

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL



VOL. XVII 2004



PART 3

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

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

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

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A complete list of the Society's office-bearers is printed on the back cover. Information about membership in the Society and its other activities and resources may be obtained from the Honorary Secretaries in Melbourne or Sydney.

The Editors welcome suggestions for articles and manuscripts dealing with any aspect of the Australian Jewish experience. 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 CD-ROM, saved in Microsoft Word, or sent by email to howfree@epartments.com.au as a Microsoft Word attachment. The disk should be sent with an identical doublespaced printout, and may be accompanied by illustrations, to Dr Howard A. Freeman, Apartment 815, 250 St Kilda Road, Southbank 3006. 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.

Communications regarding publication should be sent to the Editors of the respective Journals: Victoria – Dr Howard A. Freeman, Apartment 815, 250 St Kilda Road, Southbank 3006 (email: howfree@epartments.com.au); New South Wales – Dr Suzanne D. Rutland, Mandelbaum House, 385 Abercrombie Street, Darlinghurst, NSW 2008 (email: suzanne.rutland@arts.usyd.edu.au).

Front cover:

Unknown photographer

Portrait of E. L. Montefiore, date unknown

From album of Art Gallery of New South Wales Trustees' portraits

Collection: Art Gallery of NSW Archive

Publisher of Victorian Journal: Hybrid Publishers

ISSN 0819-0615

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November 2004

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Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect an official position of the Society.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

A bumper crop of fascinating articles from numerous sources has meant that this year we have had to hold over some material for the future, for reasons of space and cost. This fact should not discourage authors from submitting their material, but it may give them the opportunity to revise or supplement the content of their articles before publication, and we apologise to those whose contributions have not yet appeared in print.

Editing a journal like ours is no small feat. In each issue we try to maintain a balance between articles relating to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – it is perhaps premature to add 'twenty-first'! – and between personal memoirs and reflections and articles that are strictly scholarly. We always welcome submissions of various types for consideration.

This issue of the *Journal* displays a happy combination of the academic and the anecdotal. With the article by Ephraim Finch, on the Harrington Street Cemetery, we even verge on the investigative. We had hoped to add an article on the same subject by a forensic archaeologist from Hobart, but unfortunately it did not meet the deadline and will appear in a future issue.

The cover article on Eliezer Levi Montefiore is the result of a long labour of love by Rodney Benjamin, describing as it does the life of one of the fathers of the Australian insurance industry who at the same time was a superb water-colourist and gallery director. New ground for the *Journal* is broken in this article by the inclusion of four colour plates, albeit at great cost, since the article would be incomplete without them.

The firsthand account of the agricultural settlement at Orrvale was written by the late David Feiglin, son of a founding family and the first child to be born at the settlement. It supplements with authority related material that has appeared in earlier issues of this *Journal* and elsewhere.

Philip Mendes' article on the decline of the Jewish Council completes the picture of this organisation painted by the author in previous articles, and will be of particular interest to the many readers who have retained personal memories of the issues mentioned.

Two proud Melbourne institutions get coverage: sport and business are close to the hearts of many, and are described, respectively, in the articles on Cranbourne Golf Club and the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce.

Forgotten memories come back to life in the story of the rediscovery by the citizens of Krotoszyn, Poland, of the family of Sir John Monash, co-written by the general's great-granddaughter, Caroline Durré, and a Polish historian, Rafal Witkowski. The authors describe a unique act of commemoration and return.

The recurrence of Lorraine Freeman's series '100 Years Ago' reminds us that this is the centenary of the deaths of Theodor Herzl and of the Reverend Elias Blaubaum, both of whom were, in their different spheres, profoundly important and deeply mourned, as is the late Godfrey Cohen OAM whose obituary is published to honour a generous and kindly benefactor of this Society.

As usual, our book reviews cover a wide spectrum of Jewish relevance. Many of the works concerned were published in Melbourne, and some are by previously unpublished authors.

Again we thank our contributors for subjecting themselves to our pressures and deadlines, and our ever helpful and patient publisher, Louis de Vries of Hybrid Publishers, who makes all possible. Finally, as the editor, I again owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr Hilary Rubinstein, my highly experienced associate editor, who unfailingly adds value to information and with her great good humour rescues readers from boredom and confusion.

Dr Howard A. Freeman (Editor)

Dr Hilary L. Rubinstein (Associate Editor)

THE ARCHIVES OF AJHS VIC. INC.

Under the approving gaze of the white marble busts of Sir Redmond Barry and Bishop Perry, the original trustees of the Library, a reception was given on 10 February 2004 by the State Library of Victoria in the Red Rotunda, to acknowledge the transfer of the AJHS Vic. Inc. Archive into the custody of the Manuscript Department.

Prizes were awarded to the young winners of the Myra and Godfrey Cohen awards in the 2003 Jewish History Essay Competition for schools, and were presented by our patron Sir Zelman Cowen and by Mr Godfrey Cohen.

The President of the Library Board, Mr Sam Lipski AM, and the State Librarian, Ms Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, welcomed some 90 guests, representing the stakeholders of the archive, to the magnificent and newly refurbished SLV.

Our archive will be held in the Manuscript Department and will be available for public access, with some customary sensible restrictions, and consists of 107 separate Collections, all sorted and indexed over many years by Beverley Davis OAM, formerly our Honorary Archivist.

The spectrum of the archive is huge and covers congregations, organisations and individuals, as well as places, personalities and events. The records include correspondence, minute books, films, periodicals, videotapes, audiotapes, images, microfiche and microfilm and CD-ROM.

The creators of the records range from 'Arch Ellis' to 'YMHA', and truly cover almost the whole Victorian Jewish experience from the earliest days.

ACCESSING THE AJHS VIC. ARCHIVES

As mentioned elsewhere in this Journal, our archival holdings are now located in the Australian Manuscripts Section of the State Library of Victoria. They consist of 107 separate collections, all sorted and indexed over many years. They are available for public access, with some customary sensible restrictions, and the initial step is to ring staff in the Manuscripts Section of the SLV on (03) 8664 7007 between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekdays.

The spectrum of the archive is huge and covers congregations, organisations and individuals, as well as places, personalities and events. The records include correspondence, minute books, films, periodicals, videotapes, audiotapes, images, microfiche and microfilm and CD-ROM. Alphabetically, the provenance of the records ranges from 'Arch Ellis' to 'YMHA', and they truly cover almost the whole Victorian Jewish experience from the earliest days. The sheer size and complexity of this archive means, however, that the manuscript librarians at the SLV will need time to completely 'digest' the material so that it can be more easily accessed by students and scholars or even the simply curious.

Our extensive and important library continues to repose at the Jewish Museum of Australia (contact receptionist on (03) 9534 0083).

Additionally, please note that the large and important genealogical holdings of the AJHS are now housed with the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society. Inquirers should email: ajgs@exist.com.au or contact the Honorary Secretary of the AJGS, Lionel Sharpe, on (03) 9523 6738.

It is the policy of this Society to welcome, and indeed encourage, all forms of bona-fide scholarship related to the material within our archive. This policy will be facilitated by the helpful and insightful assistance of the manuscript librarians at SLV, the staff at JMA, and the volunteers at AJGS.

General inquiries can always be directed to the President of AJHS Vic Inc, Howard Freeman, on (03) 9686 0044 or the Honorary Secretary, Rhona Rosenberg, on (03) 9576 8223.

ELIEZER MONTEFIORE (1820-94): ARTIST, GALLERY DIRECTOR AND INSURANCE PIONEER – THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT AUSTRALIAN JEWISH ARTIST

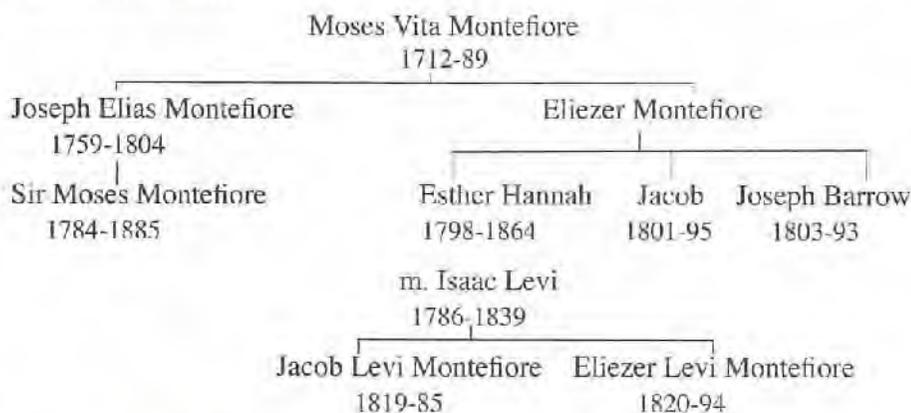
Rodney Benjamin

Eliezer Montefiore was a rare figure in nineteenth century Australia. He combined an artistic vocation, both as an artist and an arts administrator, with a career as a highly respected and successful businessman. He was a skilled amateur artist whose work was exhibited in both Melbourne and Sydney alongside the paintings of the leading professional artists of his day. He read widely and showed a broad appreciation of art and of art history in his writing. He was a moving force in the creation of societies of artists in both Melbourne and Sydney. He was so highly esteemed in the artistic world that on his retirement from business at the age of 72 he was appointed the first full-time director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. His business interests in Australia were first in shipping and general trade, and then for most of his commercial career, in general insurance. In 1884 the insurance industry in Sydney formed The Insurance Institute of New South Wales. Montefiore was so well regarded by his peers that he was elected, during his absence overseas, to be the first president of the Institute.¹

A number of writers have examined Montefiore's life with an emphasis on his artistic interests and as an artist in his own right.² One of his obituaries described his life as being 'associated with commercial pursuits during the greater portion of his lifetime, [but] a love of art was his ruling passion.'³ I first came across his name when I was researching the history of insurance in Australia.⁴ Montefiore was mentioned frequently in the journal *The Australasian Insurance and Banking Record (AIBR)*, which is an important source for the history of insurance and banking in Australia, particularly for the nineteenth century. In addition to his artistic and business interests he was the New South Wales insurance correspondent for the *AIBR* for a number of years.

This article puts more emphasis on Montefiore's commercial career and on his family life and connections than other discussions of his life have done. It was his family and his career that brought him to settle in Australia: at first in Adelaide, subsequently in Melbourne and ultimately in Sydney. The pinnacle of his commercial career was reached in an era when overland transport was slow and difficult. Ships comprised the preferred method of transport of goods and people. Insurance of ships and their cargoes was the major part of an insurance company's portfolio. Montefiore was regarded in Sydney as the expert on marine insurance.

The Montefiore family exerted a considerable influence over the development of Australia during the nineteenth century. Perhaps at this point we should introduce a truncated family tree that will provide a point of reference for the reader of the relationship between the Montefiores who were involved in Australian life during the nineteenth century.



(Sources: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Macmillan, New York, 1972. Entry under Sir Moses Montefiore, p. 274 and Montefiore Website for Esther's and Isaac Levi's dates.)

Eliezer Levi and his older brother Jacob were born in the British West Indies. Their father's name was Levi. Their mother's maiden name was Montefiore. Eliezer and most of his siblings added Montefiore to their birth names and took this well-known name as their surname.⁵ As can be seen from the family tree Jacob and Eliezer's mother, Esther, was a first cousin of Sir Moses Montefiore. Several other members of the Montefiore family had settled in the British West Indies. Eliezer's mother's brothers Jacob and Joseph Barrow Montefiore, who also played prominent roles in this story, were born in Jamaica. Their father was a sugar planter and merchant. The main product of the islands was sugar cane grown in plantations worked by slave labour. Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1834, rendering the sugar plantations less economic, and consequently all the members of the family left the West Indies. (Incidentally, Sir Moses Montefiore played a significant role in the abolition of slavery. He organised a loan of £15 million that enabled the British Government to compensate slave owners for the loss of their free labour.)⁶

Although one reference gives Eliezer's father's family as having lived in Portsmouth for several generations, another refers to him having business interests in Belgium. One of Eliezer's brothers, George, who retained the name of Levi, became a senator in Belgium. An obituary for Eliezer declared that he 'passed his earlier years in Belgium, where several members of his family have long resided, and there became imbued with a taste for Flemish art'.⁷ It is perhaps significant, in view of Eliezer's interest in etching and engraving, that his paternal grandfather was

an engraver by occupation.⁸ Eliezer and his brother Jacob were both accomplished amateur artists, but whether they received formal art training is not known.

Eliezer's connection with Australia started when he settled in Adelaide in 1842. He moved to Melbourne in 1853 and then to Sydney in 1871. His arrival in Adelaide and his subsequent moves were all connected with his older brother Jacob's extensive business interests in Australia. The choice of Adelaide was probably related to two factors. One was his uncle Jacob's involvement with the foundation of the colony in South Australia. This story is told later in this paper. The second was his older brother Jacob's business interests in the new colony.

The references to Eliezer in the *AIBR*, an otherwise very dry business journal, often mentioned his interest in art. This was quite unusual when referring to the manager of an insurance company in the nineteenth century. One article commented that those who called at his office to talk business would first be shown the latest picture that he had added to his art collection before any commercial discussion commenced.

Eliezer wrote articles for art and other serious journals and spoke at meetings of artists' societies. He was at the other end of the world from the centres of European art, but kept himself up-to-date with artistic developments. His essays, speeches and letters make reference to Ruskin's and Fuseli's writings, to fifteenth and sixteenth century Italian artists, to the paintings of Turner and to the then current European artists, and to the Pre-Raphaelites in Britain. He counted amongst his friends in Australia the artists William Strutt, Louis Buvelot, Eugene von Guerard, Conrad Martens and Nicholas Chevalier. And, importantly, he was a considerable artist in his own right using the mediums of pencil, pen, charcoal and, particularly, etching.

Montefiore's obituary in the *AIBR* ran into two columns. The writer was effusive, even for the period:

Mr. Montefiore was widely known and respected in insurance circles throughout the colonies. In private life [he] was noted for his suavity and good breeding, and his handsome face and erect figure – he scarcely looked older than sixty – and will be widely missed in social circles.

A marble bust of Montefiore is often displayed in the entrance to the National Gallery of New South Wales. There is a frequently published photograph of him. Both were executed late in his life, and they bear out the description in the *AIBR*. But what of the private man? His family life was tragic. He married his first cousin, Esther, his uncle Jacob's daughter. Esther gave birth to twelve children, five sons and seven daughters. Four sons and one daughter died in infancy, and another daughter died aged five. Their only surviving son died when he was 34. Esther died when she was 53. Her widower did not remarry. None of his personal correspondence or documents appear to have survived. His character has to be gleaned from his business letters, his published writings, and how his peers regarded him.

It is interesting to note that his mother was a first cousin of Sir Moses Montefiore, the great Anglo-Jewish leader and philanthropist after whom the Montefiore Homes were named. Sir Moses became a London broker and banker, made a huge fortune, and retired at the age of 40, devoting the remainder of his extraordinarily long life to philanthropy generally but particularly to the welfare of Jewish people in England and elsewhere in the world, actively concerning himself with the plight of Jews wherever they were being persecuted or denied justice.⁹ Sir Moses died at the age of 101 in 1885. In 1884 there were functions to celebrate his centenary in many parts of the world. In Victoria a 'Centenary Fund' was set up in October 1884. Services were held in the Melbourne, East Melbourne, Sandhurst (Bendigo) and Ballarat synagogues. The Melbourne Jewish Club held a ball in honour of the occasion. When Sir Moses died the Melbourne Jewish community decided to build a Montefiore Jewish Home.¹⁰ However, it was not until 1897 that a Montefiore Memorial Hall was built on the site of the present Home in St Kilda Road. A move to rename the existing 'Jewish Almshouses' in St Kilda Road to the 'Montefiore Homes' at that time failed. It was not until 1960 that the name was formally adopted.¹¹ The Montefiore Homes in Sydney were named after Sir Moses in 1887.¹²

Eliezer Montefiore's maternal great-grandfather, Moses Vita Montefiore, grandfather of Sir Moses, had settled in England during the eighteenth century, the first of the family to do so. A number of members of the Montefiore family came to Australia in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹³ Joseph Barrow Montefiore (hereafter cited as JBM) was the first of the family to arrive; he reached Sydney in 1829. He had been a tea broker, but at the age of 23 he bought a seat on the London Stock Exchange to become one of the twelve licensed 'Jew Brokers' in the City. Two years later the distant colony of New South Wales appeared to offer better commercial prospects. On 11 June 1828 he wrote to Sir George Murray, Secretary of State for the Colonies seeking a grant of land in the colony. As an indication of the influence that the Montefiore family had in London circles, his letter was sent under cover of one from Treasury official G. R. Dawson, who observed to Sir George: 'it seldom falls to the lot of the Secretary of State for the Colonies to receive a more desirable application'. JBM's letter to Sir George read:

'Having for many years paid great attention to the progress of New South Wales I am now desirous of removing thereto with my family to establish myself as an agriculturalist. I respectfully solicit a grant of five thousand acres of land, which if accorded, I shall forthwith proceed to the Colony with my wife, my child, brother and three domestics and a capital of ten thousand pounds. I further purpose to take with me a quantity of the most improved breed of Merino Sheep.'

His letter was accompanied by references from N. M. Rothschild, a Major Moody and two non-Jewish MPs. Dawson received a reply from Murray dated 27 June 1828, stating that the regulations only allowed for a land grant of four square miles (2,560 acres) but that he would convey to the governor of New South

Wales his authority to extend a grant to Montefiore of 5,000 acres. This Murray did by a letter to Governor Darling dated 27 June 1828.¹⁴

JBM arrived in Sydney in February 1829 with his wife Rebecca and their two children, his wife's brother George Mocatta, and JBM's business partner David Furtado. The men started a firm of general merchants, J. B. Montefiore & Co. JBM proceeded to extend his original land grants. By 1838 his grant totalled more than 12,500 acres.¹⁵ Much of this investment in agriculture was in partnership with his brother Jacob, who remained in England. David Furtado had moved down to Hobart to establish a branch of the firm there.

British capital flowed into the Australian colonies in response to the growth of the profitable wool industry. In the years from 1830 to 1835 wool production quadrupled and then doubled again in the next five years. In addition to privately subscribed capital, loans by banks to finance this expansion grew by some 700 per cent during the decade. The growth in banking created a new mercantile opportunity. The genesis of the Bank of Australasia has been ascribed to a colonist, T. P. Macqueen, who went to London in 1832. There he interested a number of wealthy City men in the project. One of these was JBM's brother, Jacob. The implication of the story is that Macqueen was acting for JBM in this exercise. The Bank of Australasia was granted a charter in London in 1834. Jacob was one of its London directors and another member of the Montefiore family was its London stockbroker. At the same time arrangements were being set in place for operations in Australia. Jacob was commissioned to arrange for JBM to form a local board in Sydney and for David Furtado to do the same in Hobart. The Bank of Australasia was the direct precursor of the present ANZ Bank.¹⁶

An indication of the extent of the boom taking place in Australia during the 1830s was the necessity for the Bank of Australasia to increase its capital from its original £200,000 by a similar sum in 1837 and again in 1839 taking the capital to £600,000.¹⁷

In 1837 JBM's 18-year-old nephew Jacob Levi Montefiore (JLM), Eliezer's older brother, arrived in Sydney to join his uncle. JLM was born in Bridgetown, Barbados, on 11 January 1819. It is not known when the Levi brothers added the Montefiore name and adopted it as their surname. Independent and gifted, JLM set up in business on his own, after being in his uncle's firm for only a short time. He was, among his accomplishments, a playwright and librettist. His translation from the French of a play, *The Duel*, was produced in Sydney in 1843. He wrote the libretto for an opera, *Don John of Austria*, with music by Isaac Nathan, which was produced in Sydney in 1847. He was also an amateur artist.

A slump followed the economic boom of the 1830s in the Australian colonies. By the end of 1840 the first signs appeared, and by mid-1843 the depression was at its worst. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 6 May 1843 reported that there had been more than 600 insolvencies in New South Wales during 1842. Two days later a public meeting was held in Sydney to discuss 'the present alarming and depressed

state of monetary affairs in the Colony'. This was followed by the appointment of the aptly named 'A Select Committee on Monetary Confusion' to take evidence on the causes of the problems.¹⁸

JBM was very badly affected by the crash. The great wealth he had accumulated in just over a decade had disappeared. The firm went bankrupt in 1841. JBM and his family returned to London during that year. JLM followed his uncle's retreat to England in 1844 but returned a year later, supported in his business ventures by a partnership with a wealthy Scot, Robert Graham. JLM opened a new business, Montefiore, Graham & Co.

In Adelaide

During the 1830s a movement had developed in England to establish a new colony in South Australia that was free of convicts, and where land would have to be bought instead of being offered under the land grant system that operated in New South Wales and Western Australia. Nor would the new colony have an established church. Jacob Montefiore, JBM's brother, who until then had never been to Australia but had investments there with his brother, was in 1834 appointed one of the Colonisation Commissioners for South Australia under an Act of the British Parliament.¹⁹ Colonel Torrens was chairman of the Commission. Sir Moses Montefiore had some influence on Jacob's appointment²⁰ which was to have a considerable effect on future developments for the Montefiore family in Australia.

Jacob Montefiore visited Adelaide in 1843. A dinner was given in his honour at the Shakespeare Tavern on 1 June. It was attended by the governor and a number of government officials and leading members of the town. Jacob was thanked for his indefatigable efforts for the advancement of the colony.²¹

There are earlier records in the South Australian shipping lists of members of the Montefiore family travelling to Adelaide. 'Mr. Montefiore' arrived there from Sydney on 24 August 1839. This was probably Eliezer's brother Jacob. His firm had been appointed agents for the government of the province of South Australia in New South Wales in 1837. 'Mr. E. Montefiore' arrived from Hobart on 5 April 1841. This may have been Eliezer, who then went on to Sydney to meet his brother before returning to Adelaide to settle there the following year, but there is no record of a departure from Adelaide to confirm this.

There is a shipping record of 'E. L. Montefiore' arriving in Adelaide on 1 July 1842 on board the Emma from Sydney. This was Eliezer arriving to set up in business in the new colony. Adelaide directories list E. L. Montefiore in Rundle Street in 1843. From 1844 to 1846 he is listed as a merchant in King William Street. It could be assumed that he was trading just on his own account at this stage; the businesses of his brother Jacob (JLM) and his uncle Joseph (JBM) in Sydney were either failing or failed.

But a Montefiore could not easily be kept down. Eliezer's uncle Joseph (JBM)

returned to Australia in 1846, having recovered from the collapse of his fortune in New South Wales only a few years before. He arrived in Adelaide on 27 July 1846, accompanied by his wife, nine daughters and three sons. Two servants were with them to husband the Montefiore belongings of 300 packages, and a harp and a piano, which were on the ship with the family.²²

The Adelaide directories for 1847 register the businesses of both E. L. Montefiore and Montefiore & Company (JBM's business) in King William Street. J. B. Montefiore is also listed in Grenfell Street, perhaps as a residence. From 1848 there is only one listing, that of Montefiore & Company in King William Street. This suggests that Eliezer had joined with his uncle in business. When Eliezer was in business on his own he advertised that he held an agency for the Australian Colonial and General Life Assurance Company. It is the first indication of his contact with the industry in which he was so involved later in his life.

Eliezer was in his mid-twenties by then. The total Jewish population of Adelaide in 1846 was only 58 persons,²³ so there were few marriageable Jewish girls available for a young man with an eye to wedlock. For Eliezer there were several of his first cousins, JBM's older daughters, to choose from. The second Jewish marriage celebrated in Adelaide was on 3 May 1848 'at East Terrace, E. L. Montefiore Esq., to Esther, second daughter of Joseph B. Montefiore Esq.'²⁴ The ceremony was performed by Barnett Nathan, 'according to the rites and ceremonies of German Jews.'²⁵ Esther Hannah Barrow Montefiore was 19 years old; she was born in London in 1829.

The National Library of Australia holds a watercolour of Eliezer's house in Adelaide.²⁶ It shows a solid brick building, painted white, with a surrounding verandah, a thatched roof and outbuildings. The Library notes that the drawing is 'after S. T. Gill' although one expert attributes it to Gill himself, who was in Adelaide at the time. It may well be Eliezer's own work, which was influenced by Gill.

The Adelaide Hebrew Congregation was formed in 1848 several months after Eliezer's marriage. There is no record of Eliezer being formally connected with the congregation, but there is evidence of his involvement with the Jewish community before then. In the year following his arrival he joined with other Jews in the new colony to apply for a grant of land for a Jewish cemetery. Then, in 1847, he was engaged in correspondence with the South Australian Colonial Secretary in which he described himself as 'having been appointed Trustee on behalf of the Members of the Jewish Community in this Province'. The letter was occasioned by a debate in the South Australian Legislative Council on the introduction of state aid to religion.

The colony had been founded in 1836 on the premise that Church and State should be separated. It followed that the state should not financially support any religion. The only reference to religion contained in the South Australian Foundation Act of 1834 was that clergymen should be appointed for the established

Church of England or Scotland. By 1847 only one Church of England clergyman had been appointed; his stipend was £250 a year. This had been the only expenditure by the state for religious purposes in a decade. In 1847 the question of whether or not there should be general state aid to religion in the colony was still an issue of contention. The original resolution for the introduction of state aid considered by the Legislative Council in 1846 was passed by a majority of only one. It proposed financial support for 'different denominations of Christians in the ratio of their numbers according to census returns'.

This brought a reaction from the Jews of Adelaide, who petitioned the Council that they should share in any distribution 'for religious or educational purposes out of public revenues to which they so largely contribute'. This had some effect. Although the final vote of the Legislative Council was that a total of only £1,110 10s for a half year be divided amongst the different organised sects of Christians, a supplementary vote of £2 18s was granted to the 'Jews for Religious and Educational purposes' on a per capita basis. As this was for a half year, the Jews of South Australia were to receive £5 16s in the next year.

This vote occasioned some light-hearted banter in the press on the following day: what could the Jewish community do with so large a sum? But there was no organised Jewish community to apply for the money, so no application for the grant was made. The next year the Jews of South Australia were still not an organised body so they were not able to apply for the grant that had been allocated to them.

At that point Eliezer unwisely thrust himself into the breach. He applied for the grant 'having been appointed Trustee on behalf of the Members of the Jewish Community of the Province.' This was too great an opportunity for a legal mind to ignore. Knowing that the Jews of South Australia had not formally organised themselves into a religious community, the advocate-general responded:

The Lieutenant-Governor is empowered by proclamation to direct in what manner Trustees may be appointed by, or on behalf, [of persons] of the Jewish persuasion. As Mr. Montefiore states he has been appointed Trustee on behalf of the members of that community it might perhaps be convenient that Mr. Montefiore should describe his proper mode of appointment, which would suggest for His Excellency's approval the terms of the proclamation.

There is no further official correspondence on the subject. Game, set and match to the Advocate-General. State aid to religion ceased in South Australia in 1851 and the Jewish community's grants were never paid.²⁷

There are incomplete newspaper announcements concerning the children born to Eliezer and Esther while they were living in Adelaide. One newspaper recorded an unnamed son born on 6 May 1849. He has subsequently been identified as Arthur Augustus Levi Montefiore. Another recorded the death of a second son,

Frederick, aged three months, on 9 June 1852 but his birth does not appear to have been announced.

There is no surviving record of Eliezer being involved in formal artistic activity while he was in Adelaide, but a number of his works from this period survive in the Mitchell Library in Sydney. They are of historical interest. Two watercolours concern local Aboriginal life. One bears the title of 'Aborigines Making Fire' and the other 'Bushmen Preparing to Fire on Aborigines'. The latter is of a group of Aborigines making a corroboree round a fire at night. In the foreground are two white men in kneeling positions with rifles to their shoulders. Whether Eliezer was a witness to such a scene, or it was painted from a story is not known. All his surviving work derives from observed landscapes and people or copies of other's works of art, so it is doubtful that he would have painted the scene from his imagination alone.²⁸

In Melbourne

It is certain that Eliezer and his wife and their surviving son, three-year-old Arthur, left Adelaide during the last quarter of 1852 intending to settle in Melbourne. Establishing the precise date is difficult. The Melbourne *Argus* 'Passenger Index' lists a total of 45 trips made by various members of the Montefiore family to or from Melbourne between the years 1846 and 1853. Most of the passengers are identified just as 'Mr. Montefiore', with no initials. Similar lists to and from the Port of Adelaide are marginally more precise. Eliezer is identified in Adelaide records as 'Mr. E. L.' on three trips that he made to Sydney from Adelaide during the years 1846 and 1847. It would seem that Eliezer and his family left Adelaide in October 1852. They stopped in Melbourne on their way to Sydney where they stayed until November of that year. Eliezer went back to Adelaide in November 1852 returning to Melbourne in late December. Again this was a stopover on the way to Sydney. They did not come back to Melbourne to settle until March 1853.

But the arrival of another part of the Montefiore family in Melbourne predated Eliezer's move there by more than a year. On 4 December 1851 the Melbourne *Argus* Shipping Intelligence listed Mr. and Mrs. Montefiore and family and three servants as cabin passengers on the *Vimiera*, which had arrived in Melbourne the day before. The ship had left London on 1 September 1851. The whole of the ship's cargo was consigned to Sydney. It had anchored in Hobson's Bay only to disembark a few of its passengers for Melbourne. On 29 December 1851 the same paper carried an advertisement:

The gold diggers of Victoria are informed that the undersigned has made arrangements to enable him to receive their gold dust for sale; and he is prepared to pay them cash advances on the same. Gold forwarded to him per escort will receive the strictest attention. Commission on sales effected at 1%. Opposite the Bank of New South Wales.

— Leslie J. Montefiore.

The Bank of New South Wales was on the north-east corner of Collins and William Streets. This placed the Montefiore premises at Market Square on Collins Street between Williams and Market Streets. The Melbourne directory dated 1851 lists Leslie J. Montefiore as a gold broker on Market Square.

This part of the Montefiore family had sailed, unknowingly, into the Victorian gold rush. The family was that of Eliezer's uncle Jacob Montefiore who had come to Melbourne rather than going back to Adelaide. Leslie Jacob Montefiore may have been Jacob Montefiore's son. Records show Leslie as being born in England in 1830 and having died there in 1909.²⁹ There are no subsequent references to him that have enabled identification.

It is clear that Jacob and his family had come to Melbourne to set up as merchants rather than to take advantage of the gold rush. Jacob could have known nothing of the rush when he embarked on the journey from England on 1 September. Edward Hargreaves had discovered gold near Bathurst in New South Wales in February 1851, but the first 'rush' to the gold fields in the Wellington district of New South Wales did not take place for three months, in May 1851. It was not until August 1851 that major finds of gold were made in the Ballarat district of Victoria and the 'rush' to those fields did not happen until September.³⁰ The news of the gold finds in Victoria could not have reached Jacob before he left London. The only means of communication was by sea mail that would have taken at least two months to reach England. Rather, the Montefiores were making for the boomtown of Australia. The growth of Melbourne from a cluster of huts in 1834 to a thriving centre of the grazing and agricultural activity in the surrounding areas made it the best commercial prospect of any city in Australia, even before the gold rush.

Leslie Montefiore was entering a crowded market of gold buyers. The Victorian gold rush soon brought a bunch of eager 'capitalists', as they proudly called themselves at the time, into the market as buyers of gold. By mid-October the Melbourne newspapers carried a column of advertisements from these buyers trying to attract the attention of successful diggers. By the end of December the Montefiore offer was just one of more than 20 such announcements that appeared in the papers.

On New Year's Day of 1852 the *Argus* carried more advertisements from the Montefiore family. In addition to Leslie's continuing solicitations, Montefiore & Co. of Collins Street had entered the lists, not only as buyers of gold, but also, in a separate advertisement, as buyers of wool and tallow. They offered to buy or to make advances on consignments that were sent to their agents in London and Liverpool, and to issue drafts on their agents in London, N. M. Rothschild & Sons. To cover their market, Leslie and the Montefiore company advertised as gold buyers in the other daily newspaper of the time, the *Melbourne Morning Herald*.

Despite the competition and their late entry into the market, the Montefiores had attracted some customers in a short time. After only two weeks in business

they shipped gold weighing 850 ounces to London³¹ on the *Brilliant*. This ship sailed from Melbourne on 16 January 1852 carrying a total of 55,077 ounces of gold. At current prices this shipment was worth over \$18 million. The largest consignment from one dealer, the Benjamin brothers, a long-established Melbourne firm of merchants, was 8,000 ounces.³²

The entry of general merchants into large-scale gold-buying was short-lived. In 1852 the major Australian banks entered this market. Initially the banks sent their officers to the gold fields to buy, but they soon established a network of branch offices to transact this profitable business on the spot.³³

From their Collins Street premises Jacob Montefiore & Co. now advertised a mélange of goods for sale in their role as general merchants. The goods ranged from brandy and rum to dried fruits, and from preserved salmon to iron safes. The list was quite different from the usual run of goods being offered by other merchants who were catering for the hopeful men going to the gold fields. These were digging and panning tools, clothing, and tents; those merchants that catered for squatters offered working clothes and household goods. But the Montefiores' business appeared to be as wholesalers, with some of their advertisements specifically addressed to shopkeepers and other merchants in the gold fields. It was apparent that there was a demand for strong liquor. A number of the Montefiore imports consisted entirely of wines and spirits. And where better than an iron safe for a trader in the gold fields to keep money and gold?

Perhaps the most bizarre of Jacob Montefiore & Company's advertisements was for a 'Large selection of clasp sabres, an article of great protection for travellers.'³⁴ Possibly these weapons had been a job lot left over from Britain's wars in India.

It is apparent from shipping records that Eliezer had visited Melbourne on a number of occasions before settling there. Departures from Adelaide clearly identify him as sailing for Sydney via Melbourne in 1845, 1846 and 1852. There were probably a number of other occasions, on which the passenger is just listed as Mr. Montefiore. Eliezer and his family certainly arrived to settle in Melbourne in early 1853. The ship *Vesta* arrived in Melbourne from Sydney on 10 March 1853 with passengers 'Mr. and Mrs. Montefiore and Family'.³⁵

Eliezer brought with him a sketchbook in which he had recorded his recent journeys to Sydney, to Melbourne and a return trip to Adelaide. The attribution to Eliezer has been made only in recent years.³⁶ The book still sits in a leather box inscribed in the name of William Leigh. It was bought by the Latrobe Library (the Australian section of the State Library of Victoria) from Maggs, London, as containing 41 drawings of Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne by William Leigh of Staffordshire. Apparently it was not thought necessary to check that Leigh had ever visited Australia, but there is now no trace of his name in the shipping records during the relevant period. Only one drawing in the book, a portrait of a young woman dated 25 December 1852, is inscribed 'ELM'.

It was this inscription that was pointed out to Nicholas Draffin by Christine

Downer, the Picture Librarian of the Latrobe Library.³⁷ Draffin took the dating on the pictures and was able to relate them to the shipping records of the time.³⁸ However, the present writer has found that several of the dates inscribed on the watercolours are improbable. There are two dated 7 October 1852 of Sydney Harbour, one dated 10 October 1852 is of a Melbourne scene and another two of Melbourne dated 19 October. Then there are three scenes of Sydney dated 20 October. These dates are clearly impossible when the Melbourne to Sydney voyage took a week or more by a fast sailing ship.³⁹ In addition, the records of the shipping companies published in the local papers which were used by Draffin to confirm the attribution were notoriously incomplete or inaccurate.

Nevertheless, the writer agrees with Draffin's conclusions. Several drawings and watercolours of the *Vesta* attest that the artist was certainly aboard when the ship arrived in Melbourne. Montefiore was listed as a passenger. Leigh, the supposed artist on the cover of the collection, was not listed as a passenger.

The quality of the sketches in the book is excellent and the watercolours are delightful. They show great skill as a draughtsman and a colourist as well as an interesting record of the time. Possibly the most ambitious was completed on a double page of the 15.2 by 22.8 centimetre book of a regatta on Sydney Harbour. This coloured sketch is undated and not titled but it is among a number of other drawings and watercolours of Sydney that are dated January 1853. Garden Island forms the central feature of this unusually large composition. In the left foreground there is a wooden boat shed with a ramp to the shore. Between the shore and the island and around it are a number of small boats under sail. In the background are several larger ships at anchor.

In all the 48 pages of the book Eliezer shows considerable skill as a draughtsman and an eye for detail and composition of plain air land and seascapes. In these sketches human figures are invariably seen at a distance. It would seem that the artist was not primarily interested in figure drawing, although there are several delightful pencil sketches in the book completed on the *Vesta* voyage. One is of a boy, perhaps nine or ten years old, and one of a seated sailor on deck and holding a steaming mug of hot drink. There are several roughed out pencil drawings of female faces and one completed portrait of a young woman. This is signed 'ELM' and dated 25 December 1852. Draffin suggests that the sitter was Eliezer's wife Esther Hannah. This was during the period that Eliezer had returned briefly to Adelaide before his move to Melbourne. There is no record that his family accompanied him on this trip. The portrait could have been of one of his sisters-in-law.⁴⁰

In a late 1853 Melbourne directory Jacob Montefiore & Co., merchants, and Montefiore, Graham & Co., merchants, are both listed at 83 Elizabeth Street. Their premises stood on the south-west corner of Little Collins Street. From advertisements in the *Melbourne Morning Herald* it seems that the move of Jacob Montefiore & Co. took place in October 1853.

The firm of Montefiore, Graham & Co. was a partnership between Eliezer's

brother, Jacob Levi Montefiore, and the previously-mentioned Scotsman Robert Graham. This enterprise was founded in Sydney in 1846 and it undertook a variety of businesses. The partners acquired major grazing leaseholds in northern New South Wales and Queensland. The partnership was to last until 1861.⁴¹

Eliezer moved from Adelaide to manage the new Melbourne branch of his brother's company. The booming economy of Victoria during the gold rush was a more attractive commercial prospect than the Adelaide backwater. There had been a mass exodus from South Australia to the Victorian goldfields. In Melbourne, for a short time at least, Eliezer was to share business premises with another uncle, Jacob. In a quarterly edition of the directory later in the same year, Jacob Montefiore & Co. described themselves as bankers at their Elizabeth Street address. An advertisement by the firm at this new location in the local papers indicates that their emphasis in trade had moved from trading in goods to banking and shipping.

In 1853 both Eliezer and Uncle Jacob were living in the suburb of Collingwood. The addresses are not known. A birth was recorded for a son born in Collingwood to Eliezer and Esther. He was named Jacob Levi Montefiore, but he died in infancy in the same year. That year Jacob's wife Justine also gave birth in Collingwood, to a daughter, Victoria Violet.⁴²

In the 1854 *Blundell's Commercial and Squatters' Directory* Montefiore Graham & Co., merchants, have moved to 54 William Street. This was two blocks away from the previous address. From a number of advertisements in newspapers of 1853, it is apparent that to describe Montefiore Graham & Co. as merchants was to use an all-encompassing term rather than a description of the enterprise. The advertisements were all related to the firm acting as shipping agents for goods and passengers mostly to and from the United Kingdom and but frequently for other ports in South East Asia, including Manila.⁴³

In the 1854 directory Jacob Montefiore & Co. are listed as 'bankers' in Elizabeth Street. In an advertisement in this directory Jacob Montefiore & Co. are offering to buy both gold and wool, and to issue drafts on Rothschild and Sons in London. In a directory advertisement for the Professional Life Assurance Company of London, Jacob Montefiore Esq., J. P. is described as the Melbourne agent and 'the resident director' of the company. He is also listed as a London director. In the same directory Jacob Montefiore of 83 Elizabeth Street was named as the consul for France. In July 1853 Jacob was elected to a committee chaired by J.B. Were that was formed to establish a Royal Exchange in Melbourne that would replicate the functions of the London Royal Exchange.⁴⁴ The proposal does not appear to have succeeded.

