room left between the beds and the accommodation was very cramped. Washing, toilet and dining facilities were communal and very primitive. Each meal we had to walk about a quarter of an hour to the dining room in all weather and queue up for food for quite some time. A typical meal was, for breakfast, tea which was served in enamel mugs and dry bread; at lunchtime a single course such as gruel or beans with some meat, and for dinner tea, dry bread and 2 eggs or 2 bananas. Every camp inmate had to perform some duties in the kitchen or bedrooms. The contrast between life aboard ship and in the camp was like day and night. It is hard to imagine how my parents must have felt finding themselves in this situation, being in their mid-thirties, with two young children.

Fortunately, my mother's brother in South Africa had forwarded some money to a bank in Shanghai and the first thing my parents did was to find alternative accommodation. After a few days we moved out of the camp into a single room with a small verandah in the Hongkew district, which was a sort of voluntary ghetto where most of the German and Austrian refugees settled. It was part of the Shanghai International Settlement which had been allocated to the Japanese, and during the 1937 war with the Chinese, had been almost totally destroyed. Many of the houses had been rebuilt by or for the refugees and provided relatively cheap accommodation. We were fortunate in that the room we rented was in a large three-storey brick western-style house which had a telephone, WC and hot and cold water — all of which were the exception rather than the rule in the type of accommodation which the refugees could afford. Some 15 other persons, all refugees, were living in there and this eventually increased to 25 persons.

My parents immediately made endeavours to find work. My mother spoke reasonably good English, my father less so. None of



Shanghai, Summer 1940, in the garden at 992 Toongshauf. Our room was on the first floor (above our family picture) and extended to the second window on the left side of the house. Most of the garden was later confiscated by the Japanese to extend the factory next door.

From L to R: George, Marion, Annie and Peter Witting

the drycleaning, cooking or hatmaking trades studied by my parents before emigration were of any use to them in Shanghai. My parents also had some referrals to a number of local businessmen and connections in Germany for the purpose of acting as import/export agents.

During the latter part of 1939, first my mother contracted some gastrointestinal infection which took her six weeks to get over — then my father, who took nearly four months, one month of this in hospital, to get over it. During this difficult time we depended on my uncle's assistance and lived on the proceeds from the sale of certain personal belongings and household goods. My parents also continued with their endeavours to undertake export/import business with some small success. This was mainly handled by my mother because of her business acumen and better English language skills. Eventually, my father secured a position as cashier and bookkeeper in an American import/export firm, which he lost at the outbreak of the Pacific war in December 1941. My father then acted as representative for a Chinese chemical firm until these activities had to cease because of the travel restrictions out of the designated area within Hongkew which were imposed by the Japanese in May 1943.

A declaration promulgated by the Japanese authorities in February 1943 required all stateless European refugees to move into a designated area in Hongkew, about one mile square by May 1943. Almost all Jewish refugees from Central Europe were affected by that decree as they had previously been stripped of their German or Austrian citizenship by the Germans. The designated area also contained about 100,000 Chinese residents, various factories, storage and military depots. The house we were living in was fortunately located in that area. We had to apply for passes to leave Hongkew from the Japanese authorities and these were very difficult if not impossible to acquire. Apart from this there was the ever-present danger that the Japanese officials might beat or imprison an applicant.

My mother in the meantime had continued with the brokerage business and also sold the products of a leatherware factory operated by refugees. After the outbreak of the war in Europe this was confined to the local brokerage business, as a result of contacts established with buyers and sellers of raw materials and chemicals. My parents were able to accumulate some limited savings during that period and these carried us over for a while. When these were exhausted, we had to rely again on relief assistance by way of meals provided by the American Joint Distribution Committee which we picked up from the Ward Road camp kitchen at lunchtime. I think

we may have also received some subsidy towards our rent. Again, such assistance was augmented by the further sale of personal belongings and household goods.

I would also like to record the almost superhuman efforts my parents made to earn some money in Shanghai: firstly, to avoid having to move into barrack accommodation in the camps and thus enable the family to enjoy some measure of personal privacy and, secondly, to try and avoid having to rely on food from the communal kitchen. When the latter became impossible, they tried to at least supplement the sparse diet for us children in a most selfless way. My parents were rather proud and averse to accepting charity. I mentioned before that the few valuables that we were able to get out of Germany and which were saleable had been sold.

My parents tried every possible means of making money honestly. Mostly this was by way of acting as commission agents or intermediaries for various products and people they had established connections with. At the same time they tried to sell leather goods, shoe polish, stockings and other items to whoever was interested. At one stage my mother and a lady friend went around the waterfront bars to sell stockings and leather goods to sailors and their girls. This ended abruptly when one night my mother and friend were held up by some Chinese and relieved of their stock and takings. One must keep in mind, also, that my parents had to carry heavy bags containing their stock — sometimes for many miles in all sorts of extreme climatic conditions — as they usually could not afford to pay transport fares. In these endeavours my mother was more successful than my father, as firstly she was a woman and generally more readily accepted than a man; secondly, because she spoke English reasonably well; and thirdly, she was more persistent and resourceful and not as easily put off as my father.

As a parent myself now, I tried to put myself in their situation — namely a couple in their mid-thirties with two young children, trying to survive in a strange environment under the terrible prevailing conditions at that time — quite a formidable task. And yet, on the other hand, one must appreciate how much better off we were, relatively speaking, than our co-religionists who were caught in Europe.

Economic conditions in Shanghai worsened with the increasing influx of refugees and the consequent drain on resources available for refugee assistance. Until the outbreak of the Pacific war in December 1941, a small proportion of refugees were able to secure some employment — mostly in the professions. Others were able to establish their own businesses mostly by servicing other refugees' needs, or in some other way acting as business intermediaries. This

was easiest in the case of professional people such as doctors or engineers or highly skilled or qualified tradesmen. It was, of course, impossible for the refugees to compete with the extremely low-paid Chinese labourers or artisans, quite apart from the social distinctions or their inability to do menial tasks. The extreme and debilitating climate, language difficulties and lack of knowledge of local conditions presented additional problems. Many refugees were unable to adapt to the completely strange environment and conditions, or lacked the initiative and willpower to try and support themselves under such adverse conditions. Others were content to accept the assistance provided without exerting themselves, no matter how primitive the accommodation and how monotonous the food. Some of the refugees were fortunate enough in having been able, somehow, to bring along or have remitted some funds to Shanghai which, if they were enterprising enough, were invested in some business venture. Some of these were successful, others not so. It was a fact, though, that opportunities were rather limited.

We mostly associated with European refugees, mostly German, Austrian and Polish — there was virtually no social contact with the Chinese population. As far as I remember, my only contact with Chinese took place within the British Boy Scouts Association, of which I was a member, such as during jamborees, campfires and excursions. Later on I did work together with some Chinese tradesmen.

Contact with other Jews or non-Jews was limited for a number of reasons. Most Europeans, other than Jewish refugees, lived in the International Settlement south of Soochow Creek or in the French Concession. These areas were a fair distance, some two to five miles from Hongkew. Public transport, although relatively cheap, still cost money and this was in short supply. To walk such distances, particularly during the summer months, was very difficult. The other Europeans were accustomed to a lifestyle which very few refugees could match. Because of the generally primitive living conditions in Hongkew, it was difficult to reciprocate socially, apart from the expense involved. Most refugees had their pride and dignity and for these reasons more or less kept to themselves. After the Japanese interned our people in Hongkew it was very difficult if not impossible to get passes to leave the district.

As mentioned before, I belonged to a refugee Boy Scout group which was affiliated with the British Boy Scouts Association and this provided us with quite a bit of contact with other European and Chinese Boy Scouts. There was little if any discrimination at this level. However, there was some antisemitism practised by certain members of the German and White Russian communities. The latter

community's antisemitism was exacerbated by the fact that at an economic and employment level the refugees provided competition. The White Russians traditionally performed most of the more menial and unskilled tasks which were open to Europeans. They had mostly belonged to the lower social strata in the Shanghai European community which numbered some 50,000 persons in total out of an overall population in Shanghai of about 4.5 million in 1939. I might add here that the Jewish refugee community at its peak comprised about 20,000 persons of which in excess of 2,000 died, were killed or committed suicide during our sojourn in Shanghai. Whilst the general mortality rate may not have been that high amongst the refugees, there were some regrettable fatalities due to tropical diseases, suicide, abnormal causes and lack of suitable medication. However, to some extent these problems would have been offset by good medical attention and the very fact that malnutrition reduced some illnesses associated with affluence, such as heart disease and diabetes.

There were two schools run by and for the refugee children in Hongkew: one by a Mr Freysinger and the other, which was established sometime later, called the Kadoori or SJYA (Shanghai Jewish Youth Association) School. The former was a small private school which my sister and I attended initially and which functioned, I think, until 1945. The Kadoori School was founded and generously financed by the Kadoori family, primarily by Horace Kadoori. It was located in spacious grounds and was well-appointed. Lessons were taught in English and parents were expected to make a nominal contribution only for tuition. The Kadooris also undertook to place any child in employment on graduation. On the school grounds Horace Kadoori also founded a youth club called the SJYA Club. This club was open three afternoons a week and provided a wide range of recreational and educational facilities for hobbies, such as French language tuition, radio construction, music, bookkeeping, stenography, jujitsu, boxing and cooking. Another of Kadoori's generous gestures was to send each sick school child a big basket of fruit and a personally signed 'get well' letter. I myself received this when I had typhoid and still possess a copy. There was also another Jewish school in Seymour Road in the International Concession but very few children from Hongkew attended that school because of the distances involved and also perhaps it was generally a fee-paying school, offering some free places to refugee children.

I attended the SJYA School until 1942 when I transferred to the ORT (Organisation for Rehabilitation and Training), a Jewish trade school where I did a *Maschinenschlosser* (turning and fitting) course. It provided theoretical and practical training and also

included general subjects such as religion and history. The school was located in a fairly large building, adequately but sparsely equipped to provide courses in carpentry, electrical engineering and machine fitting mainly. This school was able to function throughout the war, even though it was located outside the designated area (internment district). The Japanese authorities provided permits to staff and pupils to leave the district and attend the school. A significant attraction was the fact that some food was provided by the school; a very important supplement to our diet. I remember that during the war this comprised one small loaf of bread per day, which I always took home to share with the family. The *Meister* in charge of the *Maschinenschlosser* section was Sandor Ultmann who, after the war's end, migrated to Sydney, Australia. He eventually opened his own small workshop in the district and asked me to join his staff as an apprentice. This was sometime in early 1944. There was another refugee apprentice there and two Chinese tradesmen, both very capable and competent. We all got on very well together. I finished my apprenticeship in 1945 and received my apprenticeship certificate from the Jewish Guild of Craftsmen, which had been formed by the Jewish master-craftsmen in Shanghai.

There were a few such business undertakings, owned and run by refugee engineers or craftsmen, who mainly serviced the requirements of the refugee community, such as electricians, sheet-metal workers, general engineering workshops and carpenters. The workshop I was working in undertook not only repair work but also manufactured items such as heating stoves, press tools and dyes for the manufacture of aspirin and soap, which were produced in the designated area. Working conditions were rather primitive but our workshop was reasonably well-equipped with some machine tools such as a lathe, planer and drilling machine. These machines were electric powered through overhead belt transmissions. During the war, there were severe electricity restrictions and eventually there was no power at all for the machine shop. To overcome this, we converted the belt transmission to manual operation, the operative power being mostly supplied by myself and the other apprentice. It was hard, physical work made more difficult because we were underfed. Though I had always been a physically strong boy, the hard work, combined with an inadequate diet and trying climate eventually resulted in a breakdown in my health in early 1945, just before the end of the war.

My sister Marion, after graduation from the SJYA School, took a course in typing and stenography at a private commercial school run by Professor Deman. After finishing this course in 1944, she

was taught hand-knitting and embroidery by some ladies who were doing this commercially. She was later employed by them until the end of the war, when she found a job as a steno-typist with the US Army. It is interesting to note that the ladies mentioned earlier undertook mostly custom knitting, that is, hand knitting. The customer would give them old jumpers, cardigans or other woollen clothes, which they would unravel and then, after washing and perhaps dyeing the wool, re-knit it into other garments. This was a very common practice. Repairs were also undertaken. On the other hand, they also produced fine high fashion garments with elaborate embroidery for those who could afford them.

Hongkew was a fairly large district where the majority of people were Chinese so that we were living in a quasi-Chinese environment. There were numerous Chinese shops and other businesses in the district and everyday contact was inevitable. Generally speaking, there was no friction, but this was not always so. At times there were problems between individuals, the occasional quarrels and very rarely some physical violence and crime. The two communities kept very much to themselves and there was little social interaction. A few marriages between male refugees and Chinese women did take place. The hardships of the Chinese, such as the poverty, starvation and illness, were apparent to all of us as it was a very densely settled area. Although the Chinese population was not interned and enjoyed freedom of movement, they were nonetheless oppressed and maltreated by the Japanese occupation forces. On occasions we would witness Japanese brutality against the Chinese, but not knowing the language, which was the case with most of the refugees, it was difficult to communicate and find out precisely what was going on. There was some sabotage of Japanese installations and undertakings in the district and on some occasions public trials, punishments and executions in open areas in the district. The German or English publications which were available to us did not provide any detailed coverage of Sino-Japanese affairs and refugees were generally more concerned with their own plight and the European rather than the Pacific theatres of war.

Because of my relative youth, my observations were rather limited and confined to our immediate rather than global problems. It is difficult to make comparisons between the relative state of welfare in the Chinese and refugee communities. In many ways the Chinese seemed to be worse off than ourselves, but they were in their home environment. They were able to cope much better with the climate, generally had large families who could help and provide assistance, were used to a lower standard of living and generally able to eke out some sort of living. The refugees were faced with uncertainty about

the future which very much depressed people, quite apart from the immediate problems of hunger and disease. If it had not been for the charity shown by our fellow Jews in Shanghai and overseas during those difficult years we would never have been able to survive. Some very limited assistance only was provided by Christian organisations. This, with the notable exception of the Quakers, was usually tied to some missionary activities or other obligations.

Furthermore, those people fortunate enough to have jobs or businesses outside the designated area were adversely affected, although it was possible to get passes under certain circumstances to leave the district and pursue one's professional or business activities. There were different kinds of passes available for short and longer terms — up to three months. Applying for these passes was always a harrowing experience which required a long time queuing up at the office of Mr Ghoya, a diminutive, schizophrenic and unpredictable Japanese who liked to call himself the 'King of the Jews', and his helpers, and then being questioned, often humiliated, abused, sometimes slapped or even worse. I believe that some people were even imprisoned. Because of the Japanese personalities involved, the outcome of such personal applications was never predictable. The passes consisted of a rectangular cardboard card and an enamelled metal badge which was pinned to a person's lapel or blouse. I remember the case of a good friend of my parents, a Dr Flater, who was an elderly, well-known surgeon from Berlin. On one occasion when he went to apply for a pass, Mr Ghoya climbed up on a chair to make up for the difference in height between Dr Flater, a tall, distinguished-looking man, and himself. He then abused and slapped Dr Flater in the face. Dr Flater felt so humiliated by this experience that he subsequently broke down and died shortly after.

From a public health point of view the Japanese authorities were very strict and insisted that every person was regularly inoculated against typhoid, cholera and smallpox. Inoculation cards had to be carried by everyone at all times, as random spot-checks were undertaken by the Japanese. They blocked streets with barricades and anyone who did not carry a valid certificate had to submit to another inoculation then and there. Despite these precautions, some people, including our family, contracted typhoid. I might add here that the same needle was used many times to give injections to whoever was caught, Chinese or Europeans.

As time went on, more and more people had to rely on communal support. Due to the difficult climate, inadequate nourishment, cramped living conditions and tropical diseases, more people became ill physically and mentally — some breaking down completely. Drugs and medical facilities were inadequate. In view of the

trying conditions people's tempers frayed easily and resulted in quite a bit of tension, arguments and acrimony. Civilised people with good educational backgrounds sometimes behaved like animals; others lost all will to live; and others, again, behaved like angels. In the house we lived in there were some 25-odd people living in about nine rooms, representing quite a good cross-section of the Jewish community. Economically best off were the owners of the house, a middle-aged couple of Polish-Austrian origin with their teenage daughter. They were able to make a reasonably good living from the rents they collected, and savings they had brought with them from Austria. Worst off, perhaps, was a bachelor, a lawyer from Germany in his mid-fifties who lived in a small cubicle of a room. He just managed to pay the rent and lived on food supplied by the communal kitchen with little other means to supplement this diet. His mental condition deteriorated gradually and he became more and more eccentric. He did not change his bedclothes, clean his room or look after himself in any way. A terrible stench emanated from his room and it was extremely sad to see how this man was deteriorating until he eventually died.

Next door to our room on the first floor lived a couple of highly intelligent persons, one a dental surgeon and the other a physician, both from Berlin. They had been good friends for many years and shared the small room where there was just enough room to fit in two beds, a couple of chairs and a wardrobe, with no room to move. These bachelors had some private means to supplement the food from the communal kitchen. However, because of the cramped conditions, their personal relationship deteriorated over time and one could hear interminable arguments going on. One episode I remember related to a loaf of bread which was supplied by the communal kitchen. They did not trust each other to cut the bread in half because they were frightened that the other might get a slightly larger half. So they asked me, a boy of 16 years, to cut the bread and act as arbiter and they accepted my judgement. There was another middle-aged couple living on the other side of our room whom I could only describe as aristocratic, of exquisite manners and behaviour at all times, under any conditions. They originally came from Austria and had some savings. They had one daughter who had been sent with a children's transport to South America. The welfare of that daughter was their continuing concern. The couple were very devoted to each other and it was a pleasure to see how they were able to cope with the situation.

There were only two bathrooms with toilets in the house and it can easily be imagined what sort of situations arose when people were queuing up outside the bathrooms. Tempers flared easily dur-

ing these times, particularly if one was ill. The standards of cleanliness also varied amongst the tenants and this again was a cause for friction. But despite all these difficulties we were still infinitely better off than those persons accommodated in barracks in the various camps as we still could go back to our room, close the door behind us and get some sort of privacy. Our room was about four metres by four metres with a small verandah about four metres by two metres. The room had one window facing a munitions factory next door which operated 24 hours daily, creating a terrible noise and vibration. The room contained a double bed for my parents, and single beds for my sister and myself, a table and four chairs, a cabin trunk for my mother's clothes and a small side table. The verandah contained some built-in wardrobes for our clothes. There was no heating or cooling and conditions were very trying in winter and summer. Due to the high humidity everything got mouldy and had to be cleaned regularly.

One matter of concern for the refugees was the fact that the Japanese had located a number of factories for military purposes, as well as storehouses and ammunition dumps, in the designated area. We were convinced that the Americans would have known about this and might decide to bomb these targets. Right next door to our house was the factory making large shell casings. Across the road was a large warehouse, storing goodness knows what. In fact the warehouse did catch fire and was virtually gutted. Sabotage was suspected and the Japanese authorities questioned all the tenants in our house. On 17 July 1945 the Americans did, in fact, accidentally bomb part of our district, killing about 35 refugees and numerous Chinese, and injuring hundreds. Quite a lot of property was damaged as well. Fortunately, that was the only occasion. Apart from this one experience, we were always very pleased to see the American planes come over Shanghai as it seemed to indicate that the war would soon be over — particularly as no Japanese fighter planes were ever seen to intercept the American bombers. The Japanese authorities required the refugees to organise first aid and hold regular air raid drills and some air raid shelters were built.

It was generally believed that the Germans were trying to exert pressure on the Japanese concerning a 'final solution' for the refugee community. After we were liberated by the Americans in August 1945, we were told that the Japanese had apparently given in towards the end of the war to that pressure and commenced building gas chambers in Pootung, across the Whangpoo River from Shanghai, in order to dispose of us. Another report claimed that the Germans tried to induce the Japanese authorities to put the refugees in unseaworthy ships, tow these ships out into the Yellow

Sea and scuttle them. Whether there is any truth in this I do not know. From what I had heard, the Japanese did not differentiate between the stateless Jewish refugees and any other allied internees in Shanghai. Conditions were very much the same for all of us. I am fairly convinced that there was little, if any, racial bias on the part of the Japanese in the treatment of the internees. In all fairness we have to be grateful to the Japanese for having resisted the German pressure and not having resorted to the 'final solution'.

In early 1945, shortly before the end of the Pacific War, my health broke down. What precisely was wrong with me was never established. I was very weak, had a temperature and was bedridden for about a year and a quarter. Initially tuberculosis was diagnosed but after the end of the war this was discounted. More likely it was just malnutrition combined with hard physical work and the fact that I was growing rapidly, which resulted in the breakdown of my health. It was really unfortunate timing, as it occurred shortly before the end of the war when food became available again and when most, if not all, of my friends were able to enjoy themselves as a result of being able to obtain some sort of well-paid employment with the US armed forces and enjoy the hospitality and diversions offered by the Allied occupation forces. Virtually every weekend our Boy Scout group was invited to some function or entertainment, mostly put on by visiting warships or airforce units. Every possible kindness was shown to us refugee children by these armed forces and of course Jewish communal organisations such as the American Joint and UNRRA, the international relief organisation.

After the war, most people engaged in trading at least some of the rations which they regularly received from UNRRA either for cash or for other goods, either because they were surplus to their requirements or because the food may not have been to their liking. There was quite a flourishing black market in US Army rations which we received from UNRRA, as well as in other US Army equipment. Quite a few people, Chinese and refugees, made a living from these operations. In view of the rampant inflation at the time, most people engaged in some sort of speculation. There was little point in holding on to Chinese currency. Hence, people sold their rations and bought US or other foreign currency from the proceeds of such sales. The purchase of gold or gold jewellery was another type of hedge against inflation and there was always a brisk trade in such articles.

As soon as the Pacific War had ended in August 1945, people tried to make arrangements for emigration from Shanghai. Jewish relief organisations were helpful in this regard too, particularly where financial guarantees beyond the capacity of the persons concerned were required. Once entry permission had been secured from

overseas countries, the Jewish organisations arranged and very often paid for the transport costs. The usual mode of travel was by ship. However, because of the shortage of shipping after the war and the repatriation of service personnel, it was often difficult to obtain berths.

DESTINATION AUSTRALIA

Our parents contacted relations in Australia and the USA and applications for entry into those countries were made. It was decided that whichever papers came first would be accepted. Both my mother and I had some problems in getting health clearances but these were eventually obtained. After long delays and a lot of correspondence, we received our permits to enter Australia early in 1947. This had been arranged by a relation in Melbourne with the assistance of the Jewish Welfare Society. On the following day our papers for the USA arrived but our parents decided to go to Australia.

We left Shanghai on the *Benjamin Latrobe*, a 10,000 ton Liberty-type freighter of the Messagerie Maritime Line, together with eight other refugees on 21 May 1947, and arrived in Brisbane, Australia, on 8 June 1947. The travel arrangements had all been made and paid for by the American Joint. On arrival in Brisbane we were welcomed and entertained in a most generous way by the local Jewish community and continued on by train to our final destination, Melbourne, via Sydney, two days later. All necessary arrangements had been made by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society.

In keeping with attitudes at the time, our arrival in Brisbane was noted in a local Brisbane paper with the headline: '12 Jew Refugees Here From China', accompanied by a photograph which was touched up to make us look more semitic. However, whilst I have moved widely in various strata of Australian society and have never denied my background, I am pleased to say that in my fifty years here, this was the only instance of anti-refugee and antisemitic bias which I have personally experienced.

SETTLING IN AUSTRALIA

On arrival in Melbourne, we stayed for a fortnight with my mother's cousin who had sponsored us. Then, we moved into a small house in the suburb of Windsor which our sponsor rented for us and which we shared with a bachelor. In 1948 my paternal grandfather, who had survived Theresienstadt, joined us. My sister, myself and the other tenant eventually moved out, but my parents and grandfather continued to live in the house until they died.

Unfortunately my parents' health had been impaired in Shanghai and they never fully recovered. My father died at the age of 64 from cancer and my mother at the age of 66 from heart failure.

After living for eight years in the hellish climate of Shanghai under conditions of deprivation, Australia seemed like a paradise. The beautiful climate and plentiful food, friendly people and environment were just wonderful. Soon after arrival in Melbourne my father found a job as a process worker in a metalware factory. My sister did secretarial work in an office and I initially found a sedentary job in a factory assembling propelling pencils. My mother was unable to work due to health problems and looked after the house. Collectively we earned enough to live comfortably and save a little. Father eventually got a job as a salesman in a city jewellery shop until he joined my future brother-in-law in his handbag shop. My sister married in 1952 and has two children and three grandchildren. Her husband died in 1982 and she remarried in 1993.