By now Eliezer and Jacob had established themselves firmly in the commercial world of Melbourne. The Melbourne Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1851. In a list of members in 1855 the names of Eliezer, Jacob and L.J. Montefiore appear. Eliezer was already an office bearer, as a member of the 'Corresponding Committee'.⁴⁵ In that year he was a member of a committee of the Chamber that

lobbied the government to organise regular mail arrangements from the other Australian colonies. In 1857 he was elected vice-president of the Chamber,⁴⁶ and in the same year he was appointed a justice of the peace,⁴⁷ and a director of the Australasian Fire & Life Insurance Company.⁴⁸

The major focus of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce during the late 1850s centered on shipping. Dredging the entrance to the Yarra River and the river itself so that ships would have direct access to wharves in Melbourne was an important issue that was taken up by the 'Chamber'.⁴⁹ It was said that the cost of unloading cargo into lighters from ships that had to anchor in Port Phillip Bay, and then to tow the lighters up the river for unloading in Melbourne, was greater than the shipping cost from England. Another issue was the lack of accurate charts showing all the islands off the Victorian coast and in Bass Strait, and that there were too few lighthouses in the same area. These factors had resulted in a great number of shipwrecks. Between 1835 and 1858, 95 ships had been lost and another 54 seriously damaged as they made passage to or from Melbourne. More than 880 people had drowned as a result of these accidents. These shipwrecks caused both an interruption of trade for the merchants and severe losses for insurance companies. As a shipping agent and, as discussed later in this paper, a director of an insurance company, Eliezer had a dual interest in joining the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce when it lobbied the government to improve charts, to erect more lighthouses and to build huts with food supplies on isolated islands. This last point was in response to the tragic case of a shipwreck survivor who had made it ashore to an uninhabited island in Bass Strait, only to die of starvation. Adding to these problems was the existence of 'wrecking' gangs that operated out of Queenscliff and Sorrento. They plundered cargo and removed the salvagable remnants of any ship that was wrecked near the Port Phillip Heads.⁵⁰

Eliezer was quite an active letter-writer to the local press on matters that related to shipping. One letter to the *Melbourne Morning Herald* suggested the establishment of an Admiralty Court in Australia to hear shipping disputes. The court was to take the place of 'the useless and ancient abuses' to which maritime disputes in Victoria were subject at the time.⁵¹

That Eliezer had become one of the leading members of Melbourne's commercial establishment is indicated by the fact that he was one of the 35 men admitted to membership of the Melbourne Club in 1856. One historian of class society in Victoria in the 1850s rationalised this aberration from the club's exclusionary practices by describing him thus: 'The cultivated member of the famous Sephardic family, he was no ordinary businessman: he was an accomplished etcher and founder of the Victorian Academy of Art.'⁵²

This last comment was somewhat out of time. The academy was not yet founded. One of the club's historians concluded that when the club admitted 35 new members in one year, membership had ceased to be 'either a prescription for influence or the sole test of gentility'.⁵³ Although all the judges of the Supreme

Court and six of the eight County Court judges were members, the historian estimated that perhaps only one-fourth of the prominent bankers and merchants of Melbourne had joined. Only one of the professors at Melbourne University and a fifth of the medical practitioners in the Colony were listed.

As a service to their clients importing and exporting goods, Montefiore Graham & Co. opened a bond store in 159 Lonsdale Street West in 1857, but the dissolution of the Montefiore-Graham partnership in 1861 left Eliezer to carry on business in his own name. Both the 1861 and 1862 Melbourne directories list E. L. Montefiore & Co., merchants, at 116 Lonsdale Street, west, with a bond store at 159 Lonsdale Street, west. Eliezer was now living in Lennox Street, Richmond, on the eastern side of the street, just one house down from Bridge Road.⁵⁴

Soon after his arrival Eliezer had made connections with the Jewish community in Melbourne. In July 1853 he gave the substantial sum of £25 to an appeal to rebuild the synagogue in Bourke Street. A year later he and his uncle Jacob both spoke at a meeting of the Jewish community in Melbourne that was held to raise funds for Jews in Palestine. In 1855 Eliezer served on a committee to found a 'Jews' Educational Establishment'.⁵⁵ It seems that his uncle's presence may have influenced Eliezer's interest in the community. Jacob left Melbourne, probably – the date is not certain – in 1856. Thereafter Eliezer's interest seems to have waned, although he took a leading role in a meeting at the Bourke Street synagogue in 1858 that celebrated the newly-won right of Jews to sit in the House of Commons in England. This was the last entry relating to Eliezer in the history of the Melbourne Jewish Community.⁵⁶

A Society for the Advancement of Fine Arts in Victoria was founded in Melbourne in 1853 and it held an exhibition that was opened by the lieutenant-governor. But the society was short-lived, and Eliezer does not appear in its records as having participated in its activities.⁵⁷

Eliezer is first recorded as participating in the artistic scene in Melbourne in 1856. The Victorian Society of Fine Art was formed in that year. The moving figures of the society were Frank Newton, Eugene von Guerard, and William Strutt. Eliezer is not mentioned as being involved in its formation. The society opened an exhibition on 6 December in the Exhibition Building. This building was then on the eastern side of William Street between Little Lonsdale and La Trobe Streets.⁵⁸ The exhibition included works by three established artists of the colony: von Guerard, Strutt, and Nicolas Chevalier. Eliezer exhibited three works listed in the catalogue as etchings. They were entitled 'A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society', 'Return from the Warren' and 'The Glee Maiden'.⁵⁹ Describing the exhibition 30 years later, Alexander Sutherland recalled that Eliezer's exhibits were 'Indian Ink sketches' and noted that they 'were a great delight to the taste of that generation'.⁶⁰ Whether Eliezer's entries were etchings or not is questionable.⁶¹ As we have seen, nothing is known about Eliezer's art training, if indeed he had any. If he did have instruction, and given his paternal grandfather's occupation,

it is quite possible that this included the techniques of etching.

The inaugural '*conversazione*' of the society was held a week later and it was there that James Smith made the first suggestion for the formation of a National Gallery in Victoria.⁶² Sutherland recalled that the public was apathetic at that time. Apart from the opening of the exhibition, if half a dozen people turned up in the course of a day the attendance was considered a good one. The society held one or two more exhibitions but then disappeared.⁶³

The Australasian Fire and Life Insurance Company was founded in Melbourne in 1857. The company first undertook fire insurance and then marine insurance. Eliezer was a director of the company on its formation. It is perhaps pertinent that in 1857 Eliezer had acquired a new neighbour at his business address in William Street. This was the ubiquitous Edward Cohen, sometime mayor of Melbourne, member of Parliament, minister of the Crown, auctioneer and a leading figure in both Melbourne commercial circles and the Jewish community. Cohen was appointed auditor of Australasian Fire and Life when the company was founded. He was subsequently appointed a director.

The company was a successful commercial venture from its inception, although there seemed to be a continuous change in board members as they left for overseas, presumably returning 'home' to England. In 1861 Eliezer was appointed deputy chairman of the company. There was an abortive attempt by the company in that year to raise more capital in order to write life assurance. This failed and the company had to return the subscribed funds.

Whether or not this failure was ascribed to the general manager of the company is not clear, but at the sixth annual general meeting of the company it was announced that he had 'resigned'. A letter from him claiming that he had been engaged at an annual salary of £1,000 a year but had only ever been paid £800 a year, was tabled at the meeting. He claimed that he was thus owed £1,000 for his five years' service. Edward Cohen advised that the manager had been paid a bonus of £500 on his retirement and that his claim for another £500 should be rejected. This advice was accepted. The practice of making a substantial payment to 'retiring' executives is not a recent one. It was then announced that Eliezer had resigned from the Board to accept the position of secretary (general manager) of the company. His salary was not disclosed. In 1864 he appears in advertisements for the Australasian Insurance Company as the company's secretary.⁶⁴

It was an uncommon change in occupation for a 43-year-old. It would seem that his only insurance experience was as a consumer and then as a director of an insurance company. Following the dissolution of the Montefiore-Graham partnership in 1861, he had traded on his own account for two years and perhaps this was not to his liking. But this was the beginning of a new career that lasted for the next 30 years.

The fortunes of the Australian Fire and Life Insurance Company prospered under Eliezer's guidance. His interest in ships and their cargoes was responsible

for the specialisation of the company in marine insurance.

Meanwhile, a number of children had been born in the Montefiores' Richmond home. George Jacob, born in 1855, had died in the same year, Frank Albert was born in 1857 but died the following year. As a comment on the appalling infant death rate of the times Esther had now borne five sons, but only one had survived babyhood. All the girls of the couple who were born in Richmond did survive: Amy born in 1859, Eliza Jane in 1861 and Mary in 1863. Eliezer's new job enabled him to move from his house in Richmond to the more fashionable area of South Yarra. Their house in Murphy Street was on the eastern side, half way between Toorak and Domain Roads. There, Esther bore another two daughters: Esther Lillian in 1866 and Ethel Octavia in 1868.

During this period Eliezer was also heavily involved in activities of the general community. The *Argus* of 17 September 1861 contains a spirited letter from him to the editor, in defence of his position as an auditor of the Melbourne City Council. The newspaper of the previous day had published a letter from 'An Accountant' that had criticised the council's auditors for having failed to prevent substantial defalcations by two of the council's staff. The city's rate collector had made off with £2,000 and there was a 'deficiency of cash', £1,500, handled by the city treasurer. If 'city merchants' were to take on the voluntary position of auditor for the council, they should not accept the job if they cannot perform it adequately, said 'The Accountant' in his letter. And, he added, if the auditor had been appointed commercially, then he would have been personally liable for these losses. Eliezer's defence was that under the City of Melbourne Corporation's Act, the nomination for the unpaid position of city auditor by the council carried a penalty of £50 for a 'city merchant' who failed to accept the nomination. These provisions, he added, were now somewhat outmoded but they were undertaken by him as a civic duty. In any event the auditors had pointed out to the council for the half-year to February, the cash deficiency in the city treasurer's accounts. 'The Accountant' did not respond.

In 1864 Eliezer was appointed chairman of a committee to arrange a celebration in Melbourne of the 300th birthday of William Shakespeare.⁶⁵ Between 1856 and 1869 very little appears to have happened in Melbourne relating to fine art. The Public Library of Victoria had been established in 1853. Five trustees were appointed, the chairman being the Supreme Court judge Redmond Barry, later to be Chief Justice Sir Redmond Barry.⁶⁶ The National Gallery of Victoria had been formally created under the aegis of the library in 1861, but it consisted of one small room which contained no paintings, only a variety of rather dubious 'objects of vertue' which had been purchased in England for £2,000.⁶⁷ On 10 February 1862 the *Argus* published a letter of complaint that the Museum of Art at the Public Library was open only from mid-day until 4 p.m. on weekdays and that this prevented working people from attending.

Non-government activity in the arts appears again in 1870 when the Victorian

Academy of Arts was created. Eliezer was a prime mover in its creation and was elected to its first council. His fellow council members included Louis Buvelot and Eugene von Guerard.⁶⁸ At the Academy's first exhibition in 1870 Eliezer exhibited a total of nine works. Of these, seven were etchings of a wide range of subjects from landscapes like 'View in Tahiti', to figurative works such as 'The Lesson'. Other exhibits by Eliezer were in charcoal, one a portrait and the other a still life. Although the works by professional artists in all these shows had prices shown in the catalogues, Montefiore's exhibits did not.⁶⁹ There was a careful demarcation line between amateurs and professionals.

In the previous year the Victorian government had decided that there should be one piece of legislation to govern the Public Library, the National Gallery of Victoria and the Museum. This was embodied in an Act of 1869, which placed the governance of the three bodies under the control of government-appointed trustees. The Victorian *Government Gazette* of 4 February 1870 announced the fifteen that had been chosen. Eliezer was included. Here was one Jewish insurance manager amongst four knights of the realm, seven members of Parliament and a Church of England clergyman. Redmond Barry, Eliezer's fellow Melbourne Club member, continued as chairman of the new body.

At a meeting of the trustees on 18 March 1870 Eliezer was appointed to a sub-committee of three to establish the National Gallery. One of the other members was the Honourable T. T. a'Beckett, a solicitor, a member of the Legislative Council for 20 years, and a member of the council of Melbourne University. He had published a paper entitled 'Painting and Painters'.⁷⁰

The other member was Charles Gavan Duffy, an Irish-born political activist, a journalist and an author in his own country. Together with the famous Daniel O'Connell, he had been convicted of sedition in 1844 but the conviction was overturned by the House of Lords. Four years later he was four times unsuccessfully arraigned for treason for having breached legislation designed to control the Irish press. He was elected to the House of Commons in 1852 where he was one of the founders of the Irish party. Frustrated by the resignation of his colleagues from that party, he resigned his seat in Parliament and migrated to Melbourne in 1855. His fame had preceded him, particularly amongst his countrymen on the diggings in Ballarat. In order to stand for the first election of the Legislative Assembly of the Victorian Parliament a man had to be a property owner. The miners were so keen to have Duffy as a member that a group of them offered to contribute an ounce of gold each to enable him to purchase property and to stand. He was elected. He framed the act of the Parliament which abolished the property qualification for the Assembly. He was to be premier briefly in 1871-72 and was knighted in 1873.⁷¹

Thus the Committee for the National Gallery was a mixed cultural group, consisting of a Protestant establishment English-born gentleman, an Irish Catholic rebel and a Jew who had been born in Trinidad.

On 30 June 1870 Eliezer's motion to a full meeting of the trustees that Eugene

von Guerard should be appointed instructor of painting at the National Gallery was accepted.

Less than a year later Eliezer decided to leave Melbourne and settle in Sydney. He decided that it was desirable to forgo the positions of importance he had achieved in Melbourne, where he had lived for nearly 20 years, to join his family in Sydney. His two brothers Jacob and Octavius and a cousin Herbert were living there at the time. Eliezer attended his last meeting of trustees of the Victorian Library, Gallery and Museum on 17 February 1871. In recognition of his services it was agreed that the portfolio of his own works which he had presented to the gallery should be returned to him, and that he should be given 'copies of the Albert Trust photographs and charts of the Italian schools of painting'.⁷²

Owing to his departure for Sydney he did not exhibit in the Victorian Academy of Arts exhibitions in 1871 or in 1872. But he sent the Victorian Academy two untitled fusain drawings for the exhibition in 1873, and another fusain drawing, 'Bondi, New South Wales' in 1874.⁷³

In Sydney

Eliezer's older brother Jacob (J.M.) was, by then, a leading figure in Sydney's commercial and political life. A member of the Legislative Council in New South Wales when it was first reformed in 1856, he was a fervent campaigner for free trade and published several pamphlets on the subject. He was primarily engaged with many commercial interests and company directorships. The former included vast land holdings in New South Wales. The latter included directorships of the Australian Gas Light Company, Northern Rivers Sugar Company, and Moruya Silver Mining Company. Most relevantly here, Jacob was the founding chairman in 1862 of the Pacific Fire and Marine Insurance Company.⁷⁴

Eliezer's move to Sydney was to join his brother and to take up the post of manager of the Pacific Fire and Marine Insurance Company, a position he was to hold for the next 21 years. It was a venturesome career move. Since the gold rush Melbourne had been the financial capital of Australia and the centre of the Australian insurance industry.⁷⁵ He was leaving that behind him as well as his influential public appointments.

There was only a slight delay between his exit from the stage of the Melbourne art scene to an entry on to the boards of a similar one in Sydney. An advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 24 April 1871 announced a meeting to be held that day to form an 'Academy of Art in New South Wales'. Edward Reeve, a member of the Sydney School of Design and a journalist with the *Sydney Morning Herald*, had signed the advertisement. In his address to the meeting, which was attended by Eliezer and 24 others, Reeve acknowledged that the model for the proposed body in New South Wales was the Academy of Art in Victoria. The meeting determined to establish the New South Wales Academy of Art (NSWAA), deciding that 'It is expedient to form a Society for the promotion of the study of

the various departments of the Fine Arts, and for periodical Exhibitions of Works of Art in Sydney.⁷⁶ It was Eliezer who moved that a committee be appointed to draw up rules for the new academy and he was elected to this committee. In early June 1871 the constitution was adopted and officer-bearers were appointed. Thomas Mort was elected president, Eliezer was vice-president, and Reeve secretary.

Mort was the figurehead for the new body. A wealthy man, he was a collector of art, and from time to time opened his home for the public to view his private gallery. Mort was a grazier who had pioneered public wool sales in Australia and had developed the industry of freezing of meat for export. His name became widely known in Australia as a partner in the pre-eminent stock and station agents Goldsborough Mort.

The Constitution and Laws of the Academy state that it was: 'Formed for promoting fine arts and their exhibition in Sydney... Members shall consist of artists and others taking an interest in Art. These shall have the entire management of the Society...' Politicians were not acceptable ...

Neither Mort nor Reeve stayed in their positions for long. Sir Alfred Stephen was elected president and Eccleston Du Faur secretary. Eliezer remained as vice-president. Stephen (1802-94) was born in the West Indies. He trained in the law in England and arrived in Hobart in 1824. He was appointed first as Crown solicitor and solicitor-general and later was attorney-general during the turbulent period of George Arthur's rule in Van Diemen's Land. Stephen resigned his post there in 1839 to take a seat on the bench of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. Appointed chief justice in 1844, he was knighted in 1846. He retired from the bench in 1873. He had been a member of the Legislative Council, serving a year as its president. He was appointed lieutenant-governor of New South Wales in 1875. It was a coup for the new society to have a person of such a high profile agreeing to be its figurehead.⁷⁷

It was Eliezer and Du Faur who were to be the moving figures in the New South Wales art gallery scene for the next 20 years. Eliezer frequently chaired meetings of the academy in the absence of Stephen. Eliezer and Du Faur often initiated actions that were approved by the Committee after the event.

Eccleston Du Faur was born in London in 1832. He went to Melbourne in 1853 but returned to London three years later. In 1863 he was back in Australia but this time to Sydney. A draughtsman by training, he worked at first in the surveyor-general's office. In addition to his passion for art he engaged in scientific pursuits with a particular interest in weather patterns. He was admitted as a fellow of the Royal Society of New South Wales in 1873 and became president of the Royal Geographic Society in 1885. One of his theories of weather in Australia was that it was influenced by atmospheric conditions in the Antarctic. In later years he was to be a strong supporter of Mawson's expedition to the Antarctic.

Eliezer was elected chairman of a meeting held by the NSWAA on 24 April 1871 that drew up a code of rules for the academy and later that year a meeting

of the trustees was held in Eliezer's office of the Pacific Insurance Company. Having no permanent home the activities of the Society were 'restricted to the occasional exhibition of Works by Colonial Artists and Amateurs of this and the adjoining Colonies, to the distribution of Works of Art by Art Unions, to Loan Exhibitions and to Reunions of its members for the purpose of exchanging ideas upon art subjects.'⁷⁸

Both Eliezer and Jacob Montefiore exhibited paintings in the NSWAA annual showing in 1873. The review said that Eliezer 'sustains the work of the infant academy by two water colours'. Jacob's contribution was a landscape in watercolour.⁷⁹

It was not until 1874 that the NSWAA received government recognition in the form of a grant. The greater part of the grant was to be spent purchasing works of art to form the nucleus of a National Gallery.⁸⁰ The influence that Eliezer exercised over the academy during its early years can be judged from an incident that followed the announcement of the grant. When the council of the academy met on 17 July to determine how £500 could best be spent, Eliezer, unusually, was absent from the meeting. Since significant original works in oil were not available for this small sum of money, a resolution was passed stating that the grant should be spent 'on the purchase of copies of some of the most celebrated paintings by the ancient masters'. Eliezer heard about the decision and wrote to the president the following day to tell of his disagreement with the council's decision and to seek a further meeting to reconsider the resolution. The meeting requested by Eliezer took place six days later, when it was resolved to withdraw the previous decision. Eliezer's motion that the money should be spent on 'the purchase of original watercolour drawings by living artists leaving the question of purchasing oil paintings when larger sums be placed at their disposal' was carried.⁸¹

These matters soon became public knowledge and resulted in letters to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The letters were critical of the revised decision of the academy. One letter suggested that copies of great art works were superior to the 'butterfly works' of all modern artists. In Eliezer's reply in the columns of that newspaper, he exhibited a sound knowledge of current artistic thought and English artists. In defending his stand against copies he quoted from the English art critic John Ruskin's *The Political Economy of Art*: 'never buy a copy of a picture under any circumstances'⁸². He referred to the expense of purchasing the works of members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Millais and Hunt, which were beyond the means of the academy. Rather, he said, the academy should purchase the work of rising local artists of merit. And as a final thrust against his critic he responded that he could 'scarcely look on the works of such men as Turner "as merely butterfly works of the easel"'

As a result of these events Du Faur wrote to Conrad Martens on 17 August 1874 inviting Martens to paint a picture for the Society. Martens accepted the invitation, and Eliezer wrote to his friend Nicholas Chevalier asking him to accept

Eliezer's trip to Europe during which he 'inspected the workings of the London Office.' An 'experienced underwriter' was appointed to write business for the company, and a London board of directors was created to oversee the operation of the branch office. The report also recorded claims of £118,000. This was a massive increase in reported claims over previous years, which had consistently been in the region of £10,000 to £12,000.

In 1884 the general insurance industry in Australia became the first in the British Empire to establish insurance institutes for 'the dissemination of professional knowledge by the reading of papers, and other means.' The Insurance Institute of Victoria was founded in July 1884. It was followed a month later by the Insurance Institute of New South Wales.⁸⁹ The *AIBR* recorded the inaugural meeting of the Insurance Institute of New South Wales, at which Eliezer Montefiore, who was absent overseas, was elected foundation president. There were 56 members at the inaugural meeting and subsequently a further 21 were admitted. Eliezer (then 64 years of age) made his presidential address at the first meeting of the Institute on 15 October 1884: 'Had I been present at your meeting I would have requested that you appoint someone more worthy of the position, it was an unlooked for compliment, I could not but feel that the compliment was more in virtue of my venerable years rather than any special attributes I possess.'

His address was lighthearted, befitting an after-dinner speech. It certainly did not address any serious issues that may have confronted the insurance industry at the time. Its only earnest note related to the image of the industry, which, it must be said, has changed little in the succeeding century since he delivered these words:

An opinion often prevails that the interests of the insurer and the insured are antagonistic. On an experience extending over a quarter of a century [I have found] that [insurance] offices are always ready to make concessions. It is very rarely that respectable offices resist claims on technical grounds. Unfortunately ninety nine per cent of insureds do not glance at the conditions of their policies and when losses occur they think themselves very badly treated when their claims are demurred to.⁹⁰

No doubt his audience of insurance company managers applauded these comments.

The 1885 annual general meeting of the Pacific Insurance Company reported that the continuance of heavy losses in London had forced the company to cease writing any business from that source. It was now underwriting only Australian risks. It had been necessary to transfer the sum of £20,000 from reserves to cover the losses. Worse was to come. The company's results were not published in the *AIBR* in 1886, but there was an editorial comment on the Pacific that '£40,000 had been transferred from capital to meet heavy losses incurred by the London business. A call of £1 per share was made.'⁹¹ The following year a small surplus

was reported although premium income had fallen to £29,000 and the company had been forced to sell the building that it occupied in George Street in order to stay afloat.

The London office was now writing business again but matters did not improve. By 1891 the end was near. The annual report of the company for the year presented a gloomy picture. Claims and expenses exceeded income by £11,500. The chairman's address included the message that, 'It is well known that during the past year a heavy wave of disasters swept over underwriting interests, both fire and marine, in all parts of the globe – there is every reason to hope that there are more prosperous times ahead.'⁹²

Good fortune did not smile upon the Pacific Insurance Company. Poor underwriting by their London office continued to plague the company. The next year there was a further loss of £11,000, which left the company bankrupt with liabilities exceeding assets by £15,000. The chairman reported that the London agency had been closed down and that a committee of shareholders had been appointed 'to reconstruct the company'.⁹³ But it was past redemption. The Pacific Fire and Marine Insurance company ceased to be reported by the *AIBR*. It was one of the many insurance company failures of the period.

Historians have paid attention to the crashes of financial institutions in the early 1890s, when more than 40 building societies and mortgage banks failed in addition to the 26 banks that went under.⁹⁴ But the depression that followed had an equally telling impact on Australian insurance companies. In 1890 there were a total of 31 local insurance companies operating in Sydney and Melbourne. A decade later there were only ten in business. Two-thirds of the Australian insurers had failed in a decade. It left the field at the mercy of a cartel of British insurers in Australia that lasted until the introduction of the Trade Practices Act in 1974.⁹⁵

Certainly the Sydney insurance community was kind to Eliezer over the failure of the company of which he had been manager. Perhaps they were feeling 'but for the grace of God ...' The *AIBR* of 18 July 1892 reported his resignation as manager of the Pacific, and the following month published in full a letter that the Sydney Underwriters' Association had sent to Eliezer. The letter recounted that the Association at its annual general meeting passed a resolution which offered best wishes for his future welfare and remarked on 'your long and honourable career ... [and that] your high integrity and excellent courtesy have won for you the esteem and affection of your colleagues'.⁹⁶ In 1892 Eliezer was 72 years old.

This may have been the end of his commercial career, but later that year the *AIBR* published a letter from a group of professional Sydney artists which congratulated Eliezer on his appointment to the directorship of the National Gallery of New South Wales and added: 'The unfailing interest you have always taken in matters of art and the time you have devoted to furthering its interests in the Colonies, have long called for some recognition from the state.'⁹⁷

Eliezer had been appointed President of the Board of Trustees of the Art

Gallery of New South Wales in 1889. It is of interest that Hal Missingham, who was Director of the Gallery from 1945 to 1971, wrote of the Trustees of that period that they 'were jealous of their status and their powers. They made the decisions and bought works of art'. And that 'The Trustees naturally looked to England for acquisitions. All staunch subjects of Her Majesty, it was axiomatic that the best works of art should come from the Mother Country – preferably from the Royal Academy.'⁹⁸

It is hard to know whether this trenchant criticism should be applied to Eliezer who was obviously instrumental in the appointment of his brother to a selection committee in Paris.

What were his opinions about art? In 1879 Eliezer read a paper to the Literature and Fine Arts Section of the Royal Society of New South Wales. He was chairman of the section. The title of the paper was 'Art Criticism'.⁹⁹ The essay was structured as a condemnation of professional art critics, and he cited the widely differing and often highly critical views of the contemporaries of Raphael, Rembrandt, Titian, Corregio and other great European artists, so it is only possible to infer his own views on art.

He disapproved of art critics: '[They] are mostly guided by what pleases their own particular taste, without regard to any recognised art canons and possess very little theoretical knowledge ... it has been asserted that fewer qualifications are required by Parisian art critics than by any other writers in the French press.' At its simplest his view of art was that no two men ever saw the same appearance in any object whatever. What men will see is determined beforehand by very complex conditions of faculties, experience and education. What pleases us best is that which gives evidence of the qualities we most admire and approve.

But he then goes on to spoil that statement, from which one could infer that he laid some emphasis on experience and education, with the declaration that, 'I do not hold with some that a knowledge of art is indispensable in forming an opinion of a work of art, any more than a knowledge of cookery is indispensable to form an opinion of a good dish. We all know what pleases our palate and what pleases our eye.' He later qualifies this stance by adding that 'fine art is not a mere slavish imitation of nature; indeed if it were so what would we say of the gorgeous landscapes of Claude and Turner?'

The paper demonstrates that he was widely read. He quoted the views of Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), the Swiss-born artist and critic, and those of Sir Joshua Reynolds. And he referred to the libel action taken in 1877 by the American-born, but English-domiciled artist James Whistler against John Ruskin, who wrote of Whistler that 'I have seen much of Cockney impudence before now, but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask 200 guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public face.'

The present article has looked at Eliezer's involvement with the Jewish communities in Adelaide and Melbourne. His participation in their activities



E. L. Montefiore, inscribed Yarra Yarra 19 October 1852. Pen and ink and water colour wash. Latrobe Collection, State Library of Victoria



E. L. Montefiore, inscribed Ships in the Yarra River at the Falls c. 1852/1853. Pen and ink and water colour wash. Latrobe Collection, State Library of Victoria



*E. L. Montefiore,
inscribed Port
Phillip Heads
9 March 1853.
Pen and ink and
water colour
wash. Latrobe
Collection,
State Library of
Victoria*



*E. L. Montefiore,
inscribed Sydney
Regatta 26
January 1853.
Pen and ink and
water colour
wash. Latrobe
Collection,
State Library of
Victoria*

in Melbourne appears to have ceased in the mid-1850s. The obituary in the Melbourne *Jewish Herald*, written by its Sydney correspondent, included the comment that:

Only a few months before his death he read a paper on Art ... [to] the Hebrew Literary Society, which was the first occasion of his coming amongst his co-religionists for very many years, and, strange to say, he only became a seat holder of the synagogue five days before his death.

Eliezer's attitude to religion generally can be gauged from a paper that he wrote for *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine* in 1890. The title was 'Agnosticism Among the Poets'.¹⁰⁰ In this short work Eliezer exhibits an extensive knowledge of poetry from Homer and Virgil through to the English Romantic poets of the nineteenth century. In respect of the latter he postulates that, commencing with Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, there are 'constant allusions to the agnostic spirit which was beginning to penetrate through all ranks of society'. He proceeds to include Matthew Arnold in his list together with Adam Lindsay Gordon. He concludes his piece with the thought that 'it is difficult ... to wholly avoid the contagion [of agnosticism] which is in the very atmosphere' since 'the Darwinian theory had been made public' but if the writer is a 'strong soul he will rise so far above it as to see a faint glimmer of hope through the blackness'. Eliezer does suggest religion as a way of seeing the faint glimmer.

He suffered a stroke while he was walking down a Sydney city street on 21 October 1894 and died the following day. He was buried in the Rookwood Cemetery.

A number of quotations from the many obituaries written on his life have already been used in this article, but extracts from two summarise the man. One referred 'to his cheery gracious personality' and averred that he saw that 'art was doing its best to federate the colonies' through his plan to exchange art works between 'national' galleries that had been established in each colony.¹⁰¹ The other is from a letter written to Eccleston Du Faur, (who succeeded Eliezer as director of the AGNSW), by an Englishman, Thomas L. Devitt. Devitt, who had visited Sydney and made a gift of a painting to the gallery, wrote: 'I wish that some recognition of Montefiore's services had been acknowledged in the form of a knighthood years ago, and it is curious that not many months ago I was moving here on the matter and wrote to sound him as to his feelings on the subject. His reply was very characteristic, to the effect that for the sake of his daughters and friends he would have appreciated the recognition of his life's work.'¹⁰²

Notes

- 1 P. C. Wickens, *Insurance Institutes in Australia*, Australian Insurance Institute, Melbourne, 1984, p. 9.
- 2 The work of Nicholas Draffin is excellent. See his entry on Montefiore in *The Dictionary of Australian Artists*. Joan Kerr ed., Melbourne, 1992, pp. 543-5 and 'An Enthusiastic Amateur of the Arts, E. L. Montefiore in Melbourne 1853-1871', *Art Bulletin of Victoria*, December 1987. Ruth Faerber's work in 1977 set the pattern for a serious study. 'Eliezer Levi Montefiore' in *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 8, part 4, pp. 185-94. See also more general references in G. F. Bergman, 'Montefiore, Eliezer Levi' *The Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne, p. 269, H. L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, Vol. 1, William Heinemann, Port Melbourne, 1991, p. 450. J. S. Levi and G. F. G. Bergman, *Australian Genesis*, Melbourne, 2002, p. 132, S. D. Rutland *Edge of the Diaspora*, Sydney, 1988, p. 128.
- 3 *The Art Journal*, Not dated but presumed to be shortly after his death. From a collection of obituaries, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
- 4 Rodney Benjamin, *Paths to Professionalism, The History of Insurance Broking in Australia*, Craftsman, Melbourne, 1988, and 'Private and Public Regulation of the General Insurance Industry in Australia 1897-1992', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993.
- 5 When this occurred is not known.
- 6 'The Montefiores. Jews and the Centenary of South Australia', H. Munz, *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 1, March 1937.
- 7 *The Magazine of Art*, not dated but presumably shortly after his death. From a collection of obituaries, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
- 8 Cecil Roth, *Journal of Jewish Historical Society of England*, vol. 13, 1932-35, pp. 57-163, n. 18.
- 9 A. M. Hyamson and A. M. Silberman, *Valentine's Jewish Encyclopaedia*, London, 1938, p. 437.
- 10 L. M. Goldman, *The Jews in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century*, Melbourne, 1954, p. 343.
- 11 J. R. Buckrich, *The Montefiore Homes*, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 71 & 146.
- 12 H. L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia 1788-1945*, Port Melbourne, 1991, p. 7.
- 13 Levi and Bergman, *op. cit.*
- 14 Historical Records of Australia, First Series, vol. 18, p. 13. Quoted by D. J. Benjamin, 'The First Montefiore in Australia', *AJHSJ*, vol. 1, pp. 467-471. See also Goldman, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- 15 *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 16 S. J. Butlin, *The Australian and New Zealand Bank*, Croydon, 1961, Ch. 3.
- 17 *ibid.*, p. 26.
- 18 R. L. Benjamin, *A History of Insurance Broking in Australia*, Melbourne, 1988, p. 13.
- 19 C. M. H. Clark, *A History of Australia*, vol. 3, Melbourne, 1979, pp. 47-8.
- 20 Munz, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
- 21 *ibid.*, quoting a report of the dinner in the Southern Australian.
- 22 I. Gettler, 'Joseph Barrow Montefiore', ADB, p. 251, and Levi and Bergman, *op. cit.*, p. 270.
- 23 Faerber, *op. cit.* p. 186. C. A. Price, *Jewish Settlers in Australia*, Appendix I, was only able to estimate the numbers at 10 in 1841 and 100 in 1851.
- 24 South Australian Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages.
- 25 Copy of Certificate of Marriage, archives of Australian Jewish Historical Society, Sydney, NSW. Folder 'E. L. Montefiore'. Nathan was not a rabbi. When the Adelaide Jewish community was established later that year, Nathan was defeated when he stood for office as Vice President, but was elected treasurer. It is noteworthy that neither Montefiore stood for office. H. Munz, *op. cit.*
- 26 National Library of Australia.
- 27 A. Fabian, 'Early Days of South Australian Jewry', *AJHSJ*, vol. 2 Part 3, pp. 127-43.

- 28 Mitchell Library, Sydney.
- 29 Montefiore family web site.
- 30 C. M. H. Clark, *A History of Australia*, vol. 4, Melbourne, 1978, pp. 3-15.
- 31 At a value of \$330 an ounce this had a present day value of nearly \$300,000.
- 32 R. L. Benjamin, 'Early Melbourne and the Benjamin Brothers', *AJHS*, vol. 13, 1996, Part 3, p. 380
- 33 *ibid.*, p. 381.
- 34 *Port Phillip Herald*, 5 January 1853, p. 6.
- 35 Draffin, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
- 36 Accession No. H84. 459/1-44, Call No. PIC LT Box/Montefiore.
- 37 See footnote 3 for the reference to Draffin's study of Eliezer in Melbourne.
- 38 Draffin, *op. cit.*, footnotes 15 and 16.
- 39 On a page opposite a view of Hobson's Bay dated 11 March 1852 Eliezer wrote, 'sailed from Sydney 24 February 1853 at 4 am. Arrived at PP 9 March at 10 pm'
- 40 The Adelaide newspaper shipping lists 'Mr. E. L. Montefiore' arriving in Adelaide from Sydney on 18/11/1852 and 'Mr. Montefiore' departing on 28 December 1852. If he was accompanied by any family, they are not listed.
- 41 M. Rutledge, 'Jacob Levi Montefiore', *ADB*, pp. 270-1.
- 42 Pioneers' Index, Latrobe Library, Melbourne.
- 43 *The Port Phillip Herald*, 28 July 1853, p. 2, and many subsequent advertisements.
- 44 *ibid.*, 23 July 1853 and 28 August 1853.
- 45 B. Cowderoy, *Melbourne's Commercial Jubilee*. Notes from the Records of 50 years work by the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, Melbourne, 1901, pp. 9-10.
- 46 Sands & Kenny, *The Melbourne Directory 1858*, p. 201.
- 47 1857 Index to *Government Gazette*, p. 15
- 48 Sands & Kenny, *The Melbourne Directory 1858*, advertisement dated 25 August 1857.
- 49 Cowderoy, *op. cit.*
- 50 J. B. Cooper, *Victorian Commerce, 1834-1934 incorporating The Story of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce*, Melbourne, 1934, pp. 82-5.
- 51 *Melbourne Morning Herald*, 26 April 1855, p. 6.
- 52 P. de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees, the Upper Class in Victoria, 1850-80*, Melbourne, 1991, p. 257.
- 53 R. McNicoll, *The Early Years of the Melbourne Club*, Hawthorn, 1976, p. 92.
- 54 Sands & McDougall, *Melbourne Directory*.
- 55 Goldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 96, 109-11.
- 56 *ibid.*, p. 126.
- 57 *Argus*, 22 August 1853.
- 58 L. B. Cox, *National Gallery of Victoria 1861 B 1968*, National Gallery of Victoria, ND, p. 10.
- 59 Catalogue and Articles in Victorian State Library.
- 60 Sutherland, *Victoria and its Metropolis*, Melbourne, 1888. Vol. 1, p. 502.
- 61 Draffin, *op. cit.*, suggests that they were ink drawings rather than etchings, since etching was not widely practised in Australia at the time.
- 62 L. B. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- 63 Sutherland, *op. cit.*, and see advertisements in *Port Phillip Herald*, 21 April 1857, 11 June 1857, 10 November 1857
- 64 *Argus*, 8 and 9 Feb., 7 and 13 August 1862, 7 and 8 August 1863.
- 65 Goldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-11, 126, 146, 150-3.
- 66 Barry, a Protestant, was born and educated in Ireland. He arrived in Melbourne in 1839 and was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1852. The following year he became chancellor of Melbourne University. His statue stands in front of the State Library in Melbourne, but he is

- remembered as the judge who condemned Ned Kelly to death in 1880.
- 67 U. Hoff and M. Plant, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1968, Foreword.
 - 68 C. B. Christesen (ed.), *The Gallery on Eastern Hill*, Victorian Artists' Society, 1970, p. 10.
 - 69 Catalogues of the Victorian Academy of Arts, State Library of Victoria.
 - 70 P. Menzell, *The Dictionary of Australasian Biography*, London, 1892.
 - 71 *ibid.*
 - 72 Minute Books of the Trustees of the Public Library, the Museum and the National Gallery of Victoria, State Library of Victoria.
 - 73 It is assumed that 'fusan' in the catalogues was a mis-spelling of 'fusain'. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary identifies fusain as a charcoal crayon made of wood from a Spindle tree and that fusain drawings were executed with this charcoal.
 - 74 Rutledge, ADB, *op. cit.*
 - 75 R. L. Benjamin, 'Private and Public Regulation of the General Insurance Industry in Australia', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993, p. 51.
 - 76 Report presented to Lord Loftus, 22 September 1880, AGNSW archives.
 - 77 ADB, vol. 6, pp. 180-7.
 - 78 Report by the Trustees of the Art Gallery to the Governor of NSW on the opening of the Gallery, 22 September 1880.
 - 79 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 March 1873, p. 5.
 - 80 Thyra Gebbin, *The Cosmos Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 'Mr. E. L. Montefiore and the Sydney Art Gallery', p. 136
 - 81 Minutes of meetings of the New South Wales Academy of Arts.
 - 82 From Ruskin's lectures at Manchester in 1857.
 - 83 NSWAA minutes.
 - 84 Report by the Trustees, *op. cit.*
 - 85 'In the Grose Valley, Blue Mountains', dated 1875, *Illustrated Australian News*, 1 December 1875, 'Lion Rock, near Govett's Leap', dated 1876, *Australasian Sketcher*, 2 September 1876.
 - 86 'Official Catalogue of the Exhibits from the Colony forwarded to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886'.
 - 87 Moore, *op. cit.*, vol. 1 pp. 233-4.
 - 88 *AIBR*, 10 April 1884, p. 164.
 - 89 P. C. Wickens, *op. cit.* pp. 1 and 7-9.
 - 90 *Australasian Insurance and Banking Record*, no. 11, volume 8, pp. 587-9.
 - 91 *ibid.*, 14 August 1886, p. 474.
 - 92 *ibid.*, 19 October 1891 p. 793.
 - 93 *ibid.*, 19 October 1892, p. 691.
 - 94 S. J. Butlin, *Australia and New Zealand Bank*, Croydon, 1961, pp. 286-8.
 - 95 Benjamin, 'Private and Public Regulation', p. 53.
 - 96 *AIBR*, 18 August 1892, p. 606.
 - 97 *ibid.*, 19 October 1892, p. 757.
 - 98 'A Century of Art in Australia', *The Bridge*, August 1972, pp. 47-48.
 - 99 *Journal of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, 1879, pp. 189-96.
 - 100 pp. 45-50.
 - 101 'Mr. E. L. Montefiore and the Sydney Art Gallery', Thyra Gribbin, *The Cosmos Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 3, 3 November 1894.
 - 102 Letter dated 17 December 1894 in archives of the National Gallery of New South Wales, Montefiore correspondence.

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE JEWISH AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT AT ORRVALE, SHEPPARTON, FOUNDED IN APRIL 1913

David Feiglin

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article by the late David Feiglin (1914-89), son of Shepparton pioneers Moishe Zalman and Leah Feiglin, was written in 1985.

The small but important Jewish agricultural settlement at Shepparton originated in April 1913 in Victoria, the south-eastern state of Australia, at the same time as several general agricultural settlements were initiated by the Victorian government's closer settlement policies. These initiatives succeeded in their aim of breaking down the squatters' huge estates with their grossly inefficient land utilisation into comparatively small holdings. Closely settled areas with high productive potential under intensive cultivation resulted. In many cases this was achieved with the assistance of irrigation, particularly in the Goulburn Valley. At the same time as closer settlement was being planned by the authorities for the Goulburn Valley, and a monumental irrigation scheme was being physically engineered on the area, the following circumstances brought together two groups of Jewish people in Melbourne.

First, a group of chosen Jewish leaders from the Jewish 'Establishment' in Melbourne, who for several years previously were interested in deflecting newly-arrived Jewish immigrants from the city onto land settlement. Secondly, a group of newly-arrived Jewish families, predominately from Eretz Israel and Russia, some with varying degrees of agricultural experience and some with no agricultural experience, who were anxious to settle on the land. The former group instituted the Jewish Agricultural Settlement Fund, and through its members later made a supplementary loan available to Jewish agricultural settlers. Of the latter group the following eight families were selected (by the former group) and were recommended as suitable applicants for closer land settlement subject to approval by state government experts. The original people chosen for settlement were Raphael Beresinsky, B. Bendel, Bere Feiglin, Moishe Zalman Feiglin, Samuel Gorr, J. Moritz, Nehemiah Rosenbaum, I. Rubenstein, and their families. After being examined by the government agricultural experts and approved, they became the nucleus of the Jewish Settlement at Orrvale, Shepparton, one year after irrigation was brought to the district.

Thus the Jewish settlement sprung up in the district of Orrvale commencing approximately two and a half miles south-east of the then township of Shepparton

— which had a population of 3,000 (now 25,500) — and extending in a southeasterly direction for a few miles in the heart of the intensive rolling plains of the Goulburn Valley on the Goulburn River, in the north-east of the State. It was situated in a semi-consolidated area of approximately two square miles as part of what was then known as the No. 2 Settlement where the new Jewish settlers intermingled with newly settled non-Jewish farmers hailing from Australia, the British Isles or Southern Europe. The Jewish Settlement constituted only a small proportion of the general area of the Orrvale agricultural settlement, which in turn was one of several extensive settlement areas being opened up by irrigation and closer settlement in the vicinity at the time. Quantitatively, the Jewish settlement in the area was of modest proportions but with the passage of time its qualitative achievements were highly regarded and respected by both the district settlers and the government agricultural authorities alike.

Historically, the general land settlement movement of irrigated land at Orrvale, Shepparton and its adjacent and surrounding irrigation settlements in the Goulburn Valley sprang from the following sequence of events. The disastrous Australian droughts of 1880-82 led to the Royal Commission on Water Supply of 1884, which in turn led to the subsequent Irrigation Act of 1886. This Act in effect nationalised all surface waters, repealed the previously universally accepted riparian water rights, which entitled landowners adjacent to the stream to the unimpaired use of the water in that stream where it was adjacent to their land in quantity and quality. The eventual creation of the Victorian State Rivers and Water Supply Commission with inherent powers to control water resources and to acquire large undeveloped squatters' estates for subdivision and closer settlement into small unit areas serviced by irrigation was a natural consequence of this. It was this far-sighted initiative of the Victorian Government which fathered the highly developed and productive settlements of the Goulburn Valley. Today, these are amongst the best in Australia and indeed, judged by worldwide standards, rank high in productive efficiency, notwithstanding marketing problems affecting some of the produce, which have arisen in the last two decades.

Shepparton and its adjacent surrounding districts resulted from the compulsory acquisition and subdivision by the authorities of a grazing outpost of 80,000 acres (32,000 hectares) belonging to Gregor McGregor, situated at Tallygaroopna on the outskirts of Shepparton. It was considered by the settlement authorities that, with the assistance of irrigation and the practice of intensive farming methods, 40- to 50-acre holdings were adequate family units. This subsequently proved to be incorrect. Whereas this area was adequate for fruit growing, it was not even half the area required for successful dairy farming under irrigation for which the land was originally subdivided. The inadequate area was one of the reasons why the Jewish settlers, and indeed many of the non-Jewish settlers, turned from the original plan of dairy farming to fruit-growing. Two other reasons for this change of direction were the severe drought of 1914 with the loss of suitable cattle pastures

and the fact that the Jewish settlers working on developed orchards in Ardmona and the Shepparton No. 1 settlement some distance away – in order to augment their scanty income in the earliest years of settlement – put their experience to practical use in developing their own fruit-growing enterprises.

To assist with the development of settlements, the Victorian government under its Closer Settlement Acts, granted 31 years' purchase lease terms to the settlers of the district on generous repayment terms to selected applicants after careful screening. In addition it organised the erection of houses and essential outbuildings of minimum size and standards, which it financed on a long-term repayment basis. The Jewish Agricultural Settlement Fund of Melbourne granted modest supplementary loans for working capital to the appreciative Jewish settlers. These loans were also for long-term repayment. The Jewish settlers, in most cases long before repayments were finally due, repaid both the State Government and the Agricultural Fund loans.

Within three years of the original Jewish settlers taking up their holdings at Orrvale, Shepparton, the following Jewish families from Melbourne also acquired properties on an individual basis: Messrs Isaac Dabscheck & Sons (Abc and Wolf), Robert Rothberg, Louis Rothberg, and Eli Wynn (a cousin of Samuel Wynn, founder of Wynn's Wines). The latter three took up their holdings a few miles to the east of the original settlers, whilst Dabscheck purchased land in a central position of the Jewish settlement. It is noteworthy that this second group consisted mainly of established Melbourne businessmen residing in Melbourne, who purchased as a business venture rather than as farmers. They retained their properties for varying relatively short periods of time and eventually sold out to both Jewish and non-Jewish buyers who lived on their properties and successfully farmed them. Of the original settlers, the brothers-in-law Bendel and Rubenstein returned to Melbourne within a couple of years and their holdings were taken over by Messrs Sonkin and Jacob (Jack) Rosenbaum (son of N. Rosenbaum). The Sonkin family remained on the settlement for a few years only.

On taking up their holdings, the isolated and bare but fertile land posed its challenges to the stouthearted young and middle-aged enthusiastic pioneers. They faced them squarely with boundless faith, hard work, rugged optimism and a determination to succeed.

Unlined timber houses of absolute basic standards (even for the rural scene of those days) were built by the government agencies and occupied by the settlers, most of who were living in the fodder sheds whilst awaiting their completion. Amenities as we know them today were non-existent. Electricity and reticulated water did not come on the scene till some 15 years later. Roads, formed but unmade, were consequently dusty in summer and almost impassably muddy in winter. The post office, railway station, nearest shopping centre, doctor, etc., were some two to four miles away depending upon where the holding was in relation to the Shepparton township. Telephones were not yet connected to the settlement and

the English language was unfamiliar to most of the newly arrived Jewish settlers. Kosher meat was not available on the settlement and had to be brought in from Melbourne by passenger train. Refrigeration and ice chests were not yet known there; consequently Melbourne meat was not available in the summer months. A synagogue for prayer, a Hebrew teacher for children and a *shochet* were vital necessities, which had to be organised, as indeed they were. A government school for secular education was being built in the district – but was situated a few walking miles distant from most Jewish settlers through paddocks and fields. This, of course, caused difficulties, albeit minor ones, for young children during both the extreme heat of summer and rainy weather of winter. Adequate income for living expenses was not yet forthcoming from production off the land; as a result living standards were lowered to the bare minimum and beyond. These were but a few of the practical problems with which the early Jewish settlers were confronted. Progress in the district generally, and the passage of time, eventually provided solutions to the material problems. Faith, patience, and initiatives from the Jewish settlers themselves helped solve the gigantic, specifically Jewish spiritual and cultural challenges that they faced.

After gradually fencing and laying out their farms (later switched to orchards), the Jewish settlers obtained their first earnings and local experience by working on large established orchards some 12 miles away in the Ardmona district, where they camped during the week and returned home for the Shabbat. A two-hour drive in a draft horse spring-drawn cart was the transport medium. In these jobs, the new Jewish settlers faced a real test of hardship, skill and endurance. Conditions were tough, competition for jobs was keen and adequate performance in the specialised work of pruning fruit trees and later picking fruit was paramount for survival. They passed the test very well.

The following episodes point to the harshness of conditions. When, after pruning on the muddy orchard on a winter's day, a settler had his trousers burnt while drying them by the campfire overnight, he completed the week's work in his underclothing. On another occasion, one of the Jewish lads, aged 14, who was working there for half the adult rate and performed equally with the men, summoned up courage and requested equal pay from the 'boss'. Tough as the 'boss' was, he conceded the justice of the lad's claim and agreed to pay full wages for full performance. For that family at that time this gain was a fortune. This young lad's younger brother, whilst working for wages with some of the other Jewish settlers cutting broom corn with a sickle on a distant property in mid-winter (where they broke the ice in knee deep water in which they waded all day in the performance of their task), was granted a similar request in the same circumstances.

Moishe Feiglin, who also desperately needed wage income, was more fortunate in the location of his employment. The following fortuitous set of circumstances saved him the very real worry of being away from his wife and large family of young children during the week. In order to plant up his own small vineyard,

he arranged to take some vine cuttings from the orchard of a local man, Ray West, manager of the Shepparton Butter Factory, where they met. West was quite impressed at the skills displayed by this young settler in pruning these vines: he gave Feiglin a job and later made him manager of his property, only two miles away. Feiglin had obtained this experience during his life on the land for many years in the north of Eretz Israel, where he had contract planted vineyards in the settlements sponsored by Baron Edmond de Rothschild that were being established there at the time.

As pointed out earlier, because the drought had played havoc with pastures on the one hand and because Jewish settlers were now gaining this valuable local fruit-growing experience on the other, they immediately turned to planting up their properties as orchards. Encouraged by faith and determination and assisted by their wives and young families, who joined them in their continual hard work, the settlers, with whatever time they could muster, set about planting up their orchards – from which they could not expect tangible monetary returns for some four to five years. They had the good fortune to struggle through the early difficult and trying years. By the early and mid-1920s, some eight to ten years after taking up their holdings, some light was beginning to appear at the end of the tunnel. The younger children, who by this time were quite useful on the farm, lent a helping hand after school, on Sundays and during the long summer school vacation, which coincides with the fruit-picking and packing season.

In the very first years, there was a shortage of one male for a *minyan* (quorum for conduct of community divine service). Consequently Moishe Feiglin, who emerged as the leader of the group, travelled to Melbourne to find another Jewish person willing to settle in Shepparton to make up the shortage. Isaac Cyprus, a cabinetmaker, responded to the call and settled on a two-acre block with a house in the heart of the Jewish settlement, where he remained until he left for Palestine in 1921. The *minyan* was held in that house, where he also carried on his cabinet-making business until a one-acre property with a weatherboard dwelling attached was purchased from a Mr Stagg about 1919-20 under a government purchase lease for a synagogue. The following names appeared on the title, representing the Shepparton Jewish Agricultural Settlement Fund as trustees for the Shepparton Jewish Settlement – Abraham Kozminsky, Dr Moshe A. Schalit and Barnet Hyman Altson, all of Melbourne. Subsequently the name of Leon Jona appeared. On 2 December 1929, a letter was forwarded to Moishe Feiglin, president of the Shepparton Jewish Community, which made it clear that the property described as Allotment 16, Section D, Shepparton East was ready to be transferred to the Jewish settlers. The transfer was finally effected for the Shepparton Jewish Community after a final payment of £37 3s 9d, contributed by the settlers, was sent on 30 April 1930 by Feiglin on behalf of the settlement, to Mr Prescott, officer of the Closer Settlement Board.

In the very early pioneering years of the settlement Moishe Feiglin, although

fully occupied on his own property and in teaching Jewish studies to his own children during evenings and on Saturday, offered his services and taught the children of other settlers who wished to avail themselves of the opportunity. He also became a *shochet* of poultry as a matter of necessity in order to provide kosher poultry for the other hard-working families on the land as well as his own family. Nehemiah Rosenbaum, a learned and pious man, also became a *shochet* of poultry for the same reason.

With the development of the settlement, and as the young children were growing up, Moïshe Feiglin, acting on behalf of the settlement, contacted the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Abraham Isaac Kook, with a request to recommend a suitable teacher, minister and *shochet* willing to take up a position in the small community. As a result, Rabbi Haim Yoffe, an eminent Jewish scholar and member of a distinguished family in Jerusalem, answered the call (and was shortly afterward joined by his family). He acted in this capacity at the Shepparton Jewish settlement for some four years from 1922. He then answered a call to Melbourne, where he served for some fifty years as *shochet*, minister, *magid shiur* – honorary communal and Zionist worker – and in his later years served as a member of the Melbourne Beth Din. The modest salary paid to the *shochet*-Hebrew teacher was financed from payments made by the settlers with a small periodical payment from the estate of Melbourne merchant and philanthropist Joseph Kronheimer, in the very early years. Those requiring Hebrew teaching as well as the kosher meat paid 10 shillings per week (Messrs Moïshe & Bere Feiglin, Samuel Gorr and Raphael Beresinsky) whereas the others, requiring kosher meat facilities only, paid 5 shillings weekly. Although this was the general arrangement in the early years, these arrangements were adjusted to differing circumstances from time to time.

After Rabbi Yoffe left Shepparton, initiatives were immediately set in motion for the appointment of a successor. This procedure kept repeating itself as the *shochtim*, following differing periods of service, each left Shepparton for positions with better prospects. Obviously, the very limited opportunities in this small Jewish settlement were no match for the wider scope available in the larger Jewish communities of the Australian capital cities. The appended list, in chronological order, of those serving this small community as *shochet* and teacher-minister, conveys this picture very clearly. As events turned out, the Shepparton Jewish Settlement in some measure unconsciously set up a feeder service of *shochtim* for Australia's larger Jewish communities.

Throughout the existence of the Shepparton Jewish Settlement as an organised community, religious service was regularly held in the synagogue on Friday evenings and Saturday at least a *minyan* attended with only minor exceptions on occasions when some settlers were ill or absent. A *minyan* was readily available also for *yahrzeits* of the settlers, of the few Jewish businessmen in the town, and for the isolated individual Jewish residents of the surrounding districts who requested it. It goes without saying that during the High Holydays additional individual

Jewish people from further afield found their way to the small informal but warm synagogue for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It happened on more than one occasion that a Jewish itinerant salesman suddenly appeared on the scene just before *yomtov*, parked his large covered horse wagon (later to be a motor van), with all its contents, on the grounds of this small Jewish oasis in the wide open space of Australia and stayed over the festival period with one or other of the settlers. Likewise, other less affluent salesmen visiting the district carrying their wares (usually drapery) in two large suitcases found hospitality for Shabbat or festivals with one settler or another when they desired to stay over.

Generally speaking, the Jewish settlers did not participate in the social life of the general district and so, by and large, they mixed only with the small number of Jewish families there. The daily physically demanding efforts on the farms, particularly in the early years, restricted the time and inclination for social activity. On the other hand, happy occasions were enthusiastically celebrated. When a new *Sefer Torah* was brought into the *shul*, or when a wedding took place or on the occasion of a *bris* or *pidyan haben* (redemption of the first-born), the whole settlement participated with the characteristic warmth and family spirit of a small community. Indeed, the children who witnessed these, as well as the Simchat Torah celebrations at the synagogue with participation in the exuberant and ecstatic song and dance by the spirited Moishe and Bere Feiglin and others, were left with fond and pleasant impressions, which would always remain with them. Friends, of course, visited one another, particularly on Shabbat and festivals, and the children met daily, either at the district state primary school at Orrvale or at the high school in Shepparton.

Led by Moishe Zalman Feiglin assisted by his brother Bere, and with the support and help of the other original settlers who were either Orthodox or strongly traditional practising Jews, the settlement had an unmistakable religious background combined with overtones of profound love for Eretz Israel. It is interesting to note that whereas the settlers were almost all Zionist-oriented, at the same time in the large cities of Australia the Zionist ideal was confined to a very much smaller proportion of the population.

The little *shul*, situated on the southwest corner of Doyles Lane and Poplar Road, was not only geographically centrally situated in the settlement but spiritually and sociologically it was the nerve centre. Indeed, events turned out to vindicate the insistence by one member, as a prerequisite to his joining the original group, that the number of settlers must be at least large enough to provide a regular *minyan* for religious services. The level of activities around the *shul* varied with the ebb and flow of Jewish people to the settlement; this in turn varied with the ebb and flow of Jewish immigration into Australia and also on the state of the economy in the cities. During the Great Depression years of 1929-33 there was a substantial seasonal inflow of Jewish fruit pickers to the settlement. These were new arrivals to Australia for whom the Victorian Jewish Welcome Society

(which later changed its name to the Jewish Welfare Society) built a hostel in the district on leased land for their accommodation. The hostel was later transferred to the synagogue ground; later still, about the mid-1950s, it was demolished when it had outlived its usefulness and became derelict. Several successful Melbourne businessmen built their large successful enterprises on the first £50 net, which they earned in Australia with the sweat of their brow in a fruit-picking season at Shepparton. That sum was the amount a fruit picker accumulated over a season, if he saved carefully. The Orthodox Jews amongst the newcomers added strength to synagogue activities whilst at the same time social activities were augmented by newcomers, and these focused on the hostel.

The number of settlers increased gradually and peaked in the late 1930s and early 1940s with the maximum at approximately 50 families in the middle of the latter decade. Most were orchardists. The increases came principally from the following sources and for the following reasons: some were children of the original pioneers taking up their own properties after marriage; a number of individuals, being established families from Melbourne, desired a life on the land; and about ten families were Polish and German Jewish immigrants of the 1920s and 1930s. The failure of the Berwick Jewish agricultural settlement 25 miles east of Melbourne added some six families to Shepparton, where they purchased orchard properties in the 1930s. A group of five Jewish Polish families migrated during the late 1930s from agricultural areas around Brest Litovsk in Poland; they were assisted by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society to settle on a large subdivided holding on Dookie Road at Shepparton East, some 3 miles to the northeast of the existing Jewish settlement. Six young unmarried German Jewish refugees, deported from Britain on the *Dunera*, interned initially at Hay, NSW, and subsequently at Tatura, were released from the latter camp for fruit-picking duties and were employed by the Feiglins. They lived at the hostel for about two years in the early 1940s. During this period, synagogue activity increased very considerably with a daily *minyan*, and *shiurim* (study periods) were held twice a day.

Towards the close of the 1940s and until 1952, as a result of the immigration to Shepparton of a few Russian Lubavitch Chasidic families, brought out to Australia by the Feiglin family via Paris, where they had been war refugees for a few years, several families were added to the settlement. Of their number, Rabbi Bezalel Wilshansky came first as a *shochet*/teacher to Shepparton and was followed by the Althaus, Gurewich, Kluwgant, Perlov, Pliskin and Serebryanski families. The religious activity around the synagogue again immediately intensified. Advised by the Lubavitcher *rebbe* of New York, Rabbi Yosef Yitchok Schneersohn, who encouraged them to migrate to Shepparton, and assisted by Moishe Zalman Feiglin and his family, they set about establishing at Shepparton the first full-time *yeshiva* in Australia – with only three students – within a short period of their arrival. Later the numbers increased considerably by arrivals from Melbourne and Sydney. Of these student arrivals, several are today prominent and successful professional and

businessmen in Melbourne and Sydney. This *yeshiva* developed at Shepparton for two years, then moved to Burwood on the outskirts of Melbourne for two more years, and finally to 92 Hotham Street, East St Kilda, in the heart of the Jewish area of Melbourne. There it developed an outstanding educational network in the form of separate Jewish day schools for boys (Yeshiva College) and girls (Beth Rivka College) covering the combination of religious and secular educational activities from kindergarten through primary, secondary and tertiary educational levels. In addition to *kollel* (adult education) and several youth groups, other socially beneficial organisations have developed around it. Its influence, as is now well known, extends throughout the Jewish communities of the Commonwealth and beyond, including South-East Asia, from which students are sent to the schools from time to time.

During the war years, some women and children from Melbourne Jewish families evacuated to Shepparton, as part of the general exodus to rural areas, which took place at the time – as a precaution against threatened enemy bombing of the cities. A Zionist Hachshara farm was established some 12 miles from Shepparton at Toolamba, where varying numbers of young *chalutzim* (pioneer settlers) trained for *aliya* to Israel.

During the 1930s and 1940s social and cultural activities developed around the hostel. Raphael Beresinsky, one of the original pioneers with strong Zionist views, chaired a committee which developed such activities. Resolutions passed at a meeting held on 22 August 1939 reflected concern at the attempted influence of Bundists (Jewish socialists) and secularists on the cultural character of the settlement by some newcomers. The signatories to the resolutions were three original remaining pioneers, Moishe Feiglin, Raphael Beresinsky and J. Moritz, who clearly reaffirmed, in no uncertain terms, their determination that the original basic cultural character of the settlement and its institutions would remain unaltered.

A very active and successful WIZO (Women's International Zionist Organisation) group with some 50-60 members under the able and energetic leadership of Hannah Rosenbaum (wife of late Joe Rosenbaum) was developed in the 1930s and 1940s. It comprised almost all of the Jewish women of the settlement and met at regular and frequent intervals.

During the very first few years of the Jewish settlement, the older children could not allow themselves the luxury of advanced secular education (an exception was Dr Yacov Gur who graduated in medicine in the 1920s), and helped their parents on the farm, whereas later the Jewish children, almost without exception, attended the Shepparton High School. Some later attended the Melbourne University, and several of the second and third generation from the settlement graduated in medicine, arts, law, engineering, commerce, education and pharmacy.

At the high school, the Jewish students fared very well in class and on the sports field. Their relationship with staff and fellow students was one of mutual

respect and understanding. The sizeable proportion of Jewish prefects and captains at the school compared to the number attending at various periods was highly commendable. It is to the credit of the non-Jewish staff and students that during several years, at great inconvenience to themselves, they chose to travel – long distances – to district schools for competitive sports on a weekday rather than on Friday to enable the religious Jewish members of the teams to participate. At one stage, the ‘best and fairest school footballer of the district’ award went to Richard Pratt, now of Visyboard fame.

When compulsory military training was in force during the 1920s the relevant age group discharged their obligations mostly in the Light Horse Unit. A rather humorous episode occurred on one occasion when the Earl of Stradbroke, the Governor of Victoria, who was visiting Shepparton by passenger train, was welcomed at the Shepparton railway station yards by a guard of honour formed by the Military Light Horse Unit. Judah Feiglin, who participated, was having problems with his nervous mount when the commanding officer addressed him. ‘Can’t you control that bloody horse?’ ‘I am doing my best, sir.’ ‘Dismount and I will show you how.’

Accordingly, the officer got on Judah’s horse and was barely seated when he was thrown clear. ‘You win’, was the typical Australian sportsmanlike reply.

The township of Shepparton has since grown to become the focal city of the Goulburn Valley area. It is often referred to as the capital of the Goulburn Valley, and is a significant center for agricultural, commercial and industrial activities. It is noteworthy that apart from individual shopkeepers and/or traders from time to time, there has never been a significant number of Jewish people living in the town of Shepparton itself. The farmers lived in the Jewish settlement on their farms some two to three miles away. To service the orchardists of the area, a cooperative fruit-processing company known as SPC (Shepparton Preserving Company) was launched at about the time the settlement commenced. The Jewish orchardists eventually became substantial shareholders, and significant suppliers of the fresh fruit processed by the company.

The relationship with the neighbouring non-Jewish settlers was one of mutual respect throughout the half-century of the settlement’s existence. Joe Rosenbaum was at one stage vice-president of the Shepparton and District Irrigators Association, an important and influential group representing the extensive common interests of the district farmers and fruit growers. Moishe Feiglin was a well-known businessman both in the town (later city) of Shepparton and in the surrounding districts where the Feiglin family were suppliers of wooden fruit cases to orchardists for marketing their products. He was affectionately known as ‘Mo’ in local business circles, where his ability and integrity were highly respected. It was common knowledge that with him written contracts were unnecessary – he had the reputation of never going back on his word. Feiglin Road in the heart of the settlement stands as a tribute to the esteem in which the family was held in

the municipality.

The Jewish settlers were known to be good orchardists and were respected in the district for their industrious habits, honesty and sense of social and civic obligation. It was the custom in the district that if through illness or some other misfortune an orchardist fell behind with his seasonal work, the district would organise a 'working bee' and bring the work program up to date. The Jewish settlers always fully participated. In this connection, the following episode is noteworthy. On one occasion, a Jewish settler fell ill over the winter and was obliged to undergo major surgery. A district working bee was organised and both the Jewish and non-Jewish settlers pruned the whole orchard in one day, a task that would normally have taken two men some four months to complete.

The technical procedures in the fruit-growing activities saw tremendous advances over three decades to the mid-1940s. Originally two, then four and later six, heavy Clydesdale draught horses provided the motive power on the average 40-60 acre orchard. With them, the ploughing and associated activities were performed on the orchard: the spray pump was drawn for spraying the trees against insect pests, the spring cart pulled the harvested fruit from the orchard to the packing shed for sorting and packing and with them the five-ton horse-drawn four-wheeled lorry carted the fruit to either the SPC canning factory two miles away for processing, or in the case of packed fruit, to the Shepparton railway station for dispatch to the Melbourne or Sydney wholesale fruit markets where it was sold by agents. In the 1930s the tractors displaced horses on the orchard for ploughing, and the 5-ton horse-drawn lorry was displaced by motor trucks with varying capacities up to eight tons in the 1930s, and then 15-20 tons in the 1940s. The original manually-operated spray pump of 44 gallons gave way to highly specialised spray pumps and later to mist spray pumps of some 500-gallon capacity. Over these decades, also, the 50 lb. fruit cases for moving the fruit from the orchard were manhandled via horse-drawn spring cart to the packing shed at the homestead. This gave way to the fork-lifted half-ton containers on mechanised trolleys. Similarly, the original spreading by hand of fertiliser to nourish the fruit trees gave way to the mechanical manure spreader; the early partially effective insecticides gave way to more effective spraying materials; the grading and sizing of fruit was taken over by the mechanical grader. Mechanical tipping by forklift from the half-ton container bins of fruit, finally ended the tedious manual handling of individual pieces of fruit. These developments led to greater production and lower unit costs.

Marketing of the produce, largely owing to factors beyond the control of the grower, has not kept up with production procedures mainly because of different world marketing conditions. Britain's entry in the 1970s into the Common Market (European Economic Community, now the European Union) and the loss of Empire preferential marketing on the British market have dealt devastating blows to the Australian fruit industry over the last two decades, from which it is

still suffering.

In the wake of Britain's admission to the Common Market, Australia succeeded in developing stronger Asian markets but the fruit industry, particularly the canning pear section, is in bad shape and has been in a continuing crisis stage now for several years. The substantial growth of markets for our superior export varieties of pears and apples has recently boosted the industry somewhat, but not to the degree necessary to compensate for the catastrophic decline in the demand for canning pears. Each year progressively large areas of WBC canning pears are being grafted over to the 'Packham' variety which are currently enjoying good export markets, but this is a costly process; furthermore, the young grafted trees take some three years until they bear payable crops. The main concern is, of course, the fickle nature of overseas markets, which have turned full cycle on more than one occasion. Summing up this situation, the Goulburn Valley fruit-growing industry, particularly the canning pear grower, is now undergoing a crisis, which, hopefully, will eventually be overcome.

The period from late 1920s into the 1950s saw a growth period in the farming and commercial interests of several original settlers, as their families grew up. Thus Moishe Feiglin's family acquired additional fruit-growing acreage in the district; these included peach-growing land the Cobram district some 40 miles to the north on the Murray River. The family also went into citrus-growing on the Murray at Mildura, acquired a mechanised fruit-drying plant at Shepparton, became manufacturers of fruit cases for the marketing of fruit, and later extended into timber saw-milling in the vicinity of Melbourne and eastern Victoria. The Rosenbaum family became case makers, tobacco growers, extended their orchard holdings both in the district and at Cobram with the larger fruit growers of the district, and diversified into the house-building industry in the city of Shepparton. The Gorr family extended their fruit-growing acreage in the district, operated an extensive fruit-drying plant, extended into tomato-growing and operated a Red Gum sawmill. Later, two sons of the Gorr family became pharmacists in Shepparton and at Kyabram some 30 miles away. The smaller size of the family unit was probably the reason why other original pioneers did not expand their holdings.

The gradual retirement and, in most cases, migration of the settlers from Shepparton, mainly to Melbourne, was a gradual process over a few decades but was strongest from the late 1940s throughout the 1950s and extending into the early 1960s. Throughout, many of the young people in their late teens were leaving, bound particularly for Melbourne, in quest of advanced educational needs, suitable employment needs and in some cases marriage partners. They usually settled down in Melbourne and were in many instances followed by their parents. This process continued until into the early 1960s, by which time most settlers had sold their holdings, a *minyán* had already ceased to exist at the *shul*, and only a few individual settlers remained in residence. The Moishe Feiglin family holdings were maintained as commercial interests and were managed by a traveling director

resident in Melbourne.

Owing to the nature of this article, personal emphasis has been basically concentrated on the activities and influences of the original six pioneers who founded the settlement. In fact the children, particularly the older ones of the pioneering families, worked very hard in the early years and exerted a strong influence over the settlement's development and character. The subsequent settlers, who either came in the early years or succeeded the pioneering families, made very significant contributions to the development of the settlement also. They hailed mainly from European backgrounds, some having had extensive business experience, in either Poland, Germany, other European countries or Eretz Israel, and this facilitated their occupational adaptability. The agility with which these newcomers without previous agricultural experience adapted to the physically exacting horticultural tasks was indeed a credit to them and pleasantly surprising to the intelligent observer.

Of the original pioneers, Mr and Mrs Nehemiah Rosenbaum and Samuel Gorr's widow Shayna – he predeceased her by several years – ended their years in retirement on the settlement at Shepparton. Mr and Mrs Moishe Feiglin and Mr and Mrs Bere Feiglin ended their years in retirement in Melbourne. A substantial segment of the Feiglin family, second and third generations, have established themselves and their families in Israel. Mr and Mrs Raphael Beresinsky realised their lifelong ambition of returning to Israel, where they spent their retiring years with one son and two daughters who lived there, and Mr J. Moritz likewise spent his retirement years in Israel where two of his sons were residing. Mrs Moritz had predeceased him by many years. The small but warm and friendly *shul*, once the heart and soul of the settlement, now sadly projects a lonely but dignified image as it stands in a state of disrepair, nestling in the shade of the towering pines surrounding it. The disintegration of the settlement followed the pattern of some other Jewish agricultural settlements in other parts of the world and for much the same reason. If one were in search of a major cause, in this case one could not escape blaming the settlement's limited numbers and consequent limitation to Jewish social and cultural life.

It should be said that although Shepparton was the only successful Jewish settlement on the land in Australia, there have been and there still are many individual Jewish farmers who have in the past, and still continue to successfully farm their properties in scattered areas of Australia either as residents or as absentee owners.

Amongst many interesting observations which could be made in regard to the Shepparton Jewish settlement, the following two are paramount. First, the spirit and tenacity of the original pioneering families, including children young and older, who persevered and succeeded in the face of almost overwhelming odds must be admired. Secondly, the strong Jewish traditional atmosphere that pervaded the community is a credit to the group and in particular to my late respected father,

Moishe Zalman Feiglin, who exhibited a shining example in the lead.

Melbourne Jewry in a spirit of goodwill assisted the establishment of the Jewish settlement at Shepparton. Little was it anticipated that from amongst the original settlers and their descendants, individual initiatives would emerge to actively and significantly participate in the cultural and spiritual development of the Melbourne Jewish community of later years.

Appendix A: A note on the early Feiglin enterprises

The reasons for Moishe Feiglin's choice of settlement on the land were religious and economic, and he had a love for the land, having been a 'colonist' in Israel at Mishmar Hayarden in the north of Palestine, and later at Metulla, for some 20 years. This love for the land extended to the sons, who also joined in extending the family's agricultural holdings, and the business grew and diversified. The basic concept was originally dairying but the combined effects of the 1914 drought in reducing cattle feed on the one hand, and the inadequate size of the holdings for dairy farming on the other, combined with the experience gained by working on established orchards some distance away, steered the development into fruit growing.

Fruit growing shows no return until the trees come into bearing some four years later, consequently while the father was away working on other orchards to earn the wherewithal to keep the property and household in at least some income, the children after school, and the mother during the day assisted by father before and after work, planted up the orchard and milked the few cows to establish a minimum cash flow for household expenses. Years of hardship and struggle followed, but with abundant faith, rugged optimism and the combined unified hard work of the family (children after school included) the efforts were providentially blessed with success after several years.

With the purchase of additional acreage of established orchards in the early 1930s, the original 45 acres became 110 acres extending across three properties in close proximity to the Jewish settlement. The main crops were canning pears and canning cling peaches, which were purchased and processed by the predominantly grower-owned and controlled Shepparton Preserving Company, at one time the largest fruit-canning factory in the Southern Hemisphere.

In the 1930s, the canning peach and apricot trees phased out of production due to their advanced age, whereas the canning pear trees continued to produce as they are not affected by age. As it is not good agricultural practice to replace the old stoned fruit trees with young stoned fruit trees, pears replaced the peaches and apricots. Because the Shepparton district had limited areas of the sandy loam types of soil required for successful peach-growing, the family during the late 1930s and early 1940s joined the other leading orchardists of the district in taking up available peach-growing land approximately 40 miles further north on the Murray River. At Cobram the areas were larger and land was more plentiful – consequently

a 120-cow dairy farm operated by a share farmer was also established, as well as a considerable area of citrus trees. In all, the Cobram irrigation development covered some 400 acres of which some 200 were devoted to producing peaches, pears, and citrus, mainly lemons.

The original holding at Shepparton covered a fruit-harvesting season that lasted about three months. In order to extend the season, the family in 1958 branched out into apple growing at Garfield, 40 miles east of Melbourne. There it planted up an area of approximately 100 acres with 'Granny Smith', 'Jonathan' and 'Delicious' varieties. In 1960 the family acquired land at Nangiloc, near Mildura. There, some 200 acres under sprinkler irrigation were planted up with citrus trees, vines, and early table dessert fruit for both the domestic and export markets. Water is pumped from the Murray River by an electric pump, which replaced a 120 HP diesel pump when the price of oil rose too steeply in the 1970s.

During the 1920s and 1930s, as an adjunct to fruit-growing, the family diversified into drying fruit upon wooden trays in the sun, and in the 1940s a mechanised dehydration plant was acquired. In the 1920s, the family also began manufacturing packing cases from timber components, which were purchased from saw millers and sent by rail to Shepparton. There the cases were made and sold to the district's orchardists. This business grew, and as supply of the timber components, known as shooks, was not reliable from the saw millers, the family produced their own timber components by entering into the sawmilling business in the early 1930s, at a location 50 miles to the east of Melbourne. Some of the older members of the family, who by that time were married and living in Melbourne, managed the mills and timber yard. The business unit, consisting of father and sons, later became a proprietary company. The timber enterprise developed beyond the mere manufacture of packing cases, and following the expansion of the supply of building and furniture timber, it became the major component of the business. The Victorian mountain ash kiln drying procedures in the pioneering stages were carried out at our kilns in the Powelltown areas in the early 1930s. The head of this section at the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation) timber products section was I. H. Boas M.Sc., who was also a Jewish communal leader in Melbourne at the time.

The Feiglin family enjoys the reputation of being amongst the oldest and largest fruit-growers in Victoria. At our two bush saw-milling areas, situated at Mansfield and Narbethong, we have been saw-milling for several decades. In both the saw-milling and fruit-growing enterprises in the country districts many local families are employed and housed. In 1945, the family based the headquarters of the timber operation at Nunawading, where it established a timber yard, with drawing kilns, gang frame sawmill, seasoning works and planing sheds.

Appendix B: Chronological list of people who officiated as minister, teacher and shochet at the Jewish agricultural settlement situated at Orrvale, Shepparton, Victoria

- | | | |
|-----|--|---------|
| 1. | Moishe Feiglin (settler who acted as the first hon. minister and shochet of poultry, and teacher, and later held those offices between appointment of others) | 1914–18 |
| 2. | Rabbi Teitelblatt | 1919–21 |
| 3. | Rabbi Haim Yoffe | 1922–27 |
| 4. | Rev. Glick | 1927–30 |
| 5. | Rev. S. Elbaum | 1930–31 |
| 6. | Rev. Levine | 1931–32 |
| 7. | Rev. Churgin | 1932–33 |
| 8. | Rev. M. Kantor | 1935–36 |
| 9. | Rabbi Goldberg | 1939–43 |
| 10. | Rev. E. Loehenstein | 1943–45 |
| 11. | Rabbi Gardyn | 1945–46 |
| 12. | Rabbi Wilshansky | 1949–51 |
| 13. | Rev. Shidlo | 1953–55 |
| 14. | A settler, Judah Alperstein, conducted the services on the High Holydays for the next few years at the synagogue until he moved to Melbourne and thence to Israel. | |

THE JEWISH BURIAL GROUNDS OF BRISBANE

Morris S. Ochert

Give me a possession of a burial place with you, so I may bury my dead. Genesis 23:4.

The title of this article uses the term 'Jewish burial grounds' rather than 'Jewish cemeteries' advisedly. A Jewish cemetery is one dedicated exclusively for Jewish use, or comprises an area in a general cemetery allocated to the Jewish community. It must have clearly defined borders, which are physically discernible; for instance, consisting of an internal street or a hedge of trees or a fence. Before the initial burial, it must have been consecrated for its sacred purpose.¹ I have used the generic term 'burial grounds' to describe all five of the places referred to below. The first and second of our burial grounds were not Jewish cemeteries, while the other three conformed to the requirements stated above.

First, the burial ground at the convict settlement on the Redcliffe Peninsula (1824-25). In common with many other parts of Australia, the early story of Brisbane is that of a convict settlement. It was a primitive place on the Redcliffe Peninsula where the convicts' lot was exacerbated by mosquitoes, cruelty, hopelessness, isolation, attacks by the Aborigines, privations and lack of clean water. The settlement was established there in 1824. It was only a year later, after Lieutenant John Oxley had reported that it could never be sustained since the anchorage was completely unsuitable, that it was decided to move it about 40 kilometres up the Brisbane River. An area was chosen between where the northern approaches of the Victoria Bridge and the William Jolly Bridge now are. Though no record of Jewish convicts at the burial ground at Redcliffe (1824-25) can be



The Memorial Chapel, consecrated 1966, and the Martyrs Memorial, dedicated 1968, Mt Gravatt Cemetery

found, it is likely that there were some, as the convict death rate was high.

There are many vague aspects in the early history of Brisbane: those who were charged with the difficult tasks of administering the colony were far too busy with the problems of running a convict settlement to give much thought to leaving behind a written history. As was the case at Redcliffe, either no records were made of grave locations, names, religions, dates, and so on, at the North Quay (Skew Street) General Cemetery from 1825-44, or if they were, they have not survived the passage of time. Though early photographs (no longer extant) are described as showing that there were 'clumps of monuments' in this cemetery, the only monuments to have survived were those of three children of soldiers.² Nor is there any record of this cemetery being divided into areas for the various religions.

By consulting reports of various researchers and maps drawn by various town surveyors,³ we learn that Brisbane's first general cemetery was situated on a one-acre site through which Skew Street now runs. This street is the northern approach to the Grey Street (William Jolly) Bridge and runs the short distance to Upper Roma Street. At random, various graves were also dug in the adjoining area, bound by that cemetery, George Street and the river as far eastward as Makerson Street.

This burial area did not drain into the river, which was adjacent, but into a natural depression on the opposite side of George Street, called 'The Reservoir'. As domestic water was drawn from that pondage, illnesses inevitably broke out and it was decided in 1844 to move the cemetery further out of the town area. In any case, had it remained where it was, it would have impeded the growth of the town towards and along the river. With the closure of the convict settlement in mid-1844, Brisbane was now a town in its own right and was expanding due to the influx of free settlers.

Though the abovementioned reports include no reference to Jewish burials, there must have been Jewish deaths in Brisbane between 1825 and 1844, the period during which this cemetery was in use. These would have included convicts and the first free settlers. For the latter, the only alternative would have been burial in the few Christian churchyards. It can be reasonably assumed that the Jewish mourners preferred the inter-denominational cemetery.

On the closure, in 1842, of the Skew Street (North Quay) burial ground, a large new area was designated only one kilometre to the west. Being on the opposite side of a low hill, it drained in the opposite direction, but again, the surface water did not flow direct to the river. Instead it fed into a foetid swamp and this was one of the reasons the area was ultimately abandoned.