As I regained my physical strength I sought other employment, first as a fitter's assistant in engineering works at General Motors, and then with Singer Sewing machines where I trained as a sewing machine mechanic. In 1951 I was appointed manager of a sewing machine business and 18 months later joined a friend in the import and distribution of sewing machines. Eventually we opened a retail shop in Moonee Ponds which I managed and became a partner in.

In 1948 I commenced night-time studies for a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering at the Royal Melbourne Technical College, now the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and I completed my Diploma in 1957. In 1955 I was sent to Germany for a six weeks' training course in all aspects of sewing machine manufacture and servicing at the *Anker Werke*. On my way back home I met my wife-to-be aboard ship and we were married in Melbourne in May 1956. We rented a nice flat in Ascot Vale and bought our first car. I had learned to drive in 1951 and had a car provided by my employers since then. Our first daughter was born in August 1957 followed by another two daughters in November 1960 and October 1964. In 1959 we bought our first house in North Balwyn.

I decided to undertake a part-time Commerce degree at Melbourne University and, on completing my degree in 1964, joined the Federal Department of Trade. In 1965 I was promoted to the Canberra head office and we moved to the ACT. In 1969 I transferred to the Immigration Department and was sent with my family to London as a migration officer, working mainly in the Professional Migrants Advisory Area. We returned to Canberra in 1972 when I transferred back to the Department of Trade where I became involved in the government's export incentive schemes. I set up the



Celebration of my promotion and farewell before my departure to Canberra.

From L to R: George Witting, Marion and Kurt Beildek, Lesley and Peter Witting and Annie Witting, Melbourne 27 March 1965.

Export Development Grants Board, a statutory authority which administered the schemes and became its first director in 1974. In 1979 I resigned from the public service and set up my own export consultancy which I continued until I retired in 1996.

Australia has been good to us and all our family have been very happy here. Initially life was not easy as we arrived with nothing, but the country has offered us excellent opportunities by way of education, work, freedom, and lack of discrimination. From 1980 reunions have been held of ex-Shanghai refugees every few years in the United States, Shanghai and Jerusalem, with participants from all over the world, the most prominent being Michael Blumenthal, the former US Secretary of the Treasury. I have also been fortunate to revisit Shanghai, first in 1974 whilst with an Australian trade delegation in Beijing, then in 1993 with my wife for a reunion, and again in 1998. These visits evoked memories, some of which had been long forgotten, and made me reflect on how fortunate we were to have found refuge from Nazi tyranny in Shanghai, and then being able to start a new life in this wonderful country.

OTHER RECOLLECTIONS OF A STORMY TIME

Shlomo Etzioni (Sol Woodman)

I read with great interest the book review by Sophie Caplan of Gershie Epstein's autobiography *Seventy Chequered Years* in the *AJHS Journal* Vol XIV Part 4 p759 *et seq* and feel that I would like to add my recollections of those stormy times in the history of the Zionist youth movements of Australia. I was deeply involved with Habonim at the time, having been *Maskir* (Executive Secretary) of Perth Habonim and represented that organisation on the federal body. At the time I was also doing *hachshara* (training) on the Zionist Federation's farm at Toolamba (near Shepparton) prior to making *Aliyah* to Kibbutz Tzora where I have lived ever since.

When Gershie Epstein arrived in Australia towards the end of 1951 to serve as *shaliach* (emissary) to Habonim and all the Zionist youth movements, there had been no *shaliach* in Australia for over a year. He devoted over two years of his life for the benefit of Australian Zionist youth, under very trying conditions. With his young family living under primitive conditions on the isolated Hachshara Training Farm near Shepparton and with no car, for half of his term he was expected to assist all the Zionist youth movements throughout the country. For most of that first year, he spent half of each week alone in Melbourne, in order to work with Zionist youth there. His was a mammoth task, given the size of Australia and the distances between the centres of Jewish life.

It is true that during World War II, the Royal Navy provided Gershie with the opportunity to be active in Capetown Habonim. However, the split which he supposedly engineered there, resulting in the formation of South African *Hashomer Hatzair*, never took place. The latter movement was founded in 1935, while Gershie was in grammar school in England.

Again, when Gershie was executive secretary (*Maskir*) of English Habonim in the forties, he could not have split the movement and help create English *Hashomer Hatzair*, since the latter was founded in the late thirties.¹

It is a fact that there was a small trickle of *chalutzic aliyah* from Australia from 1950 to 1951, but almost all of it went to the Habonim kibbutz, Kfar Hanassi. Only later did any considerable number join the left-wing Kibbutz Artzi settlements, most of them after the split in Habonim. It is apparent that Gershie, therefore, did not play any part in the split between *Hashomer Hatzair* and *Habonim* in other parts of the world; nor did he engineer such a split in Australia, as your reviewer implied, the reason for Gershie's so-called "mission".

It is true that Australian *Habonim* hesitated at first about joining World *Habonim*, the formation of which Gershie was indeed active. However, the Israeli Mapai-orientated youth movement *Tnuah M'uchedet* was not the problem — it only joined World *Habonim* in the late fifties, when I was in Israel, sitting on the World Executive. At the time, the non-party *Hatzofim* (Scout Movement) was then considered a possible partner. The real problem was the Labour Zionist affiliation of American *Habonim*.

Isi Leibler's rise in Australian Jewish public life did indeed occur at that time, when he became the head of Melbourne *B'nei Akiva*. Does the article imply that Gershie was responsible for purging that "notorious left-wing figure" (the late) Arnold Bloch, to make way for Isi Leibler?

And a final minor correction: at the federal executive meeting of Australian *Habonim* in 1951, I did indeed make a jocular prediction, but certainly not as quoted. For the record, when someone expressed the fear that Australian *Habonim* would not get a *shaliach* if we didn't immediately join the world movement, I correctly "prophesied" that, in that case, one would definitely be sent. And sure enough, Gershie arrived within six months.

So much for the factual basis of the main thesis of the book review.

Without a doubt Gershie Epstein engineered — with the help of others, including myself — the split in *Habonim*, in order to prevent its being turned into *Hashomer Hatzair*. The fact that *Hashomer Hatzair* in Australia has remained so small only proves how right he was to do so.

But the Zionist Youth movements in Australia, and indeed the Australian Jewish community in general owe a great deal to those early youth *shlichim* including Ehud Lederberger, Josef Goldstein, Gershie Epstein, Moshe Deutsch and others, who shared their enthusiasm and expertise under extremely difficult conditions, to spread the word of Zionism and Israel.

NOTES

1. *Encyclopedia Judaica*

WHO SPEAKS FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY? REPRESENTATIVE AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICT OVER THE MARRIAGE BILL OF 1960

Benjamin Phillips

In June 1960, the Commonwealth Attorney General, Sir Garfield Barwick, wrote to Maurice Ashkanasy, the President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ).¹ The subject of the letter was the newly introduced Marriage Bill, which brought marriage under Commonwealth jurisdiction for the first time. Barwick sought Ashkanasy's assistance in determining how Jewish marriage celebrants would be authorised by the Commonwealth government. This was to trigger a divisive dispute within the Australian Jewish community. The ECAJ wanted to be named in the legislation — this would cement its claim to be the official organisation of Australian Jewry. Orthodox and Progressive leaders viewed marriage as a purely religious issue, and were of the opinion that they, not the ECAJ, would be the appropriate authorities to nominate celebrants.

The ECAJ had been established in 1944 as the roof body of Australian Jewry, a federal counterpart to the newly established state Jewish Boards of Deputies. Its headquarters rotated every two years between Melbourne and Sydney. The President was a resident of the headquarters state, the Senior Vice-President came from the other state, and the Vice-Presidents were the Presidents of the other Boards of Deputies, and of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation and the ACT Jewish Community, which was established in 1951. Between 1954 and 1968 the Presidency of the ECAJ alternated between Ashkanasy and Sydney D. Einfeld. The two men often differed in their approach to issues, and this was the case here. Over the history of the ECAJ disagreements between Melbourne and Sydney have been far from infrequent.

True to form, there was disagreement between the two states. Melbourne leaders were determined that the ECAJ should be recognised as the nominating authority, regardless of objections from

other parts of the Jewish community. Sydney feared that the ECAJ would lose authority were it to be rejected by parts of the community. The Orthodox were opposed to the Progressive movement being recognised at all, while the Progressives wished to be recognised in their own right. While disputes within the Jewish community are frequent, this is the only time when the religious and representative bodies of the Australian Jewish community have lobbied against each other before the Commonwealth government.

A few people were central to the dispute. The most important was Sir Garfield Barwick, GCMG, QC, the man who had to decide how Jewish marriage celebrants would be nominated. A brilliant lawyer who became a Liberal parliamentarian and Commonwealth Attorney General, Barwick was later appointed Chief Justice of the High Court. Maurice Ashkanasy, CMG, QC, the President of the ECAJ, was a senior Melbourne barrister. He was a strong critic of the rabbinate.² The Senior Vice-President, Sydney D. Einfeld was a Labor politician, a member of the House of Representatives from 1961–3, and later Deputy Opposition Leader and then a cabinet minister for Consumer Affairs in the New South Wales Parliament. Rabbi Dr. Israel Porush, of the Great Synagogue in Sydney, was president of the Association of Jewish Ministers of Australia and New Zealand and was seen as the leader among the Orthodox community, although Rabbi Dr. Izaak Rapaport of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation was the key figure in Victoria. The most active Progressive leader was Cecil Luber, President of the Australian Union for Progressive Judaism (AUPJ). The small stringently Orthodox community made its representations through Rabbi B. Stern of Adass Yisroel directly to the Attorney General, apparently via W. C. Haworth, a Member of Parliament.³ No letters from these Orthodox leaders were found in the ECAJ archives.

William Rubinstein has previously examined this dispute.⁴ His work is, however, seriously flawed by its limited access to ECAJ documents and, at times, he misrepresents their contents.⁵ Rubinstein is correct when he points to the importance of the dispute as a rare public display of tension within the Jewish community.⁶ However, he characterises the matter as a question of Jewish identity, when the dispute is better described as one of clashing institutional agendas.⁷ The ECAJ leadership, especially in Melbourne, desired to be recognised by the government as the official voice of the Jewish community. Later in the dispute, the Executive Council also opposed any formal division of the Jewish community. No letters from the ECAJ leadership showed any concern about the question of Jewish identity, except as it related to government recognition or a divided Jewish community.

THE MARRIAGE BILL

The issue for the Jewish community was how marriage celebrants were to be appointed. The Marriage Bill offered two possibilities. The first was under section 39(2), where the Attorney General personally authorised each marriage celebrant. The second, under section 29, declared a religious body or organisation to be a recognised religious denomination. The denomination then nominated its marriage celebrants to the Attorney General. The problem was that the Jewish community lacked a single organisation that could function as a 'denomination.' Quite aside from the schism between Orthodox and Progressive Judaism, each synagogue was autonomous, answering to no higher body than its own members through their elected board of management. Barwick wished to avoid the cumbersome device of declaring each Jewish congregation as a separate denomination, as well as the administrative tedium of authorising each celebrant individually.⁸ Another way had to be found, and in this light, he wrote to the ECAJ as the only federal body representative of Australian Jewry, in the hope of finding a way to specify Jews as a single denomination.⁹

THE ECAJ RESPONDS

Ashkanasy saw Barwick's letter as a golden opportunity to have the ECAJ recognised in Commonwealth legislation.¹⁰ From his perspective, the fact that the specific context had to do with marriage was essentially a side issue. As Ashkanasy noted:

Obviously, the subject is one of major importance to the Jewish community not so much in the religious aspect as because it provides a basis for legislative recognition of our Council as the representative body of Australian Jewry.¹¹

Ashkanasy clearly felt that having the ECAJ officially recognised by the Commonwealth government on all matters, would make its task of representing the Jewish community easier.

The scheme for nominating celebrants Ashkanasy proposed was scrupulously fair, and paid no attention to who was nominated.¹² Congregations affiliated with the various State Boards of Deputies would nominate a celebrant or celebrants to the Board, which would in turn pass these nominations to the ECAJ for transmission to the Attorney General.¹³ For congregations not affiliated with the Boards, the Board would list them, provided they were felt to be a *bona fide* Jewish congregation without distinction between Progressive or

Orthodox, and these bodies would independently inform the ECAJ of their choice of celebrants.¹⁴ This was in keeping with Ashkanasy's preoccupation with enhancing the position of the ECAJ rather than the substance of the nominations. He may or may not have been concerned with ensuring the unity of the Jewish community. However, no such concerns were explicitly mentioned in his letters to Barwick or Einfeld. The closest he came was in his comments regarding the reception of this proposal within the Jewish community:

I realise that our Jewish clergymen might claim that this is a field exclusively to themselves. However, in the view that in Melbourne the Minister of the Hebrew Congregation not only does not recognise the Minister of the Temple but will not recognise marriages conducted in the Temple, or even the legitimacy of children of such marriages, I think it would be most deplorable if we did not adopt a firm attitude which I am sure would have the endorsement of the overwhelming majority of members of our community.¹⁵

Responding to Ashkanasy, Einfeld agreed with his course and the reasons behind it, but with noticeably less enthusiasm:

Although I have generally felt reluctant for the Executive to enter this special field...I can see no real alternative. I think the principle which you support, both directly and implied, is undoubted. The Executive Council is the only organisation which could handle this matter and, in any case, I fully agree that from the point of view of the Commonwealth Authorities it should be emphasised again and again that it is representative of all Jews in this Country.¹⁶

The delay in the Jewish community's response led Barwick to ask whether it intended to suggest any amendments, and if so, to be quick.¹⁷ This prodded the ECAJ in Melbourne into discussing whether amendments were required. One of the lawyers consulted, Arnold Bloch, made the first objection to the ECAJ's involving itself in this field at all, on the grounds that it was undesirable and would not be accepted by the Jewish community as a whole.¹⁸ This was hotly opposed by Ashkanasy, who wrote:

I see no reason whatever to say it is undesirable or that it would be not generally acceptable for the Executive Council of Australian Jewry to be accepted vis a vis the Government as the general representative of the Jewish Denomination in

Australia. That it would not be happily received in some quarters I have no doubt but I do not regard the squeals that would arise in this regard as of any real significance.¹⁹

Ashkanasy also opposed technical amendments suggested by Bloch because they weakened the position of the ECAJ:

I think it would be in the highest degree undesirable that we should endeavour to have amendments introduced into the Bill minimising the extremely strong position which we are invited to take up, which is our duty to take up, which history will endorse our taking up and you may rest assured condemn any who endeavoured to fritter away the privilege granted to us.²⁰

Moss J. Davis, who was also from Melbourne and was Acting President of the ECAJ as Ashkanasy had become ill, was also anxious to see the ECAJ recognised in legislation.²¹

Once the Executive Council's leadership had agreed that it was necessary for the ECAJ to be recognised in Commonwealth legislation, the Vice-Presidents were finally informed.²² In the letter, Davis informed them of the ECAJ's decision, but did not emphasise the desire of the ECAJ leadership for legislative recognition. He stressed:

The Committee of Management feels that whilst it is generally reluctant to enter these special fields, there is no acceptable alternative. This decision will establish the E.C.A.J. through the proposed legislation as a proper representative of all Jews in this country.²³

RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS

The letter to the Vice-Presidents marked the end of internal deliberation. Contacts were made with Orthodox and Progressive figures in Melbourne and Sydney. Then, as now, a very sizeable majority of the Australian Jewish community identified themselves as Orthodox, without necessarily strictly adhering to *halakhah*. However, the Orthodox community lacked a central organisation, though there were periodic conferences of rabbis and a largely inactive Federation of Orthodox Synagogues. By contrast, the Progressive community had a single, far more active, representative body in the Australian Union for Progressive Judaism (AUPJ).

The results were far from positive. The first Orthodox objection to the plan was from Rabbi Dr Izaak Rapaport, and was rooted in his

opposition to the Progressive movement. He complained that the ECAJ's plan would involve the unwitting recognition of Progressive marriage practices 'which are often flagrant breaches of Jewish Law,' and declaimed, 'Shall not Jewish Law enjoy at least the same respect on the part of our lay leaders as does the motive of speaking with a single voice!'²⁴

Most objections were, however, made on the grounds that the ECAJ was improperly interfering in an area that the religious bodies claimed as their own. Both Progressive and Orthodox leaders were so vehement in their objections to the ECAJ and its plan that they refused to state the exact reasons they had taken offence. The Orthodox would only state that the ECAJ did not acknowledge the correct reasons for their opposition.²⁵ The AUPJ, likewise, only said that the reason for their objections was not, as the ECAJ supposed, for fear that the ECAJ would discriminate against them.²⁶ It seems likely that the unstated reason for both the Orthodox and Progressives was on the grounds that the ECAJ was intervening in an exclusively religious area, as this is referred to by Einfeld,²⁷ and later by Rabbi Porush who argued that:

The Executive Council is a body of laymen which both by its constitution and purpose is qualified to deal only with secular matters. Marriage, on the other hand, represents one of the most vital and consequential laws of our Faith. The marriage celebration and the Jewish marriage laws are through and through religious in character and therefore have always been within the province of the Rabbinate.²⁸

In an unusual step, these grievances were not contained within the Jewish community. The Orthodox proposed creating a rival 'Ecclesiastical Marriage Council' to act as the authorised body for Orthodox celebrants.²⁹ In a similar vein, the AUPJ wrote to the Attorney General requesting that they be designated the nominating authority for the 'Australian Liberal Jewish denomination.'³⁰ If granted, this would have formally split the Jewish community, at least in relation to marriage.

These objections reinforced Einfeld's doubts about the wisdom of the Victorian plan, although on instrumental grounds rather than stemming from any concern that the ECAJ may have overstepped its role. As he wrote to his Victorian colleagues:

...I feel that there could be a serious blow to Government recognition of the E.C.A.J. in all other matters if important sections of our community state that they do not recognise our

authority in this particular matter. My view is that we should not proceed on these lines but either should withdraw from the whole situation, or else try to find some agreement with the members of the clergy and leaders of religious organisations before taking any positive action.³¹

The religious objections also led the Victorian leadership to overturn its previous plan, in the hopes of becoming acceptable to the religious groups. The new plan made the congregations themselves the nominating authorities, with the ECAJ certifying the congregations to the Attorney General.³² The ECAJ would still, of course, be mentioned in the Bill.³³ There was considerable optimism on the part of the Victorian leadership that this would solve the problem:

The plan ...should completely remove the objections of both sections of the clergy. In any case the Committee of Management is unanimous that the E.C.A.J. can do no less than make the suggestion to the Government. The amended plan provides that our Council will remain in the picture without entering the field of actually nominating celebrants, which was the main reason for the objection.³⁴

The Victorian leadership decided to stand their — admittedly altered — ground despite Einfeld's concern that the ECAJ might suffer a loss of prestige if its plan was rejected at the behest of Orthodox and Progressive bodies. As the Victorian leader, Davis, wrote:

Whilst I agree that we cannot feel at all certain that we will succeed, and it is true that the Minister may feel influenced by the opposing Congregational points of view and delete us entirely from the legislation, I still feel that it will not discredit the E.C.A.J. in the slightest. Indeed I have come to the conclusion that even if we fail, it will have been all the better for us to have taken the stand as set out in the final memorandum.³⁵

The new plan did not produce the results expected by the Victorian leadership because Orthodox and Progressive leaders continued to oppose the ECAJ having any role at all in what they saw as a religious area. The AUPJ declared the scheme to be completely unacceptable,³⁶ and the Orthodox said as much when they asked Barwick to recognise the Rabbinic Council for the Appointment of Marriage Celebrants.³⁷

In the light of the renewed religious rejection the ECAJ — for the first time — explicitly opposed the division of the Jewish community. Davis put forward the following arguments:

The E.C.A.J. cannot agree to any step which, be it through direct suggestion or by implication, could cause the Government to recognise in legislation, two separate denominations within the Australian Jewish community. I should add that the use of the word denomination in this paragraph denotes a separatism far greater than when used in the Act itself and in effect would divide the community into two distinct groups for the first time in the communal history of Australian Jewry. In the considered opinion of my Council this would comprise a most retrograde step which if brought about, the community would never cease to regret.³⁸

This new call for unity was also linked to a strong desire for statutory recognition. Davis declared that the ECAJ was still duty-bound to seek recognition in the proposed legislation as it was the roof organisation representing all Jews in Australia.³⁹

A CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP

Every two or three years the headquarters of the ECAJ shifts between Sydney and Melbourne. In November 1960 NSW became the headquarters state, so that Einfeld became President, and Ashkanasy Senior Vice-President. The new leadership brought a new desire to reconcile the Orthodox and Progressive sections of the community.⁴⁰ This policy may have been new, but the results were familiar. In little more than a fortnight Einfeld wrote to Ashkanasy saying he had failed to make any headway in discussions with the Sydney Beth Din and Lubet.⁴¹ The Sydney leadership decided to return to Melbourne's original stance, overturning the compromise plan that had been offered:

Nothing has occurred which would cause any of us to think that any other organisation in Australia, either already in existence or proposed to be formed, could be a more suitable channel of communication than this Council for the nomination of members of the Clergy as Marriage Celebrants.⁴²

There was no mention of the ECAJ being content to certify congregations to the Attorney General and let them communicate with the Commonwealth government themselves.

In mid-December, Barwick finally stated his preferences. With his usual clarity, he noted that it might be necessary to recognise several denominations:

You will, of course, understand that I may deal with factual situations only when considering the question of recognising particular religious denominations and it may be, having regard to present differences of approach of the several Jewish organisations involved, that recognition may have to be accorded to distinct groups of Jewish congregations as separate denominations for the purposes of the Bill.⁴³

The immediate reaction in Sydney by Einfeld's Acting President, Horace Newman, was to pillory Melbourne. Newman wrote:

It is always futile to say "I told you so", but it would seem that our reactions here in Sydney, after going into the matter for a couple of weeks, that the E.C.A.J. should drop the matter was the logical and correct attitude, which should have been adopted by the E.C.A.J. instead of Melbourne's stubbornness in pursuing the matter according to their ideas, which were of course mostly those of Morrie Ashkanasy, and unfortunately we had to endorse the Committee of Management's decision at the Melbourne Conference [the annual conference of the ECAJ].⁴⁴

A prudent retreat was called for:

...without thinking over the matter too deeply, it would seem that the only course which the E.C.A.J. might now pursue in order to save our dignity and standing, would be to advise the Government that our Constitution requires that purely religious matters are not within our province, and although we don't agree with the attitude, it appears that our Clergy and Congregations feel that anything connected with marriage ceremonies is religious and nothing else.⁴⁵

By January 1961, the ECAJ had changed its mind yet again and resolved to pursue a unified arrangement with the religious groups, dropping its demands for statutory recognition.⁴⁶ This met with some success among the Orthodox, who appeared ready to let the ECAJ be the official liaison with the Commonwealth government provided the ECAJ enter a legally binding agreement to nominate only those Orthodox ministers approved by the Rabbinical Council

for Marriages, as the organisation had become known, and that similar arrangements were made with the AUPJ for Progressive ministers.⁴⁷ Such accommodation was not forthcoming. Luber declared that the ECAJ could not interfere in marriage because it had no jurisdiction over religious matters, and that in the opinion of the Progressive movement, marriage was a religious matter and nothing else.⁴⁸ As the AUPJ did not agree, these moves to compromise were permanently halted.

Following the failed attempt at compromise, Ashkanasy raised a very novel objection to the Rabbinical Council, championing the rights of individual congregations against ecclesiastical bodies:

Whilst we would be happy for an arrangement to be made by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry with the Rabbinical Council for the Celebration of Marriages, we are absolutely opposed to the E.C.A.J. being a party to any arrangement or agreement under which that Council will, with our assistance, be given exclusive control over the appointment of marriage celebrants by Synagogues.⁴⁹

Ashkanasy proposed to agree to accept the Rabbinical Council's verdict only for congregations that recognised its jurisdiction. Given that the AUPJ's rejection of the ECAJ had prevented any chance of an arrangement between the ECAJ and the Rabbinical Council, it is difficult to see what the exact reason for this suggestion was, other than a reflection of his opposition to religious bodies. No one in Sydney responded to this suggestion.