The Paddington (Lang Park) Cemetery was on the site of, but was much larger than, the area which had been occupied by the Lang Park Sports Complex since 1910. It was Brisbane's first general cemetery. Unlike the Skew Street Cemetery, it was partitioned off into areas for the several religious groups.⁴ To the tiny Jewish

Community, an area one-third of an acre was allocated. This is about the size of three domestic blocks. The Brisbane Hebrew Congregation's board of management minutes make several references to the need to restore the fence around their area 'after it was damaged by cattle and an irresponsible element in that vicinity.'⁵

It was soon found that this cemetery was also badly sited. Apart from the poor drainage already referred to, it was a barrier to the westerly expansion of the town. In 1871 a large new area was therefore allocated. It is known as the Brisbane General Cemetery or the Toowong General Cemetery.

In 1875 the Lang Park (Paddington) Cemetery was closed to further use. By then, about 10,000 people had been buried there. The Department of Public Lands wrote to their families. They were asked whether they wanted the remains of their departed to be exhumed and, with their monuments, if any, transferred to the Toowong Cemetery at no cost. Otherwise, would they prefer the remains to be re-buried elsewhere? After some years, many of those communications remained unanswered and it was decided to leave those bodies where they were. The unclaimed monuments were stacked in a nearby churchyard and were progressively stolen. Most of the suspicion rested on Brisbane's several monumental masons, who were accused of 'shaving off the inscriptions and recycling the stones'. No action was ever taken about that felony. A local newspaper explained that 'the miscreants would have been difficult to apprehend as they would access the churchyard after midnight to commit their nefarious thefts when good folk would not be about. The indentations left by their dray-wheels and the droppings of their draught horses would remain, while the pile of gravestones would decrease.'

In response to the Department's approach, the following transfers to Toowong Cemetery were made by the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation. First, on 28 September 1885, Florence Rachel, daughter of Lewis and Leonora Zieman, who had died on 31 October 1874, aged six months. Secondly, on 31 March 1908, Aelcey, wife of Coleman Davis; she had died on 13 May 1875. The Zieman infant must have been the niece of Simion Zieman, who as described in my article on 'Toowoomba Jewry', published in a previous issue of this Journal, was murdered near Waroo Station, in the vicinity of Toowoomba, in 1871.

In 1902, the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation was asked by the Department of Public Lands to agree to the transfer, along with their monuments, of the bodies of the three remaining Jewish persons known to be buried there to the Jewish portion of the Toowong Cemetery. It is unclear why permission was not given until 1910, and why the actual movement did not take place until 1913. The Congregation's Minister, the Reverend C. Levy, supervised the transfers. The three monuments, all of Levites⁶, can be seen near the centre of the Toowong Jewish Cemetery. They were David Lawrence, Herbert Levy and Osias Loewe.

There can be no doubt that not all the Jewish bodies were transferred, for all Paddington Cemetery records were lost. This was probably owing to a fire in the wooden shed used by the sexton. By extrapolating the death rate in the community

after the opening of the Toowong Cemetery, it seems that it is possible that up to ten Jewish people were buried in Paddington, but only the abovementioned five were moved as only they had gravestones. Without gravestones or a sexton's register, the location of graves could not be established. This applied to all graves in the cemetery. As a result, hundreds of bodies were left. Remains have been exhumed and decently re-interred elsewhere, whenever excavations have subsequently been carried out. This has happened during the construction of the original Lang Park Sports Complex, the Police Boys' Club, Caxton and Hale Streets, Milton Road, Ithaca Baths and Highway 20.

In July 2001, when the Lang Park Sports Complex (now named Suncorp Stadium) was about to be greatly expanded and enhanced, a number of churches arranged for a memorial service to be held to pay respect to those whose remains are still buried in that area. On 15 August 2001, a group of clergy conducted that service in the presence of representatives of the State Government and the city council. George Stein, president of the Chevra Kadisha, represented the Jewish community. He recited Psalm 130 and intoned *El Mole Rachamin*.⁷

Subsequently, a memorial monument was erected at Toowong Cemetery and the Chevra participated in the consecration. An on-site memorial was provided in the form of an inscription on the huge glass wall of the main building of the new complex. The burial customs of each of the concerned religions were researched and it was decided to use the suggestion which I put forward, namely to feature the tearing (*k'riah*) of a garment of a Jewish mourner. They felt that this equated to the spontaneous tearing of cloth in a passage in the New Testament, so that the theme served both religions. The symbolism has been given the esoteric name: 'the Torn Shroud'.

The Toowong Jewish Cemetery⁸ is in what usually known as the Brisbane General Cemetery, Toowong. Being on the foothills of Mt Coot-tha, it drains readily into the river and it has not impeded the western development of the city. Having been in use since 1875, all burial plots have long been sold and most have been utilised. At the time of writing, 118,000 burials had been carried out in the entire area. In the Jewish section, 870 persons had been buried there by late 2002. About 20 sold allotments are still to be utilised; of these, eleven belong to the Chevra Kadisha for its use in cases where deceased estates have no provision for the cost of a plot.

Just as occurred in the Paddington Cemetery, the Toowong Jewish Cemetery has had an occasional episode of vandalism. This has usually involved the overturning of a few headstones. However, one night in 1968, a band of vandals set out on a major sortie. It could not be called an antisemitic outbreak, for whereas about 58 Jewish monuments were damaged, the toll in the entire general cemetery was nearly 1,000, including many in the Anzac section. The Chevra took charge of the restorations immediately. Families whose deceased's monuments were damaged were approached for the cost of the work and there were no refusals.

In those cases where the families could not be found, the Chevra met the costs. Within about three months, all damage was restored.

The Anzac section was badly damaged. The repairs were carried out by the War Graves Commission. Of the remainder of the damaged monuments in the general cemetery, some were restored by the families. Apart from those, the broken masonry still lies in pathetic heaps. The city council's health and cemeteries officer said: 'What a pity that all denominations don't have a Chevra Kadisha.' No one has been brought to justice for this episode of vandalism, which has not been repeated.

In 1960, the Brisbane Chevra Kadisha requested the city council to allocate a new burial ground as the Toowong area was filling rapidly. In 1966 this was granted, the allocation being within the Mt Gravatt General Cemetery. The Chevra erected *Buyit Chaim*⁹, a chapel in which most of the service is conducted, after which the interment is carried out on the burial ground. By following the cortège on foot, from the chapel to the graveside, the *mitzvah* of following the departed part of the way on his last journey is adhered to. This eliminates the car processions, which formerly proceeded from the funeral director's premises in the city area.

This Jewish cemetery contains 1,320 plots. It is on well-drained, sloping ground and lightly grassed. The Chevra carried out the consecration, with the traditional seven circuits¹. The first burial took place in 1967.

A striking monument in black granite, in memory of the Holocaust victims, was erected opposite the chapel by a group of survivors. The annual Holocaust Remembrance is held in the chapel, after which the gathering moves to the monument for the memorial prayers.

A separate enclosure for the *Cohanim* was erected in 1980.¹⁰



The Levite Symbol

To obviate the disharmony of having monuments of many sizes and styles, as is the case in the Toowong Cemetery, they are all of a uniform design. One aim of this uniformity is to express the Jewish precept of 'equality in death'.

At Mt Gravatt, the only case of vandalism had a touch of humour about it. The culprit was known as 'the Skull'. He was a huge fellow whose head was as bald on the outside as it was vacuous on the inside. Amongst the louts of this city he was feared for his alleged prowess in martial arts. That legend was disproved by two young female constables who drove through the cemetery while he was painting a swastika on a Jewish headstone. When he tried to escape the girls neatly brought him to ground. When he was handcuffed, they made him clean the headstone with his Nazi tee-shirt. The police magistrate subsequently told him: 'I fine you \$200, to be paid to the aggrieved party [the Chevra] in ten equal monthly payments from your pension. As I am aware that the calculation would be beyond you, you will be given a note to tell you that you must pay \$20 a month.' After making two payments, 'the Skull' fell behind; the Chevra advised the Court that it had no use for his money and he served a gaol sentence instead. In the quarter-century which followed, he has not resurfaced!

The Liberal Congregation has a burial area elsewhere in the Mt Gravatt Cemetery, while other Jewish cemeteries in Queensland are in Cooktown,¹¹ Toowoomba,¹² Cairns, Nerang (Gold Coast) and Southport (Gold Coast).¹³ Jewish graves are to be found, however, in general cemeteries such as those of Boonah,¹⁴ Rockhampton, Townsville, Hughenden and Roma.

Notes

- 1 A Jewish cemetery is consecrated by the menfolk reciting appropriate *T'hillim* (Psalms) while walking seven times around its border.
- 2 They were buried in 1831, 1832 and 1833 respectively. In 1878, the three headstones were relocated in the Toowong General Cemetery, where they are of great interest to researchers. There is a highly active group of enthusiasts, The Friends of the Toowong Cemetery; they do great research into this burial ground, which is so rich in history. They have support from the city council, which requested me to prepare an illustrated booklet – *A Historical Walking Trail through the Toowong Jewish Cemetery*. Copies are given to the many enquirers. I deliver a lecture to their annual 'Open Gathering', which is a major event. Another keen society is the Brisbane Family History Group, which, as a Bicentennial project, recorded the English inscription on every headstone in the Jewish section. This can be consulted in the cemetery's museum adjoining the sexton's office.
- 3 This mainly refers to the 'Plan of Brisbane Town 1840', the 'Proposed Town Survey Plan 1842', and the report titled 'Some Investigations on the Site of Brisbane's Earliest Burial Grounds' by J. C. Gill, 1960.
- 4 The old plans of the Paddington Cemetery show its apportionment into areas for the Jewish community and for each Christian denomination. However, instead of 'Anglican' or 'Church of England', the term 'Episcopalian' is used. It means 'followers of the Bishops'. This term is rarely seen today, except in Scotland and, more especially, in the USA, where it embraces a large proportion of the Protestant denominations.
- 5 The first such reference was at the meeting, in March 1865, at which the congregation was founded. Thus it is evident that the Chevra Kadisha predates the congregation.

- 6 The Levite symbol (see photo) can be observed on one of the three monuments moved from Paddington Cemetery to Toowong. It is in bas-relief, deeply sculpted into the sandstone monument and shows the hand of a Levite pouring water from a pitcher. Leviticus tells us that it was a Levitical function to wash the hands of the *Cohanim* (cohens, priests) prior to their participating in the Temple Service.
 - 7 'G-d, who is full of compassion ...'. (The opening words of the Mourner's Prayer.)
 - 8 This Cemetery is 'closed' in the sense that all plots have been sold, but burials are still carried out there. Therefore, it is still regarded as being in use.
 - 9 There is an esoteric Jewish custom that a pleasant term should be given to a sad subject. In this case, the name '*Beit Chaim*' (House of Life) was given to the Cemetery Chapel, as is the case in many Jewish Communities, worldwide.
 - 10 Descendants of the family of Aaron (Moses' elder brother who was the first High Priest) are known as *Cohanim* (Priests). Many, but not all, have the surname of 'Cohen', or a derivative from it. In a Jewish Community, a Cohen has certain privileges, honours, functions and restrictions. One of the latter is that he must avoid knowingly being under the same roof as a dead person. So that he may attend (or even conduct) a funeral, a separate room or enclosure is provided opening upon the Chapel and there is a distinct gap of a minimum of about three centimetres between its roof and that of the Chapel.
 - 11 *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. XI 1993, Part 4.
 - 12 *ibid.* vol. XIII 1997, part 4.
 - 13 *ibid.* vol. IX 1981, part 2.
 - 14 *ibid.* vol. XIV 1987, part 1.
- See also references as follows:
ibid. Vol. IX 1984, part 6.
ibid. Vol. X 1986, part 1.
ibid. Vol. XI 1999, part 1.

Acknowledgments and sources

Manuscript 'The Old Burial Vault at North Quay, Brisbane' by G. C. Gill, 1978.

Surveyor Dixon's '1840 Plan of Brisbane Town'.

Dennis Cleary, Queensland Historian and former Secretary of the Queensland Place Names Board.

Hilda Maclean, MEd, BA(Hons), DipEd, Chairperson and Historian of the Friends of the Toowong Cemetery.

Dr Jonathan Ford, PhD, MA(Qual), BA, DipTch, Historian of the Brisbane City Council.

The Report of the Department of Public Lands to the Government of Queensland, dated 1913, detailing the statistics involved in the transfer of remains and monuments from the Paddington (Lang Park) Cemetery to other cemeteries, mainly Toowong.

The Brisbane Courier newspaper.

The Minutes of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation.

The Minutes of the Brisbane Chevra Kadisha.

See photos.

A TOWN IN POLAND REMEMBERS ITS PAST

*Caroline Durré and Rafal Witkowski **

Caroline Durré: In 1801 Baer Loebel Monasch was born in Krotoszyn (Krotoschin), a town in the Prussian-occupied part of partitioned Poland, the son of a schoolteacher and bookbinder, of a Jewish family long resident in the province of Posen. In 1853 his second son Louis left the old country for Australia, where he established an import business in Melbourne. After returning home in 1863 to Krotoszyn, where he courted and married Bertha Manasse, Louis settled in 1874 as a shopkeeper in Jerilderie, New South Wales.

In 1910, Louis and Bertha's son John Monash, a prosperous engineer and businessman born in 1865, made a tour of Europe with his wife Victoria (*née* Moss) and daughter Bertha. Their itinerary included visits to Szczecin (Stettin), the birthplace of his mother, and Krotoszyn, that of his father.

In 1992, my mother Elizabeth Durré, granddaughter of Sir John Monash, daughter of Bertha Bennett (*née* Monash), with her cousin Ruth Cameron and Ruth's husband Ron, travelled to Krotoszyn, now in Poland. With the nation barely free of communist rule, which ended in 1989, they were not impressed by the ambience of the town, a 'dull grey place' according to my mother. They searched for remnants or memorials of their Jewish ancestors, or any sign of their part in history. They found only the space where the synagogue had stood, and the site of the old cemetery.

Now it is June 2002. I am standing in front of a veiled plaque on the wall of the old Jewish schoolhouse of Krotoszyn, opposite the site of the old synagogue. I stand here as a representative both of my family and of Monash University, named for General Sir John Monash, my great-grandfather, where I am a lecturer. Facing me is the assembled hierarchy of Krotoszyn. After a short speech I unveil the brass plaque which commemorates my great-great-great-grandfather, Baer Loebel Monasch. It is for me a gesture which symbolises these symmetries of return and of remembrance.

In this essay, with the co-authorship of the main organiser of this act of commemoration, Dr Rafal Witkowski, we interweave our personal stories with some of the history, both national and familial, which led to this moment.

Rafal Witkowski: *I am aware of my ancestors back to the mid-nineteenth century. They were Polish and lived in Krotoszyn or neighbouring villages. I was born in*

* In this essay Caroline Durré's contribution is printed in roman type and Rafal Witkowski's in italics.

Krotoszyn in 1967 and grew up there. I have been interested in history since I can remember and ended up as an adjunct professor at the Institute of History, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. Before I left Krotoszyn in 1986 I graduated from Krotoszyn High School, which is quite renowned in the region. I knew where the former Jewish cemetery and synagogue were located, but I was certainly not aware of the rich Jewish influence on the history of my home town. University education gave me a chance to learn not only foreign languages but also to read books and travel. The end of the 1980s was a hard time for Poland and many young people emigrated. I stayed.

In the mid-1990s I was given a grant to do research in the British Library, London. At the end of the day, tired after hours of reading manuscripts and microfilms, I typed the name of Krotoszyn in the 'search field' of the library's on-line catalogue. I also tried the German version of the city name, Krotoschin. Dozens of references appeared, but almost all of them were books printed by a certain Baer Loebel Monasch. I was a professional historian, born in that town, but I had never heard of him. I made some notes. Soon I had to return to Poznań.

A few months later I saw the memoirs of Baer Loebel Monasch cited in a journal article dedicated to the uprising of 1848. The reference was to an English translation, made by Peter Fraenkel and published by the Leo Baeck Institute. Peter Fraenkel is a descendant of Baer Loebel's fourth daughter Rosa, who with her husband Herrman Goldschmidt inherited the Monasch printing business. I was driven by curiosity about Baer Loebel Monasch, but I was still working on my dissertation. Having finished it and obtained the Prime Minister's Award as the best dissertation in the field of history in 1997, I went to the United States to teach. I lectured at Notre Dame University, Indiana; however, I still kept looking for additional information on Krotoszyn Jews and Baer Loebel Monasch. When I came back home in August 2000 I already knew quite a lot about the man and his achievements.

My great-great-great-grandfather, Baer Loebel Monasch (1801–79), was a printer and publisher, bookbinder and innkeeper, patriarch of a dynasty and memoir-writer. In his long life of hard work he produced editions of the Scriptures, commentaries and prayer books which are even now acknowledged as masterpieces of Jewish publishing. His unique handwritten autobiographical memoir, *The Life, Labours, Joys and Sorrows of Baer Loebel Monasch*, was written circa 1855–70. It is a rare record of provincial Jewish working and family life in a small town which was then in the Prussian Empire. As well as being a family chronicle it tells of the anxieties of a businessman in a time of great social change, and all the successes and setbacks of his enterprise. Baer Loebel maintained a livelihood for many people: 13 children (of whom ten survived), several dependent relatives, plus his employees, who at one time numbered 36. The memoirs make fascinating reading.

One of my friends was the owner of local newspaper in Krotoszyn, another was the manager of a printing company there. Both of them listened to me carefully on a train going from Prague to Poznań when I told them about this man who used to live and work in the same business as them in Krotoszyn more than a century ago. We decided to promote this still 'unknown' figure. I published several short articles in the local newspaper presenting Baer Loebel Monasch and his grandson Sir John Monash. I translated some fragments from the the former's memoirs into Polish and I aired the idea of putting in place a plaque to commemorate him. In June 2001 I also contacted Dr Ann Mitchell, archivist at Monash University, then Peter Fraenkel (who lives in London), Caroline Durré, and some American descendants of Baer Loebel Monasch. The circle has been growing constantly.

In researching the Monasch name, Rafał came upon the Monash University website; he was thus alerted to the fascinating possibility that a university in distant Australia had been named for a descendant of the once-thriving Jewish community of Krotoszyn. Rafał will soon publish a Polish translation of the memoirs with parallel German and English texts in a critical edition, under the auspices of the Krotoszyn Historical Society. It will include archival photographs from the Monash Papers held in the National Library of Australia, researched by Dr Ann Mitchell. Recently retired as Monash University Archivist, Dr Mitchell has a particular interest in Monash family history and was able from her initial contact with Rafał to direct him to some fruitful resources. Ann also knew that a descendant of the Monasch family, myself, was on the academic staff. This gave the connections between Krotoszyn, Adam Mickiewicz University and Monash University their initial momentum.

Family tradition locates the origins of the Monasch family in Salonika, Greece, from where they moved to Vienna. They had to escape from Vienna in 1681, as did many other Jews. They settled in Wrocław (Breslau), Kórnik and Krotoszyn. This last town, with its eminent Jewish community dating to the fifteenth century, was to become the most important place for the Monasch family for the next two centuries.

What were the social conditions in Baer Loebel Monasch's time? The final years of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1772–95) were marked by constant attempts to reform the state. These political, economic, social and cultural changes culminated on 3 May 1791, when the parliament passed a constitution, the first in Europe. Baer Loebel's father, mentioned with great respect in the memoirs, was a representative of the last generation of 'Polish Jews'. The Prussian army captured the province of Poznań (also known as Wielkopolska, Greater Poland) in 1793 and annexed it to Prussia with its highly centralised and bureaucratic Prussian administration. In 1801 Baer Loebel was already born into a different world from the eighteenth-century world of his father. Krotoszyn was at that time a medium-sized town. The census of 1793–94 recorded two Calvinists, 666 Lutherans, 1533

Catholics and 1625 Jews. In other words, the Jewish community – which has now totally disappeared – was once the largest single entity in this provincial town, as in many others in what is now Poland.

Baer Loebel's childhood was strongly marked by the Napoleonic wars. Napoleon, having defeated the Prussian army in 1807, created the grand principality of Warsaw and soon introduced his civil rights code. The Jews were granted many social and political privileges; but a few years later, in 1814–15, the principality of Warsaw was captured by Russian and Prussian armies, and finally annexed to Prussia again in 1815. The grand duchy of Poznań was created and immediately incorporated into the Kingdom of Prussia. This meant the beginning of the split between the Jewry of Prussian, Russian and Austrian Poland, a split which influenced all aspects of the public and private life of Jewish people in these territories from the nineteenth century onwards.

In those uncertain times Baer Loebel completed a traditional religious education. His father expected him to be a rabbi, but Baer Loebel had other ideas. At the age of 15 he went to the neighbouring town of Milicz (Militsch) to learn the profession of bookbinder. Following an arduous apprenticeship and a struggle to establish himself in both the bookbinding and printing trades, he announced in a public magazine (Amtsblatt) in January 1830 that he had established a lithographic printing press and would make all necessary efforts to act as a good and reliable printer.

One of his first significant books, printed in 1834, was the collection of the new naturalisation laws promulgated by the Prussian administration in an attempt to Germanise the mainly Polish-inhabited province. In 1834 he published a pamphlet encouraging the Jews to accept the new law code. Soon he started to publish books written by contemporary religious authors, including the rabbis of Wielkopolska. Having purchased Hebrew type from the renowned Jewish presses in Dyhernfurth (Silesia) and Frankfurt, he began editing the monumental works of Jewish religious literature. He published the five volumes of the Pentateuch with a German translation (1837), and a famous 12-volume edition of the Bible, also with German translation (1839–43).

Monasch's edition of the Jerusalem Talmud (1866–67) is considered the standard edition. The commonly used Talmud is the Babylonian Talmud; Baer Loebel published the alternative Jerusalem version which had not been printed for over a century. The most beautifully ornamented edition of his works is known now as Aboab's Menorat ha-Ma'or, with German translation (1845–48). Thanks to the support of his son-in-law Heinrich Graetz, from 1869 Monasch printed 17 volumes of the well-known Jewish journal Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums. The list of his books printed in Hebrew includes 149 titles, to which can be added 100 books in German. Monasch also printed texts in Polish, including the ordinances of the Krotoszyn district police from 1870.

This was the man I went to Poland to commemorate. From mid-2001 until June 2002, Rafał negotiated for the support of the city government of Krotoszyn for the creation of a public memorial to Baer Loebel. On the invitation of the City Fathers of Krotoszyn I represented my family and Monash University. Ann Mitchell was also able to be there in connection with her own research interests, and together we made a formidable Aussie team.

My personal experience of Poland began when I was met at Warsaw airport on the damp grey evening of Friday, 7 June 2002 by Rafał Witkowski, Mieciu Plonka, Rafał's friend and supporter, and Ann Mitchell, who had arrived a little earlier from London. On our drive from Warsaw to Poznań, through the relentlessly flat, fertile country of central Poland, Rafał told us something of the history of Poland. His attachment to the entrepreneurial and intellectual character of Poznań and Wielkopolska was strongly expressed. I could see clear signs of a surge in material prosperity in the years since the end of Communism.

The Communist regime in Poland collapsed in 1989, and was followed by similar events in other Warsaw Pact nations. After almost 50 years of foreign domination Poland was a free country again. Free, but with a ruined economic and social life. Even so, the province of Poznań is still one of the richest regions in Poland, with its own characteristic features reflected not only in its mentality, political preferences, social and economic conditions, but also in its own dialect and local patriotism. The city of Poznań, capital of Wielkopolska (province of Posen), located between Warsaw and Berlin, is the centre of the region.

The next day, Saturday, Rafał had arranged for us to view bound archival copies of the *Kreisblatt und Anzeiger* ('District News and Advertiser') in the wood-panelled nineteenth-century reading-room of the library of Adam Mickiewicz University. This newspaper was published by my great-great-grandfather from 1844 until his death in 1879, and then by Baer Loebel's son-in-law and heir, Herrman Goldschmidt, until this, the edition of April 1904, when he sold the business. The *Kreisblatt und Anzeiger* had an established function in the highly-regulated Prussian empire. The *amtlicher Teil* ('official part') was devoted to announcements of government regulations such as licences and taxes. The *unamtlicher Teil* published local news, social and cultural reports, advertisements and reprints from other magazines. The 'small ads' included several for steamships sailing from the ports of Bremen and Hamburg, which serviced a flood of emigration to the United States, to South America and to Australia. These very ships my ancestors had taken on their journeys to Australia.

As an artist printmaker by profession I appreciated the beautiful impress of the letterpress type in both Gothic and Roman faces evident in these historical newspapers. Indeed, type is a theme in the Baer Loebel memoirs. In reference to the cost of setting-up his printing workshop, he writes of the difficulty and expense of obtaining the full range of typeface matrices from specialist foundries

in Frankfurt and having them cast in Breslau. A glance at a prayer book will show the need for a huge range of typefaces in order to distinguish body text, marginal notes, headings, footnotes, and commentaries in Hebrew and Gothic.

The Jewish printing press run by Baer Loebel Monasch was not the only one in the province of Wielkopolska (for example, there was Jolowicz in Poznań), but he certainly produced more significant works for a Jewish audience than any other publisher in Wielkopolska in his time.

In 1833 Jews in the province of Poznań were divided by the new laws of the Prussian administration into two groups: naturalised and tolerated. To the first group belonged only those Jews who could prove that they had lived legally in the province since 1815, who discarded their traditional Jewish garb, spoke fluent German, accepted German surnames, sent their children to public schools, proved their loyalty to the Prussian Crown and possessed certain property. In return they were allowed to settle free, choose their profession, buy landed property and enjoy all civil rights. Under these conditions it is not surprising that 'naturalisation' often meant assimilation. The 'tolerated' Jews, most often the poor and unassimilated, were not allowed to buy any property, to get married before they had turned 24, or to freely choose their profession.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the reforms of 1833. Baer Loebel Monasch was one of the first to obtain the naturalisation which helped him to develop his business. He was not only a printer and editor of books, pamphlets and newspapers, but also acted as bookseller. He was allowed to have a travel passport, which enabled him to undertake business trips to Cracow (Austria), Kalisch (Congress Poland), Königsberg, Memel (Klaipeda), Breslau, Frankfurt and many other places. This same status was granted to his sons, who could legally emigrate, as well as to his future sons-in-law.

The family of Baer Loebel Monasch, both in their education and in their mobility, can be considered to exemplify clearly the changing status of the Jews through the nineteenth century. His sons and sons-in-law were all well educated. Benzion Behrend was an eminent translator and editor of several works which came out of the Monasch press. During the revolution of 1848, Behrend, together with Louis Cohn and Max Krüger, established the Society for the Preservation of Jewish Interests (Verein zur Wahrung jüdischer Interessen) and were strong supporters of the German case. However, the most famous among Baer Loebel's sons-in-law is, without any doubt, Heinrich Graetz, historian and biblical scholar. He gained great fame as the author of the first modern History of the Jews, which, starting in the 1870s, was published in several editions in German, then translated into English, Russian, Yiddish and Polish.

On Sunday, on our way from Poznań to Krotoszyn, we stopped at the Jewish cemetery at Kozmin, not far from Krotoszyn. This cemetery is the only one in the province of Wielkopolska to survive the German occupation without being

destroyed. It is maintained by children from a local orphanage who have a sister relationship with the Hartmann High School in Jerusalem. Rafał and his friend Mieciu very respectfully put on *kippot* as we walked along the orderly rows of tombstones among rough-mown grass. This peaceful graveyard made a profound contrast with the site of the Jewish cemetery at Krotoszyn, where, the same day at dusk, we walked in the weedy forest which has grown over the dead, some of them my ancestors. Here, every memorial had been destroyed and scattered in 1940, during the German occupation. Some fragments of broken headstones, which were distributed as building material, are cemented into the paving surrounding an old wooden church in the town.

The Krotoszyn cemetery gained its fame over the centuries as the resting-place for many famous rabbis and scholars who were buried there, including those who lived in Silesia, Bohemia, Germany and other regions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. When Peter Fraenkel came to visit Krotoszyn in May 2003 we needed only one meeting with the mayor to convince him to set in order the site of the former Jewish cemetery. A sign of change!

At the offices of the local paper, *Informacje Regionalne*, we met the editor Andrzej Czarnecki, a consistent supporter of Rafał's plans even when, in early April 2002, with the renewal of *intifada* in Israel, the local authorities had wavered in their support over some imagined potential for local violence. On this occasion Rafał had rung me in a most dispirited state, and yet a month or two later, by some miracle of persuasiveness, he had managed to revitalise his plans. It was sometimes hard for Rafał to conceal his frustration at the narrow worldview of his compatriots.

Andrzej showed us the beautifully-made brass plaque which the newspaper had sponsored. It reads:

PAMIĘCI BAR LOEB MONASCHA
MIESZKANCA KROTOSZYNA
ZNANEGO DRUKARZA ŻYDOWSKIEGO
(1801–1879)

*[To the Memory of Baer Loebel Monasch
Inhabitant of Krotoszyn
Famous Jewish Printer
1801–1879]*

The correct date of Baer Loebel's death was discovered at the eleventh hour by Ann Mitchell. Before she left for Europe, Ann researched the historical images included in the Monash Papers. Looking closely at a snapshot taken by John Monash of his grandfather's grave in 1910, Ann was startled to see the date 1879, not 1876 as given in all references. A flurry of last minute emails ensured that the

plaque was accurate.

The next day, Monday, 10 June 2002, gave proof of the momentum of Rafal's idea. In the hall of the Krotoszyn High School the entire school body and local administration were assembled: *burmistrz* (mayor) Julian Jokś and his wife, vice-mayor Maria Kalak, chief school commissioner Ryszard Czuske, high school principal Katarzyna Kazmierczak, director of the local history museum Helena Kasperska, professor of history of Krotoszyn High School Dionizy Kosiński, and many others. The mayor read messages of support from the Israeli ambassador to Poland, Professor Shewach Weiss, and local government representative Andrzej Nowakowski. Ann Mitchell gave an address about Monash University and the lives of the ten surviving children of Baer Loebel and his wife Mathilde Wiener, tracing their various spouses and children and their destinies from the old country, illustrated with numerous archival photographs, many never shown before. The point was clear: the town, and the nation, had an unknown history, a concealed past. We might find special evidence for this – if we looked.

It took half a year to explain my objectives to the local authorities, to negotiate the terms, to collect money, to organise supporters like Mieciu, Katarzyna, Helena, Dionizy and Andrzej, and to present the main goal: to commemorate the historical richness of Krotoszyn and to create an awareness of facts which were already forgotten. I wanted to achieve all this when there was no allocation in the yearly town budget for a plaque to commemorate Baer Loebel Monasch!



Andrzej Czarnecki (editor), Caroline Durre, Mieczysław Plonk, Rafal Witkowski with the plaque sponsored by Andrzej's newspaper, Informacje Regionale. Krotoszyn 9 June 2002

From the school we walked together to the site of commemoration. The 'crocodile', as Ann dubbed it, wound through the town to arrive at the park, a sad square of grass, where once stood the *shul* which Baer Loebel was instrumental in having built in 1845, destroyed like the cemetery in 1940. The plaque, covered with a blue curtain, was mounted on the wall of the building said to be the old Jewish schoolhouse, now an apartment block. After an introduction from Marian Nabzdyk, head of the Krotoszyn Historical Society, and from the mayor, I gave a speech. In brief I told the story of my family and how, over the years, the dispersed descendents had returned to this, the ancestral town. I tried to affirm the sense of cultural and intellectual continuity which links Baer Loebel's career and his commitment to the printed word with the values of my own family, and how this connected to my own work as a lecturer in printmaking in the university named for Baer Loebel's grandson, himself a man who valued culture deeply. I conveyed the support of that university and the best wishes of my family. I then unveiled the plaque.

This story would not be complete without telling how the Jews of Krotoszyn came to disperse. The first generation of young Jews who were able to enjoy equal rights as a result of the reforms of 1833 sought a better future through education; but then they generally emigrated from the province of Wielkopolska, now in economic decline, to the western provinces of an already unified, powerful and affluent Germany, or often, to the New World. The Jewish population of Wielkopolska was ca. 75,000 in 1849 and only ca. 35,000 in 1900. This movement also influenced the prosperity of the printing business of Baer Loebel Monasch and his family.

Most of the children of Baer Loebel left Krotoszyn for Wrocław (Breslau, then in Germany), Australia and America, between the 1850s and 1880s. To trace the fates of all ten surviving children is beyond the scope of this account. For our part, my mother's family have been successful professionals in Australia for several generations, a true migrant's success story. We are secular and assimilated, and have been so for several generations. I can see now that this has been a logical consequence of the legal and economic pressures which acted on my ancestors. A strong sense of history, however, links me to my heritage.

Little material evidence remains to give witness to centuries of Jewish culture in the town of Krotoszyn. At the Regional Historical Museum we attended the opening of a modest display of relics of the community, assembled by Helena Kasperska. These remnants include documents, photographs, fragments of gravestones, and a single unbroken gravestone, displayed in the foyer where every visitor must pass. I was later able to enrich the collection by donating to the museum one of the prayer books of Baer Loebel's imprint of 1859 which my family had inherited. Ann and I, laden with gifts, were guests of honour at a Polish feast hosted by the mayor. When this long afternoon was over Rafał, Ann and I went back to look

at the plaque. This was the moment I sensed most forcefully the flow of events which had led to this place and time.

The fate of the vast majority of the Jews of Poland needs no retelling here. Now, when Poland is again an independent country, scholars from many universities are creating local centres of Jewish studies (Warszawa, Wrocław, Kraków, Lublin); a Hebrew department will be initiated at the University of Poznań. The old Jewish quarter in Kraków is being brought to life, particularly when the Jewish Culture Festival takes place in summer. Recently I heard on the radio an old Jewish man who came to Poland from Israel to visit the graves of his ancestors. He said that before the last war there were more rabbis along one street in Warsaw than now in the entire country. People of goodwill, Jews and Poles and others, can work together to preserve the evidence of what once was the centre and heart of the European Jewish world.

I was born in Krotoszyn and spent 18 years there; I lived and worked there, and graduated from the high school. Yet I never heard of Baer Loebel Monasch in all that time. Now, almost everybody in this town of almost 40,000 inhabitants has at least heard of Monasch and has had a chance to learn something more about him, if they wish to do so. The plaque unveiled by Caroline commemorates a man who simply deserves it, who spent all his hard and laborious life, full of sorrows and joys, in my home town.

Initially I was wary, even suspicious, of the motives which might underwrite this commemoration. Would it represent genuine and widely-felt curiosity about the past, or were a few people of goodwill and liberal ideals masking a general reluctance? In the event I was very glad that I attended. In all my meetings with local people I was treated with great kindness and generosity. At the same time I was aware that some of these were the same people who had erected barriers against a ceremony of remembrance of the Jewish history of the town; I felt that I had arrived in Krotoszyn at the centre of ideologies and histories of which I could have only glimpses. As Rafal later reflected, not much might have changed in Krotoszyn as a result of these events into which he poured so much passion and energy, but he 'broke the silence' around the town's Jewish past and created, from nothing, some knowledge of the life of Baer Loebel Monasch. I was honoured to be a part of that fine aim.

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THE 'DECLINING' YEARS OF THE MELBOURNE JEWISH COUNCIL TO COMBAT FASCISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM, 1954-70

Philip Mendes

The Melbourne Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, which existed from 1942-70, has been the subject of an extensive historiography. Much of this literature concentrates on the Council's rise and fall amidst the tensions of the Cold War. A number of authors have suggested that the Council was permanently discredited and marginalised by its apparent defence of Soviet antisemitism in 1952-53. Yet the Council existed for a further 17 years until its eventual demise in 1970.

The purpose of this paper is to reappraise the Council's activities from 1954-70, and particularly to evaluate its relative successes and failures. It will be argued that the Council was first and foremost a proactive and often highly effective Jewish anti-defamation organisation, and that its broader political activities (while often linked to a rigid pro-Soviet agenda) generally took a back seat. In short, the Council continued to represent a significant viewpoint within Melbourne Jewry which aimed for a high profile and active struggle against antisemitism in partnership with broader social and political forces linked primarily but not exclusively to the Left. This perspective arguably needs to be judged on its own merits, rather than via a narrow judgment based solely on the Council's attitude towards Communism and Soviet Jewry.

Anti-defamation activities

The Vigilance Committee of the Jewish Council waged a consistent and activist campaign against local manifestations of antisemitism. Particular activities included:

1. Responding to specific incidents of anti-Jewish discrimination in business, employment, housing, education, and immigration. The Council would typically target not only the specific sources of discrimination, but also the broader authorities or bodies responsible for policy and legislation. Other concerns included antisemitic statements in the media and literature, and anti-Jewish slogans in public places.
2. Action against sporting and corporate clubs and bodies which discriminated against Jews. For example, the Council mounted an extensive campaign against the alleged exclusion of Jews from the Stock Exchange.
3. The production of educative pamphlets and leaflets, and the holding of

high-profile forums and addresses. For example, the Council responded to a worldwide outbreak of antisemitism in 1960 by holding a major protest forum at the Melbourne Town Hall. The forum featured a number of prominent speakers, including ALP MHR Leslie Haylen, Professor S. D. Rubbo, the Reverend Dr A. H. Wood, who was President General of the Methodist Church, ACTU president Albert Monk, Victorian ALP president Albert McNolty, and author Alan Marshall. The Council also arranged for resolutions to be passed by ALP branches and trade unions condemning antisemitism. Similarly, the Council responded to the growth of the Australian Nazi movement in 1963 by addressing a large number of ALP, trade union, and migrant forums.

4. The maintenance of detailed files on leading antisemitic groups and individuals. Particular attention was devoted to monitoring the activities of Eric Butler and the League of Rights. The Council also expressed concern about the antisemitic and fascist activities of some migrant groups, and the likely presence of former Nazi collaborators. For example, the Council publicised the presence in Australia of Laszlo Megay, a former Hungarian mayor responsible for the deaths of 18,000 Jews in Hungary. Later the Council strongly opposed Sir Garfield Barwick's decision in 1961 permanently to block the extradition of alleged Nazi war criminals.

The strength of the Council included its wide range of supportive networks in the Australian Labor Party, the trade unions, the churches, migrant groups, the media, and other social and cultural bodies. The Council was a highly energetic body, and claimed in 1960 to have given 700 addresses over the previous five years to schools, trade unions, and political parties, and to have placed 350 articles in the daily and weekly press. Reference was also made to talks and features on radio and television, and to the organisation and sponsoring of other speakers. For example, the Council arranged for Reverend Westerman from the Methodist Church to address a large number of schools on the dangers of antisemitism and racism. The Council also cooperated on several occasions with the Jewish rabbinate, and with conservative politicians such as the Victorian Jewish MLA Baron Snider.

Bill Rubinstein notes that the Council operated as a relentless, sophisticated, and proactive body, and compares its activities favourably with the generally less professional and poorly funded activities of the state Boards of Deputies. Indeed it was not until the early 1960s that the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies appointed a full-time professional public relations officer. Another major source of difference was that the Council favoured a high-profile and activist approach to fighting antisemitism, whereas for much of this period the VJBD preferred a quieter and more subtle behind-the-scenes approach. These different strategies were particularly reflected in the contrasting responses to the outbreak of antisemitism in 1960.

The Council and Israel

With the exception of its defence of Soviet antisemitism and anti-Zionism during 1952–53, the Council maintained a consistent pro-Israel stand. Taking a similar position to the left-wing Israeli party Mapam, the Council issued statements promoting Israel's cause, and supporting peace negotiations between Israel and the Arab world.

In late 1955, the Council sent a petition to the meeting of the Big Four foreign ministers in Geneva urging them to promote a peaceful settlement between the Arab states and Israel. This petition was condemned by the VJBD for failing to criticise the extensive Soviet arms sales to Egypt which directly threatened Israel's security. However, the Council defended Israel's right to procure arms for self-defence, and offered support to the pro-Israel Emergency Committees established by the Board of Deputies and State Zionist Council.

The Council aimed to promote 'in the non-Jewish community a sympathetic understanding of Israel's point of view and problems', and sponsored the Reverend Benjamin Burgoyne Chapman to deliver a series of pro-Israel lectures to over 180 organisations including Rotary clubs, schools, teachers' colleges, university societies, and churches. Chapman also produced a number of radio broadcasts and articles in the press, and addressed a Council forum along with Council vice-president Sam Cohen and two other Protestant clergymen. At the forum Cohen declared: 'Creation of the State of Israel has added to the status of every single Jew in the world, and we of the Council take second place to none in our love and devotion to Israel'. In addition, Council secretary Ernest Platz combined with Israeli delegates to the Helsinki World Journalists' Conference to block anti-Israel motions from Arab delegates.