The lack of consensus in the Jewish community forced Barwick to construct a scheme of his own devising. He proposed to use his powers under section 39(2), where he alone appointed marriage celebrants, neatly avoiding declaring Jewry to be a denomination at all.⁵⁰ The conflicting claims of Jewish organisations clearly had an effect. Writing to Ashkanasy, Barwick stressed:

I would like to make it clear that I have no desire to enter upon any differences which may exist in relation to doctrine or practice of Jewry nor have I any desire to force everybody into a pattern. But after looking at the various systems of registering marriage here and abroad and the various devices utilised in relation to Jewry and some other groups, I did conclude that the plan of the Bill would allow administrative arrangements which would accommodate the position of Jewry to that of various denominations for whom I had otherwise to provide.⁵¹

Despite having proposed to appoint celebrants under his own authority, Barwick still required a means of identifying them. The proposal was a compromise and, like all compromises, somewhat unwieldy. He proposed to accept the names of celebrants from individual congregations or from organisations authorised to speak on behalf of congregations. At the same time he was prepared to seek the assistance of the ECAJ in identifying congregations.⁵² This bore more than a passing resemblance to the ECAJ's modified scheme. However, as an administrative arrangement, it did not give the ECAJ statutory recognition. Also, it did not restrict the Attorney General to the advice of the ECAJ, and it gave a role — even if contingent on the agreement of individual congregations — to the Rabbinical Council and AUPJ.

Following Barwick's letter, the ECAJ claimed to at least one congregation that it had agreed to act as the only channel of communication to the government, and would certify that congregations are *bona fide*:

Because of the Commonwealth issues involved and at the early request of the Attorney General the E.C.A.J. has agreed to act as the channel for communicating such appointments to the Commonwealth Government for authorisation, and it also has agreed that it shall be the organisation which shall certify that congregations making such nominations are in fact *bona fide* congregations.⁵³

The grounds on which these claims were made are not clear and are at odds with Barwick's letter. Though the ECAJ may have earnestly desired to be the channel of communication, Barwick's scheme called for no such single channel, and had placed the ECAJ in a secondary role, where it would help determine which congregations were acceptable. The rationale advanced by the ECAJ for its actions was new in the stress placed on maintaining the autonomy of each congregation:

It [the ECAJ] adheres strongly to the complete autonomy of each congregation particularly in this purpose, and we believe that unity of action in this matter as in all other matters affecting the Jewish community, should be with the Executive Council of Australian Jewry as the spokesman.⁵⁴

The reference to the need for a strong and united community under the spokesmanship of the ECAJ is, of course, a more familiar argument.

The ECAJ's apparent optimism about Barwick's plan was not mirrored by the religious bodies. In an unprecedented show of unity, Orthodox leaders supported a Progressive initiative which called for Progressive Judaism to be recognised as a distinct denomination.⁵⁵ Given the normally bitter relations between the two factions, Barwick was reportedly impressed by the agreement. Commenting on these proposals, Ashkanasy wrote:

Nothing could be more undesirable from the community's point of view but, of course, Sir Garfield is impressed with the fact that he finds the Liberals making such a request and the Orthodox Clergy agreeing with them so that the protestations of laymen such as yourself and myself become somewhat discounted.⁵⁶

Concerned by this turn of events, he offered another plan. This time he advocated creating a special committee which would include the chairman of the ECAJ congregational committee, as well as co-opting one nominee each from the Progressives and the Orthodox. The committee would present the minister with a list of synagogues to be recognised as religious bodies.⁵⁷ How this would avoid the Progressive objections to any involvement on the part of the ECAJ was not explained.

BARWICK MAKES HIS PROPOSALS

For reasons that are not apparent Barwick changed his mind about appointing celebrants under section 39(2). Frustrated by the pronounced lack of unity from the Jewish community he opted to let it choose its preferred alternative from a variety of possible courses. He did, however, express a preference for what he designated plan (c), the option offered by the Orthodox and Progressives:

I might declare any substantial number of congregations identified as separate for religious purposes as a denomination within Jewry and treat with a representative and authorised body of each group of congregations for the purpose of authorising celebrants.⁵⁸

In doing so he explicitly rejected the arguments put forward by the ECAJ. As Barwick wrote:

It has been put to me that, if I recognised the Orthodox community, the Independent Orthodox community and the Liberal

community as each constituting a separate denomination of the Jewish faith for the purposes of the Marriage Act, I would not be, in any sense, participating in a division of Jewry, but would have been doing no more than recognising what some of the groups who have seen me have said is a well established denominational division of Jewry, both in Australia and elsewhere.⁵⁹

Barwick offered five other alternatives for Jewish organisations to consider.⁶⁰ Plan (a) involved making each congregation a denomination and identifying them without reference to the Jewish community. Plan (b) was similar, but asked the ECAJ to assist in identifying congregations, and kept open the possibility that other organisations might also assist. Plan (c) has been discussed above. Plan (d) was the ECAJ's original suggestion, with itself as nominating authority. Plan (e) was a weakened form of the ECAJ's second plan, in that each congregation nominated its own celebrants, and the congregations were identified by the ECAJ, but with the proviso that the Attorney General was not limited to the ECAJ's recommendations, but was free to supplement it with his own investigations, including assistance from other Jewish groups. Plan (f) was to use his section 39 powers.

The ECAJ favoured plan (e).⁶¹ In addition, Einfeld wrote directly to the congregations to persuade them to oppose plan (c), arguing that this would threaten Jewish unity. No mention was made of statutory recognition. In his letter he stressed:

I think I should point out that the representations of the Executive Council in this matter have mainly rested with the desirability of retaining Jewry as a single denomination in the eyes of the Government for all official purposes. It is for that reason that this Council has consistently supported clause (e) which, although following this course, nevertheless permits each congregation to nominate members of its own clergy as marriage celebrants and gives to the Attorney-General the right to accept the advice of the Executive Council or any other organisation, whether individual or united, to give such assistance as may be required from it in the identification of the congregations themselves.⁶²

Barwick's preferred option was also the cause of considerable concern to the *B'nai Brith* organisation which planned to pressure the Progressive and Orthodox unions to accept a form of plan (e) that did not refer directly to the ECAJ. On behalf of *B'nai Brith*, Bloch wrote:

It is my personal feeling that sufficient pressure can be brought to bear on the liberals to accept this formula, and I think that we can isolate the orthodox Rabbis on this issue by obtaining the support of the orthodox congregations as such. Both Walter [Lippman] and I still remain firmly of the view that the tactics should be for the E.C.A.J. to state its views to the Attorney-General and only then seek to persuade the others to refrain from expressing their separate viewpoint and concur with ours.⁶³

In private, the ECAJ leadership identified the Progressives as the cause of the trouble. Ashkanasy suggested pressuring their membership through *B'nai B'rith*:

First, as to the Liberals: There is every indication here that if we apply sufficient pressure, C.L. [Cecil Luber] and Co., will be compelled to retreat. I am sure the Chairman of the Liberal Congregational group here, [Alfred] Ruskin, is becoming most unhappy. The news is getting about and the reactions, I am told, amongst the Liberals have been very strong. The *B'nai B'rith*, as you know, in Victoria is predominantly Liberal in its membership and I have been told they are proposing to issue a strong denunciation of any attempt on the part of the Liberals to form themselves into a separate group. I am stronger than ever in my belief that we should not cede ground but should show what I believe is our real strength by fighting on this matter with all we have and I am sure we will succeed.⁶⁴

Ashkanasy was also confident of success with the Orthodox congregations:

By the same token, I think if we try we will be able to get all the congregations — I mean 'all' — on the Orthodox side to accept Course 5. I think that Felix Friedman's [sic — Freeman] influence in this regard in New South Wales will be overwhelming.⁶⁵

B'nai B'rith acted as expected, with its national chairman, Hilary Pryer, sending a circular to the presidents of all Australian lodges calling for action to prevent future political, social and religious problems as the result of recognising two denominations:

We fear that, if the issues dividing Australian Jewry are not contained within the limits of our community, a fatal break-up

of our religion into a number of denominations will become a statutorily established reality.⁶⁶

Pryer also called upon the lodge presidents to lobby their local congregations to oppose such a move, as it was 'the duty of *B'nai B'rith* to try and influence our religious and congregational leaders to see the wider implications rather than their own sphere of influence.'⁶⁷

Barwick's proposal to recognise several denominations led Einfeld to protest in very strong terms about the division of the Jewish community:

We wish to make clear first, that we would have the gravest objection to any course being adopted by your Government which would amount to an official Governmental declaration that Australian Jewry is fundamentally other than one religious entity adhering to and accepting the Hebrew or Jewish Faith. The fact that there are various groupings and variations in practice and details of doctrines amongst them is something that should not concern your Government in any way. The essential and basic unity of adherence to Judaism is absolutely fundamental. It is world wide and as ancient as the Bible itself.

We do not ask you to involve yourself in any way in the internal affairs of Australian Jewry including their internal differences but we do ask you as a Government not to take a step to which we could not fail to take the gravest objection and any step dividing Australian Jewry officially into two, three or four categories would come within this description.⁶⁸

Einfeld also proposed that Barwick consider the modified course (e) presented by *B'nai B'rith*, which made Jewry a single denomination, and identified congregations either on the Attorney General's own authority, or by using such co-ordinating or representative organisations as he desired.⁶⁹ In a major break with previous suggestions, Einfeld even explored the possibility of a unified denomination without ECAJ involvement:

We would remain ready and willing to give such assistance as you may require of us or if you preferred you could as a matter of administrative procedure deal with those bodies whom you now contemplate recognising under Course (c) [such as the AUPJ and Rabbinical Council]. No doubt time would show whether in fact you would not find it expedient and satisfac-

tory in the long run to call upon my Council and be guided by its recommendations.⁷⁰

However, this letter was overtaken by events as Jewish bodies responded to Barwick's letter. Of the responses one was in favour of plan (a) which made each congregation a denomination in its own right and identified them without reference to the Jewish community, 14 were in favour of the religious bodies' preferred plan (c), and 15 were in favour of plan (e) which was supported by the ECAJ.⁷¹ The community had spoken, but without the unanimity Barwick had hoped for.

While the congregations and other bodies did not show overwhelming support for any of the alternatives, the religious bodies driving the opposition to the ECAJ's position appeared to have undergone a change of heart. The Union for Progressive Judaism and the Rabbinical Council made a joint submission proposing a variant of plan (e).⁷² It called for the creation of a single denomination, conceding the ECAJ's point, but permitted each congregation or group of congregations to nominate its own celebrants, identifying the congregations with the assistance of the religious organisations mentioned in plan (c) rather than the ECAJ. A similar submission, also predicated on a unified denomination, came from the Federation of Orthodox Synagogues in Victoria.⁷³ It is impossible to say why this dramatic change took place, but it is at least possible that the intervention of *B'nai B'rith* was decisive. The reasons cited by Bloch and Ashkanasy about *B'nai B'rith*'s ability to exert pressure may have been true. Equally, the very fact that an organisation which was neither Orthodox nor Progressive, and did not seek greater recognition for itself, had spoken out against dividing the Jewish community may have tipped the balance.

The change of heart of the religious bodies and the divided response from the congregations still left Barwick without a clear solution:

Failing unanimity among the congregations, I have had to work out a form of compromise. The compromise I propose seems to me not to depart from any of the points of principle regarded as vital by anyone who has written to me but virtually to meet the wishes of every congregation that expressed its view on the action that should be taken.⁷⁴

What Barwick proposed was to include all Jewish congregations presently in existence — for none were disputed — as coming within a single denomination of Jewry.⁷⁵ Congregations which wished to

be recognised at a later date either had to be certified by an organisation that was a channel of nomination or be considered by the Attorney General on the facts of their case.⁷⁶ Channels of nomination were any organisations that represented at least four congregations. Congregations could either nominate their celebrants through their own board of management or through an accepted channel of nomination. This placed the onus entirely on the congregations to decide. If they wished, they could nominate the ECAJ, the Rabbinical Council, the now Union for Progressive Judaism, or some other body with a minimum of four congregations affiliated with it. Barwick felt he could have come to no other conclusion, given the divisions within the Jewish community:

What are involved here are matters of organisation that are the domestic concern of the Jewish community. I certainly have no desire to interfere in those matters. My task, under the Act, was to inform myself of the form of the organisation of the religious denominations seeking recognition. In the case of the Jewish community, putting the matter as objectively as I can, the position that arose was that I received more than one answer to the question, and the answers did not seem to me to be reconcilable.⁷⁷

He rejected the ECAJ's contention that it was the proper authority to handle matters:

...I think I should refer to the offer of your Council to act for Australian Jewry as a whole. In the face of several quite firm representations on behalf of groups of Jewish congregations that, in this matter, your Council did not represent them and had no authority to speak for them, it was impossible for me to accept your offer.⁷⁸

At this point the Sydney leadership decided that nothing further would be gained by making representations to the Attorney General.⁷⁹ Victoria, however, still seemed to believe that the original ECAJ plan could somehow be salvaged. The Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies, under the Presidency of Maurice Ashkanasy, passed a resolution calling on Victorian congregations to support the ECAJ proposal that it should act as the transmitting medium without a veto power.⁸⁰

Barwick's plan was now fixed, and came into full operation on 1 September 1963.⁸¹ The delay was due to the slow pace of implementing the necessary administrative mechanisms.

EPILOGUE

The defining motivation for both the ECAJ and the religious leadership was the reinforcement of their institutional positions. The Marriage Bill served as a way for the ECAJ to be recognised by the Commonwealth government, enhancing its claims to be the Official Organisation of Australian Jewry. For the religious leadership, this seemed to be an incursion by secular, representative bodies on a traditionally religious issue. From the 1930s lay organisations tended to supplant synagogues as the representatives of the Australian Jewish community.⁹² Although there is no direct evidence on this point, one can speculate that the vehemence of religious opposition may have been based on the concern of losing still more of their functions to lay bodies, and a further decline in their institutional position. The co-operation of otherwise antagonistic Orthodox and Progressive leaders in opposing the ECAJ is powerful evidence of shared interests; the legitimacy of Progressive Judaism was only ever a tangential issue. As the ECAJ never intended to usurp the role of synagogues in deciding who their celebrants were to be, this was not a dispute over a core function of religious bodies. Legitimacy and power within the Jewish community was the reason behind their actions.

It is impossible to point to a single cause for the differences between Melbourne and Sydney. Einfeld and the Sydney leaders were more prone to accommodation with the religious leadership than Ashkanasy and the others in Melbourne whose letters exhibit a 'damn the torpedoes' style. The differences between NSW and Victoria seem to go beyond just Ashkanasy and Einfeld, as their Acting Presidents struck similar notes to their principals. Whether this was because these attitudes were endemic to the leadership or a reflection of the strong personalities of the two Presidents is impossible to say.

The dispute with the ECAJ forced the religious leadership into unprecedented action. By its nature as a communal roof body, the ECAJ responded to a great many issues, often involving representations to the Commonwealth government. In contrast, there were few issues that required a co-ordinated response from either Orthodox or Progressive leaders, especially against another section of the Jewish community. The Marriage Bill called forth energetic action, and led to co-operation when there had been little or none.

In September 1962, Ashkanasy wrote a draft press release that he sent to Einfeld. More than any other document, it serves as a fitting conclusion:

Although the communal danger of Jewry being treated as consisting of more than one denomination has been eliminated

and the right of Congregations to nominate their own marriage celebrants has been preserved so that the position of the E.C.A.J. as the sole representative body of the whole of Jewry is not now materially affected, we express the firm opinion that it would be in the interests of all Congregations whilst maintaining the names of their Congregations on the Attorney General's list and their right to send their nominations direct, in fact to transmit their nominations through the E.C.A.J. thereby adding to the prestige and standing of Australian Jewry.⁸³

The hour was late, the decision had been made, and advocacy could do no more. Ashkanasy must have known how unlikely it was that a significant number of congregations would use the ECAJ as a channel of nomination, after many of their own ministers and lay leaders had fought against this very concept. He cannot have felt at ease writing such a passage, virtually begging those whose complaints he had dismissed as insignificant squeals two years earlier to take advantage of the ECAJ's offer. Nevertheless, he did so, not for personal gain, but for the institution that he served. Einfeld had similar motivations, as did the religious protagonists, as they sought to enhance the positions of the institutions they served. What was lacking throughout the entire episode — with the sole exception of *B'nai B'rith* — was any consideration of the welfare of the Jewish community as a whole.

After the heat of battle died down, nominations of celebrants on behalf of the Jewish community were made in different ways in different states, but in all cases by Synagogues or Synagogue groupings. In Victoria several groups of Synagogues submit nominations; in NSW, The Great Synagogue nominates Orthodox Jewish celebrants and the Liberal nominations are made by the Progressive Movement. The system as it has developed has never been subject to any further challenge from the E.C.A.J.⁸⁴

NOTES

1. Letter from Sir Garfield Barwick to Maurice Ashkanasy, 15 June 1960, in Box E38, Archive of Australian Judaica (AAJ).
2. Peter Medding, quoted in Rubinstein, W.D. *The Jews in Australia, 1945 to the present*. Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1991, p. 11.
3. See letter from Barwick to interested parties, 7 September 1962, in Box E38, AAJ.
4. Rubinstein, *ibid.*, p. 36-8.

5. The original sources cited by Rubinstein are limited to those held at the Archive of Australian Judaica. The collection there has a comprehensive collection of documents from 1960, but very limited materials from 1961 and 1962. This study has the benefit of using the collections of the Australian Jewish Historical Society and the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies collection at the State Library of Victoria, which has an extremely important selection of ECAJ documents.
6. Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
7. *Ibid.* This is examined in greater depth in note 12, below.
8. Rubinstein, *ibid.*, p. 36, misrepresents Barwick's rationale for making decisions when he claims that the Attorney General chose a single Jewish denomination 'for no apparent reason.' Barwick was far less certain of the facts than Rubinstein insinuates, as is made obvious in his letter of 15 June 1960 to Ashkanasy when he said that, 'I understand that each Jewish congregation is autonomous, and I assume that each would want to be recognised as a religious denomination.' This is hardly the statement of a person sure of their knowledge. Rubinstein is further in error when he claims that Barwick had already made a decision. In the same letter Barwick stated that 'I am hopeful, however, that it *may be possible* to specify Jews generally' (italics added) for the purpose of nominating marriage celebrants. Barwick was only expressing a preference. The most likely reason for Barwick's initial opposition to recognising each synagogue as a denomination was the complexity of administrative arrangements this would have entailed.

Rubinstein's suggestion, *ibid.*, p. 36, that Barwick dismissed the possibility of groups of congregations being registered as a denomination at this stage is an out-and-out misstatement. Rubinstein cites as evidence a letter of May 1960 that does not exist in the AAJ. The letter of 15 June 1960 was the first notification about the Marriage Bill. It did not mention the possibility of recognising groups of congregations as denominations. There was no suggestion by Barwick that he was even aware of different groups within Jewry at this stage, and it is unlikely that he would have been until after he had been in contact with the Jewish community. Contrary to Rubinstein's assertion, when Barwick became aware of the existence of groups of congregations, he advocated recognising them instead of a single Jewish denomination. (See letters from Barwick to Einfeld of 23 June 1961, AB110, Australian Jewish Historical Society Archive (AJHSA) and from Barwick to interested parties of 24 July 1961, AB110, AJHSA.)

9. Letter from Barwick to Ashkanasy, 15 June 1960, in Box E38, AAJ. Again Rubinstein, *ibid.*, p. 36, is in error when he claims, 'Under this preferred option [of a single Jewish denomination], the ECAJ would be legally recognised as "the Representative Body of Australian Jewry," Barwick probably having in mind the legal position of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.' Barwick never asked the ECAJ to be the denomination. It was the ECAJ that attempted to seize the opportunity to become the official representative. The let-

ter of 15 June 1960, was exploratory in nature. The statement that is presumably evidence for Rubinstein's case, '...I will need to know the actual authority of your body, or authorities in the congregation, who will nominate celebrants for registration,' is weakened by the preceding sentence. This states that 'I shall be glad if you will let me know the title of the body, or the titles of the bodies, to be so specified in relation to Jews.' This makes it plain that Barwick did not know the Jewish community, did not ask the ECAJ to be the denomination and had no preconceived idea what organisation should nominate celebrants for a unified Jewish community. The effect of Rubinstein's misrepresentations is to paint Barwick as a capricious minister who rode roughshod over the divisions of the Jewish community. In fact, Barwick knew little of the Jewish community and was expressing opinions aimed at minimising administrative hassle, not issuing dictates.

10. Ashkanasy suggested that the ECAJ be recognised as the nominating authority within a week of receiving Barwick's letter. Letter from Ashkanasy to Barwick, 22 June 1960, in Box E38, AAJ. Rubinstein claims, *op. cit.*, p. 36, that Ashkanasy was 'acting on his own behalf,' implying that Ashkanasy was in some way promoting his own beliefs over the greater good of the ECAJ. This is untrue. Ashkanasy acted in his capacity as President of the ECAJ for the purpose of enhancing the organisation's capacity to act as the representative of the Australian Jewish community, and other members of the ECAJ leadership supported his actions. (See letter from Einfeld to Ashkanasy, 29 June 1960, in Box E38, AAJ and letter from Davis to Ashkanasy, 12 July 1960.) When the NSW leadership temporarily changed its mind, this was because of concern over the effects of religious opposition, not a clash of principles (see letter from Einfeld to Davis, 12 July 1960, in Box E38, AAJ). Ashkanasy's policies continued even when Einfeld was President (see letter from Einfeld to Barwick, 1 December 1960, in Box E40, AAJ). Support for Ashkanasy's stand was seen throughout the ECAJ establishment. Were Rubinstein correct, this would not be the case.
11. Letter from Ashkanasy to Sydney Einfeld, 22 June 1960, in Box E38, AAJ.
12. This is contrary to Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 38, who claims that Ashkanasy attempted 'to give the ECAJ the power, in effect, to define Jewish identity in religious matters,' and also to Rubinstein's unfounded claim that the ECAJ 'would, under the proposed Bill, have in effect the power of life and death over one of the central religious functions of Jewry,' *ibid.*, p. 37. The ECAJ never proposed to do anything more than act as a channel of communication between the individual congregations and the Commonwealth government for the appointment of marriage celebrants, and certify which congregations were properly constituted and, in both cases, planned safeguards to ensure its powers would not be abused. This last point carries some weight because the letters in which it was discussed

were internal documents not intended for public consumption. (See letters from Ashkanasy to Einfeld, 22 June 1960, in Box E38, AAJ, Ashkanasy to Davis, 11 July 1960, in Box E38, AAJ, Davis to Ashkanasy, 12 July 1960, in Box E38 and Davis to Vice-Presidents, 14 July 1960, in Box E38, AAJ). Given that the ECAJ did not plan to influence the selection of celebrants, nor the form of marriage ceremonies or their associated laws, it is very difficult to see the grounds on which Rubinstein bases his assertion.

13. Letter from Ashkanasy to Einfeld, 22 June 1960, in Box E38, AAJ.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. Letter from Einfeld to Ashkanasy, 29 June 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
17. Letter from Barwick to Ashkanasy, 8 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
18. The memo from Arnold Bloch regarding Marriage Bill was appended to letter the from Moss Davis, Acting President, ECAJ, to Ashkanasy, 11 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
19. Letter from Ashkanasy to Davis, 11 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Letter from Davis to Ashkanasy, 12 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
22. The ECAJ Vice-Presidents were *ex officio* the Presidents of the Queensland, South Australian and Western Australian Boards of Deputies, the Hobart Hebrew Congregation and the ACT Jewish Community. The post of Senior Vice-President was an elective position held by a resident of either NSW or Victoria when that state did not hold the Presidency.
23. Letter from Davis to ECAJ Vice-Presidents, 14 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
24. Letter from Rabbi Isaak Rapaport, Chief Minister, Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, to Davis, 15 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
25. Letter from Rabbi Israel Porush, Chief Minister, the Great Synagogue, to Davis, 24 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
26. Letter from Cecil Luber, President, Australian Union for Progressive Judaism, to Davis, 25 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ. Both this and the following letter were in response to a letter from Davis to Orthodox and Progressive leaders of 21 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ, in which Davis attempted to allay their fears.
27. Letter from Einfeld to Davis, 20 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ. Einfeld was reporting the objections of Rabbis Porush, Freedman and Abramson of the Sydney Beth Din.
28. Letter from Porush to Barwick, 25 September 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
29. Letter from Porush to Davis, 24 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ. The official request for recognition was not made until September: letter from Porush to Barwick, 25 September 1960, Box E38, AAJ. The nascent organisation was named the Rabbinic Council for the Appointment of Marriage Celebrants, not the 'Draft Constitution for the Appointment of Marriage Celebrants' *per* Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
30. Letter from Luber to Barwick, 25 July 1960, AB110, AJHSA.