The Council described Israel as a 'haven for thousands of victims of Hitler's oppression', condemned the presence of former Nazi propagandists such as Johann von Leers in the Egyptian government, and argued for the right of Israeli ships to obtain free navigation through the Suez Canal. The United Nations was urged to 'induce the Arab nations to accept the existence of Israel'. The Council subsequently passed a motion stating: 'It is desirable that we should support and justify, in so far as we can do in conscience, the State of Israel's activities'. As a result, the Council participated in the 'Call for Israel Appeal', and raised £1300 at a public meeting.

Following the October 1956 war, the Council continued to urge peaceful negotiations between Israel and the Arabs, and condemned Arab military threats to Israel. The Council emphasised its support for 'a strong, prosperous and independent State of Israel, at peace with her neighbours on fair and just terms'. In 1958, the Council published an advertisement in the Jewish press celebrating the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the state. The Council subsequently condemned the statement by Liberal Party MHR Jim Killen (supported by Eric

Butler) that Israel was the fundamental cause of the conflict in the Middle East.

In 1961, Platz visited Israel as a guest of the Israeli government, presented prime minister Ben-Gurion with a plaque on behalf of the Australian labor movement, and praised the vitality of Israel's political and educational institutions. The Council continued to urge action to 'secure wider appreciation and support for Israel's position', and called on the Arab states to negotiate with Israel. In addition, the Council vigorously supported the right of the government of Israel to place Adolf Eichmann on trial. A strong protest was issued against the presence of West German rocket scientists in Egypt. The Council called on the Jewish people 'to unite in defence of Israel', and approached the State Zionist Council with the offer of conducting a campaign 'to win support for Israel in the non-Jewish community'.

The Council strongly supported Israel during the 1967 Six Day War. Activities undertaken included a letter to the prime minister urging support for Israel at the United Nations Special Session, sponsoring of a successful pro-Israel resolution at the Victorian ALP Conference, and a protest to the Soviet ambassador against his country's anti-Israel policy. Council president Todd Trevaks argued that 'it is essential that every Jew should assist Israel in its present crisis to the utmost'. This pro-Israel advocacy was denounced by the pro-Chinese Communist Party, which described the Council as aiding US imperialism.

The Council and Soviet Bloc antisemitism

The Council's overt defence of the antisemitic Slansky Trial and Doctors' Plot in 1952-53 severely eroded its support and credibility in the Jewish community. This issue continued to be a blind spot for the Council, although over time some muted criticisms were made of specific anti-Jewish manifestations in the USSR. The Council was unable to openly condemn Soviet anti-Jewish discrimination even on human rights grounds, since a key faction within the Council together with many of the Council's key allies in the Victorian ALP and trade union movement were rigidly pro-Soviet. The Council also seemed unable (either on political grounds or perhaps owing to plain naivety) to comprehend the fundamental difference between Jewish life and antisemitism in the Soviet Bloc and the West.

Jews in Eastern Europe lived in autocratic states where antisemitism was often promoted as an official state policy, and where Jews were unable to oppose such manifestations under threat of persecution. In contrast, Jews in democratic countries were able to vigorously combat existing antisemitic groups which, although permitted to operate freely, were generally marginal and insignificant. In addition, the Council's passivity on Soviet Jewry (labelled by some as 'appeasement') contrasted not only with its activist approach to combating antisemitism on the domestic scene, but also with its confrontational criticism of alleged Nazism in West Germany.

Conversely, Jewish critics of the Council continually exploited this issue

in order to paint the Council as loyal to left-wing political forces, rather than to the Jewish community. They demanded that the Council repudiate its earlier positions on Stalinist antisemitism as a condition for its political rehabilitation. The Council was never able to meet this condition, and hence much of its good work in other areas such as anti-defamation and pro-Israel advocacy was denied just recognition.

Following Stalin's death, conditions temporarily eased for Soviet Jews. Thousands of Jewish political prisoners were amnestied, the imprisoned doctors were released, and diplomatic relations were restored with Israel. However, Nikita Khrushchev's ascent to power in 1955 halted the brief 'thaw' or liberalising period. Jews were denied equal citizenship. Khrushchev not only refused to restore the Jewish cultural institutions destroyed under Stalin, but also took active measures to hasten Jewish assimilation. Under his rule, the number of synagogues was rapidly reduced, the baking of *matzos* and the performing of circumcisions were greatly restricted, and virulent public campaigns were conducted against the Jewish religion and its practices. In addition, Khrushchev gave vent to his own anti-Jewish prejudices in meetings with foreign communists and dignitaries. Perhaps of most concern was the active scapegoating of Jews as alleged 'speculators and illegal traders in State property'. A disproportionate number of offenders convicted of such economic crimes were Jewish. The Jewish origins of such offenders were also given considerable press publicity, and Jews were far more likely to receive death sentences.

In early 1956, Khrushchev exposed the brutal fabrications of the Doctors' Plot without, however, referring to its specifically anti-Jewish connotations. The picture was completed by the Yiddish daily in Warsaw, the *Folks-Sztyme*, the official organ of the Jewish Section of the Polish Communist Party. In an article entitled 'Our Sorrow and Our Consolation', the *Folks-Sztyme* revealed the full details of Stalin's murder of the leading Soviet Jewish writers and cultural figures.

Faced with unquestionable confirmation of the harsh reality of Soviet antisemitism, the Council responded with caution. Initially its president, Lewis Wilks, indicated that the Council was waiting for reliable information from the Trades Advisory Council in London. The Council then decided to write to the Polish Jewish community seeking information on Jewish life in Eastern Europe.

The Council appears to have concluded in late 1956 that the evidence that they lacked in 1953 of antisemitism in Eastern Europe was now clearly available, but that there now appeared to be a lessening of antisemitism there. It was decided that no public statement would be made, but that the Council Executive would be 'authorised in private discussions on occasions they think it appropriate' to acknowledge this evidence. Following a visit to the Soviet Union in 1957, leading Council figure Norman Rothfield admitted that although synagogues were open for worship, any meaningful Jewish cultural life appeared to be suppressed.

In the meantime, numerous local and international communists including the

Melbourne Jewish Progressive Centre, the Sydney-based *Outlook* journal, and leading British, American, and Canadian communists including Hyman Levy, J. B. Salsberg, and the famous novelist Howard Fast, denounced both Stalin's antisemitic crimes, and the continuing repression of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union.

Finally, in February 1958, the Council acknowledged publicly for the first time the extent of Soviet antisemitism. Council president Sam Cohen stated: 'We in the Jewish Council have been no less saddened than other members of the community by the cruel fate of a number of Soviet Jewish writers and cultural workers; by the restricted opportunities available to Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union; by the manifestations of anti-Jewish feeling in some countries of Eastern Europe; and by the sharpness of the Soviet Bloc's attitude to Israel in her present difficulties. What is the best way of offering practical assistance to the still large Soviet Jewish community and to the smaller Jewish communities of other Eastern European countries? As we see it, we accomplish nothing by joining in the paeans of hatred being sung today in the context of the cold war ... what is urgently needed today is a strenuous effort to establish closer contact between the Eastern and Western Jewish communities, so that the situation of Soviet and Eastern European Jewry may be improved, and especially in regard to the development and enjoyment of Yiddish culture in those countries ... The whole problem is, of course, painful and difficult and a happy ultimate outcome may well have to await the abatement of the cold war.'

This was the crux of the matter: while the Council now acknowledged the existence of Soviet antisemitism, it believed that public protests against the Soviet Union would only exacerbate the Cold War, and ultimately worsen (rather than improve) the situation of Soviet Jewry. In contrast, the mainstream Jewish leadership argued that only the force of international public opinion would persuade the Soviet authorities to cease their repression of Jewish life and culture. This view was increasingly supported by many prominent left-wing personalities, including writers Bertrand Russell and François Mauriac, peace activist Linus Pauling, and US civil rights leader Martin Luther King. It would appear that Khrushchev was sensitive to western criticism, and that such protests did lead to an improvement in the condition of Soviet Jewry.

Soviet antisemitism continued to be an issue of contention both inside and outside the Council. At the 1958 Council AGM, two former presidents, Isaac Sher and Aaron Mushin, criticised the Council's timidity on the issue. Sher urged the Council to recognise the reality of Soviet discrimination against Jews, and to protest loudly. Mushin similarly called for loud and vocal protests. Council president Sam Cohen and others disagreed, arguing that a public protest would place the Council in alliance with reactionary groups.

Following the AGM, Mushin successfully moved a motion calling for representations to be made by letter to the Soviet ambassador in London (the USSR having no diplomatic representation in Australia at that time), expressing

concern at the position of Yiddish culture and Yiddish cultural institutions in Russia, and asking the Soviet Union to encourage renewed contacts between eastern and western Jewries. The letter politely requested 'the restoration of opportunity for full cultural activities to Jewish citizens' as a means of 'creating goodwill between nations and assisting in the reduction of international tensions'. However, a proposal by Mushin for the USSR to use its influence to promote peace negotiations between Israel and the Arab states was rejected. Equally, a motion by Robin Rothfield at the 1959 annual meeting calling for the Council to take action against the antisemitic and anti-Israel policy of the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries appears to have been sidelined. In April 1960 ALP leader Arthur Calwell addressed the Council dinner, and forcefully denounced Soviet antisemitism including Stalin's murder of 450 Jewish writers and artists. Nevertheless, following Calwell's statement Council president Sam Cohen allegedly told the Melbourne Trades Hall Council that it was not known for sure that 450 rather than 45 Jewish writers and artists were murdered, and that Calwell's views were not necessarily those of the Jewish Council.

Early in 1961, the Council sent a letter to the Soviet ambassador in Australia protesting the appearance of a blood libel in the Soviet press alleging that Jews drank the blood of Christian children for ritual purposes. And in April 1962 the Council criticised the Soviet government for failing to permit the baking of *matzos* for Pesach. The Council reiterated its commitment to defending the rights of Jews in Russia, but denied that there 'was an official policy of antisemitism in Russia', and urged Jews 'to make a positive contribution towards the improvement of relations between East and West'. Senator Sam Cohen advanced similar arguments during the famous parliamentary debate on Soviet Jewry in October 1962. Cohen drew a distinction between the Soviet treatment of Jews as individuals, as opposed to Jews as a religious group or collective. According to Cohen: 'It is fair to say that the Russians make a strong case as to the equality which Jewish citizens enjoy in civic matters'. He added: 'I do not find it necessary to defend the Russian system. That system apparently suits the Russian people, and the Jewish community of Russia must work out its own destiny in that system'.

He also noted that antisemitism existed in many countries, evidenced by the emergence of fascist groups such as the League of Rights and social discrimination in Australia, Nazi groups in Britain, and the revival of Nazi propaganda in Germany. In contrast to the parliamentary motion which advocated international pressure on the USSR at the UN to change its policies, Cohen believed that the interests of Soviet Jews would best be served by international dialogue and peace. He declared that while he was 'fully in support of any condemnation of such discrimination as may exist against Jewry in Russia', he would 'not be a party to making political football out of human suffering'.

Cohen's speech provoked enormous criticism within the Jewish community, and can be criticised on a number of counts. First, he appears to have seriously

underestimated the extent, nature and seriousness of antisemitism in the Soviet Union. Secondly, his comparison of western Nazi groups with Soviet antisemitism was spurious since the former represented marginal viewpoints, whereas the latter reflected official government policy. Thirdly, there is little doubt that the Liberal/National Party Coalition government's Soviet Jewry motion reflected baser political motives including the embarrassment of Senator Cohen and the ALP. Nevertheless, it should still have been possible for Cohen to unequivocally defend on human rights grounds the rights of Soviet Jews to be free from either persecution or forced assimilation, regardless of whether or not he supported the actual motion to raise the matter at the United Nations.

Attempts were made by the Council to defend Cohen. The Council suggested the publication of a broadsheet containing an exposure of the involvement of the right-wing press in the attack on him, a discussion of the relationship of Jews to political parties, and a report of the growing world influence of Nazism and fascism. Suggestions were also made to engage prominent friends of Sam Cohen such as Professor Julius Stone and Judge Trevor Rapke in public defence of his stance. However, none of these ideas appear to have come to fruition.

Following a visit to Eastern Europe in December 1962, Council secretary Ernest Platz also denied that there was any official policy of antisemitism in the Soviet Bloc countries. The Council continued to distinguish between its mild (and supposedly balanced) criticism of negative Soviet attitudes to Jews and Israel, and the participation of other Jewish leaders in what it termed 'anti-Soviet campaigns'.

However, influenced by a lessening of Cold War tensions and associated changing attitudes in the Australian Communist Party, the Council proceeded in subsequent years to condemn particularly blatant manifestations of antisemitism in the Soviet Union. For example, it requested clemency for the Russian Rabbi Gavrilov, who had been convicted of economic crimes. The Council also protested the publication of the notorious antisemitic tract, *Jews Without Embellishment*, and met with the Soviet ambassador to demand that the text be suppressed. In addition, Senator Sam Cohen sent a personal letter of protest to the Russian Embassy, demanding that the Soviet Government 'make an official disavowal of this publication and of all manifestations of antisemitism, and take effective steps to prevent the publication of such material in the future'.

The Council vigorously protested the publication of further antisemitic tracts in the Soviet Union, and argued that 'the Jewish citizens of the Soviet Union should not be subject to any restrictions which discriminate against them, that they should be free to practise their religion, and should be free to emigrate to Israel if they desire to do so'. The Council also assisted with the distribution of Isi Leibler's book, *Soviet Jewry and Human Rights*. In November 1965, the Council condemned the Soviet Union's opposition to a United Nations resolution condemning racism and antisemitism, and its equation of Zionism with Nazism.

But pro-Soviet hardliners such as Sam Goldbloom and Saul Factor continued to influence Council policy. They were able to block effective criticism of the 1968 antisemitic campaign in Poland, although the Council did send a letter of protest to the Polish Consulate-General.

German rearmament

In the early 1950s, the Council's unrelenting campaign against German migration to Australia and associated attack on West Germany had been a major source of conflict with the mainstream Jewish community. Yet the Council continued to campaign aggressively against German rearmament and the rehabilitation of former Nazis, pointing to an alleged revival of Nazism in West Germany.

In early 1955, the Council hosted a major protest meeting attended by over 400 people. Speakers included Dr John Burton, former Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Senator Don Cameron, and Sheet Metal Workers Union leader Albert McNulty. Council representatives also addressed a number of trade unions, and distributed books and pamphlets warning of the dangers of rearming Germany.

These campaigns retained considerable popular support within the wider Jewish community. For example, the Melbourne Jewish Youth Council (which included the Council's youth section as an affiliate) initiated a press writing campaign against German rearmament, and organised a public protest forum. They also produced an emotive pamphlet attacking German rearmament. The pamphlet featured a photo of rotting corpses from Buchenwald, and claimed that a rearmed Germany would threaten world peace.

During 1957 the Council protested the appointment of former Nazi General Hans Speidel as commander of NATO in Central Europe. The Council argued that his appointment 'was the culmination of a series of acts restoring former Nazis to high office and is an important encouragement to the revival of Nazism'. Council representatives addressed numerous Labor Party, trade union, and church meetings.

A further campaign was launched in 1958 against the visit of alleged Nazi war criminal Baron Krupp to Australia. The Council held a public forum, distributed leaflets to unions, participated in radio and television debates, and organised a demonstration at the airport. The campaign was supported by the Jewish Association of ex-Concentration Camp Inmates. Further Council publicity claimed that former Nazis were playing a prominent role in the West German Government and army, and expressed concern at the alarming increase in antisemitism in West Germany. The Council also criticised the Israeli Government for concluding an arms deal with West Germany.

The international outbreak of swastika daubings in 1960 provoked further Council attacks on West Germany. The Council argued that the growth of Nazism in West Germany and the prominence of former Nazis in the German power

structure had contributed to the spread of antisemitism throughout the world. The Council demanded that West Germany take immediate action against all persons involved in current antisemitic acts, disband neo-Nazi organisations, remove all former Nazi officials from all positions of authority in the public service, judiciary and armed services, and ensure that all schools and universities present a full and correct picture of the Hitler period to their students.

Critics of the Council argue that its attacks on West Germany reflected a pro-Soviet political bias. This argument has considerable truth given that the Council seems to have grossly exaggerated the threat of a revival of Nazism and antisemitism in West Germany, and made no commensurate reference to the prominence of former Nazis in the government, civil service, and judiciary of East Germany. Equally, the Council's militant activism on German antisemitism compared unfavourably with its failure to actively protest Soviet antisemitism. But such sober analysis arguably underplays the continued resonance that German militarism posed to all Jews only a decade after the Holocaust. As Bill Rubinstein has noted, the Council's position reflected widespread Jewish fears of Germans and German rearmament which persisted well into the late 1950s.

The Council and the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies

The Council had been expelled from the VJBD in July 1952 as a result of its refusal to halt a public protest against the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with West Germany. The subsequent relationship was characterised by ongoing tensions, but also by some attempts at reconciliation.

The conflict between the Council and the VJBD arguably reflected a wide range of factors. First, the two organisations had different strategies for combating domestic antisemitism. The Council adopted a militant approach to combating antisemitism, based on public confrontation and exposure as well as alliances with a range of social and political groups and movements. In contrast, the VJBD generally preferred a more subtle behind-the-scenes approach based on private negotiations with government and other authorities. Second, there were ideological tensions revolving around Soviet Jewry and the Cold War: the VJBD regarded the Council as being influenced if not dominated by communist affiliations. Conversely, the Council viewed the VJBD as being dominated by hardline anti-communists. The VJBD demanded that the Council openly condemn antisemitism in the Soviet Union in order to prove that it was no longer controlled by pro-Soviet elements. The Council was neither willing nor able to meet this expectation. Third, there existed intense personal acrimony between VJBD leaders such as Maurice Ashkanasy and some Council representatives. This personal conflict appears to have increased after Council president Sam Cohen won pre-selection for the ALP's 1961 federal Senate ticket at the expense of Ashkanasy. Fourth, despite what appeared to be significantly different respective status and influence, both the VJBD and the Council appear to have seen themselves as competing for communal

recognition and support. There was ongoing disagreement and perhaps genuine confusion in some quarters on the question of who spoke for Victorian Jewry. As a result, the VJBD publicly and privately sought to discredit the Council in the eyes of the broader community.

Conflict was more prevalent than cooperation. For example, the VJBD attacked the Council in September 1955 for taking action over an anti-*shechita* campaign marked by antisemitic overtones. The Council responded by stating its preference for cooperation with the VJBD on matters of public relations. However, this public spat was followed by a request from Caroline Isaacson of the VJBD to access the Council's files on antisemitism. In addition, Council representatives Norman Rothfield and Lew Wilks met with Maurice Ashkanasy and Nathan Jacobson of the VJBD in an attempt to resolve their differences. However, this meeting appears to have been unsuccessful. From time to time individual Council representatives such as Sam Cohen were also invited to join the VJBD's Public Relations Committee.

During 1956-58 there were some serious attempts at reconciliation. A number of discussions were held about the possibility of the Council rejoining the VJBD. Judah Waten of the Council prepared a detailed memorandum setting out the proposed parameters of the relationship. The document accepted that the Council (unless requested by or with the prior permission of the VJBD) would desist from independent contact with the Federal or State Governments, or from holding public meetings or making statements in the daily press. But the Council insisted on retaining 'complete freedom in all matters dealing with the combating of antisemitism' including the right to approach firms and employer and employee groups, to issue press releases to the sectional press, and to address non-Jewish organisations in consultation with the VJBD Public Relations Committee. Nevertheless, the Council would make its research files available to the VJBD, and provide an annual report to the Public Relations Committee.

In essence, the Council seems to have aimed to independently continue its existing anti-defamation activities under the banner of the VJBD without actually subjecting itself to the authority or discipline of the VJBD. It is highly unlikely that such an arrangement would have worked given that the VJBD already had its own Public Relations Committee which was responsible for these activities. Regardless, the Council decided not to proceed with an application for affiliation, believing that it would not succeed at that time. Instead, it was decided to seek the informal cooperation of the Board on particular campaigns.

Tensions quickly renewed. In his 1959 report, VJBD Public Relations Committee chairman Isi Leibler complained that the Council spokesmen 'have frequently interfered in our activities, made approaches to certain bodies giving the impression that they represent the Jewish community, and endeavoured to undermine our status in the Jewish community by indulging in cheap publicity and exaggerating minor antisemitic incidents'. Leibler added that the VJBD was

'not willing to work on a joint basis with any private political group that is outside the discipline of the Jewish community and has no basis for setting itself up as a representative of Victorian Jewry'.

Matters came to a head in 1960 when the Council and VJBD adopted vastly different responses to the world-wide outbreak of antisemitic activities which included a local wave of swastika daubings. The Council launched a vocal public campaign, including the citizens protest meeting described above. In contrast, the VJBD provided what it considered to be a sober analysis based on joint action with the police and public authorities to protect Jewish property, and condemn antisemitic activities.

The Council offered to cooperate with the VJBD in a joint campaign against the 'resurgence of Nazism'. But the Board spurned this overture, claiming that it had access to far greater resources, and that the Council was regarded as 'persona non grata in official and semi-official circles in Victoria'. The VJBD not only publicly dissociated itself from the Council's protest meeting, but also contacted a number of the speakers advertised for the Council meeting in an attempt to persuade them not to participate.

In addition, the VJBD later held its own public forum at which the Board president Nathan Jacobson strongly attacked the Council. The Council responded with a public leaflet titled *We Accuse* which attacked the VJBD for rejecting communal unity in the fight against antisemitism, and conducting a 'witch-hunting smear campaign' against the Council.

Concerned at the public conflict and division, VJBD member and ALP activist Leon Freedman attempted to promote a rapprochement between the Council and the VJBD. But his efforts were unsuccessful. VJBD president Nathan Jacobson stated that the VJBD could not accept the Council because it was a 'Communist-controlled organisation' which had refused to condemn antisemitism in Communist countries.

Further conflict occurred over the Council's campaign against the exclusion of Jews from the Melbourne Stock Exchange. The VJBD attacked the Council's public exposure, stating that it had been involved in 'delicate' negotiations with the Stock Exchange to resolve the problem. In response, the Council argued that the VJBD's 'behind the scenes negotiations' and secrecy had been a dismal failure in combating antisemitic practices. The Council also prepared a confidential anti-Ashkanasy memorandum, detailing his political opposition to the Council, his alleged political opportunism including his friendship with Sir Robert Menzies, his personal anger towards Sam Cohen, and his questionable business dealings.

Following the Council's strong support for Israel during the Six Day War, there was again some discussion about re-affiliation with the VJBD. However despite some friendly contact between Isi Leibler and the Council, this did not eventuate.

Why the Council survived until 1970

The Jewish Council represented a generation of Jews whose formative political experiences were the rise of Nazism and fascism culminating in the Holocaust, and the wartime anti-fascist alliance of the Soviet Union and Western powers. Although Stalinist antisemitism eroded Jewish support for the Soviet Union in the early to mid 1950s, a disproportionate number of Australian Jews remained sympathetic to the Left. This was reflected in continued significant Jewish participation in, and support for, the Australian Labor Party. Some of these Jews were Bundists, and others were left-wing Zionists. But many supported the Council.

Evidence of broad support for the Council comes from an analysis of its fundraising activities. Despite the continued tensions with the VJBD, it was able to retain a full-time secretary and supportive administrative staff during much of its history. Some of its major donors were committed activists of the Left such as Norman Rothfield, Sol Kurop, Isaac Gust, Joseph Redapple, Sam Goldbloom, Todd Trevaks, and Jules Meltzer. But others such as Sam Wynn, Jack Skolnik, Stephen Dattner, S. Kosky, S. Revelman, Sol Segal, D. Zyk, Saul Same, and Isador Magid were not obviously so. In addition, prominent Jewish legal figures and even rabbis (Chaim Gutnick and L. M. Goldman, for example) continued to cooperate with the Council.

Equally, the Council's close relationship with the ALP was a source of major strength. Leading Council figures such as Sam Cohen, Norman Rothfield, Sam Goldbloom, and Ernest Platz were close to the left-dominated central executive of the Victorian ALP, and all were successful in securing preselection for seats in the Senate and House of Representatives. But the Council's relationship with the ALP was not limited to the Left. Regular contact was maintained with leading figures such as Dr Evatt and Arthur Calwell, and three consecutive federal party leaders, Evatt, Calwell and Gough Whitlam (at the time still deputy leader); moreover, federal Senate leader Lionel Murphy addressed Council dinners. The Council also enjoyed good access to local ALP branches, and a particularly cooperative relationship with the trade union movement.

Why the Council ultimately died

The major reason for the Council's decline was the reduced threat of organised antisemitic activities in Australia. By the mid-late 1960s antisemitism was generally limited to fringe far Right groups such as the League of Rights, and sections of some immigrant communities. And internationally the key threat came no longer from West Germany or a revival of Nazism, but rather from the Soviet Union both in terms of its internal persecution of Jews and its external support of Arab hostility to Israel. The Council was not able to adapt to these changes, or to engage with the newer passionate Jewish activism revolving around the issues of Israel and Soviet Jewry.

The ageing leadership of the Council was both a contributor to, and a reflection of, the organisation's decline. Most of the major Council figures from 1954 – including Norman and Evelyn Rothfield, Sam Goldbloom, Nubert Stabey, Lew Wilks, Lou Jedwab, Ken and Martin Marks, and Martin Ravech – were still there in 1970. The significant exceptions were Senator Sam Cohen, who died from a heart attack at the age of only 50 in October 1969, and Ernest Platz, who resigned from the Council owing to ill-health in December 1967 and passed away in 1969. Platz was not replaced, except on an honorary basis.

The Council had retained an active youth section until approximately 1956, but virtually none of the key figures – Dick Diamond, P. Pearson, Irving Saulwick, Norman Rothman, Sylvia Rothman, G. Gimel, Jack Pose, or Hyman Kolt – moved into the adult section. There was also some attempt to revive the youth section in the late 1960s through Gloria Meltzer, Nahum Mushin, Nahum Warhaft and other children of Council activists. But the Council was unable to attract the new generation of radical Jewish Left activists whose passion was opposing the Vietnam War, rather than combating antisemitism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Jewish Council deserves to be judged both on its merits as well as its failures. Much of the historiography of the Council has narrowly accepted the perspective of its mainstream critics: that the post-1953 Council was a small, marginal, and generally despised left-wing group surviving only on past memories and continued antagonisms. But this article paints a rather different picture, based on a more complex analysis of Jewish Left identity. Council activists were motivated by broader left-wing concerns, but also by specifically Jewish concerns. On some issues, such as Soviet Jewry and West Germany, there is no doubt that these agendas clashed, and priority was often given to left-wing loyalties. But on other issues, such as domestic antisemitism and support for Israel, these agendas more often complemented each other, and the Council acted as a vibrant and highly energetic anti-defamation body for much of the period under study.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Norman Rothfield for providing open access to his personal collection on the JCCFAS, including the full surviving collection of Council Executive Committee Minutes.

FROM TAKE-OFF TO MATURITY: THE AUSTRALIA-ISRAEL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, VICTORIA

Rodney Goultman

It will probably never be known when the idea of establishing the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AICCI) in Melbourne in the early 1950s was first mooted. Neither the scant documentation surviving nor the very few remaining founders is able to provide the details. Two facts, however, are known. First, the tiny band of committed Zionists who formed the rather loose organisation known as the AICCI was motivated by a visceral desire to offer some essentially practical help to relieve the dire social and economic distress then being experienced in the newly declared State of Israel, where the profound difficulties of nation-building were greatly exacerbated by the burden of assimilating an overwhelming and extremely varied migration wave, and fighting a war. Secondly, similar chambers of commerce had already been formed in other countries.

As early as 30 June 1938 the Zionist-leaning *Australian Jewish Herald* discussed the need for trade between Australia and the Yishuv, as the Jewish community in Mandate Palestine was known.¹ The issue of 7 November 1940 again urged immediate consideration of the matter.² From 1938 to the British withdrawal from Palestine in 1948, Australia's trade with Palestine could well be characterised as minuscule, erratic, and more concerned with the needs of the Mandate administration than those of the Yishuv.³

However, as early as 1944, an Australia-Palestine Trading Company was registered in Sydney, its purpose being to stimulate bilateral trade between the two countries. This company is said to have been the predecessor of the AICCI in Sydney.⁴ When the State of Israel was declared on 14 May 1948, Australia's trade with what had been Palestine was zero,⁵ but with the outbreak of the first Arab-Israel War or the 'War of Independence' that immediately followed, several aircraft privately purchased in Australia were flown to Israel. Some saw action, while others were cannibalised by Israel's fledgling airforce for spare parts.⁶ The then federal Labor government led by Ben Chifley denied any knowledge of the transactions,⁷ and to this day military purchases between Australia and Israel are never itemised in Australia's trade statistics.

While bi-national chambers of commerce are private initiatives, they must by their very nature operate in the public domain, ever mindful of the economic situation and political climate in the nations with which they deal. As will be shown, Australia-Israel trade was affected by several factors. These include

initially quite different business cultures, mutual ignorance of each other's economic requirements, the vast physical distance between the two countries, with its problems of transportation and communications, and the geopolitical ramifications of the ongoing Arab-Israel conflict.

Although healthy trade between nations can proceed even when the political path is troubled, it is better achieved when the atmosphere is positive. Generally, diplomatic relations between Australia and Israel have been positive, although on occasions Australian Foreign Affairs bureaucrats have expressed hostile and prejudiced views.

The founders of the AICCI in Melbourne realised that the goals of companies and public instrumentalities involved in Australia-Israel trade were governed not by charitable motives but by hard economic self-interest. For that reason, the test of success of the AICCI ultimately had to be judged by the degree to which it could convince companies and instrumentalities to participate in the bilateral trade between the two nations.

Those local Zionists who formed the AICCI in Melbourne were driven by the desire to help Israel by practical means rather than charity. In the years immediately following the state's establishment, Israel did not really possess an organised economy.⁸ Because the cessation of the 'War of Independence' was not followed by peace between Israel and the Arab states,⁹ an excessively high percentage of the new state's meagre GNP was directed to the non-productive area of defence. Compounding this situation was a huge influx of migrants, who were welcomed but whose integration was socially and economically debilitating. These newcomers included traumatised Holocaust survivors from the displaced persons' camps in Europe, and Jewish immigrants from Arab states and the Caucasus. Many arrived in shock and penury, and they suffered from sudden cultural displacement.¹⁰

Economically, the Yishuv had been dominated by agriculture rather than industry. In fledgling Israel the public sector played a dominant role in all manner of commerce and social activity. The private sector was minuscule and therefore incapable of contributing meaningfully to the absorption of an overwhelming immigrant workforce. Indeed, the fears felt by the early AICCI activists for an economically vulnerable Israel were well founded.

At this time there was no certainty that a Britain-oriented Australia would accord diplomatic recognition to Israel¹¹ let alone trade with her, a situation not helped by the circumstances which forced the British to quit Palestine. Even the Labor government of Ben Chifley had no desire to depart from British policy in the Holy Land. In fact, the brokerage of diplomatic relations between Australia and Israel was the work of only one man, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, who was both the Minister of External Affairs and the Attorney-General in that administration. He faced opposition from Britain and the hostility of many of his parliamentary colleagues.¹²

The actual exchange of diplomatic missions between Australia and Israel

in 1950 occurred during the rule of the recently-elected Liberal/Country Party coalition government of the Anglophile Robert Gordon Menzies. Despite having previously taunted Evatt for his prominent role at the United Nations in general, and for his role in that body's acceptance of a Jewish state in Palestine in particular, Menzies continued Australia's support for Israel.¹³ However, when the respective diplomatic missions were established in Tel Aviv and Sydney, neither employed a representative who dealt solely with issues of trade.

A common thread among the founders of the AICCI in Melbourne was personal experience of Nazism in Europe. If only for this reason they were emotionally committed to Israel's survival. Although rejecting thousands of applicants, Australia took in more survivors of the Holocaust per head of population than any Western nation, Israel excepted. Although these people had to establish themselves in a new and quite foreign land, some of them had a strong Zionist background and kept an ever-anxious eye on the situation in Israel. When they arrived in the Antipodes, they found an entrenched Anglo-Jewry unsure of itself and much absorbed with their fellow Australians in the nation's post-War economic reconstruction.¹⁴ In this situation, Zionist concerns were peripheral. It was always feared that expressions of antisemitism in the 1940s might be exacerbated by the struggle between the Yishuv and the British Mandate authorities.¹⁵

One of those who kept a nervous eye on Israel was the late Henry Krongold. He joined a small band of like-minded people to form the AICCI in Melbourne in the first half of the 1950s. It was an ad hoc body with no constitution, let alone articles of incorporation. No data is available as to when and where the first meeting was held, nor who attended and what was discussed. Meetings seemed to have occurred haphazardly when required and took place at the business premises of the major players. Krongold recalled that it took some five years for many in the Melbourne Jewish community to fully recognise and digest the difficulties being experienced by Israel. According to him, only when this had occurred was there some commitment to the formation of an organisation whose sole function was to develop and expand trade between Israel and Australia.¹⁶

The oldest surviving document concerning the AICCI is a letter dated late in 1954, and addressed to P. Berstein, Israel's Minister of Commerce and Industry. Signed by the Chamber's president, J. Skolnik and secretary, Dr S. Rosing, it advised the minister that Henry Krongold of Charmaine Hosiery Mills in Melbourne, a member of the group's governing committee, would soon be arriving in Israel on a business trip during which he wished to discuss with him 'matters of mutual trade' between Australia and Israel.¹⁷

Krongold's first stopover en route to Israel was New York City. From his Fifth Avenue office he spent much time in liaison with the American-Israel Chamber of Commerce observing how it operated and noting aspects that might be profitably implemented back in Melbourne. Apparently, there was a similar body in Chicago, but Krongold seems to have made no attempt to contact it.¹⁸

One idea canvassed in New York was the establishment of a world federation of bi-national Israel Chambers of Commerce, possibly headquartered in that city. Such a proposal had been on the table long before Krongold's arrival. An inaugural conference on the matter had been touted for Tel Aviv in June 1955, under the auspices of either the President of the State of Israel, or the government of Israel. Indeed, Krongold was asked to discuss the conference en route to Israel with fraternal chambers in Britain, France, and Italy.¹⁹ However, his extremely busy schedule seems to have prevented this. As things stood, an international federation was an idea whose time had not yet arrived.

In Tel Aviv Krongold met with the president of the Israel Chamber of Commerce, who supported any move which might expand his nation's overseas trade and business contacts. Krongold observed that Israel viewed trade through a prism of short-term needs, which was understandable given her prevailing economic and social predicament. In Jerusalem he made contact with minister Berstein who wished his mission well. In passing, mention was made of a buyer from the Sydney department store Mark Foy's who had come to Israel to place orders for knitted goods, corsets, and brassieres. Krongold was told that should an international trade exhibition be held in Melbourne in association with the 1956 Olympic Games, Israel's businesses might be interested in participating.²⁰

Back in Melbourne, Krongold shared his observations with colleagues in the Chamber. Two matters were specifically discussed. The first was how to expand the membership of the Chamber beyond the Jewish community. At least half the board and committees of the New York chamber were non-Jews. The second concerned levels of membership. In New York, the job of securing new members had been given to agencies on a commission basis. It was thought that some modification of this model might be worth considering for Melbourne.²¹

Early trade difficulties

In the early 1950s trade between Australia and Israel was negligible, narrow in scope, and irregular.²² It was hindered by Egypt's blocking of Israel's access to the Suez Canal in retribution for her defeat by the Jewish State in the 'War of Independence'. Other obstacles included ignorance of each other's markets and the lack of a viable and regular shipping service between the two countries.

The Suez Canal obstacle was further exacerbated by the outbreak of the second Arab-Israel War known as the 'Suez Crisis' of 1956²³ especially when Egypt decided to intimidate ships bound for Israel's southern Red Sea port of Eilat. Occasionally, ships were also fired on from Sharm el-Sheikh at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba. Although this difficulty was removed as a consequence of the 'Suez Crisis', it was later to reoccur as a prelude to the Six Day War of 1967.

Not surprisingly, Israel's diplomatic mission in Sydney was anxious to improve Australia-Israel trade. It engaged Canberra in wide-ranging talks on such subjects as the possibility of an Israeli shipping line's carrying Australian cargo, the transit

of goods through the Suez Canal, and the export of Australian meat to Israel. Israel's First Secretary, Zvi Dover, used an Australian company's recent order for 4000 tons of potash from Israel as an example of what was possible. Interest was expressed in an Australian trade fair planned for 1958 or 1959, and Dover proposed that an Israeli trade group expected in Tokyo in January 1958 might travel to Australia to investigate prospects for commerce. The Department of Trade appeared favourable to this.²⁴

On the other hand, some Australian business and trade officials were more concerned that no actions be taken which threatened regular oil supplies from the Middle East. They also hoped to improve the prospects for increased trade with Arab states. Interestingly, moves for Australia's participation in a proposed British-led security force in the Middle East,²⁵ and Australia's subsequent support for Britain in the 'Suez Crisis' of 1956 were not perceived as inimical to this end.²⁶ Far greater impediments were considered to be the lack of Arab diplomatic representation (apart from Egypt's) in Canberra and any pro-Israel policy on the part of the federal government. The Australian Chamber of Commerce's own Export Council wanted Australian diplomatic representation, replete with a trade commissioner in Saudi Arabia, in order to gain access to the states that bordered the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf.²⁷

Following advice from Israeli Ambassador Max Nurock, Israeli Minister for Commerce and Industry Pinchas Sapir visited Australia in March 1958. His purpose was to secure private investment to expand bilateral trade, to encourage the purchase of Israeli defence bonds, and to convince the local international trader H. C. Sleigh to reassign some of its Hong Kong-registered ships to the Australia-Eilat route. The company showed interest in transporting Dead Sea potash, but Israel also wanted it to carry such items as textiles and citrus fruit. On the return voyage wheat, metals, and primary produce might be carried.²⁸ The year following, Israel's first economic representative, O. Sharef, was installed in its Sydney-based Mission.²⁹

Initially, the AICCI was not able to put down deep roots in the Jewish, let alone the general community. The prevalent feeling in Australia was that Israel had little to offer. The perceived problems outlined above were exacerbated by the prejudices of some of Australia's officials in the Department of External Affairs in Canberra. Mainstream diplomatic relations between Australia and Israel, both in sentiment and practice, appeared quite friendly. However, bureaucratic advice from External Affairs to the Department of Trade was not always amicably disposed to Israel, Israelis, and the Australian Jewish community.

To overcome the Egyptian embargo on cargo flowing through the Suez Canal to and from Israel, Israel's imports were given a European address, and then shipped to their real destination. Her exports took the same route in reverse.³⁰ As far as Australia was concerned, the extra time involved increased costs. Moreover, Egyptian hostility was not always directed at cargo. On occasions, attempts were

made to remove Israeli nationals from passenger ships passing through the Canal for interrogation and perhaps worse. These efforts were usually foiled by ships' captains, who refused to comply. However, Israeli travellers were warned by their Mission in Australia that travel through the Canal would be at their own risk.³¹ There were also cases of Australian mail destined for Israel being impounded and then eventually returned.³²

In the aftermath of the Suez Crisis came the notorious Arab Boycott designed to proscribe companies dealing with Israel. Its agent in Australia was the embassy of the United Arab Republic (UAR).³³ The UAR had been created by a merger of Egypt with Syria in February 1958, which lasted until September 1961, though Egypt kept the name for the next decade. This Embassy identified Australian companies wishing to trade with or invest in Israel for blacklisting by the Arab League.

The Department of Trade was duty-bound to counsel companies wishing to engage in business with Israel of the possible consequences of doing so should they also wish to trade with Arab states. However, information on Israel was excised from its brochure on the Middle East. The Australian government did convey displeasure with the Arab Boycott to the embassy of the UAR, declaring that Australians were free to trade with whoever they wished.³⁴ Nonetheless, it refused to back its rhetoric with action, offering the lame excuse that since the office overseeing the boycott was 'unofficial' formal intervention was not required. This stance was undoubtedly governed by the pragmatic economic fact that potential trade with Arab states would swamp anything Israel could offer. Moreover, Australian industry depended upon heavy crude oil from Arab states.

The true impact of the Arab Boycott on Australia-Israel trade will never be known, but at the minimum it created a psychological impediment. This was not helped by attitudes within the Department of External Affairs towards Israel, Jews in general, and the Australian Jewish community in particular. Its negative in-house views were never voiced in discussions with representatives of Israel and of the Australian Jewish community, let alone of the AICCI. Nonetheless, the advice offered by External Affairs bureaucrats to their colleagues in Trade smacked of Judeophobia.