31. Letter from Einfeld to Davis, 20 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
32. Letter from Davis to Vice-Presidents, 21 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ. Letter from Davis to Barwick, 27 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ. This statement is further evidence against Rubinstein's contention, *op. cit.*, p. 38, that Ashkanasy wanted to have, in effect, the power to decide religious identity.
33. Letter from Davis to Barwick, 27 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
34. Letter from Davis to Einfeld, 21 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
35. Letter from Davis to Einfeld, 1 August 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
36. Letter from Lubor to Davis, 3 August 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
37. Letter from Porush to Barwick, 25 September 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
38. Letters from Davis to Porush and Lubor, 29 July 1960, Box E38, AAJ.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Minutes, Committee of Management, 14 November 1960.
41. Letter from Einfeld to Ashkanasy, 1 December 1960, Box E40, AAJ. Rubinstein's claim that 'the dispute was centrally kept alive by the obstinacy of Ashkanasy in wishing to establish ECAJ supremacy and legal recognition,' *op. cit.*, p. 38, is false. Leadership passed to Sydney Einfeld in New South Wales, a strong President in his own right and the new and apparently moderate Committee of Management attempted to find a compromise — as had Victoria — and failed because of the refusal of the religious organisations to give ground. The dispute was to drag on for nearly another year. The central factor in delaying settlement was the sheer administrative drudgery the Attorney General's department had to go through in waiting for replies from the various stakeholders to each letter from Barwick. As soon as the Attorney General realised there was disagreement within the Jewish community, it was impossible for the dispute to be resolved quickly as he had to ascertain, first, what the possible schemes for recognition were and, second, which was preferred by the majority of congregations. The culprit was bureaucracy, not Ashkanasy.
42. Letter from Einfeld to Barwick, 1 December 1960, Box E40, AAJ.
43. Letter from Barwick to Einfeld, 14 December 1960, AB110, AJHSA.
44. Letter from H.B. Newman to Einfeld, 16 December 1960, Box E40, AAJ.
45. *Ibid.* This is also found in the Minutes of the Committee of Management, 20 December, 1960.
46. Minutes, Committee of Management, 17 January 1961.
47. Letter from Rabbi Lionel Singer, Chief Minister, North Shore Synagogue, to Newman, 7 February 1961, AB110, AJHSA. Minutes, Committee of Management, 7 February 1961. Letter from Ashkanasy to Newman, 9 February 1961, AB110, AJHSA. Letter from Newman to Ashkanasy, 3 March 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
48. These views are reported by Newman following meetings with Lubor. Letter from Newman to Ashkanasy, 3 March 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
49. Letter from Ashkanasy to Einfeld, 16 March 1961, AB110, AJHSA.

50. Letter from Barwick to Ashkanasy, 4 April 1961, Box 25, VJBD Collection, State Library of Victoria (SLV). Letter from Barwick to Ashkanasy, 19 April 1961, Box 25, SLV. Again this is contrary to Rubinstein's view, *op. cit.*, p. 36, that Barwick wanted the ECAJ to be the authority.
51. Letter from Barwick to Ashkanasy, 4 April 1961, Box 25, SLV.
52. Letter from Barwick to Ashkanasy, 19 April 1961, Box 25, SLV.
53. Letter from Einfeld to Gus Hines, President, Adelaide Hebrew Congregation, 5 June 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
54. Letter from Einfeld to Hines, 5 June 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
55. Cited by Ashkanasy following a meeting with Barwick. Letter from Ashkanasy to Einfeld, 22 June 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*
58. Letter from Barwick to Jewish organisations, 24 July 1961, AB110, AJHSA. A similar scheme is canvassed in earlier correspondence with Einfeld. Letter from Barwick to Einfeld, 23 June 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
59. Letter from Barwick to Jewish organisations, 24 July 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
60. *Ibid.* A similar series of options were placed before Einfeld earlier. Letter from Barwick to Einfeld, 23 June 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
61. Minutes, Committee of Management, 4 July 1961.
62. Letter from Einfeld to the Presidents of Congregations, 7 August 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
63. Letter from Arnold Bloch to Einfeld, 20 July 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
64. Letter from Ashkanasy to Einfeld, 7 August 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
65. *Ibid.*
66. Letter from H.H. Pryer, Chairman, Australian *B'nai B'rith* Council to Presidents, Australian *B'nai B'rith* Lodges, 12 August 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Letter from Einfeld to Barwick, 30 August 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.*
71. Letter from Barwick to Jewish congregations and other parties, 7 September 1961, Box E38, AAJ.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.*
77. Letter from Barwick to Einfeld, 14 September 1961, AB110, AJHSA.
78. *Ibid.*
79. Letter from Einfeld to Ashkanasy, 21 March 1962, AB110, AJHSA.
80. Letter from Nathan Beller, Honorary Secretary, VJBD, to Ilse Robey, General Secretary, ECAJ, 13 April 1962, AB110, AJHSA.
81. Letter from Secretary, Department of the Attorney General, to Jewish

organisations, 1 July 1963, Box 79, SLV.

82. Rutland, S. D. *Edge of the Diaspora*. Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 1997, pp. 214–9.
83. Letter from Ashkanasy to Einfeld, 21 September 1962, AB110, AJHSA.
84. Information supplied by Rabbi Raymond Apple.

Obituaries

Obituary — M H (Harry) Kellerman, OBE

Maurice Herman Kellerman — known everywhere as Harry — passed away in April at the age of almost 98, having become an Australian icon in education, freemasonry and community service.

Born in Wellington, New Zealand in 1902, he was dissuaded by his father from becoming a doctor; his father believed there were enough doctors already. As a result, Harry began to study engineering and worked as a research chemist in his university holidays. Before long, a scientific career was abandoned in favour of teaching; Harry's father now told him, 'If you have to be a teacher, then be a good one!'. The long and distinguished career in education which followed showed just how good a teacher Harry was.

He began teaching in Walcha in 1923, but before long went back to university and graduated in economics. He became commerce master at Telopea High School in Canberra and is said to have taught economics to Gough Whitlam. By 1934 he was headmaster at Tullibigeal, but within a few years sought a position in Sydney. He was already recognised as a fine teacher and firm disciplinarian known by the nickname, 'Kill-a-Man'. In Sydney he became deputy headmaster and then principal of the newly established Blackfriars Correspondence School, remaining with the school for 25 years and becoming the great pioneer, practitioner and exponent of distance education, with a staff of over 400 teachers and 7000 pupils. He was not only an administrator but an active teacher, known for his School of the Air broadcasts over the ABC. His eminence as an educator was widely acknowledged. He was awarded the Coronation Medal in 1937, was appointed OBE in 1969, and received a number of professional awards. Retiring from the New South Wales Education Department in 1963, he became principal of the International Correspondence School until he retired once again in 1973.

His rapacious energy led him to the leadership of the New South Wales Board of Education during a period that was financially dif-

ficult but educationally rewarding, with new schools and classes opening up in many districts to cater for the growing and diversifying Jewish community. He worked closely with Rabbi Dr Israel Porush; he and the rabbi alternated in the presidency of the Board for lengthy periods, Harry holding office for 12 years and becoming involved not only in administration but in teacher training and supervision and school inspections. The Board appointed him honorary life president in 1969, the first person to be accorded this honour. The history of the Board written by him was published in 1979 and is a solid contribution to the story of Jewish education in Australia as well as testimony to its author's skills as a researcher and writer. The Kellerman Gallery in the new Board of Education building recognises his seminal contribution.

In the Australian Jewish Historical Society he was a committee member for many years and for 13 years its editor of publications. His own papers in the AJHS Journal dealt with subjects as diverse as Benjamin Leopold Farjeon, Walter L. Lindenthal, Abraham Abrahamson, the York Street Synagogue and the Jewish Literary and Debating Society of Sydney.

His Jewish community involvement included many years as a highly respected member of the Great Synagogue, a member of the Synagogue board from 1957 to 1960, a member of the Journal Committee and a prolific contributor to the Synagogue Journal.

Harry was far from a retiring individual: every time he retired from a position there was always another major challenge awaiting him. The last several decades of his long life were devoted almost full-time to freemasonry. He became a member of Lodge Apsley No. 129 in 1924, and from then onwards remained active in the movement in a whole sheaf of lodges, many of whom he served as Worshipful Master. He was promoted several times to Grand Lodge rank and close to 20 years was Grand Librarian of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales. He wrote a number of papers for the Research Lodge in New South Wales, held office in that lodge and was its editor of publications. In addition he was the author of a two-volume history of the United Grand Lodge, covering the years 1948 to 1988. He believed that the masonic ethos had a major role to play in building a quality society, and his masonic lectures, given with great energy and lucidity till he was well in his 90s, were an inspiration to countless audiences. He was so well known and esteemed as a masonic lecturer and author that in his honour the Kellerman Lectures were instituted in order to foster masonic knowledge and pay tribute to Harry's leadership.

In 1926 Harry married Millie Ellis, and her support for him throughout his career and in all his activities was a decisive factor

in his success. She predeceased him in 1984. Their two sons Geoffrey and Gordon have both become eminent professional men in their own right. To them and all their family the warmest of condolences are expressed.

Rabbi Raymond Apple

Obituary — Rabbi Ronald Lubofsky, AM

For over four decades, Rabbi Ronald Lubofsky, who passed away suddenly during Pesach, was a towering figure in the Australasian rabbinate. Born in London in 1928, he was always passionately interested in Jewish studies and had already become a proficient Torah reader at synagogue services before his Barmitzvah. During the Second World War he spent several years as a full-time yeshivah student; not until he was 17 was he able to pursue secular subjects for matriculation. However, he subsequently gained a BA (Hons) degree at London University as well as ministerial qualifications from Jews' College.

He entered the ministry as assistant to the Rev Dr Isaac Levy of the Hampstead Synagogue and then moved on to the growing suburban Jewish community of Cockfosters and Southgate. In 1957 he came to Sydney as assistant minister to Rabbi Dr Israel Porush. His impact on the Sydney community was electric; he was tall, dark and handsome, with a rich voice, penetrating mind and personal charisma. After being ordained as a rabbi as a result of a fresh period of study in London, he returned to Sydney but in 1963 was appointed chief minister of the St Kilda Hebrew Congregation.

At St Kilda, where he held office for 25 years, his preaching placed him in the top rank of Australian public speakers. He had a creative approach to synagogue programming and broadened the range of synagogue activities. He became involved in many areas of wider community activity; he held office as president of Mount Scopus College; lectured widely, including a period on the staff of the Prahran College; and was the inspirer and founder of the Jewish Museum of Australia which is situated across the road from the St Kilda Hebrew Congregation in Melbourne. He started the outstandingly successful Open University series of lectures, and for many years gave *shiurim* for women. In addition, though often critical of

trends in the rabbinate, he held leadership positions, including the presidency, in the Association of Rabbis and Ministers of Australia and New Zealand. As a spokesman for Judaism in the wider community, he shone; in the Victorian Council of Christians and Jews, in particular, he played a leading and often decisive role.

He retired at the age of 60, but filled his retirement with constant activity, including the development of his unique personal library and Judaica collection and leading Jewish-interest tours to various countries including Israel. He was in great demand as a speaker, lecturer and writer, and found ever new opportunities for the expression of his talents. Gifted with a fine voice, he founded the Melbourne Jewish Men's Choir, and enjoyed leading synagogue services.

He was an unrepentant proponent of modern orthodoxy, and he insisted that Judaism had to be understood and practised rationally and without superstition. He was a warm and loyal friend and colleague, and his countless admirers find it hard to imagine the future without him. To his wife Shirley, sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren, sincere sympathy is extended.

Rabbi Raymond Apple

BOOK REVIEWS

ENOUGH ALREADY: AN ANTHOLOGY OF AUSTRALIAN-JEWISH WRITING

edited by Alan Jacobs, St.Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1999

This new collection of writing by Australian Jewish writers is unusual in many ways and contrasts with earlier collections such as *Shalom* and *Pomegranates*. It is, as it claims, a collection of contemporary writing by postwar-born authors. The collection is almost at odds with itself as each piece stirs the emotions in differing ways. Some are heart wrenching insights into identity; others are glaring confrontations. In some cases, the pieces are extracts from larger works. Jacobs states in his foreword (Four Words): 'Jewish writers have always held a mirror up to our collective Jewish soul, monitoring it and providing constant, if sometimes unpleasant, feedback' and his choice of extracts clearly aims to provide this mirror of Australian Jewish life.