Hostile attitudes to Israel and to Jews were etched into the private records of the Department of External Affairs at least from the time of Australia's first envoy to Israel, O. E. C. Fuhrman, whose previous attempts to prevent Jewish refugees emigrating from Shanghai were well known.³⁵ The irony was that he was given the Israeli posting during the ministerial reign of Dr H. V. Evatt and with the knowledge of the Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell. Fuhrman's venomous dispositions were redolent in the missive he sent to Canberra from Tel Aviv under the cover of the diplomatic pouch. Rarely did his bureaucratic bosses try to dissuade him. Perhaps they agreed with their colleague Alan Renouf that the 'Arabs with reason regarded the Jews as having stolen their land'.³⁶ In the aftermath of the 'Suez

Crisis'. Renouf dismissed the gravity of Arab threats to extinguish Israel from the face of the Middle East, suggesting it was only a harmless emotive way in which Arabs spoke.³⁷ He was to lead the Department of Foreign Affairs during the Whitlam Labor government of 1972 to 1975, and doubtless played a significant role in the moulding of that administration's 'even-handed' policy, which tilted Australia's attitude to the Arab-Israel imbroglio more towards the Arab side.³⁸

In 1951 Australia signed a tariff agreement with Israel, and supported its application for membership of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade. Israel had always wanted Australia to install a trade official in its embassy in Tel Aviv in order to raise the profile of Australia-Israel trade, but Canberra prevaricated so as not to upset the Arabs.³⁹ Eventually, domestic pressure came from the Jewish community for a trade mission to be sent to Israel. A Jewish member of Victoria's Legislative Assembly, Baron Snider, publicly suggested it in May 1961. A trade mission was dispatched to Egypt in 1962, and the prevailing wisdom in Canberra was that to avoid any appearance of discrimination, Israel should be equally treated.⁴⁰ In the middle of 1962, the Egyptians reciprocated the Australian initiative, and sent a trade mission to this country.⁴¹ Around that time, Australia's Rome-based trade commissioner visited the Trade Fair in Tel Aviv to ascertain trade prospects there. He reported optimistically that there could well be markets in Israel for Australian goods. However, there was a caveat – this might only be possible if a direct shipping service were operating between the two countries.⁴²

Canberra finally agreed to an Australian trade mission in Tel Aviv in March 1963. This fact was enthusiastically received there, especially by relevant members of the Israeli government. Members of the trade mission were under the impression that Israel might be willing to take unusual steps to encourage trade with Australia. It seemed that prospects for trade were better than Canberra had previously thought, though the need for a regular shipping service and the need to develop the port of Filat were emphasised.⁴³ Israel replied with its own trade mission Down Under late in 1963.⁴⁴ Two matters Canberra hoped would not be discussed were the thorny issue of Qantas flights direct to Ben Gurion Airport in Israel, and a request for a permanent Qantas sales representative in the BOAC office in Tel Aviv.⁴⁵

The boffins in External Affairs feared that their colleagues in Trade might prove putty in the hands of these 'scheming' visitors. They were at pains to ensure that no agreements would be finalised, which would upset the Arabs. Not only were Israelis seen as too overtly and passionately advocating their self-interest, but also the perceived fifth column nature of the Australian Jewish community had to be combated. External Affairs advised that:

In negotiating with Israelis, it is advisable to realise that Israel is at once the state of the Jews who inhabit it and the focus of religious and cultural attraction for Jews throughout the world. A consequence of the worldwide dispersion of Jews is that there are family, charitable, religious, cultural, political, and other links of a universal character.

Religious and political groups in Israel are reflected by almost precisely corresponding groupings in other countries, including Australia. Links deriving from such associations might well be used in the development of individual transactions, which might not always be compatible with maximum effectiveness or results in lasting, as distinct from ephemeral, commercial relations ... It can probably be assumed that the mission will not neglect any opportunity which might present itself for furthering aid to Israel. Through the corresponding social groups in each country referred to, the Jewish community in Australia is giving aid to Israel, outright gifts etc. Credit might be sought with at least some form of government sponsorship or blessing. One of the factors to be considered in this connection is possible Arab reaction ... it need hardly be added that persons dealing with, or hoping to do business with Arab countries would risk incurring Arab boycott ...⁴⁶

Discussions on Australia's stance on the Arab-Israel conflict or arms purchases were forbidden, though Australia had secretly imported Israeli technical products associated with her purchases of Mirage fighter planes from France.⁴⁷ Israel had been the only nation to test the Mirage in battle. Later, RAAF officers were sent to Israel in civilian dress to purchase jettisonable fuel tanks for their Mirages.⁴⁸ R. K. Gates, chargé d'affaires in Tel Aviv, summed up the basis of Australia's relations with Israel: 'our relations with Israel are carried out on the supposition that it is Israel which needs Australian support and not vice versa.'⁴⁹ The Israeli trade mission reached Australia at a politically inconvenient time – in the midst of a federal election. Once the election was called, the incumbent government went into caretaker mode, and so could not enter into any binding additional commitments to bilateral trade. Any External Affairs paranoia was soon sidelined as conversations kept away from issues it considered contentious and only dealt with general matters of commerce, trade, tariff policy, and the key issue of shipping.⁵⁰

Australia's view of trade with Israel was that, while welcome, it was not a high priority. When, in 1966, the Minister for External Affairs, Paul Hasluck, visited Israel as the first ever serving Australian Cabinet member to do so, his departmental brief was that bilateral trade talks were not worth pursuing, owing to the small volume of trade between the two nations.⁵¹ This occurred at a time when the Department of Trade, deeming it not in Australia's best interests, had rebuffed approaches by an Israeli shipping line, Maritime Fruit Carriers Ltd, to carry Australian wheat on the Australia-North America run.⁵²

The challenge of the Whitlam years

Despite having commenced life in Melbourne in the early 1950s, the AICCI was legally constituted only in 1971. The Chamber was a small cabal of extremely busy and successful businessmen who volunteered their time and expertise when requested. Others were co-opted as necessary. Its activities were based on members'

personal contacts rather than any coherent strategic plan. The entry of Nathan Werdiger, a Chamber stalwart, is a typical example of how many became members. He was asked to join in the 1960s owing to his particular technical and business experience, which was pivotal in helping to create a wool-scouring industry in Israel's southern coastal town of Ashdod.⁵³

In the absence of surviving documentation, one can only speculate as to why activists in Sydney and Melbourne came to place the Chamber on a legal footing. Presumably, this initiative afforded the AICCI greater recognition by public authorities and other relevant chambers of commerce. It would also have helped to establish and regularise a coherent *modus operandi* between the two distinct state bodies functioning under the same name.

On 13 April 1971, the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Industry became incorporated under the NSW Companies Act, 1961. The 'Memorandum of Association' declared that the Chamber's mission was to develop 'physical' trade, propagate knowledge about the economies of both Australia and Israel, promote tourism between the two countries, acquire property and hire personnel to bolster the Chamber's activities.⁵⁴ The object was to obtain registration in every state in the Commonwealth, have an initial membership of 200, and the capacity to expand as the Chamber's board of management saw fit. Prospective members would need to be proposed by existing ones and screened by the board. The membership fee was set at \$50 per annum.⁵⁵

The board of management was to comprise prominent figures in the Jewish and general communities, including the presidents of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand. A special class of outstanding supporters known as 'honorary governors' was also established. They could participate fully in the board's activities but lacked voting rights. Their status would change if elected to the board. Direct and proxy voting would be invoked on all matters of importance. Israel's Ambassador to Australia was proposed as the Chamber's patron.⁵⁶

It was not until 25 January 1973, however, that the relationship between Melbourne and Sydney was formalised. A special meeting held at the latter's premises in Rushcutters Bay essentially established the Chamber as comprising two equal but distinctly separate state divisions, each with its own subcommittee. There was to be an overarching national administration known as the board of management, whose leadership was to pass between the two centres every three years. The initial leadership was to be Melbourne-based, and after three years it would pass to Sydney for the next triennium. And so it would alternate *ad infinitum*. While state divisions were to nominate their own executives, the final approval of the selection was the prerogative of the board of management.⁵⁷ No mechanism was provided should the two divisions disagree on a particular issue.

Despite Melbourne's being chosen to commence the six-year cycle of national leadership, the meeting chose a foundation executive whose principal posts were

occupied by representatives from Sydney.⁵⁸ At no time was it indicated that this was only an interim team, one whose time would expire when the proposed rotation was touted to commence in 1974.

These constitutional changes came at a time when the atmospherics surrounding Australia's attitude towards Israel took a far less positive turn. Even before the Yom Kippur War broke out on 6 October 1973, the diplomatic ground rules had formally changed. With the election of the Whitlam Labor government on 2 December 1972, Australia's attitude to the Arab-Israel conflict was readjusted to take into greater consideration the Arab position.⁵⁹ Putting aside the personal attitudes of Whitlam and his team towards the Arab-Israel conflict, it was essentially economic pragmatism which drove the new policy. A consequence of Israel's victory in the Yom Kippur War was the potential application of the Arab oil boycott against any nation which demonstrated friendship or sought to trade with Israel. Around 70 per cent of Australia's oil needs came from the Arab Middle East.⁶⁰ When the 1973 hostilities erupted, a huge Australian wheat sale destined for Egypt was pending. Offering a more friendly face to the Arabs was designed to protect Australia's oil supplies from the Middle East, to attract burgeoning Arab oil revenues for investment in the Whitlam government's policy of economic nationalism, and to open up Arab markets to Australian industry and manufacture.⁶¹

There is a dearth of information from the 1970s on AICCI Melbourne's organisational practices, the relationship between the two State divisions, and the decisions of the board of management. The memories of surviving members have not been able to fill in the gaps. In those years, the Victorian division was led by men of the calibre of Victor Fonda, Jack Rezek, Gerald Rose, Alan Selwyn, Reuben Sackville, with Felix van Lier as 'honorary manager' providing day-to-day organisational backup.

Van Lier had migrated to Australia from England in 1955, but in 1969 left for Israel with possible aliyah in mind. In Israel, he was asked by Koor Intertrade to represent them in Australia, which he accomplished, before returning to Israel for a brief stay. He had formed close links in Israel with the British-Israel Chamber of Commerce. Back in Australia in 1971, van Lier offered his services in an honorary capacity to the AICCI, and this was continued in 1976 when he became its executive director. A major challenge for him was to change Australians' perception of Israel's economy as predominantly agriculturally based.⁶²

On the other hand, in Israel van Lier had found a profound ignorance of the possibilities of bi-lateral trade with Australia. While there was a genuine, even desperate desire for new markets, Australia did not rate a blimp on the Israeli radar screen. Further, as van Lier tells it, when company representatives did venture down to the Antipodes, they were often ignorant of the local business culture. After an initial rigorous pursuit of their commercial interests, they did not wait around for contacts to emerge. Rather, they left the cities to spend the rest of their stay enjoying tourist sites. Van Lier claims to have been successful in altering this

approach. He also warned these representatives against regaling their Australian contacts with the finer political points of the Arab-Israel conflict, in which they were not interested; if they were, it was only in terms of how the conflict might affect business. Only a handful of local companies in which Jews persons held influential positions were interested in trade with Israel. Nonetheless, members of the Jewish community were crucial repositories of informal business contacts.⁶³

Whether by chance or design, Australia's first trade mission to Israel since 1963 occurred after the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor government in November 1975. It operated in Israel from 17 June to 1 July 1976. Although the AICCI arranged preliminary seminars designed to encourage Australian firms' participation, the enterprise was fully organised and sponsored by the Department of Overseas Trade.⁶⁴ One member of this mission was Sonnie Lipshut, who was later to preside over the Chamber, although at this time he had no association with it. In Israel, the mission decided that Australia's best trade potential with the Jewish State lay in commodities such as cereals, coarse grains, wool, and especially coal. However, a major factor in the growth of trade was the future development of the Israeli ports of Haifa, Ashdod, and in particular Eilat, which would remove the need for carrier vessels to pass through the Suez Canal. As it was, insufficient cargo had caused the Israeli ZIM line to end its direct service between Eilat and eastern Australia in 1974. This service had been replaced by a container service by ZIM via Hong Kong.⁶⁵

The AICCI's first sponsored trade fair in association with the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce was scheduled to open in May 1979. Inspired by the success of the 1976 venture, it had the support of Israel's Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Israeli Export Institute, and the Australian Trade Commissioner in Tel Aviv.⁶⁶ Felix van Lier had gone to Israel in the second half of September 1978 to advance the arrangements, and concluded that with improved prospects for Middle East peace following Egyptian president Anwar Sadat's sojourn in Jerusalem, prospects for Australia-Israel trade were fortuitous.⁶⁷ Despite this initial optimism, van Lier not long afterwards informed the Mission's travel agent that everything had to be postponed for six months at least, when it was hoped that the political situation would be more conducive to success.⁶⁸ The fair finally opened in November 1981.⁶⁹

By the year 1982-83 the two-way trade between Australia and Israel approached \$A111.5 million, with the trading gap between the two reducing in Australia's favour. The AICCI not only provided a series of seminars to encourage more businesses to embark upon bilateral trade with Israel,⁷⁰ but in 1982 the organisation had introduced annual Israeli trade awards to honour those companies which had done so.

Despite all this activity, too often due only to Felix van Lier's unbounded enthusiasm, dedication and competency,⁷¹ the AICCI was in essence a part-time Chamber. Van Lier was a part-time official in an ad hoc organisation. His small

stipend did not even cover his expenses. While by the mid-1970s he operated out of the Chamber's own office at 150 Albert Road, South Melbourne, much was still arranged from the private business addresses of its executive members.

A brief new regime

Despite the incorporation of the AICCI in Melbourne in 1973, its membership grew slowly. People joined via different routes. For example, Reuben Sackville was co-opted owing to his general activism in the Jewish community, whereas Victor Fonda, a highly successful businessman, entered from the Jewish National Fund, Keren Kayemet.⁷² AICCI gatherings were often held at the Travelodge Hotel on St Kilda Road. After some disagreement within the leadership, it was agreed that all catered functions would be kosher.⁷³

After 1973, the Chamber's leadership in Melbourne remained relatively stable, with only one point of disruption. This occurred in 1984 when Sonnie Lipshut, aiming at the presidency, broke the tradition whereby leadership posts were normally uncontested. Lipshut was the joint managing director of Intercorp Australia, an importer of high technology products from Israel. Dissatisfied with the manner in which the Victorian division of the AICCI was being run, he sought 'to revitalise the executive and engage full-time staff' in order to have the Chamber follow a more entrepreneurial and professional managerial path.⁷⁴ He challenged the incumbent president, Reuben Sackville, by lobbying members for their proxy votes, a constitutionally valid process but one never previously used. Nominations for the executive were called for on 14 November 1984. Also required was the election from Victoria of three representatives to the board of management, and the appointment of an auditor.⁷⁵

At the annual general meeting on 5 December 1984 Sackville explained that, contrary to all the Chamber's efforts, trade from Israel in the year past had not increased dramatically, while exports from Australia had remained stable. On the credit side, ZIM had increased the number of its ships servicing Australia, with a vessel arriving approximately every 13 days.⁷⁶ No doubt knowing that the proxy votes favoured Lipshut, Sackville withdrew from the contest, declaring that after 11 years in the post the presidential address he was about to deliver would be his last. The outgoing chairman of the executive, Victor Fonda, decided he too would retire. Fonda singled out Felix van Lier for particular praise, observing that during his 11 years as the executive director bilateral trade between Australia and Israel had grown from 5 to 70 million dollars. Moreover, a small number of Israeli firms had established offices in Australia. With pride he added that both divisions of the AICCI were held in very high regard by federal Department of Overseas Trade, Israel's Department of Trade and Commerce, and her Export Institute. He believed that Israel's economic future depended on her capacity to export, and the Chamber's role was to assist in that objective.⁷⁷

With tension running high at the meeting, treasurer Gert Silver stated somewhat

sarcastically that while the Victorian division was 'operating more or less on the smell of an oil rag' he queried whether the incoming executive would 'bring with them the oil as well, so we'll be able to increase our budget income and expenditure'⁷⁸. The upshot was that only one nomination was received for each position on the incoming executive, and all were duly elected, with Felix van Lier as the honorary secretary. Lipshut acknowledged the efforts of Sackville and Fonda, and praised Gert Silver, who despite his misgivings joined the revamped executive. The new president felt that his team had the skills and experience required for the job, but he warned of forthcoming changes in the management of the Chamber. He also argued that Israel had to export herself out of her current economic and employment difficulties: the balance of trade had tilted in Australia's favour, and so the focus of the Chamber should be the growth of Israeli exports Down Under.⁷⁹

Details of the changes in management style were duly spelled out. The office was to open five days per week and be staffed by a roster of the executive at least until full-time employees were recruited. What Lipshut wanted was a 'working executive', a full-time secretary, a full-time marketing officer, and a Chamber operating within budget. The extra revenue needed to be garnered, for all this would have to come from a substantial increase in membership, and the fees that would follow.⁸⁰

Many of those who had nominated for positions on the executive claimed they had been unaware of Lipshut's requirement that they serve in the office for at least eight hours per week and take responsibility for a particular portfolio or task. They labelled Lipshut's campaign 'a takeover' and claimed there had been no overt expression of dissatisfaction with Sackville's administration. Sackville declared that he had neither retired or resigned, and that there had indeed been 'a takeover'. He also claimed that he had been desperately seeking a successor, but the person of his choosing had not been available.⁸¹

Lipshut did not want just new members from only the business sector; he sought them from the professions as well. He emphasised that Australia-Israel trade was not charity work but strict business. Ways and venues had to be found for Israeli exports, and many more Israeli companies encouraged to set up shop in Australia. With Israel's economic emissary ensconced in Sydney, the Chamber in Melbourne had to act as that official's surrogate in Victoria, with the hope he would travel down every four to six weeks.⁸²

On taking office, Lipshut commissioned two reports. The first raised concern as to whether current practice of the election of the board of management was constitutional,⁸³ and the second looked at how the Chamber's organisation might be changed to produce greater efficiencies and better outcomes.⁸⁴ Prior to assuming the presidency Lipshut had not sighted a copy of the Constitution.

Regarding the first report, it was recommended that there should be at least three amendments to the Constitution. Each state division at its annual general

meetings should choose three representatives to the board of management, with each division permitted to raise and retain its own funds, and both divisions to use the Constitution as their operating guidelines. As matters stood, they operated individually and idiosyncratically.⁸⁵ On the second matter, the proposal was for the Chamber to expand its operations into areas such as market research, marketing strategy, negotiation of agreements, and follow-up services. A network of experts across a range of interests should be formed, and a newsletter created which would include a section covering South East Asia. In response, Lipshut proposed five subgroups which would focus on day-to-day activities and special projects, each chaired by a member of the executive with the power to co-opt experts when necessary.⁸⁶

As matters stood, the board of management, the AICCI's national watchdog, had no staff, budget, or facilities, and spoke for the Chamber only when required to do so by state divisions. The Victorian division's budget was a mere \$20,000, three-quarters of which was spent on rent, administration, and wages, leaving only \$5,000 for activities. Van Lier continued to receive a pittance of a stipend but had no support staff. Lipshut wanted changes in the membership structure to attract small business, hitherto neglected, and wanted the Israeli trade awards to reflect their contribution.⁸⁷ Together with his chairman, he visited Israel, meeting relevant ministers, bureaucrats, leaders of other bilateral chambers of commerce, representatives of technological industries and individual businessmen. The pair also explored the area of Australia-Israel scientific cooperation, the brainchild of Israeli academic Professor Greenblatt.⁸⁸

Despite his plans to transform the Victorian division, Lipshut's reign lasted but one term. Deciding after all to contest the presidency, Reuben Sackville lobbied members against Lipshut. Sackville was convinced that the demand for greater executive commitment had caused resentment among members who, though willing to give of their time, wished to do so only when they were able.⁸⁹

At the general meeting in December 1985 Lipshut announced he would not stand for re-election. His reasons were not explicitly stated, but his words barely masked frustration with the result of his attempts to speedily transform the Victorian division. The failure significantly to increase membership was acknowledged, and so was the fact that the costs involved in gaining new members had been greater than the revenue delivered. According to Lipshut, the situation had been reached where the overall costs of the Chamber would soon exceed revenue; the Chamber was in no position to finance any desirable projects; if trade with Israel was the top priority, and the Chamber was to play its part, the Victorian division would need at least \$50-60,000 above monies currently brought in by subscriptions. Lipshut felt he had started the Chamber along the path of change towards a professionally-run unit, but major constitutional, organisational, and financial issues had still to be faced.⁹⁰

Interregnum and transformation

Lipshut's departure elicited few tears from the Chamber's principal activist in Sydney, Sid Fields, shown as procedural courtesy rather than any genuine feelings of fraternity.⁹¹ The irony is that within a few years of Lipshut leaving office the AICCI underwent a profound organisational change in both Sydney and Melbourne, and then nationally. This change embraced a new entrepreneurial ethos in the spirit of his recommendations. In Melbourne, an 'old guard' engaged in traditional activities in the usual manner could exist as a holding operation at best. As Victor Fonda described the situation, there was a distinct question mark over the Victorian division.⁹² Age, ill-health, and intrusive family duties were eroding the capacity of the leadership team, and new blood with new ideas was imperative.

That transformation came in the person of Leon Kempler, a prominent Melbourne businessman with extensive involvement in the manufacture of fur and leather. He had joined the Chamber and executive in 1988, and when Sackville resigned in 1989, he took the reins of the Victorian branch, and has since led it since in an honorary capacity. Victor Fonda remembers the 'old guard's' initial reservations about Kempler's capacity to lead the Chamber, as they knew little about him. Such doubts were soon dispelled.⁹³ Kempler underwrote the Chamber financially, allowing it to be more innovative and administratively efficient. This was achieved with the recruitment of permanent paid staff. In 1990, the 29-year association between Felix van Lier and the Chamber officially came to an end.

During the last decade of the twentieth century the AICCI was also transformed nationally, and even extended its fraternal reach internationally. Only in 1997, however, did the Chamber become truly a national organisation, existing in each Australian state except Tasmania. Each state branch was autonomous, with its own constitution, management, and special interests. A national council was created, composed of all state presidents, which facilitated cooperation and communications between the separate divisions. The new federated Chamber also underwent a name change to become the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce.

The Victorian branch has achieved financial self-sufficiency, with each of its principal functions becoming themselves successful fundraisers. Programs and seminars have been tailored to the needs of an ever-widening audience across many sectors of the national economy. A framework for commercial networking has developed through widely-attended CEO lunches, each addressed by a senior figure from business, finance, politics, scientific research, and academe. All this has been complemented by traditional activities, such as helping to organise trade missions to Israel, hosting leading business or scientific figures from Israel, or encouraging contacts between people contemplating business between the two countries.

As mentioned above, Australia-Israel trade has always been vulnerable to

the fickle winds of the Arab-Israel conflict. No longer is there an effective Arab Boycott, and Israeli peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan have created a somewhat better atmosphere. Nonetheless, the unstable situation between Israelis and Palestinians is always present with the potential negatively to affect Australia's trade with the Jewish State.

Throughout the 1990s, Australia's share of Israeli imports increased by only 0.3 per cent despite the Jewish State's imports increasing by some 103 per cent. This is in a context where trade with the Middle East has become far more important to Australia than the reverse. Israel's contribution to Australia's total Middle East trade is but 4.4 per cent. In the year 2000, Australian exports to Israel covered only an extremely narrow range dominated by three items – coal, aluminium, and an intentionally vague category of 'confidential items'.⁹⁴ Only a handful of Australian companies have engaged in joint ventures or opened branch offices in Israel. In fact, the trend is the other way, with more Israeli firms becoming involved in Australia. Nonetheless, if interest in Australia-Israel trade is to be judged by the numbers of requests to the Victorian division of the Chamber to answer queries and act as intermediary, interest in the two-way enterprise remains strong.

Almost half a century ago, Henry Krongold dreamed that the AICCI might become part of an international organisation of bi-national Israel chambers of commerce. This dream came to fruition in November 2000, when representatives from 28 countries, including Australia, gathered in Israel to witness the signing of an international declaration to form the Federation of Israel Bi-National Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

The inchoate AICCI of the 1950s has developed arguably into the most prominent example of an organisation of its kind in Australia. No more a struggling voluntary body holding a vague hope of helping the Israeli economy in some way, the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce is at the cutting edge of practical Zionism in Australia.

Notes

- 1 *Australian Jewish Herald*, 30 June 1938, 'Palestine & Australia'.
- 2 *ibid.*, 7 November 1940, 'Trade with Palestine'.
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HARRINGTON STREET OLD JEWISH CEMETERY, HOBART: REVISITING OUR PAST

Ephraim Finch

In January 2002, I was asked a single question by David Clark of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation: 'How do we handle an exhumation?' I was intrigued, so I delved further. David said the exhumation might involve a few bodies, and accordingly I gave him details of how to handle the skeletal remains and offered the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha's assistance. David said he would get back to me as things developed. After approximately two weeks I rang him and to my surprise was told that the skeletal remains of 42 people had been exhumed, placed individually in plastic bags, and deposited in the Tahara House in the Jewish section of the Cornelian Bay Cemetery.

On 4 February 2002, I travelled to Hobart to inspect the skeletal remains and to ascertain the possibility of there being further burials at the old cemetery in Harrington Street. I can still remember the feeling of opening the doors of the old Tahara House, the sun streaming in on 42 plastic bags. I stood in the room in the presence of 42 people who had been laid to rest over a period of 60 years between 1811 and 1871, whose eternal peace had now been disturbed.

I met archaeologist Parry Kostoglou at Harrington Street and inspected the area that had been excavated. We found bones lying on the disturbed ground from the initial excavations. Parry asked me to identify the remains of tombstones. One large panel had an inscription in Hebrew which showed that Ziporah (Sophia Moses) had been buried there. It was the only significant part of a memorial left on the site. I went to the Archives office and photocopied the burial register in order to pursue our own investigations. In the afternoon I met at the *shule* with Caroline Heard, president of Hobart Hebrew Congregation, and David Clark. I photographed the memorial board on the stairwell wall listing the names of 57 people buried in the old Jewish burial ground. My fact-finding trip was now complete and I headed back to Melbourne to plan for the reburials and possible further exhumations.

Following further discussions with the Hobart Hebrew Congregation it was agreed that the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha and Adass Israel Chevra Kadisha would come to Hobart and rebury the remains in the Jewish section of the Cornelian Bay Cemetery. We provided information to the archaeologist for his report and assisted him in our request for a more professional approach for the remaining exhumations. We asked that an archaeologist be on site to supervise the excavation of the whole area, to map the positions of the graves *et cetera*, and for a forensic pathologist to determine the sex and age of the remaining bones.

To make the return trip we had to organise the making of 60 small coffins, sand from Israel, shovels, tools and the delivery to the two cemeteries. We made arrangements to meet at Cornelian Bay on Tuesday, 19 February 2002, the morning that these requisite items were delivered from the ferry. The general manager of Cornelian Bay Cemetery arranged to meet with us and provide two trenches in the Jewish section for the coffins to be buried according to Jewish law.

The doors of the Tahara House were opened once again, and we started our holy duty of carefully placing the skeletons in the coffins. We sprinkled soil from Israel over the bones, placed the lids on the boxes and then carried the coffins to the trench and brought them back to *Kever Yisrael*, to their final resting place. We buried 42 coffins and then flew back to Melbourne.

Before we could proceed on the complete clearing of the old cemetery site further discussions took place. Although Heritage Tasmania initially could not see any reason to be involved, they were now forced to take a stand as it had become an embarrassing situation. They put a work suspension order on the site.

The Department of Health and Human Services confirmed they had received the archaeologist's report incorporating our requests. Our requests can be summarised as follows. First, safe removal of significant stonework: headstones to be removed from the Windsor Court site under archaeological guidance. Second, professionally credible removal of remaining burials, the Jewish community having requested that any remaining burials known on the site be exhumed and transferred to Cornelian Bay. Housing Tasmania agreed that I should be present during the next phase of exhumations. Third, forensic analysis of all human remains – the report recommends that the remains be analysed to determine sex, age and cause of death. In the case of remains exhumed as at February 2002, it was not possible to undertake this work, as it was the community's wish to re-inter them without further delays. (There had been no planning by the department for this scientific procedure and the Hobart Hebrew Congregation had not sought advice in order to effect this. One would surely expect a government department to handle an historical burial site in excess of 190 years old with a professional approach.) In consequence, the forensic examination could only be done on the remains exhumed during the second phase. The archaeologist recommended that the examination be done as part of the exhumation process, which might require the expert to be present, and he accordingly provided the Jewish community with the name of a local forensic pathologist, Letitia Carter. (Unfortunately the government only paid for one day of site work. The pathologist said that consequently an opportunity was missed to show what life was like in the Van Diemen's Land colony.)

The Department agreed to further historic research in association with the forensic work recommended above, and recommended that further historic research be undertaken. It noted that the archaeologist had recommended that following completion of both forensic and historic research, this information should be combined and the results detailed in a written report. (As of July 2003 all details

could be accessed on the Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania, website, www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/housing/windsor-court/history/burial). With regard to the establishment of a repository for artifacts and information, the Department noted that the process recommended by the historian would result in a considerable amount of information which would need to be stored and properly interpreted.

The second phase of exhumation took place on a cold morning on 20 May 2002. The Windsor Court housing building had been demolished and you could see from Harrington Street up the steep incline just as it was 190 years ago. There was a large excavator working to the right side of the block. Present on site with the Department supervisor were Parry Kostogolou, Letitia Carter, a labourer with shovel and the three representatives of the Chevra Kadishas, S. Kohn, D. Paneth, and myself. Once the formalities were over it was down to work. I had voiced my concern about the area to be excavated and I said that I wanted the whole area done. The archaeologist said he would not leave the site until my request was met.

It was fascinating to watch how the work proceeded. The first layer of soil uncovered did not show any evidence of a burial, but the second layer revealed the 'ghosting' of a grave. The third layer was carefully dug up until it revealed a skull, then Parry Kostogolou used his brush to gently move away the soil to reveal a complete skeleton. After he had recorded the details, Letitia Carter carried out her investigations. Then it was our turn to carefully remove all the remains and place them into individual coffins. It was like observing the prophecy of Ezekiel and seeing the vision of dry bones, namely 'the resurrection' of our people. During a lull in proceedings, while we were all standing along the back fence, I looked over the fences of adjoining properties and to my surprise there were sandstone pieces holding up the garden beds. On closer perusal we noticed inscriptions on the headstones. We had discovered monuments, which had been stolen by the neighbours! The irony of the situation is that in order to get the pieces back, we have to replace the stolen stone with similar material. This matter has not yet been resolved and needs to be revisited and resolved to our satisfaction.

Over these first two days we had identified and exhumed a further seven sets of skeletal remains. On the third day, when we thought we had finished, I requested one last excavation on the left corner, and after the second layer of excavated soil was lifted we found three sets of skeletal remains partially hidden under the neighbour's fence. As we placed the last three remains into their coffins, the archaeologist asked why we were sprinkling small packets of sand onto the bones. I told him that it is a 'quaint custom' to ensure that everyone outside of Israel has some soil from the Holy Land placed on their body. I suppose that this sprinkling might not have happened 150 years ago. He said that it was a very special experience to watch and witness the care and respect afforded to our people!

We took the ten coffins to Cornelian Bay for burial. The Chevra Kadisha men stood together, recited the *El Mole Rachamim*, and asked for forgiveness for anything we had done to cause the remains to suffer in anyway. As we were

leaving Harrington Street, we watched as the labourer was checking the boundary fence for any materials that we may have left behind. At one of the adjacent fences a neighbour was asking the labourer what was going to happen to the heap of stones; he answered that they were destined for Cornelian Bay Cemetery to be used in a memorial for the people who had been buried at Harrington Street. The labourer added: 'There must have been many more memorials here based on the number of graves identified.' The neighbour said: 'Yes, there were, but we took them for landscaping.' I was amazed by the total disrespect for a cemetery and for the people buried there!

To conclude the story I wish to make the following observations. First, I find it sad that a Jewish community *sold* its sacred burial ground. Second, it is even sadder that when the two government departments inquired what should be done with the monuments, the representative of the Jewish community was interested in only one headstone, that of Bernard Walford, and no other. Third, the cemetery was visited in 1952 to record the inscriptions, but regrettably no photographs were taken nor the positions of the graves recorded. Fourth, the Jewish community should be aware that government departments can take advantage of a situation in the interest of saving money. The reports by public servants show that they wanted the site cleared posthaste so the new development could commence. Thank goodness that there was a delay in the demolishing of the building owing to an asbestos problem. But for that they would have had the whole site cleared without further consultation with the Jewish community.

It is with amazement that we read that we are being chastised in the archaeologist's report for being too hasty in reburying the unearthed remains. I feel it must be stated that we had to fight to get the help we got from the government. The first exhumations were carried out without our knowledge; everything was done speedily. It was only with the second phase of the exhumation that we were able to make representation to the government through the archaeologist. The Hobart Hebrew Congregation seemed unable to support our requests. The government permitted the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha to be present to supervise the exhumations and reburials and they granted us an archaeologist for the duration of the work. Unfortunately, a forensic pathologist was employed by the government for only one day. Thus a great opportunity to make a study of the colony during this period of time was lost as the government was not prepared to extend additional funds. Given this situation, the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha then concentrated on giving '*Kever Yisroel* to our bones' at the earliest possible opportunity. Much time and many thousands of dollars were outlaid by both Chevrei Kadisha to achieve this result.

WHAT'S GOLF? THE STORY OF THE CRANBOURNE GOLF CLUB

Les Kausman

Geoff Kagan was fifteen when he came to Melbourne in 1937. He left behind in Bialystok, Poland, an environment of persecution, particularly antisemitism. By 1951 Geoff had become a successful businessman. One day he received a visit from Sam Fink, also from Bialystok. 'Geoff,' said Sam. 'I want £200 from you. I want to form a golf club.' 'What's a golf club? What's golf?' asked Geoff.

Sam explained that he was serious, and that Jews could not get into Melbourne golf clubs.

'Don't tell me there's antisemitism here,' replied Geoff. 'If that's the case, put me down for £200.'

The Geoff Kagan story is the setting for my book, *What's Golf?* It is a history of the first 50 years of the Cranbourne Golf Club.

At first sight the Cranbourne Golf Club is similar to any other good private members' club. The sights, sounds, and even the smells, would be comfortingly familiar to over 300,000 members at their own clubs throughout Australia. They could not be expected to know that this club is remarkably different. For the Cranbourne Golf Club was formed out of adversity. It was formed by people who were the target of prejudice and religious intolerance. Discrimination had hindered the social or work opportunities of many of these people. In the case of others, it had attacked their very existence. These people had no idea how to form a golf club or run a golf club. Many founding members joined with the intention of never playing golf. Many never got to own a set of golf clubs, or never set foot on the course.

The Cranbourne Golf Club is one of some 200 Jewish golf clubs around the world, all created owing to discrimination; the situation in the United States is of particular interest, in view of that American institution, the 'Country Club', with its historic exclusion of non-WASPs. The Cranbourne club was conceived on the notion of fairness and equality. It brought special joy to the people to whom fairness and equality had been denied. But to the club's infinite credit it did not restrict its own membership. It welcomed as members any persons of good golfing character. Nevertheless, the excitement and joy that comes with new-found freedom permeated the club. Half a century has passed since the course opened for play. The club continued to be a haven against discrimination, but the influx of members from a broad range of religious beliefs and socio-economic positions has moulded the unique character of the club. Many of these people have gone on

to make important contributions to the club. I was approached to write the history of these first 50 years.

I am a second generation Australian Jew. My mother was born in Melbourne from parents who came to Australia from Russia and Poland, and my father was born in England, and came to Australia when he was 12. At the age of 45 I took up golf at Cranbourne, the 'Jewish club'. I was president of the club from 1985 to 1993, and developed a very strong feeling for the club's history.

Initially, the historical records of the club could not be found. After three months of searching I eventually found them in the club's implement shed, which houses tractors, mowers, equipment and chemicals; its dark and dusty corners can serve as the rubbish bin of the club. In one corner was a pile of ageing paperwork; spider-ridden, and adorned with the droppings of birds and mice. Amongst that rubble-like pile of raffle butts, invoices and other records, I found every minute book of every committee meeting and subcommittee meeting, both men's and ladies'. The jumble was just waiting for some enthusiastic employee to spring clean the lot into a skip. Accordingly, I believe that any achievement in writing the book is dwarfed by my achievement in preserving for posterity, this priceless archival history.

The minute books were the major resource in compiling the history. But there were also around 30 living founders who could be located and interviewed. Many of them, like Geoff Kagan, had fled Europe in the 1930s. Take Robert Salter, for instance. He decided to get out of Vienna when Hitler marched into Austria in 1938. He flew to Rotterdam to catch a ship that would be leaving for Australia the following day. Just getting onto that ship was a battle of wits, which is a story in itself, but at the then-Dutch island of Batavia he applied for an Australian refugee visa. He was unsuccessful, and arrived in Melbourne with only a visitor's visa. Robert was directed to a federal politician, the member for Melbourne (Dr William Maloney), who arranged a refugee visa for Robert, his girlfriend, his mother and father, his pregnant sister and her husband. Robert asked why he was being so kind, and the politician explained that a Jewish woman had saved his mother's life. He showed Robert a fob watch upon which was a *Magen David*. His mother had given it to him, with the directive that if he could ever help a Jew, then he must do so. Very soon after this incident war broke out, and all refugee visas were cancelled. Robert made another successful trip to Maloney, the only stipulation being that Robert must marry his fiancée within three months of her arrival in Australia. Eventually they all came, with the exception of his sister, who got to Paris and was betrayed by a Frenchman; and was sent to die at Auschwitz.

Robert went into the *schmatte* business in Flinders Lane, was successful, and in 1953 became a Cranbourne founder. Further examples are founder Sonny Bierman, who married Ann Bloom, and became an owner of the Portman's chain of fashion shops; and Kalman and Eric Rogers, who developed the Roger David chain of menswear stores.

The picture of discrimination against Jewish golfers was worldwide, but was especially evident in the United States, Britain, Canada, South Africa – and Australia. There is early Australian evidence of antisemitism as written club policy. A minute, dated 14 May 1908, of the Royal Sydney Golf Club states: 'The committee recognise that the feeling of the Club is adverse to the admission of Jews, and resolve during their term of office to give effect to this feeling.' Clearly, this resolution met with the approval of subsequent committees, because with a single exception no Jew became a member of the Royal Sydney Golf Club during the subsequent 75 years.

Now for unwritten club policy. There is anecdotal evidence that many clubs would not allow in 'Jews, Asians and bookmakers'. Apparently even well-meaning committee people feared a backlash from members if 'Jews, Asians and bookmakers' were admitted. Consequently, applications by Jews for membership of these clubs were ignored, returned or rejected. In some instances the pain of rejection was real and lasting. The federal parliamentarian Barry Cohen's experience provides just such an example.

In 2002 Barry Cohen spoke at the launch of the history of Cranbourne's counterpart in Sydney, the Monash Golf Club. He related that at 18 years of age he was club champion at Monash, and had ambitions of becoming a professional golfer. He believed that membership of a second club could help his career, and asked the manager of an interclub junior team on which he played to join him up at Manly Golf Club. He received the reply: 'Barry, don't embarrass me. You know why I can't'. As Barry Cohen related this story some 50 years later, so real was the pain that he was on the verge of tears. He did not pursue a career in golf. He went into politics, with such distinction that he was elected to the Federal Parliament, and became a minister in the Hawke government. He could join the highest forum in the land, and achieve promotion by the prime minister, but he could not join the Manly Golf Club.

A seminal fact led to the formation of the Cranbourne Golf Club: Australian Jews were good enough to fight in the wartime trenches, alongside their non-Jewish countrymen, but on their return home they were not good enough to join the nation's golf clubs. In remedying this there was a pivotal figure in Victoria, Syd Kaufman. He was an automatic member of Huntingdale Golf Club by transfer from the Eastern Golf Club. He tried to enroll at Huntingdale a nephew who had returned from wartime service in the Australian Air Force, but was told that Huntingdale had 30 Jews, and would not take any more. Syd Kaufman felt the same pain of rejection experienced by Barry Cohen.

Kaufman had many conversations with Bert Walker, a non-Jewish representative who called at Kaufman's business premises. When Kaufman told Walker he did not wish to stay at Huntingdale to be merely tolerated, he received the reply: 'Well, why don't you start a club of your own?' That same question has been asked of Jewish golfers many times around the world. And Bert Walker is not the only

instance of the question being asked by a gentile.

Walker canvassed many of his Jewish clients, and it was his persistence that convinced Kaufman to act. By 1950 self-belief was entering the Jewish psyche. The formation of the State of Israel in 1948 was a sign that Jews had a place in the world community. Israel's magnificent victories against the marauding Arab armies were proof positive that Jews could fight back and prevail against any threat. There was a sense of euphoria in Jewish communities worldwide. All of this, and the fact that Jews in Sydney had been able to form their own club, must have strengthened Kaufman's resolve.

Kaufman knew of some Jewish golfers. He occasionally played golf with brothers Barney and Harry Cohen, and like Eric and Kalman Rogers he took an interest in horse racing. Together they called a meeting of around 30 of their friends in late 1950. No minutes were taken at that meeting, but Kaufman later spoke of the enthusiasm with which the proposition of forming a Jewish club was received. He had no idea how to build a golf club, or how much it would cost to do so. There was no feasibility study, no cost estimates, no count of potential Jewish members. Kaufman merely told them that suitable land could be bought at an affordable price, and they promised their support.

The first recorded meeting, held on 14 June 1951, elected a provisional committee of the Monash Country Club. At that time Sir John Monash was our most famous Australian Jew. Amongst his achievements he was dux of Scotch College, a graduate in engineering from Melbourne University, commander of the Australian Infantry forces in the First World War, vice-chancellor of Melbourne University, chairman of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, and more. His name is now honoured in numerous ways, including a university and a freeway. Syd Kaufman wanted to honour him with the name of a golf club. He sought and received naming permission from the Monash family, but the recently formed Monash Club in Sydney objected. The Melbourne club was subsequently named after the locality in which it is situated.

Land of suitable dimensions was found at Cranbourne. According to Kaufman, it was a big piece of land that suited the pocket. As to funding, how simple and ingenious is this, all scribbled out on the back of an envelope by Harry Cohen:

Raise 50,000 pounds to buy the land and build the course, by finding 250 Melbourne Jews who will pay £200 each. They will become the 250 members of the Cranbourne Country Club. This is an entirely Jewish body. The Country Club will create the Cranbourne Golf Club ... open to anyone to join. The Country Club – in effect the Melbourne Jewish community – will always own the property. The 250 members of the Country Club would be life members of the golf club.

And so the committee embarked on its search for 250 people. The scheme was simple and ingenious, but sadly it was not entirely practical. Relatively few

Melbourne Jews played golf in 1950, and of those who did, many could not afford £200, equivalent to more than \$6,000 in today's terms. The committee placed advertisements in the Jewish newspapers, and they went out on Sunday mornings door-knocking in the streets of Carlton, Toorak and Caulfield.

Here is the remarkable fact regarding the formation of the Cranbourne Golf Club: most of its founders were not golfers. They opened their doors to the committee canvassers, and gave them a sympathetic hearing. Many who donated had endured antisemitism as a life-threatening fact of European life. Many did not care for golf, but did care that if a Jew wished to play then it should not be denied him. Some paid £200, not for themselves but so that others could play golf. Some, in fact, paid the £200 and never did get to own a set of clubs, or set foot on the course. (Ian de Winter's father had his own agenda. Ian received for his 21st birthday a foundation membership at Cranbourne. It was not given so much for the Jewish cause, as in the hope that Ian would stop playing football; he was no less welcome, as a Cranbourne founder.)

Further antisemitic incidents were the direct cause of membership applications. John Sackville was playing golf with his son Maurice at Albert Park when he witnessed an antisemitic altercation. He immediately joined up at Cranbourne four members of the Sackville family. Jessel Rothfield joined after being accepted at Greenacres, and advised by its committee that he could not join up any more of his kind. Harry Sluice came to Cranbourne owing to the treatment he received at Yarra Yarra. Manny Goldstone was accepted at another club because he was a British Jew. It seemed that after the war any 'Brit' was seen by mainstream Australians as 'one of us'. When Goldstone learned that the club would not accept European Jews, he resigned to join Cranbourne.

Of necessity, the committee accepted payment by instalments. Sam and Bill Webb paid £50 each a year for four years. Theirs is an interesting story. They were born in Brest Litovsk, in East Poland. Their father was a most powerful community identity, and when he learned in 1937 of an anti-Jewish pogrom he used his influence to try to get the police and army to intervene. When he discovered that the police and army had joined the pogrom, the family was forced to flee. Had it not been for the clout he wielded, they probably would not have got out. The Webb family came to Australia, and was setting up a giftware business when the door knock from Cranbourne came.

So idealistic was the door-knocking brigade that, as well as joining up new members, they had no objection to collecting the instalments. However, it did annoy Syd Kaufman that a particularly wealthy founder made him call every month for a £10 payment, when that person could have bought outright, multiple memberships.

In most cases, obtaining new members and subscriptions ranged from difficult to excruciating. Occasionally, however, there were moments that made up for all the hard work. George Dryen came down to Melbourne to purchase menswear

for his Broken Hill drapery from committee man Lou H. Cohen. Dryen went home with his menswear and with membership of a golf club. Syd Kaufman called into the home of founder Cyril Davis, to find Davis playing tennis with David Mandie. Kaufman told Mandie he should become a founder, and received immediate agreement. Mandie is an accomplished sportsman, but has still never played golf. Syd Kaufman, a member of Lodge Fraternal, was also able to convince a number of Freemasons to become founders.

Dedicated communal workers comprised the final group from which founders would emerge. David Morley, for example, gave freely of his time and expertise to a number of Jewish organisations, including his synagogue. Morley saw a Jewish golf club as just another worthwhile communal entity. He was not a keen golfer, but went on to become foundation treasurer of the golf club, and was elected to honorary life membership.

And so the money was raised, the course designed and built. These were not the days of advanced technology. The course was not measured by a theodolite, or other such sophisticated device. It was measured, all 7,000 yards of it, by a 60-inch tape measure. It took Harry, Barney and Leila Cohen a whole day and half the night. And how's this for state of the art? The plans for all of the greens were drawn up in a sixpenny graph book. No computer-generated technology here!

For the opening on 8 May 1954, the clubhouse was a marquee that blew down in the wind, and the changing room was a wooden hut, with hessian bags acting as the partition between men's and ladies' changing rooms. But the optimism and the sense of achievement were palpable. Founder Robert Salter has observed that he has eaten in some of the world's best restaurants, but nothing matched the expectation of the pie and beer in the shed at Cranbourne.

There is another remarkable fact about the formation of the Cranbourne Golf Club. Among its foundation members, 14 had the surname Cohen. Harry Cohen's funding solution had worked. There were 249 founders, and the course was built. The weakness in Cohen's formula was painfully obvious. On opening day the club was in debt, and money had to be found to maintain, prepare and further develop the course; with no right to ever receive a cent from its 249 members, who were paid up for life. The club endured a hand-to-mouth existence for years, and would have folded if not for the generosity of some members. Reuben Sackville, for example, gave an interest-free loan of £4,000 (the equivalent of \$100,000 today). It was a loan for six months, that was not repaid for four years. Eventually an increase in membership, together with funding avenues at the bank, stabilised the club's financial situation.

If there is any doubt that the creation of a Jewish golf club was both necessary and timely, then such doubt is dispelled by a letter in the *Melbourne Age*, two years after the club opened for play.

Jessel Rothfield had written about the discrimination he had experienced at Melbourne golf clubs. FAF's reply appeared in the paper on 5 May 1960:

Mr. J. Rothfield, in his letter (3/5) on the non-acceptance of Jews as members of some golf clubs, supplies the chief reason for their exclusion. No one, I think, would dispute the right of any individual to decide who he shall admit to the privacy of his home. In the case of a club, this right is delegated to the membership committee. The tone of Mr. Rothfield's letter, in which he seems to demand as a right what can only be a privilege, tends to justify the committee's attitude. Without a country for over 1,000 years, Jews have never become assimilated with the nations that harbored them—probably to the disadvantage of both races—but remain separate nuclei with their first loyalty to Jewry. Such an attitude within a golf club would be particularly undesirable.

People such as FAF ply their prejudice in all areas of their existence. An unfortunate fact of golf life is that they sometimes become members of golf club selection committees. They are the reason it was necessary to found the Cranbourne Golf Club.

The club continued to be a haven against discrimination. In 1942 the 14-year-old George Oshlack was moved with his family from the Warsaw ghetto on to a train. He did not know that the destination was Treblinka, but he knew enough to jump with his brother Joe from the train. They never again heard from their family. George spent the remainder of the war living in the forest as a freedom fighter. In fact, he was the feather boy. His job was to place a feather under the nose of a slain German to be certain he was not breathing. After liberation, George and his brother came to Australia. In the 1960s George tried to join Greenacres Golf Club, but never received a reply to his applications. He joined the Cranbourne Golf Club. When fighting for his life in the trees in Poland, George could never have imagined he would one day be free to walk the fairways of a Jewish club. Or free to search amongst the trees for a golf ball—not for a German.

In the 1980s there was a Cranbourne member with the unlikely given name of Mohamed. Mohamed Saih was an outstanding Moroccan golfer. Owing to his dark skin he could not get past the first handshake at Melbourne's 'elite' clubs. It is ironic that the Arab golfer was turned away from other clubs, but found a home at the Jewish club.

Early on, the question of *kashrut* had to be faced. The club would be open for play on Saturdays, and the committee deemed it would therefore be a contradiction to require kosher food. Plans for a permanent clubhouse had been approved, with only one kitchen. The committee, and most members, were comfortable with the decision that the dining room would not be kosher, but that no *traife* fare would be served: thus no shellfish or pig's flesh.

Some members, however, were unhappy. The matter came to the boil when Sir Dallas Brooks opened the first permanent clubhouse in 1956. Member Alex Sachs asked a waitress to identify the meat being served. She incorrectly replied

that it was ham, when in fact it was corned beef. The caterers immediately rectified the mistake, but the event led to a bitter and acrimonious annual general meeting. When the dust settled, the club was able clearly to articulate its stance:

It was a club for Jews, not a Jewish golf club. There is no exclusivity. There is no discrimination in membership selection. The prohibition in the clubhouse of shellfish and pig food does not amount to discrimination against the non-Jewish members.

The club, to this day, adheres to those policies and positions. The course is open to members 365 days of the year. The clubhouse is closed on four days of the year: Christmas Day, Good Friday, first day Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur.

The ladies of Cranbourne supported their founder husbands magnificently. They did not form a club for the love of golf; they formed the Cranbourne Golf Club for the love of their husbands. A roll call of the first ladies' committee is a roll call of the wives of the first men's committee. They were not so much concerned about the running of ladies' golf, as supporting their husbands in their every endeavour, to get this Jewish golf club up and running.

These were ladies in the true sense of the word. They arrived at the club beautifully clothed and groomed, changed attire for their round of golf on the muddy course, and were later seen in the clubhouse beautifully clothed and groomed once more.

Social Day provides just one of the many scenes from the ladies' history. This is an annual ladies' day at Victorian clubs, where visitors come for morning tea, golf and lunch, as well as shopping for a few handmade items, cakes and plants. Social Day at Cranbourne in the 1970s became a phenomenon. With army-like precision the ladies would solicit the Jewish garment manufacturers for donations. Come the day, the clubhouse was more a warehouse, with racks of clothing around the walls, and tables of socks, shirts, ties, belts and underwear. Cranbourne Social Day became the most anticipated day on the ladies' golfing calendar. Ladies from all over Victoria loved coming to 'The Jewish Club', arriving early to shop before golf, lest they miss out on bargains. The ladies raised thousands of dollars each year for the club.

The foregoing is an overview of less than one-quarter of the book *What's Golf?* From here the book charts the progress of the club over the next 50 years. But it continues to be a social commentary. Each chapter embraces a decade, and each chapter has a preamble of three main themes: the environment, the economy, and ethnic relations. They are examined in a local and global context, and they are relevant to the club, notwithstanding the fact that the club is but a microscopic dot on the world map.

Within these contexts there is the story of the golf club as a living thing: the people who have crossed its stage; the decisions they have made, often in the face of great difficulties; the progress of the course to its present status as one of

the finest in Australia; highlights in its history, including the 1980s pro ams, still the richest ever held in this country, and the Victorian Opens in 2000 and 2001. Following the 2000 Victorian Open, Gary Mansfield, editor of *Golf Victoria*, wrote: 'Something of a forgotten jewel in the glittering glory box that is Victorian golf, Cranbourne was at least the equal of any major tour venue this summer.'

There have been great changes over 50 years – not just in the course, but also in society. Non-Jews, with about 60 per cent of the membership, now outnumber the 40 per cent of Jewish members. None of the original 14 Cohens survives as a member. In fact, there are now more Kellys than Cohens on the roll of members. This does not represent an Irish takeover; it merely shows that gentiles are now an integral part of the club. Before acceptance they attend an induction ceremony in which the Jewish foundation of the club is related to them. That a very small number have thereupon withdrawn their applications is a positive reflection on those who have proceeded to membership. Some have proceeded further to committee positions and, in one instance, to elected life membership.

Peter Thomson, the great Australian golfer, wrote the foreword to *What's Golf?* He described this history of the Cranbourne Golf Club as 'an important story, setting down for all time the social mores of the time of birth'. Fifty years later, what is the social situation today? Certainly, it has improved. The general population is more enlightened than it was 50 years ago. There is legislation embracing equal opportunities, anti-discrimination, racial vilification. The legislation has brought about some changes, but is evidence that changes were necessary. Bigots, such as FAF who wrote that letter in 1960, are still around; they still get onto selection committees. The legislation does not change their attitudes: it causes them only to be politically correct. Tolerance and understanding cannot be found in legal documents. They can be found only in the hearts of men and women.

The Country Club still exists, as a generous and non-interfering landlord. It owns the land, and is now owed hundreds of thousands of dollars by the Golf Club. Its existence in the distant and silent background is vital – to ensure that no person is ever denied membership because of race, colour, or religious belief.

This article began with the opening words of *What's Golf?* It is fitting to conclude with the book's closing paragraph:

Cranbourne Club has a special story to tell that goes outside the four corners of a property in Melbourne's southeast. That story began 50 years ago when the club made a statement to the world that discrimination, persecution and unwarranted mistrust are not acceptable in our society. Today's diverse membership is living proof that the club has never departed from that philosophy. It is a story of courage and determination to right a wrong, and provides an example of proper behaviour amongst all peoples. At any given time there is a need for a club such as this. Any persons who are members of the Cranbourne Golf Club can wear their membership with pride.

100 YEARS AGO: VICTORIA 1904

Compiled by Lorraine Freeman

Judging by the articles within the *Jewish Herald* during 1904, intense loyalty to Britain remained the identifying characteristic of the Melbourne Jewish community. The editorial in the issue of 15 January is entitled 'His Majesty the King', and includes the statements 'we British Jews ought to feel proud of living under the sceptre of a Sovereign [Edward VII] ... God save our noble King!'

The paper's editor, the Reverend Elias Blaubaum, originally from Hesse-Kassel, Germany, had been the minister of St Kilda Hebrew Congregation for 31 years. Active to the end, he passed away in April 1904 aged only 56. The edition of 22 April contains his death notice, while that of 17 June includes a description of the special memorial service held in his honour at St Kilda synagogue. The transcript of a letter of sympathy from the office of the Chief Rabbi to the president of the congregation, mourning Blaubaum's 'deep piety, his great energy and his admirable zeal in the cause of religious education', appears in the 15 July issue.

On 26 August the *Jewish Herald* reported another poignant and deeply touching memorial gathering, this time for the late Dr Theodor Herzl, who had passed away on 3 July. This meeting was held by the Victorian Zionist League at the Albert Street synagogue. Nathaniel Levi, president of the League, expressed the grief of members at the untimely death of Dr Herzl, describing him as 'the brilliant light which showed them the way.' In that same issue, Blaubaum's successor, Moses Moses, dedicated his editorial to Herzl, and included the words of London-based Dr Moses Gaster, the Haham (spiritual head of the British Sephardi community): 'The name of Herzl will shine through the ages with undiminished lustre ...'

An earlier editorial by Moses, that of 3 June, again referred to the vexed Amalgamation issue, whereby all three Melbourne congregations would combine. Later in the year a conference was to be held, to fully consider the scheme once more, the proposal being modelled on the London example. At the conference Nathaniel Levi presided, and outlined the mooted scheme, to be known as 'The United Hebrew Congregations'. However, he was to be bitterly disappointed when, at a specially convened general meeting of the St Kilda congregation in December, about 40 members voted against the scheme. Since adoption of the scheme required a three-fourths majority of members present at each congregational meeting called to consider it, this dealt it a body blow.

The edition of 16 December included a pointed letter from a correspondent headed 'The New St Kilda Rabbi.' The writer wondered whether Mr Danglowitz could part with his Russian appendix 'as a compliment to his new Australian

friends who are nothing if not British.' The St Kilda congregation certainly prized its anglicised character, and in April 1905 members were relieved to hear that their new minister had formally abbreviated his name to Danglow.

The Jewish Herald.

MELBOURNE, FRIDAY, 15th JANUARY, 5664-1904.

Mis Majesty
the King.

Last week a cable message informed us, on the authority of the "Daily Express," that King Edward was exerting strong influence on the Czar Nicholas to obtain better treatment for the Jews in Russia. There is every reason to believe that the statement is true. Already when he was Prince of Wales King Edward showed strong sympathies with the Jews, or, for the matter of that, with suffering humanity generally. It was a noble trait which he inherited from his illustrious mother, whose womanly heart felt deeply for all who suffered misfortune, or were the victims of intolerance. We need only call to mind how graciously she received the late Sir Moses Montefiore before he set out to plead the cause of his wrongly-accused brethren in Damascus, and that she placed her own yacht at his disposal to take him across the English Channel. Similarly the Heir Apparent, now our beloved King, in times gone by gave many a proof of his goodwill towards our people, and it would be strange if this kindly disposition did not accompany him on the Throne, and hence it is quite possible—indeed, it is quite in keeping with his noble character—that he should have put in a good word with the Czar to obtain humane treatment for the unfortunate Russian Jews. For such a gracious act we Jews cannot be too thankful. It is bound to do much good, if not all at once, at any rate in time to come. Perhaps King Edward pointed to the handsome return the Jews of England have made for the liberties granted to them; to their loyalty, their usefulness as citizens in times of both peace and war, and then put it to the Czar whether it be not possible for him to obtain similar services from his Jewish subjects? Be that as it may, we British Jews ought to feel proud of living under the Sceptre of a Sovereign who does not consider it beneath his dignity to plead for suffering men and women in a foreign country. Well may we pray fervently and with one accord—"God save our noble King!"

DEATH OF THE REV. E. BLAUBAUM.

It is with deep sorrow that we have to announce that the Rev. Elias Blaubaum, the respected Minister of the St. Kilda Congregation, passed away yesterday evening at Dr. Moore's private hospital, after a long and painful sickness. The hopes that were entertained that the medical skill with which he was treated, and the care with which he was tended, would master the malady from which he suffered, unfortunately turned out vain, and by the inscrutable wisdom of Providence the community is deprived of one of its most prominent and zealous workers.

The Rev. Elias Blaubaum arrived here about thirty-one years ago from Germany, under appointment to the ministership of the newly-formed St. Kilda Congregation. He was at the time a young man of twenty-five, with scarcely any knowledge of English. His first sermons were delivered in his native tongue, but so keen was his intelligence, and his industry and energy so great, that in a very short time he attained to a remarkably accurate knowledge of our language; so much so that he was one of the founders of this journal, and conducted and edited it with conspicuous ability from its beginning, a quarter of a century ago.

Love of learning indeed was one of the rev. gentleman's chief characteristics, and he neglected no opportunity to increase his store of knowledge, especially theological, and he gave out the fruits of his labours in numerous interesting essays and pamphlets on Jewish subjects. The same bent of mind induced him to lay the greatest stress upon the education of his children, and he thought no sacrifice too great to procure for them the best instruction. They will have the sincere sympathy of all in the loss of such a father, and the more particularly as they are now deprived of both parents, the late Mrs. Blaubaum having died about twelve years ago.

The late Mr. Blaubaum's love of Judaism was intense, and he spared no efforts to raise its standard and ensure its progress among us. He was always deeply conscious of the importance of religious education, and identified himself with all movements in that direction. In addition to the local St. Kilda Hebrew School, he was one of the chief labourers in connection with the United Jewish Education Board, of which, at the time of his death, he was president. He paid frequent visits to the classes, and took a practical interest in their working, occasionally himself giving interesting lectures to the pupils.

He showed great zeal in all communal philanthropic matters, and every case of distress or poverty found in him kind and sympathetic attention, as well as every endeavour to assist practically and effectively. The Almshouses received much of his benevolent interest, and he was instrumental in the erection of the Montefiore Hall. He also spent much of his time in visiting such of our unfortunate co-religionists whom evil conduct brought into the prisons.

In private life Mr. Blaubaum was beloved and respected in his domestic circle. He was an excellent friend, staunch and faithful, and nothing was too great a trouble to him if he could render a service.

No man of worth ever lived who did not rouse, in his time, opposition or antagonism of some sort, and although some in the community may have on occasion disagreed with him in this or that point, it can be said with confidence, that everyone, without exception, will admit that the Rev. Elias Blaubaum was a good man and a good Jew, and that in losing him the community loses one whom it will not easily replace.

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The Late Rev. E. Blaubaum.

LETTER FROM THE CHIEF RABBI.

The high esteem in which the late Rev. Mr. Blaubaum was held by the Chief Rabbi is shown by the following autograph letter of condolence written by Dr. Adler to Mr. E. J. Michaelis, president of the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation:—

Office of the Chief Rabbi,
22 Finsbury Square,
London, 3rd June, 5614.

My Dear Sir,—I have just seen with the most poignant grief the sad tidings of the demise of your beloved minister in to-day's "Times," and find the distressing information confirmed in "The Jewish Herald" of 22nd April. I had certainly learnt from some members of your congregation, residing here at present, that Mr. Blaubaum was suffering from a serious illness, but we had hoped that his precious life might be spared for some years to come. But it was willed otherwise. I now beg to offer to you and all the members of your congregation the assurance of my heartfelt sympathy. Though I had not the privilege of knowing the deceased personally, I was in continual correspondence with him, both in his capacity of being your minister and as correspondent of the local Beth Din, and I had ample opportunity of learning to know and appreciate his deep piety, his great energy and his admirable zeal in the cause of religious education. I hope to bear public testimony

to this on Sunday next at the distribution of prizes to the pupils of our Religious Education Board. It is a source of keen grief to us all that he has been taken thus prematurely in the fulness of manhood, but there is comfort in the thought that even within the compass of his short life he accomplished a great amount of good, and laboured strenuously and successfully for the welfare of his congregation and his co-religionists generally. I sympathise deeply with his orphaned children. May I beg you to hand them the enclosed card.

As for your community, my hopes and wishes are contained in the Prayer of Moses: "May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation who may go out before them, and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in, that the Congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep which have no shepherd."

With warm wishes for the welfare of your community, I remain, my dear Sir, yours very faithfully,

H. ADLER.

The President, St. Kilda Synagogue.

THE LATE DR. HERZL.

MEETING OF THE VICTORIAN ZIONIST LEAGUE.

On Sunday morning, 11th August, in the upstairs room of the Albert-street Synagogue the members of the Victorian Zionist League held a special memorial meeting to give expression to their grief at the death of Dr. Herzl, and to offer sympathy and condolence to the family of the lamented leader. The chair was occupied by Mr. Nathaniel Levi, the president of the League.

The President, in moving a resolution expressing sympathy with the late Dr. Herzl's mother, his widow and family, in their sad bereavement, dwelt with great feeling upon the irreparable loss which the Jewish nation has sustained in the untimely death of the great Zionist leader. Zionists all over the world were overwhelmed with mourning by this quenching of the brilliant light which showed them the way. The nobility of his character and the extent of his genius and ability marked him out as one of the grandest Jews of modern times. The unselfish courage and determination which he displayed in carrying on the movement, in spite of the hostility which threatened on all sides, must fill us with admiration, as well as the wonderful organising power which accomplished such great things in so short a time.

The Jewish Herald.

PUBLISHED FORTNIGHTLY.

Edited by M. MOSES, M.A., LL.B.

Correspondents are informed that all letters must be accompanied by the Name and Address of the writer, not necessarily for publication.

The same rule applies to items of a social character which are sent for insertion.

MELBOURNE, FRIDAY, 26th AUGUST, 5664-1904.

Theodor
Herzl.

What was it, then, specifically, that drew men towards the Zionist leader, that gained him their confidence and unquestioning fealty?

From every quarter, and from men of every shade of opinion, from pulpit and platform, by spoken and written word, pour forth eloquent testimonies of the lovable character of the man, of his kingly appearance and noble bearing, of his courage and determination, of his intellectual gifts, of his self-abnegation and his ardent and holy zeal. Well may we say, in the words of Dr. Gaster: "The name of Herzl will shine through the ages with undiminished lustre, as a type and a symbol of the man who lived for his people, and who in his death has begun a new and more glorious life."

MELBOURNE, FRIDAY, 3rd JUNE, 5664-1904.

On the occasion of the recent meeting of the members of the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation the Hon. Nathaniel Levi, M.L.C., by way of obiter dictum, let fall a hint that the question of the amalgamation of the synagogues, which has so often more or less exercised the communal mind, is once more to be brought on the tapis. More than thirty years ago the combination of the various Jewish communities of Melbourne into one body was not only mooted, but agitated with considerable enthusiasm, and discussed in formal meeting from every point of view, with no little vehemence. The outcome of it all, however, was entirely negative, and the only definite result that was arrived at was to discourage all idea of the possibility of union. It seems difficult to understand why here, more than anywhere else, there should exist any special hindrances against bringing all the scattered forces of the community under the guidance and direction of one central management. But that there have been obstacles, and hitherto unsurmountable obstacles, is unfortunately a fact that cannot be gainsaid. Whether they still exist in full force, or whether the course and experience of years have educated the Jews of this metropolis up to a more liberal, enlightened and statesmanlike view of things, remains to be seen. Having a common object, they can only be productive of feelings of antagonism detrimental to the attainment of that object. Besides, it is not by a priori reasoning alone

that we are convinced of the advantages of united action. We are led to the same conclusion by the contemplation of the example of what has been done in other countries. In London, for instance, the numerous isolated congregations have been welded into that fine organisation, the United Synagogue, which has proved itself far more powerful to promote the welfare of English Judaism than the sum total of its individual constituents in a state of separation. Then also, in another sphere, the federation of the synagogues, the great work of Sir Samuel Montagu, has been a source of incalculable benefit to the less Anglicised sections of the community. No reasonable grounds can be assigned why an amalgamation of communal resources and powers should not among us be followed by equally good results. At any rate, we welcome with satisfaction any indication, however slight, that the idea of such a consolidation has not altogether been abandoned as hopeless, and we trust that the conference which is to take place next Sunday to consider the subject will be the starting point of a successful and harmonious movement to bring about the practical realisation of the truth of the Psalmist's exclamation: "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in union!"

Amalgamation Scheme.

The scheme of amalgamation of the Hebrew congregations of Melbourne, as drafted by the sub-committee appointed for that purpose, was taken into consideration at a meeting of the conference held last Sunday, at which Mr. Nathaniel Levi presided. The various clauses submitted were considered, and with some slight alteration the scheme was unanimously adopted. Special general meetings of the metropolitan Hebrew congregations will be called at an early date to consider the scheme of amalgamation, as adopted by the conference. It will require a three-fourths majority of the members present at such special meetings to bring the amalgamation into effect.

The following are details of the scheme :—

The title shall be,

1. THE UNITED HEBREW CONGREGATIONS.

2. The Board of Management to consist of five members of the present executives of each Congregation; the president of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation to preside until such time as the laws and regulations of the United Hebrew Congregations have been approved of.

3. The members of the Congregations to constitute the United Hebrew Congregations.

4. Present synagogues and all other properties belonging to such congregations to be vested in trustees (two from each congregation), who will hold office as trustees for the united congregations.

5. All income to be funded on behalf of the United Hebrew Congregations.

6. All expenditure to be disbursed from the funds of the United Hebrew Congregations.

7. The disposal of one or both of the present Melbourne synagogue properties with the view of erecting a large central synagogue, with school buildings, minister's residence, and requisite offices attached may take place with

the consent of three-fourths of the members present, at a meeting called for that purpose.

8. That the staff may consist of head minister, Chazan, assistant Chazan, Shouchat, secretary, collector, two Shomossim, and any other officers that may be deemed necessary.

9. Present officers to receive notice, and the United Hebrew Congregations to elect its own officers.

10. Proportion of seat rents to be appropriated towards the maintenance of schools and Shechita.

11. Amounts received from requests or In Memoriam to be appropriated towards an endowment fund.

12. Burials to be under the control and management of a separate Board, to be appointed by the executive of the United Congregations, who shall also appoint a Chevra Kedusha.

13. Seat rents to be fixed by the members of the United Hebrew Congregations, and should there be more than one applicant for any particular seat, then the disposal of same shall be in the first instance by ballot.

14. Laws relating to the management and government of the United Hebrew Congregations to be submitted to and approved of by the members.

15. The order of service shall be that adopted by the United Synagogues of England (Minhag Polen), and the congregation shall be under the jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbi of the Jews of the British Empire.

16. All inchoate rights of every member to be preserved, and existing tablets, inscriptions and monuments to be retained and placed or erected in any new or altered building.

17. The scheme of amalgamation shall be submitted to a general meeting of the members of the respective congregations, and it shall require a majority of three-fourths of those present to secure its adoption.

A special general meeting of the members of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation will be held on Sunday, 7th August, at 2.30 p.m., to take the above scheme into consideration.

St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

A special general meeting of the members of the above congregation was held on Sunday last in the schoolroom, Charnwood Grove, St. Kilda. The president (Mr. E. J. Michaelis) occupied the chair, and there was an attendance of about forty members.

THE AMALGAMATION SCHEME.

The secretary having read the circular convening the meeting, the chairman called upon the Hon. N. Levi to move the motion standing in his name on the notice paper, viz:—

‘That this meeting of the members of the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation deem it desirable and expedient if practicable, that a union of this congregation with the Metropolitan Hebrew Congregations be effected with a view of benefiting the Jewish community in regard to the financial position of its synagogues, its educational system, its religious customs and observances, and its united action in all matters relating to its public and social position in the state of Victoria.’

Mr. Levi related the history of the movement, which was inceptioned by a meeting of representatives of the three congregations on 9th May. At that meeting representatives of the St. Kilda Congregation were present, and notified that any opinions they expressed were but personal, and could in no way bind the congregation as such. The Melbourne and East Melbourne congregations had already passed a resolution in the exact terms of that now submitted. In the case of the former the meeting was unanimous; in the latter by an overwhelming majority. The amalgamation of the three congregations would have taken place twelve years ago had it not been that even then St. Kilda could not see its way to fall in with them. All the old influential members of that congregation, if they were now amongst them, would, he felt sure, support him in this movement, and it would be an act of grace towards those who were gone if they now seized this chance of bringing peace and harmony, and raising the status of Judaism socially, and in the eyes of the outside world.

The chairman, Messrs. Hallenstein, Jacobs and Zeltner, explained that they had given the original conference no encouragement to suppose that they would favour the amalgamation scheme, whilst the committee further explained away one or two misapprehensions under which Mr. Levi seemed to labour.

Mr. I. Barnet, J.P., seconded the resolution, dealing mainly with three lines of argument, viz., the interchange of pulpits, the Chevra Kedusha, and Schechita.

Mr. I. Jacobs was opposed to the motion. He did not question either the sincerity or the earnestness of the mover. The committee had well considered the scheme, and had come to the determination to collaborate with the metropolitan congregations in matters affecting Judaism and the welfare of Jews, such as those referred to by Mr. Barnet, but they could not enter into any such scheme from its financial aspect. They objected most to the proposed dominance of the extreme orthodox party of the metropolitan congregations.

Mr. P. Blashki, J.P., hoped that Mr. Jacobs would try to leave that question alone. He could do nothing.

Mr. Jacobs thought they had done plenty, and would go on. He thought that the change of pulpits was a good idea, but it would not be brought about by financial amalgamation. The St. KIMA order of service was a good one, and it was likely to be interfered with detrimentally by amalgamation. They did not want bishops and prelates as suggested by Mr. Levi. Why, in Bourle-street they still had to pay Minyan men, and that was what the orthodox party brought about. He could not see what benefit could accrue to the charities by amalgamation, because their congregation had always dealt liberally with the poor. He ventured to say that the old members would, if they were still amongst them, be opposed to the scheme. He ought to know, as he was a contemporary of theirs.

Mr. P. Blashki, J.P., was also opposed to the amalgamation. Something should certainly be done, but the congregation would not carry the resolution in its present form. Let the matter remain till they saw how the two metropolitan congregations got along.

Mr. L. Slutzkin supported Mr. Levi. The very fact that at present they were passing through a period of peace ought to make them take steps to face any trials and troubles that might meet them in the future—they knew not how soon. Amalgamation would enable them to take united action on all matters that might arise, and they were likely to be many. The scheme did not hind them to financial amalgamation. In educational questions and other matters they could do a deal of good.

The Hon. N. Levi having replied, the motion was put to the meeting, when fourteen voted in favour and eighteen against. The chairman therefore declared the resolution lost.

The New St. Kilda Rabbi.

(To the Editor of "The Jewish Herald.")

Sir,—Last Sunday Mr. Danglowitz was unanimously elected rabbi of the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation. His credentials were excellent, his reputation, both scholastic and personal, were pronounced to be flawless, and his physique and appearance were considered photographically correct. But, above all other merits, abstract and general, he was counted as eligible mainly on the fact that he was an Englishman to the manner born. There was, however, one little fly in the ointment, an insignificant insect, in a sense, but one that clearly affected an otherwise unanimous meeting. The question was pertinently asked—Why should an English gentleman have an odious Russian tag to his name?

Is it not possible for Mr. Danglowitz to part with his Russian appendix before he reaches Australia? It would be a graceful compliment to his new Australian friends, who are nothing if not British, and it would be a tactful act that would at once make the young rabbi popular with a congregation which "is nothing if not critical."—
Yours truly,

"STKILDAWITZ."

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BOOK REVIEWS

NOT PARADISE

by Anna Rosner Blay

(Hybrid Publishers, Melbourne, 2004)

Today, we live life in the fast lane, no time to examine how we truly feel about life's serious side. Armed with clichés, 'quick-fix', 'move on', 'closure', sincere emotions are sustained for milliseconds, if at all. In such a culture are we really capable or free to connect with our interior lives? How many lives are unknowingly lived forever disconnected?

To thus reflect, beyond the surface, to reach to the rawest manifestations of desire, is challenging, especially for members of the 'second generation', children whose parents survived the Holocaust. Members of this generation need first to confront their parents' lives – this, according to the writer Eva Hoffman, is a core moral responsibility. She has astutely observed how this task creates a moral battleground for children of survivors. Clichés don't cut.

Anna Rosner Blay's *Not Paradise* reveals the intimate conflicts of this battleground, confronting them, in Hoffman's words, 'not between rights and wrongs, but between equally legitimate claims and imperatives. And, as we know, it is conflicts between right and right that are the most wrenching and that sometimes, if the stakes and consequences are significant enough, earn the name of tragedy.'

The author transforms personal tragedy to triumph, finding words for her previously silent inner life as she examines how she and significant others have coped with calamity and those apparently small acts of oversight and omissions that hurt beyond reason. How? Part of her life's silent mystery is revealed through the personal reflections of four amazing women: Basia, Erna, Jasia and Kitia. They are life-long friends of Anna's parents' generation whose stories allow her to navigate a survival course after the demise of her 33-year marriage.

Anna, you see, is the fifth woman. She enters almost apologetically at the end of each chapter. She reveals a hidden world, previously uncharted psychic terrain, hinted at in her earlier book, *Sister, Sister*, where attention focused on her mother and aunt.

Anna's energy transforms her shadow self to glaring self-awareness. *Not Paradise* chronicles this subtle voyage of discovery, simultaneously uncovering three layers of a profound personal truth: the discovery of her entitlement to be acknowledged.

Alongside the four women's past, Anna's own history and present, intimate

thoughts and experiences resonate on the same page. They resonate across the generation to life's *big* questions: how to survive, cope, endure and start over. But wait. How dare she put her 'ordinary' suffering on the same page as the privilege afforded to survivors' unique suffering?

Welcome to the moral battleground.

Anna's anguish is the reason she pursues such questions in detail. Not only to find out how her survivor friends found new beginnings; not only how to negotiate past trauma; not only to engage life anew. True, they form part of the art of survival. But Anna's deeper agenda is nothing less than to give birth to a different palette of being: a new sense of reality, a new sense of truth and a new sense of authentic self-expression.

The moral battle lines are clear; to understand: 'my own story is so ordinary and trivial in comparison to theirs. Nevertheless I have a need to understand: Where did they find their strength and resilience? How did they cope with memories of sadness and loss, without being overwhelmed? What gave them the courage to keep going? Perhaps if I can achieve a fuller understanding, I too will be able to move forward and recreate a new life for myself.'

However, to achieve victory, Anna must confront complex, unworded visceral experiences. Hers is a silent generational consciousness. Beyond words, hinted in the epigraph, captured by architect Daniel Libeskind in his Jewish Museum, Berlin: a generational consciousness of exile, foreignness, dizzying, disorienting mysticism.

'The second tunnel rises to a doorway of daylight and the Garden of Exile and Emigration. Stepping into the garden is like stepping off a yacht after days at sea ... 49 six-meter concrete columns leans away from the horizon.

Nothing feels quite right.

Disoriented, you pitch into the 'trees'. The forest unmasks exile: it is not paradise or heaven, but a foreign land where learning basic things anew is dizzying ...'

Not Paradise is unsettling as Anna breaks personal barriers and cultural tradition. That tradition holds that survivors' suffering is *the* benchmark of suffering. It is by definition absolute, beyond comparison, surely beyond that of a woman who decides to end her marriage. To breach such barriers Anna had to negotiate family and social sensibilities: 'what will they say?' She concluded: 'how can I not say it!'

To learn anew is dizzying, confusing and disorienting. Such states are 'typical [of] second generation – an ingrained belief that nothing that we experienced could compare to what our parents had been through'. To claim a sense of entitlement to own her own 'ordinary' feelings ('How presumptuous of me!') Anna gives herself permission to feel, feel anew, and experience feelings for the first time.

Anna is born to live.

James Pennebaker, the American psychologist, confirms wisdom's well-worn truth that the expression and disclosure of emotions through writing results in health improvement. Surely *Not Paradise* is living testimony of both the power of writing for art's sake as well as for therapy. The convergence of Anna's raw courage and gifted writer's intelligence, combine in the true sense of 'Art': to extend no less the reader's than the author's horizons of being.

But there is more. At the deepest transcendent level, Anna offers a triple clue for readers to pursue: first, the title *Not Paradise* speaks of a relationship between two worlds; second, the epigraph's reference to Libeskind's '49 six-meter concrete columns' symbolises the 49 spiritual levels that form the daily blessing during the counting of the Omer between the festivals of Passover and Shavuot; third, the chapter headings taken from the concluding verses of King Solomon's Book of Proverbs.

Quotations from the wisest of all people surely must elicit many layers of meaning. The last 22 verses of *Eshes Chayil*, that famous paean to the righteous woman, are chanted in Jewish homes at the beginning of Friday night meal. *Chayil* is often translated as woman of 'valour' or 'excellence'. However, its meaning includes the possession of whatever attributes are needed to carry out a given task. How appropriate to thus celebrate the transcendent dimension of these *five* remarkable women.

Not Paradise, at this deepest level, offers a transforming lesson for life, an essential formula to give life a sacred, unique meaning, the generational meaning passed on from survivors to their children and grandchildren. Anna's epilogue, 'Praise her in the gates' is from the full sentence 'Give her the fruits of her hands, let her be praised in the gates by her very deeds.' What a fitting blessing for the fruits of Anna's hands, let her indeed be praised!

George Halasz

A PATCHWORK LIFE

by Eva Marks

(Makor, Melbourne, 2003)

For obvious reasons most Holocaust memoirs focus on the horrors of Nazism. Eva Marks' *A Patchwork Life* is much more than a Holocaust memoir, but its account of her 2099 days in a Stalinist gulag balances the historical record, giving voice to the experiences of Jewish victims of Russian atrocities during the Holocaust.

A wise and civilised memoirist, Marks is deft in drawing attention to experiences of gulag Jews. Having chronicled her ghastly six years of incarceration – an experience (from ages nine to 15) that robbed her of childhood innocence, her adolescence, and which included such traumas as an appendectomy without anaesthetic – she pauses the story and quotes without comment four authorities who

leave us in no doubt about the magnitude of Stalinist atrocities. The point made, she does what many survivors manage so remarkably to do – she moves on.