Alan Jacobs has chosen to include writers from Melbourne and Sydney and some whose base is the USA. Included are Andrea Goldsmith, Ramona Koval, Bernard Cohen, Elizabeth Wynhausen, Joseph Zaresky, Doris Brett, Brian Castro, Alan Jacobs, Dorothy Porter, Rosa Safransky, Judy Horacek, Sandra Goldbloom, Mark Baker, Tobsha Learner, Lily Brett, Arnold Zable, Ron Elisha, Alex Skovron and Matthew Karpin. Their reminiscences, stories and poems travel from Europe to Australia and back again as they follow the threads of ancestry and identity along the way.

I particularly liked Goldsmith's 'Only Connect', a very personal piece exploring her identity as the 'hyphenate Jew' and Ramona Koval's haunting conversation with her dead mother in 'Samovar' as well as Alex Skovron's Dylan Thomas-like poem 'The Violin maker, the Forest and the Clock'. I was disturbed by Jacobs' own piece 'The Bar Mitzvah of a Nazi' and confronted on many occasions by unconventional characters and themes in some of the writing.

Incredibly, in this age of spell-checkers, two glaring and unforgivable errors appear in Tobsha Learner's 'My Grandfathers' Graves' — Asekaiyi and Serphadic!

I am not sure if the anthology's title *Enough Already* is a *crie de coeur* upon finishing the whole book or simply a trite Jewish expression. However, like a good meal, even though you are replete, it is not long before you start all over again.

Helen Bersten

THE SEARCH FOR AN AUSTRALIAN PARADISE

by Bill Hornadge, Bondi Junction, Imprint, 1999

Bill Hornadge likes to document quirky parts of Australia's past in his easy to read writing style. In this book he traces three centuries of searches for the perfect paradise while making his own social and political comments along the way.

His acknowledgments and bibliographic notes attest to careful research on the forays from his home town of Dubbo. For his chapter on the Kimberley scheme called 'The Israel of Oz', he acknowledges Gettler's *Unpromised Land*, Rubinstein's *Chosen*, Rutland's *Edge of the Diaspora*, Mossenson's *Hebrew, Israelite, Jew* and Medding's *From Assimilation to Group Survival*. Unfortunately his careful research is not always mirrored in his proof reading and niggling errors have crept into this chapter. He spells Herzl as Herz twice.

As background to Steinberg's Australian scheme, he also discusses the Jewish settlement of Birobidzhan in Siberia on the border of Manchuria which had 20,000 Jews in 1914 and 30,000 in 1948. The Jewish episode in Australia will make interesting reading for those who do not know the story and sits well with the other multicultural paradises outlined by Hornadge. He follows this chapter by 'Bob's Kibbutzim Plan' about Bob Hawke's ideas to solve youth unemployment in the 1970s.

An unfortunate omission in an otherwise fascinating book is an index which would have been very useful.

Helen Bersten

BEING GEORGE AND LIKING IT!
Reflections on the life and Work of
George Dreyfus on his 70th birthday, 1998
by Allans Publishing, Richmond, Victoria.
Paperback 150pp. RRP \$19.95.

Originally published in *Music Forum*
(Journal of the Music Council of Australia),
August–September 1999

George Dreyfus is unarguably one of Australia's most successful composers. He would disagree with that assessment, arguing that he has no peer. Modesty has never been one of his failings.

This book gives the impression that George would not feel fully dressed unless he wore a chip on his shoulder, displayed more prominently than his membership of the Order of Australia. He does not take reversals lying down, and uses every possible opportunity to carry the fight into enemy territory. That appears to be one of the purposes of this book. There are others, more praiseworthy.

George's status as a highly significant composer, and one who has raised opportunism to an art form, is based chiefly on his film and television music. That is what loosens the financial floodgates. They remain shut when it comes to what the classical purists would call the serious, high-minded stuff. And so it is that where the reputation of Albinoni depends on an *adagio* (made palatable by someone else), Pachelbel rides on a canon, Paderewski on a minuet, and Rachmaninov came to stand aghast at the popularity of his *C Sharp Minor Prelude*, George Dreyfus floats on *Rush*, the theme of a TV series about the Ballarat goldrush days, which George repeatedly likens to a potential Australian anthem. The royalties from *Rush*, arranged for more instrumental combinations than any piece by Liszt, keep George in clover, after all. *Rush* is played on a sound system in the Gold Museum at Sovereign Hill near Ballarat for 12 hours a day, seven days a week. No shoulder chip there!

The undying feeling of incurable injury which keeps the chip in place was crystallised out of the rejection by The Australian Opera of *The Gilt-Edged Kid* (1970), one of six operas it had commissioned, and among those it then declined to perform, for reasons which only George could possibly find incomprehensible. Those reasons must be pretty obvious to anyone familiar with the opera's subject matter of which, at the composer's insistence, Lynne Strahan made a far from unworthy libretto. The subject is the virtual glorification of a university-based anti-establishment rabble rouser (an

actual individual who, now of course much older but no wiser, recently fell foul of the law for inciting people not to vote at an Australian election). That operatic story would certainly have left a lot of seats in the soon-to-open Sydney Opera House bumless, and the powers that were did not want to dim a blaze of patriotic glory by supporting a revolutionary plot. George Dreyfus fought tooth and nail against the rejection, but to no effect.

So what does this new book give us? There are thirteen essays, atrociously proof-read, of which nine are by the birthday boy himself, and one each by Joel Crotty, Lynne Strahan, Manfred Bruston and Volker Elis Pilgrim. To read them all you must be bilingual, for about half of the book is in German.

Indeed, George Dreyfus' attitude to Germany is controversial. He escaped the Nazis at the age of 11 with his older brother Richard but without their parents (who escaped a little later), in the nick of time, but many members of his family perished in the Holocaust. Most people in that situation felt, after the war, that the less they had to do with Germany, the better. George took an opposite attitude, going out of his way to seek fame there, to the extent that he wrote two operas on German subjects (so far unperformed in Australia) — *Rathenau*, with a libretto by Volker Elis Pilgrim, and *Die Marx Sisters*, with the same librettist. *Rathenau* was premiered in Kassel, *Die Marx Sisters* in Bielefeld, and both were copiously reviewed favourably and unfavourably — and then apparently committed to the bottomless pit in which the vast majority of modern operas find rest after the initial hullabaloo. George has gained a great deal of artistic mileage out of his German origins, which is something many people find hard to swallow.

The essay by Lynne Strahan titled *The Long And Winding Road* is eminently fair-minded. She writes that George Dreyfus is "both awesomely ancient and experienced and frighteningly young and blind"; she calls him a wise old man and the me-too adolescent, and remarks that "the brat hardly turns into the seer, and the seer remains aloof". But let us be objective and point out that quite a few of the Dreyfus compositions have been important trail-blazers, most obviously the *Sextet for Didjeridu and Wind Instruments*, *The Adventures of Sebastian*, *The Fox*, the *Australian Folk Mass*, the *Galgenlieder*, the opera *Garni Sands*, and the youthful *Trio for Flute, Clarinet and Bassoon*. That is a collection of which any composer can be proud — and there is far more. It adds up to full justification for a composer to blow his own trumpet, in this case a bassoon.

The 13 essays in the book are mostly reprints from other publications, some of them obscure or defunct. Some originated as talks

and have a colloquial air of informality not without a strong component of charm. But they also have a disdain for punctuation and syntax. Quite the best piece, albeit in German, is the objectively biographical essay by Manfred Burston titled "Mr. New Music In Australien".

George Dreyfus needs no publicity agent; he does the job supremely well himself, starting with an earlier volume *The Last Frivolous Book*. He sometimes does himself a disservice by harping on the rejection slips rather than the voluminous array of praise. He is, and one hopes that he will long continue to be, an exceptionally imaginative and wide-ranging composer who has made Australian music far richer. He is his own guilt-edged kid and revels in the role.

Fred Blanks

GENEALOGICAL ENQUIRIES

This list represents enquiries made to the AJHS until April 2000. If you did not initiate the enquiry but would like to add information or receive information, please write to our Genealogist at 385 Abercrombie Street, Darlington, NSW, 2008.

ABRAHAMS, H & EC, Goulburn

ALEXANDER, Hyam married to Charlotte Wilson at Windsor 1844,
children Henry George and Hyam

BENEDIK, Else, wife of Robert, died New York, 1990s?

BENNETT, Louis son of Joseph Samuel Bennett

COHEN, Abner & Jenny, Maitland 1908

COHEN, Charlotte Ada daughter of Richard Frederick Cohen &
Alice (née King)

COHEN, Mark & Ernestine (Esther) née LYONS

DE SAXE, Wilfred Emanuel born Melbourne

FINKELSTEIN (FINGELSTEIN), Hannah, sister of Morris, seeking
parents

GOLDSTEIN, AM, Goulburn

GOODMAN, Irene Liselotte married to Gerard, died 1996?

HARRIS, George Carlton, born Melbourne, information requested re
first marriage 1906

HERSHCOVITZ, Louis, Rosa & Alec Myer, changed surname to
LEWIS

ISAAC, Ann born Norfolk, England, 1790, married to John GREEN

ISAACS, Isidore & Alice, daughter Annette, Maitland/Newcastle 1908

ISAACS, Lewis Benjamin & Elizabeth (née Hart) married Melbourne
circa 1864

ISON, Levi married to Martha Barling, Tomakin NSW, Nov 1868

JOSEPH, Arthur Wellesley

LEVY, Adolf, died 1956 East Roseville

LEVY, John died October 1852, aged 39 buried at Grenfell

LEVY, Michael married to Emma Blanche Rollison, child of Lazarus
& Sarah (née Myers)

LYONS, Alfred & Sarah (née Hyatt)

MAGNUS, Morris Moses and family

MARKS, Benjamin married to Maria King, Goulburn 1874

MUSKOVITCH, Morris married to Lena Carlish, son Emanuel MOR-
RIS married Miriam Lewis (UK)

NATHAN, Johanna & Dorinda

NATHAN, Rachel, born in Windsor 1845, married James Mullins

PHILLIPS, Eleazer Lazarus married to (1) Esther Rodriques — (2)
Leah Rodriques; son Philip married to Amelia BARNETT

ROSENBLUM, Alois, from Shanghai, refugee

YATES, Lydia, Goulburn

NEW MEMBERS (May 1999–April 2000)

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STEIN	Edgar & Pamela
SUGERMAN	Dr David A.
WOOLF	Frank

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Raymond Apple, AM, BA, LLB, MLitt, senior Rabbi of the Great Synagogue Sydney and past president of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Inc.

Helen Bersten, BA, Dip Lib, a member of the AJHS Committee and its honorary archivistsince 1979.

Fred R. Blanks, AM, is a Sydney music critic.

Sophie Caplan, OAM, BA, Dip Ed, MEd (Hons), vice-president of the AJHS Committee, founder and president of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society, and editor of its Newsletter, *The Kosher Koala*.

Neville Cohen worked in the family furniture business for 30 years. He is now a para-legal in his wife Totti's law practice. He is at present researching his family's history.

Shlomo Etzioni, formerly Sol Woodman, was active in Australian Habonim after World War II before settling in Israel as a member of *Kibbutz Tzora*.

Lionel Fredman, MA, LLB (Melb), AM (Stanford), PhD (Tulane), formerly Associate Professor of History University of Newcastle 1960-1993.

Astrid Mignon Kirchhof, MA, undertook her graduate studies in the School of History at the University of New South Wales and has returned to her native Germany.

Morris S. Ochert, OAM, ASTC, (MechEng), MIE Aust, CP Eng., Queensland correspondent for the AJHS, researcher and author of many articles on Australian Jewish history, specialising in Queensland topics, a retired engineer and honorary life member of the Institution of Engineers of Australia. He is an honorary life member of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation.

Benjamin Phillips, BA (Hons), at present undertaking his doctoral studies at Brandeis University, Boston, USA.

Louise Rosenberg, OAM, a member of the AJHS for over thirty years. Honorary Secretary for 25 years, including 11 years as Secretary/Treasurer from 1966 to 1977. She is a regular contributor to three publications: the *AJHS Journal*, the *Great Synagogue Journal*, and the AJWS Jewish Community Services' *Keeping in Touch*.

Heinz Peter Witting, B. Com, Associate of RMIT (Mech. Eng).
Retired public servant and export consultant. Member of the ACT
Jewish community and the Canberra Branch of the AJHS.

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