This fine and beautifully constructed book was written and published under the auspices of the remarkable Makor Jewish Community Library 'Write Your Own Story' project. Many non-Makor Australian Holocaust memoirs end just after the war, or with only a brief coda about life in Australia. These authors often worry that they lack the necessary insider's cultural knowledge (and, perhaps, linguistic expertise) to write about their adoptive country. Many feel such profound gratitude to this haven for Jews that they prefer to leave extended (and possibly qualified) accounts of the place to others. Survivors also commonly assume that their lives are only of interest insofar as they bear witness to the Holocaust. Makor authors are encouraged to consider including in their narratives detailed descriptions of their Australian lives, and rightly so: survival, after all, is much more than merely a physical matter. It is about how people adapt, live, even prosper after trauma and abuse. Individuals like Eva Marks, who have built successful and productive post-war lives, have every reason to commit the entire life narrative to paper: her upper middle class Viennese early childhood; the gulag; her decades Down Under.

Despite a certain stylistic restraint – a reflection, no doubt, of the need for some emotional distance when revisiting terrible events – *A Patchwork Life* is one of the most accomplished of the Makor volumes. Its spare prose brings clarity and balance to all it touches. There are many remarkable scenes, as when Eva falls into a camp cesspool and almost dies (p. 62). But often, as in so much Holocaust memoir, small, almost incidental happenings seem to radiate meaning in a world gone psychotically bizarre: the Jewish prisoners who use pages of Hebrew prayer books and bibles as cigarette wrappers (p. 52); or this, on the train journey home from the gulag:

Mutti slept next to the wall ... During the night, Mutti's very short hair would freeze to the wall of the train and in the morning, she couldn't sit up. If she had tried to sit up, she would have scalped herself. Every morning, I cupped my hands over my mouth and blew my warm breath onto her frozen hair again and again until I was able to loosen it from the wall. (p. 75)

Child survivors of the Holocaust lost their childhoods in part through experiences like these where (p. 34) children 'realised with a growing horror that the adults couldn't protect' them, and where the grotesque imperatives of survival sometimes required an inversion of the parent-child relationship. The girl who defrosts her mother's hair is the child become parent – a precocious product of atrocity.

The psychological effects of such experiences inevitably permeate later adult life, even trickling down to later generations. To write about such psychological complexities is no easy matter, and many first-generation Australian Holocaust

memoirists are disinclined to make the attempt: it is too painful, too baffling, and in any case many such authors hail from *shtetl* cultures where inwardness was about a Jew's moral condition, not about individual psychological perplexities. Eva notes that 'there was no talk or partaking of psychoanalysis in our family' (p. 3); yet her psychologically astute book reflects both her impressive post-war education and her cultured, individualistic, secular pre-war milieu – one so assimilated that she had 'no concept of being Jewish' (p. 17) before the war.

Why, when she married in London, did she leave her mother standing on the steps of the synagogue instead of inviting her for a cup of tea after the ceremony? With the help of insights gained from her 'Child Survivors of the Holocaust Group' she concludes that the omission was an unconscious 'pay-back' (p. 132) for the time in 1938 when her mother left her, a girl of six, in Vienna while she sought safer habitation. The young Eva becomes passionately attached to a nightdress her mother has left behind – an instance of the way children emotionally invest in what the psychologist Donald Winnicott calls 'transitional objects': items of comfort and fantasy that help children effect the natural process of separation from the mother, and to which they may obsessively turn in states of deprivation, depression and anxiety.

Another such object is a big doll her mother gives her just before her ninth birthday and the start of their horrific journey to the first of two gulags. Her grandmother and first stepfather, Ben, also make the journey, and it is to obtain food for the ill Ben that she later barter the doll in camp – another stunning inversion moment; another in which the last vestiges of childhood are forfeited. Many years later her daughter, Lee, receives a walking doll for her ninth birthday. Lee was to die young in tragic circumstances, and on one of its many levels *A Patchwork Life* is a moving tribute to her turbulent and impassioned life. Lee's doll is with Eva still, another icon of continuity, another bridge to Eva's own childhood.

A Patchwork Life is beautifully produced, its cover adorned by a wall hanging crafted by the author, featuring several scenes from her wartime experience. These visual vignettes, which seem deliberately fashioned to reflect the child's perspective, are no mere decoration. Like the memoir itself, they reflect the reparative impulse's sweep back into lost childhood; the survivor's unending quest to wrest back what was confiscated during the nightmare of history, to integrate various phases of a life ruptured by tragedy.

In a case like that of Eva Marks, tragedy, alas, does not end with the Holocaust. The pain of Lee's death is endless, as is the hurt occasioned by her father's neglect after she joined him in Australia. But Marks leaves us no doubt that the patchwork of her life contains many panels of pride, satisfaction and success – her marriage to the marvellous Stan, son Peter's fine career, granddaughter Caitlin's intellectual talent (a seeker in narrative like Eva, Caitlin's honours thesis is entitled 'Remembering Lee'), meeting Bindi-Anne, the daughter whom Lee gave up for adoption, Eva's craftwork, and her award-winning community activities.

Like all Holocaust memoirists, Eva Marks writes to 'bear witness', 'to leave a testimony' (p. 212). But these books do more than recount awesomely eventful lives. The writing of a work like *A Patchwork Life* is itself a major life event: a wonderful – and hopefully healing – achievement for the author, but also a chance for the reader to see what an astounding, and finally affirming, thing survival can be.

Richard Freedman

CARLTON: A HISTORY

by Peter Yule, ed.

(Melbourne University Press, 2004)

I never lived in Carlton, despite arriving in Australia in 1934 at the height of Carlton's 'Jewish Period'. However, even in neighbouring East Melbourne, the influence of Carlton's centrality to living a strictly Orthodox Jewish life was daily evident. Much of our food was brought to us from Carlton (even fruit) or purchased in Lygon Street. In preparing for Pesach, we seemed to be endlessly boarding trams to Carlton, living as we did at the Richmond end of East Melbourne.

My father, as *chazan* of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, situated on the border of Carlton, ministered to an almost totally Carlton congregation. In my teens I joined the first Habonim group (Hashachar) which met in Herzl Hall in Drummond Street, involving a very long walk on Saturday afternoons. When I became interested in the Kadimah Youth Organisation in Lygon Street I was no longer walking on Saturdays.

For me, Carlton's Jewish aroma was overwhelming. A reading of the book under review does not have the effect of diluting the Jewish flavour of Carlton. What it does do very effectively is to place Jewish Carlton in the much broader context of an inner Melbourne district – one with a long and varied history and presence, in which the Jewish and later Italian immigrant experience, however significant, represents only a facet of a complex story.

The chapter titled 'The Jews' occupies less than 20 pages in a 500-page tome, although references to Jews and Jewish life are scattered about in many of the chapters, particularly in the several chapters devoted to the University of Melbourne, nominally situated in Carlton. In my days of study there in the 1940s, Carlton's charms were largely irrelevant to the students except for an occasional visit to the film theatre in Faraday Street. Thus, we get a picture of the late Abner Shavitsky as a member of the Student Representative Council and one of the young John Monash as a member of the Melbourne University Rifles. Neither man had anything to do with Carlton apart from attending the university as students.

What strikes one in reading the chapter on Jews and the other references to Jews, is that, unlike the Jewish migrants to New York's East Side or London's East End, who struck very deep and persistent roots into the areas they inhabited,

the Jewish roots in Carlton were relatively shallow. There are fascinating chapters in the book on crime and sport and party politics, for instance. None of these find a need to refer to a Jewish participation (except that Carlton's Football Club still competes with St Kilda's for Jewish allegiance). Equivalent chapters on New York's or London's Jewish districts would be teeming with mentions of Jews. The transition in Melbourne from arrival to departure (to more favourable habitations) was swift and almost total (although I remember one kosher butcher lingering on in Lygon Street well into the Italian occupation).

The book aims to provide a record of the rich tapestry of life in Carlton over most of Melbourne's existence, and even includes brief discussion of what it refers to as Koori tribes. It notes that 'until the 1850s much of what we know as Carlton remained lightly forested indigenous bushland' and refers to Koori fires in what is now Royal Park. It was sometime the abode of the Wurundjeri, some of whom, after white arrival, were buried in Carlton's Melbourne General Cemetery.

Despite my caveat on the transience of the Jewish presence in Carlton, for many Jews – particularly descendants of the migrations that peopled Carlton – it represents a significant element of our history in Melbourne. The very opening of the book is a short memoir by Arnold Zable, who moved into Carlton in 1948 into a 'rat infested' terrace house in Canning Street. His beautifully and evocatively written memoir, 'Carlton Dreaming', brings to life the streets and sights of post-war Carlton. The very names of the streets, shops and institutions remind us of a period in our history now only surviving in memories and memoirs. Recording of this history, by Zable and by others, is an essential ingredient in the defining of our identity in a previously alien land.

It is perhaps apposite that the very source of the name for the suburb is shrouded in mystery. Is it named after a hotel? Or is it named after Carlton Gardens? We cannot be sure.

What the book makes very clear is the preservation in Carlton (and its surrounds) of institutions and associated structures (the cemetery, the City Baths, the Exhibition Building) which contribute to the culture and identity of the city of Melbourne itself. The university, for a long time turning inwards and oblivious to the suburb, is now increasingly facing towards it and purchasing much of it. Inevitably, Jews feature in all this. One chapter notes that when the Menzies government set up a referendum to ban the Communist Party under terms causing concerns to many liberal-minded people, two faculty deans spoke up in a crowded public lecture Theatre against the proposal: one was the Dean of Law, Professor Zelman Cowen. The chapter on students tells that Jewish students were among those dunked in the university lake for expressing dissident left-wing views. That chapter also refers to those who spoke up against the Vietnam war and notes that Arnold Zable was one of those publicly involved.

The chapter specifically on 'The Jews' is the work of Pam McLean and Malcolm Turnbull, both historians familiar with Jewish Australia. Unlike Zable's

'Dreaming', they relate in some detail the Jewish presence in Carlton, which they broadly identify as extending from the 1920s to the 1950s, although they comment that 'Carlton and its environs had become the center of Jewish residence north of the Yarra River by the turn of the century'.

The 1901 census recorded that about 40 per cent of the estimated 5100 Jews living in Melbourne were clustered 'in the inner city, North of the Yarra'. Jews spread well beyond Carlton to the neighbouring suburbs of Fitzroy, Northcote, Brunswick and Coburg. By the 1920s however, Carlton's Jews represented a vital element in Melbourne Jewry – clearly visible, clearly identifiable. As relatively raw immigrants they did not easily merge into the surroundings as did their south-of-the-river co-religionists. McLean and Turnbull report on a key element of Jewish Carlton – the businesses, large, small, growing and shrinking – from the Fetter Hosiery Mills in Lygon Street to Pose's Pickles in Rathdowne Street.

Here are the cake shops, grocery stores and Pahoff's dairy, to which I went regularly with an empty, shiny billy-can, and of course the legendary butcher shop which evolved into the Smorgons' vast industrial empire. The shop was, in the 1950s, only one of a number of kosher butchers catering not only to Carlton's Jews but also to some co-religionists in more tree-lined suburbs.

Suffusing all was the Yiddish language and everything that came with it. The Kadimah, with its focus on language and culture, was founded, McLean and Turnbull relate, as a means of preserving and perpetuating Yiddish culture and identity in Melbourne (despite its Hebrew name). It became a focus for lively political and literary debate, for Yiddish theatre and music, and a stimulus to a period of intense publication of stories and novels associated with names such as Melech Ravitch, Pinchas Goldfarb and Hertz Bergner. The vitality of this cultural hub was never quite recaptured in its later Selwyn Street home. The authors note that the political battles within the Kadimah were between supporters of the socialist Bund and the communist-oriented Jews who looked for inspiration to the Soviet Union – neither faction supporting Zionism. That ideology however, also flourished in Carlton, with its centre at Herzl Hall. I still remember as a teenager attending an *Oneg Shabbat* there. Coming from a religious home, I found it excitingly exotic; it was very different from *shul*.

However, despite the noise and the heat generated by the political activities, the majority of Carlton's Jews were traditional religious Jews who tried their best to maintain a kosher life and regularly attended religious services. Neither Reform Judaism nor the ultra-orthodox *Haredim* were in evidence, although several chassidic minyans catered for those considering themselves more pious. The mainly Eastern European and recent arrivals attended the Carlton *shul* and the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation; McLean and Turnbull give a good account of this religious life, which was, of course, underpinned by the range of shops already noted.

Despite all the activity which has left such a vital memory in Melbourne's

Jewish history, the authors accept the transience of Jewish life in Carlton. Anglo-Jewry (including some early German migrants) had already established a bridgehead south of the river while raw, basic Carlton flourished. Yet not so long after their arrival Carlton's Jews began to move south, making way for the next wave of 'New Australians' to fashion Carlton in their own image. In this rich, well-produced and edited book, all the cultural and economic aspects of this district are assessed: from its wrought-iron posts, its estimable architecture, to its rambunctious students.

Jewish contributions turn up in many of the specialist chapters. The chapter on the theatre in Carlton (the site of La Mama and The Pram Factory) notes that a Jewish theatre club met in Carlton for rehearsals in 1908, the first such activity in Carlton. The chapter on writers pays tribute to the Jewish (mainly Yiddish) writers who drew their inspiration there.

Carlton's Jews, however short their stay, can take pride in a contribution to an ever-changing suburb to which this lavishly illustrated book is a loving tribute.

Review copy courtesy of MUP

Bernard Rechter

GOD, GUNS AND ISRAEL: BRITAIN, THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE JEWS IN THE HOLY LAND

by Jill, Duchess of Hamilton

(Sutton Publishing, Stroud, Gloucs., 2004)

This book by Australian-born Jill, Duchess of Hamilton sheds fresh light on the support given to Israel by the United States of America. With the coming election in the United States it seems timely. Jill Hamilton points out that the creation of Israel was initially made possible by Nonconformist Protestants in Britain, and then, later, by President Harry S. Truman, a southern Baptist, in 1948. Unless support from America continues Israel will cease to exist. It cannot stand alone in the Middle East. The publication of her book coincides with speculation about the effect of religion in shaping the policies of John Kerry and George W. Bush. If Kerry wins will he, despite his recently discovered Jewish grandparents, continue to back Israel to the same degree?

Bush's attitude to Israel brought him votes from conservative Protestants in the last US election as many Evangelicals and 'religious conservatives' regard the creation of Israel in 1948 as proof that biblical prophecies are coming true. This Christian sector, according to recent statistics, forms between 15 and 18 per cent of the electorate. In contrast, the six million American Jews constitute only around 2.5 per cent of their country's population (it should not be forgotten, however, that a greater proportion of the Jewish community register their votes than do most other sectors of the electorate, thus creating a potential effective voting block of almost 4 per cent).

God, Guns and Israel shows that similar religious influences to those outlined above were operating in Britain in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. The author contends that if it were not for decisions by a long line of British Protestant politicians, who all came from homes where the Bible had few competitors, the 'national homeland for the Jewish people' would never have been created during the First World War. The author has found earlier evidence that David Lloyd George had acted, whilst a suburban solicitor in 1903, to support the aims of the early Zionist movement in Britain.

While examining the religious influences and interest in the Old Testament, which led Britain to create a place for the Jews in the British Empire, *God, Guns and Israel* looks back to Lord Shaftesbury and beyond. It also analyses the religious backgrounds of the members of Lloyd George's War Cabinet, and shows that seven out of its ten members were raised as Nonconformists and that one, although Anglican, was from a family with a strong Evangelical leaning. Some had been lay-preachers, but all had a close acquaintance with the Old Testament, which had given them a feeling of familiarity with the Holy Land.

Howard A. Freeman

OF FOLKTALES AND JEWISH FOLK IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

by Louise Rosenberg

(Printworthy, Melbourne, 2004)

When I first learnt that Louise Rosenberg was producing this, I anticipated a work which would be quite out of the ordinary and one that reflected her unique personality. I was correct. Although I was familiar with her involvement with the Australian Jewish Historical Society in New South Wales for over 33 years, and had read her contributions to its journal, it wasn't until a few years ago that I actually met her in person at an international genealogical conference in London. Meeting someone whose age spans nine decades, who possesses enthusiasm for history, incredible memory for detail, remarkable energy and who is never short of words, is an unforgettable experience.

This, her first publication, was lovingly produced by her granddaughter by marriage, Carla Hutchinson-Reade, the first publication from the latter's publishing business, 'Printworthy'. The text design, illustrated with some 33 photographs, sketches, documents and illustrations, make it an attractive gift book for those with an interest in Jewish personalities and folk tales across this vast continent.

Fifteen chapters with such captivating titles as 'A Jewish Bushranger', 'Our Two Ghosts', 'The Jews of Kangaroo Valley' and 'Pearls The Nazis Discarded', provide an insight into the author's fascination with personalities, events and unusual tales spanning 216 years of Jewish settlement in Australia. The author attempts to weave some of the history of Australian Jewry through the tales of people that have held a fascination for her. Many of the names mentioned of very

early settlers are familiar to us from the works of such writers as Bergman and Levi, Nancy Keesing and Spielvogel. While references to sources are sparse one has to bear in mind that this is not a book for the serious academic historian.

Those who know Louise Rosenberg personally will have a better appreciation of this book. As I was reading I was visualising her actually talking to me. Thoughts, memories and ideas come to her mind so rapidly that one has to forgive the frequent tangents one encounters in the pages of the book. For example, in a chapter entitled 'Queen Victoria and the Jews' Rosenberg introduces the reader to Benjamin Disraeli, the British Prime Minister, and to the Jubilee celebration for Queen Victoria at the Great Synagogue in 1887 – and then we skip a century to read about the involvement of two Jews in the redevelopment of the Queen Victoria Building in Sydney. Considerable details are given about the involvement of Warner Ari Kuttner, an engineer who arrived from Germany at the age of 15 years in 1937, and Neil Glasser, a Tasmanian-born entrepreneur, and their contribution to the renovations.

In a later chapter, 'Pearls The Nazis Discarded', following a four-page potted history of the SS *Dunera* episode, when 2524 internees of German and Austrian birth were deported from Britain to Australia in 1940, we are given a 15-page description of the Dunera Boys' annual reunion held in September 2000, with long extracts from the speeches made on that occasion.

Apart from material relating to her own family history, the author includes an essay written early in life by her daughter Ruth Marianne Helm, who died in 1998. The attractive cover illustration includes a photo of her beloved daughter at the age of eight years. Those interested in Jewish settlement will no doubt seek out the names of the many hundreds of early settlers listed.

This work needs to be appreciated for what it is: namely, a testimony of its author's pride in the contribution that Jews have made to Australian life and to the Jewish community, her fascination with personal stories, and her desire to contribute to the recording of Australian Jewish history.

Lionel Sharpe

SHADOW OF DOUBT: MY FATHER AND MYSELF

by Richard Freadman

(*Bystander Press, Northcote, Victoria, 2003*)

Here is the Melbourne High schoolboy, Paul Freadman, 1931-33: school prefect, form captain, captain of the first XI cricket team, member of the first XVIII football team, player in second-string lacrosse, baseball and tennis teams; also leader of the debating team, member of the Magazine Committee and the Student Representative Council, secretary of the Literary Society, honorary secretary of the League of Nations Union, involved with the Dramatic Society, and, throughout these years, always ranking academically among the first five in his class.

And here is the same Paul Freadman towards the end of his life: a man of integrity with a broad range of friendships, widely held in high esteem as a decent self-giving individual with a strong record of service to the community both Jewish and general; a public intellectual and brilliant teacher with a breadth of professional achievement, having lectured in current affairs at the Council of Adult Education for 43 years, worked as manager of the National Gas Association of Victoria, served as senior research officer with the ABC, been a member of the Directing Staff at the Australian Administrative Staff College in Mt Eliza, worked as tutor at Deakin University and, even after retirement, worked with the State Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Moreover, here is a man endowed with a sharply incisive and analytical mind and writing style which – as his son and biographer, Richard Freadman writes – had he been in a university department, would have resulted in a substantial body of published work. In summary, a man whom, both as adolescent and adult, one might well envy.

And yet, this Paul Freadman passed the bulk of his 70 years as a self-perceived failure for not having reached the heights to which, as a youngster with the gifts he possessed, he had aspired – a life of intellect, ideally at a university or in a position of high office – best reflected in a remark he confides in his son when the latter is eleven: 'I'm quite a successful person. Quite successful, but not as successful as Zelman.' I hope you don't mind, referring to his brilliant, illustrious and much decorated lifelong friend Sir Zelman Cowen reaching his peak as Governor-General of Australia.

The son, on growing older, does not mind that his father is not like Zelman, but bristles with anger and frustration that his father has by his own hand twice sabotaged the Paul Freadman *he could have been*. For, twice does he turn away when opportunity knocks: first, when, having completed a first-class honours degree in History and Political Science, he rejects a Harkness Fellowship at Harvard which would enable him to complete subjects opening upon a highly successful career either within academia or outside it, and, later, he passes up an almost-tailor-made lectureship in the Politics Department at the University of Adelaide which would have afforded him opportunities for research, intellectual exchange, promotion and academic stimulation, no antidote more suited to counter the low self-esteem that had already dogged this man to the point of clinical depression and which would last for many years. His rejections of these offered positions that he had applied for with keenness may seem mysterious to the son – or attributed to his father's anxieties about possibly not measuring up to requirements – but to this reader, they reflect a failure of self-assertiveness within his home. In each instance, excited as he is by the offers, that bubble of excitement is burst in the face of his domestically more dominant wife Fleur's reservations: the first time, when, pregnant and carrying their first child, Fleur is effectively influenced by her own parents' appeals not to leave, and the second because Fleur, having just had surgery – in the longer term a fully recoverable condition – is 'in no mood to

appreciate Adelaide when they flew there to look the place over'. In each case, Paul's vaulting enthusiasm is cut from beneath his feet, with son Richard in no way showing that Paul in any overt way pressed his case with his wife once she had expressed her resistance. Richard resists placing blame on her, even when she herself acknowledges it and the narrative itself in its sequence suggests it.

At least two sequelae follow.

Richard will not be making the same mistakes. If opportunity knocks, he will seize it, he will not spurn it; unlike his father, *he* at least will be monarch of all he surveys. And it knocks at least four times: at nineteen, when he is offered a scholarship to Brandeis University, then, in succession, admitted to Hertford College in Oxford, given a lectureship at the University of Western Australia and the Chair in English at Melbourne's LaTrobe University – his progression through the ranks which keeps him from his family home a solid 20 years.

Against this, his father Paul – however 'successfully' and, at times, innovatively he may be performing in the positions that he holds – continues his ever-obliging, self-denying life of a workaholic, gaining much respect from others all around him which keeps buttressing his otherwise crumbling self-esteem, but, in the very service of others, priming himself for failure in his own terms. This was compounded by depression necessitating anti-depressants for his last 30 years and an unmitigated – even mounting – anxiety about his seemingly meagre attainments, about money and security, retirement, and perhaps (it is hinted) of being bested professionally by his own ambitious driven son, his life being in the end consumed, as his son writes, 'by three colossal forces ... from within: cancer, Alzheimer's, and self-doubt'.

Richard Freadman's telling of his father's story – interlaced with his own – is intense, at times bitter, angry and harshly judgmental, at others more mellow, empathetic and conciliatory. Through his narrative, ruminations, recordings of conversations, and transcriptions of letters sent to each other over many years, a tragic figure emerges: a figure he likens to Arthur Miller's salesman Willy Loman, tragic not because 'he underachieved, but [because] he could not forgive himself for doing so', made more potent and painful because of a fatal flaw in his own personality. Richard Freadman, the son, repeatedly stresses his father's poor self-esteem as the major characteristic holding him back from high attainments, the deprivation of these leading in a cyclical way to a further diminution of self-esteem.

But the text taken as a whole begs another, broader question: how much of his supposed 'failure' was really the stuff of poor self-esteem and how much perhaps the issue of some still deeper meekness of character, non-assertiveness, submissiveness and an innate attrition, on emergence from an illustrious high-school adolescence with an uncompleted education because of family financial decline, of the verve that propels the perpetual ball-chasing go-getter to grab, come what may, every opportunity as it presents itself?

His self-juxtaposition against Zelman Cowen, both early in their lives and later, is part of that fatal flaw. For Zelman Cowen is presented as a man 'exceptionally bright, [who] had the right blend of gifts to cash in on his intellectual talents: abundant energy and self-confidence, clubbability, a photographic memory, prodigious curiosity, a disposition towards others that enabled him to court and welcome success without feelings of complication, an immense capacity for pleasure ... while in Anna he married someone who complemented him beautifully and seemed happy to do so', where Paul Freadman's home is more than once described as having been non-harmonious and dysfunctionally fraught.

This brings to mind the Yiddish saying, here adapted to the context: 'Paul, when in the next world you stand before the judges on high and they demand from you an account of yourself, do you know what they will ask you? They will ask you not, "Why were you not a Zelman, but why were you not the Paul you might have been?"'

*Review copy courtesy of Dennis Jones & Associates
Serge Liberman*

CHINESE EXILE: MY YEARS IN SHANGHAI AND NANKING

by Horst (Peter) Eisfelder

(Makor Jewish Community Library, Caulfield South, Victoria, 2003)

Of all the amazing accounts of Jewish persecution and survival nothing rivals in uniqueness the story of those Jews of Germany who fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s for the safety of Shanghai.

For centuries, Jewish communal existence in Christian Europe was extremely precarious, largely relying on the self-interest and whim of a local ruler, until their usefulness was exhausted and it became necessary, once again to move.

By the end of the nineteenth century, for the Jews of Germany, this state of precariousness seemed to have disappeared, as they saw themselves accepted as equal citizens of one of Europe's most civilised and enlightened states. For them, therefore, the sudden collapse of their position, in the wake of the rapid rise of Nazism, was an extremely traumatic experience as they were stunned to learn that erstwhile neighbours and friends were so readily prepared to abandon them to the privations of a rabid antisemitism, not experienced since the worst of medieval times.

In the initial pages of this book the author sets this scene with tragic poignancy, describing how his own family, and many thousands of other desperate Jews, found it necessary to scurry from consulate to consulate to obtain the elusive visas in order to escape the ever increasing humiliations and horror of Nazi mobs and vicious laws.

Only one city, Shanghai, held out hope, due to a peculiar circumstance of the aftermath of the Opium Wars of 1839-42 and 1856-60, when it acquired the

status of an 'International City', thus obviating the necessity of a visa to enter and settle in it. Despite the ignorance, and often even dread, of what life would hold for Europeans in this far-off Asian city, many, in fact, some thirty thousand German and then Austrian Jews, took up this brave option, and ultimate safety. Among them, the Eisfelder family.

The arrival into what actually turned out to be a Westernised and sophisticated metropolis was a pleasant surprise, not the least of which was to find two small, but thriving, Jewish communities within a larger cosmopolitan European population lording over millions of poverty-stricken Chinese in a totally 'laissez faire' business environment.

Despite the readiness of the existing Jews, one an older Sephardi group, originally from Iraq, and the other, more recently arrived Russian Jews, mainly from Siberia, to assist them, there was an immediate pressing need to start to earn a living. This was hard for many of the new arrivals with professions and skills not easily adaptable to this strange new circumstance.

By anchoring his narrative to a very personal account of how his own family adapted in order to establish a tenuous economic foothold in their earlier years, Horst Eisfelder vividly portrays the difficulties and triumphs of what it must have been like to forsake the comfortable and structured life in pre-Nazi Germany for the daunting challenges of an environment as different from their past as it was humanly possible to imagine. What sets this book apart from the many others, who also sought to convey the bizarre experience which fate forced upon them, is the author's keen photographic eye and expertise, the results of which are generously endowed in the book.

'Chinese Exile' is more than a sensitive personal narrative and an outstanding pictorial essay. It is also a valuable historical account of unusual events set in a very unusual place, thanks to the research undertaken by the author. The chapters dealing with the travails of these new immigrants, who escaped Hitler's Germany, and who, in 1943 were herded by the Nazi-influenced Japanese rulers of Shanghai into a confined area, called Hongkew, a poor area, just as they were getting themselves established economically, are vividly portrayed. For it is not easy to describe, in an Asian context, what is essentially a European Ghetto experience replete with an antisemitic overlord in the person of a sycophantic Japanese officer, named Goya, raining upon these bewildered and entrapped Jews many of the same humiliations, which their ancestors were subject to.

Fortunately, unlike the terrible fate of the Jews of Europe, this particular group of Jews, despite the many privations they had to endure, did actually survive to learn of the defeat of Nazi Germany and the eventual defeat of Japanese in 1945. The author sensitively describes the mixture of anguish, when the fate of not only European Jewry became known (and for many their relations left behind), and the exultation when the first liberating American soldiers started to arrive in Shanghai.

For the Sephardi and the Russian Jews liberation meant (hopefully) the carrying on of the same comfortable life which was interrupted by the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and their military occupation of the rest of Shanghai. For the 'Hongkew' Jews, however, bruised by their war-time experience, a life somewhere else, other than the graveyard of their former country, seemed the naturally choice. Horst and his family came to Australia, as did many of the German and Austrian Jews who sought a refuge in Shanghai, and this country is the richer for admitting them, despite the initial doubts of immigration officials.

Eventually, the 'established' Sephardi and Russian Jews also had to forsake Shanghai and make a new home elsewhere as the tides of history affected their cosy existence as well. In May 1949, by which time most of the Hongkew Jews had left, the Chinese Communists entered Shanghai and brought to an end its century-old European hegemony. Australia received many of these Jews as well, and by the mid 1950s the Jewish presence in Shanghai, and a number of other Chinese cities such as Harbin and Tienstin, came to an end. This is probably one of the few times in Jewish diasporic history when such an exodus of Jews was not the result of antisemitic persecution.

The remarkable story does not end here, however. For the Shanghai 'alumni' continued to thrive in their new homes in Israel, the United States, Canada and Australia. In the USA Michael Blumenthal, after an illustrious business career, was appointed Secretary of Commerce by President Jimmy Carter

Here in Australia, significant communal contributions have been made by a number of former 'Shanghailanders'. Isador Magid AM, longtime head of the United Israel Appeal and principal benefactor of the Progressive Jewish Movement and King David School, heads an illustrious list. There were the Tugenthaft family, instrumental in establishing the Kew Synagogue, and Karl Appel who brought the Yeshiva to Melbourne from its original locality in Shepparton and many others.

Sam Moshinsky

Except where otherwise indicated, all review copies courtesy of the Sunflower Bookshop, 434 Glenhuntly Road, Elsternwick 3185; telephone (03) 9523 6405.

OBITUARY – GODFREY ABRAHAM COHEN

Trevor Cohen



Godfrey Abraham Cohen, who with his late wife Myra was a major benefactor of the AJHS, Victoria, and became a household name in Australia through the Godfrey's vacuum cleaner business he established, passed away on 8 May 2004 aged 95.

His interest in Australian Jewish history had strong roots: his forebears were pioneers, having arrived in this country from England in the early nineteenth century. His great-grandfather Michael Cashmore had a drapery shop on the corner of Elizabeth and Collins Streets (known at that time as No. 1 Melbourne), and there his grandmother was born in 1845.

Godfrey's family was very large, his mother Adelaide Abraham being one of sixteen children, born in Ballarat, and his father Joe one of eight. He was born in St Kilda on 11 March 1909, the second of four brothers – Henry, Godfrey, Sydney and Michael – who must have been quite a handful, as they were known collectively as 'Addie's four devils'.

He left school at 14 to work for his father in the family furniture business, Cohen Brothers, started by his grandfather and great-uncle. (Cohen Place off Little Bourke Street in Melbourne is named after the warehouse operated there by Cohen Brothers.) During the Great Depression the business faltered and Godfrey, who was earning five guineas a week, sought other ways to earn a living.

His teenage sweetheart, Myra Davis, encouraged him to explore business opportunities, resulting in his purchase at an auction in 1931 of an allotment

of used vacuum cleaners, which his father allowed him to sell from one of the windows of his Chapel Street furniture store. The reconditioned cleaners sold with such success that Godfrey opened his first shop in Commercial Road, Prahran, shortly afterwards.

In 1937 Godfrey met 19-year-old John Johnson, who was hoping to start his own business. Godfrey supplied him with a load of vacuum cleaners to expand the existing business into Adelaide. Their partnership began with a handshake and continued to prosper thereafter as Godfrey's spread throughout Australia and New Zealand, becoming the world's largest specialised retail vacuum cleaner business.

Godfrey and Myra were married in 1932. A devoted couple for over 60 years, they had three children – Natalie, Daryl and Trevor – and encouraged a close family network that exists to this day. Godfrey had 11 grandchildren and 26 great grandchildren.

The Jewish and general communities benefited greatly from Godfrey's contributions. Together with Myra, he endowed a kindergarten and was a donor to numerous charities and public institutions including, in addition to our own society, the Australian Jewish Museum, the Victorian Institute for the Blind, Wesley College, Mount Scopus Memorial College, and Ajax Football Club, which he helped to found, and of which he was an early president. He served for many years as president of the Jewish Orphans Society, retiring only recently at the age of 94. He was an honorary life governor of both the Alfred and Prince Henry's hospitals. He also served as a volunteer fire fighter.

As a justice of the peace he sat in the St Kilda and Elsternwick local courts. For many years he was a member of Rotary. He was frustrated when, owing to his age, he was not allowed to donate blood for a fiftieth time. In 2001 he was awarded an OAM for his services to the community.

Godfrey was a keen and accomplished lawn bowler. Even in his final year he loved playing the game and meeting new people. Indeed, his interest and enjoyment in meeting and talking to people of all walks of life was a special trait. He had an uncanny memory for people and the things they had told him, which provided a rare and valuable glimpse into the past.

His zest for life never ceased. At his ninetieth birthday celebration the photographer remarked that he would like to be there to photograph him at his 100th, to which Godfrey replied: 'I think you will be. You look healthy enough!' On his ninety-fifth birthday he rode down Toorak Road on the back of a Harley Davidson to join the principal of Wesley College for afternoon tea.

During his final short illness, Godfrey still relished the company of others and enjoyed keeping abreast of the stock market and watching news programs and sport on television. A kind, humble and gentle man with a wonderful sense of humour, he passed away at Cabrini Hospital in the early hours of 8 May, having said farewell to his family.

OBITUARY – JULIE POWERS

Howard A. Freeman

Ms Julie Powers passed away on 7 September 2004 at the age of 91. Julie was known to many as the guardian angel of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation because of her role as the secretary to the congregation. Until her retirement in 1991, Julie had been secretary for 15 years, a period during which she greatly enjoyed escorting school groups, tourists and the curious through the historic synagogue. She shared with visitors the rich history of the congregation and for this was appointed a Victorian Benefactor Member of the AJHS Vic Inc.

Born and bred in Carlton to Julia and Samuel, and living there almost her whole life, Julie was witness to the ebb and flow of Jewish life in Carlton, Collingwood and Brunswick, through which suburbs she rode her bicycle until quite elderly.

As a young girl – and well into her mature years – Julie was a good gymnast, becoming secretary of the Judæan Girls Gymnasium Club, and then co-honorary secretary (with Henry Friedman) of AJAX. She was for many years the secretary of the Judæan League, under the leadership of Maurice Ashkenasy and then Trevor Rapke. During the Second World War Julie was the secretary of the Judæan Red Cross branch, and was later awarded life membership of Australian Red Cross.

A fine pianist, Julie taught piano to many students and was later to help schoolchildren with reading difficulties.

Her last years were spent happily at Montefiore Homes, alert and interested in everything. The families of her late brothers, Clavering and Isaiah, survive her.

REPORT TO MEMBERS

This year has been a very busy one for the AJHS Victoria. It started with the successful completion of the project to deposit our archival material with the State Library of Victoria. The official celebration of this event took place in February 2004. It was particularly fitting that the date coincided with the 150th birthday of the State Library. The President, Dr Howard Freeman, thanked the President of the Library Board, Sam Lipski, State Librarian Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, Manuscripts Librarian Jock Murphy, and Shane Carmody, Director for Acquisitions, for all their help. Members are encouraged to use the facilities of the SLV to access the AJHS archives for scholarship and family history.

At the State Library function another important event took place: the awarding of prizes to winners of the Myra and Godfrey Cohen History Essay Competition, by our Patron, Sir Zelman Cowen, and Godfrey Cohen. We note with sadness the subsequent passing of Godfrey Cohen, a true gentleman and benefactor of many charities including the AJHS.

Our extensive reference library has now been permanently housed within the facilities at the Jewish Museum in Alma Road, and our highly important genealogical material has been placed with the Jewish Genealogical Society, under the supervision of Lionel Sharpe.

We have again conducted a number of successful boat trips along the Maribyrnong River, one of which was for the B'nai B'rith Mitzvah Group. We would encourage more communal groups to take advantage of these trips, which can be excellent fundraisers.

We have had a number of interesting and well-attended talks this year. The first of these was at the AGM in March, when Trevor Cohen spoke about the fascinating relationship between Emanuel Solomon and Sister Mary McKillop, who was beatified in 1995 and is likely to become Australia's first saint. In June Les Kausman spoke about the history of the Cranbourne Golf Club as described in his book *What's Golf?* In July, Jill, Duchess of Hamilton, addressed us on the subject of her latest book *God, Guns and Israel*. In August, Kevin Murray spoke of the intriguing story of Critchley Parker and Caroline Isaacson. Our final talk was given by James Kirby, who described the long fight to recover property looted by the Nazis and return it to some of the Australian survivors and their descendants.

The 54th Annual General Meeting was held at the Jewish Museum of Australia, Gandel Centre of Judaica, on 4 March 2004. The retirement of long-serving Honorary Secretary Ron Aarons was noted and his tireless devotion to the AJHS acknowledged. Beverley Davis also retired from the committee after

many years as the Society's archivist and librarian. Lionel Sharpe has offered to take on acquisitions and archival tasks – see the article in this Journal about how to obtain access to both the Index and the Archive.

The election results from the AGM are as follows:

President	Dr Howard Freeman
Honorary Secretary	Ms Rhona Rosenberg
Honorary Treasurer	Mr Phillip Stanton
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	Dr David Cohen
	Mr Trevor Cohen
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CONTRIBUTORS 2004

Dr Rodney Benjamin OAM is a former President of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society and of the Federation of Australian Jewish Welfare Societies. He is an accomplished historian and past contributor to this Journal. He is the author of *A Serious Influx of Jews*, a history of Jewish welfare in Victoria, published in 1998.

Caroline Durré is a lecturer in the Faculty of Art and Design, Monash University, and an artist who works in printmaking and painting, currently working towards a PhD in visual art. She lives in Melbourne.

David Feiglin was born in 1914 in Shepparton, an agricultural and orchard settlement situated approximately one hundred and twenty miles north of Melbourne. He passed away in 1989 in Israel while on a visit to his family.

His community activities in Melbourne were related to the Young Zionist League, the Mizrachi Religious Zionist Movement, Bnei Akiva and Young Mizrachi. He was also active in the Victorian State Zionist Council, the Zionist Federation of Australia, and in the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies. He was founder of Beth Rivka School in Melbourne, and a lay president of Lubavitch. His children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren live in Israel.

Ephraim Finch joined the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha as a volunteer, and was subsequently appointed Executive Director in 1986. Ephraim has put the MCK's burial records and histories onto computer listing, and continues to seek and record all burials of Jews in Victoria. Well known in his role with the Chevra Kadisha, Ephraim also works closely with the Holocaust Museum and records concentration camp information and numbers. Married, and father of six children, he is the proud grandfather of nine grandchildren.

Professor Richard Freadman is Professor of English and Director of the Unit for Studies in Biography and Autobiography at La Trobe University. His most recent books are *Threads of Life: Autobiography and the Will* (Chicago, 2001), and *Shadow of Doubt: My Father and Myself* (Bystander, 2003). A Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, he is currently writing a study of Australian Jewish autobiography.

Dr Howard Freeman, BSc, LDS, long-time President of AJHS – Victoria Inc, and more recently Editor of the Victorian Journal.

Lorraine Freeman: Long-term member of the AJHS and the regular compiler of '100 Years Ago'.

Dr Rodney Gouttman is an Associate of the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, an historian of the Australia-Israel relationship, and Senior Political Analyst of the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission Inc.

Dr George Halasz is a well-respected consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist, and honorary senior lecturer at the Department of Psychological Medicine at Monash Medical Centre. He is also in private practice and has written widely on the transfer of trauma in Holocaust families and the problems of Holocaust survivors.

Les Kausman is a pharmacist, a graduate in law, and a businessman. Les has also found time to be involved in local government, and became Mayor of the City of Hawthorn. He still serves as a JP to the local community. However, a major interest has been cricket, baseball, and more recently golf. In 2000, Les was awarded the Australian Sports Medal for his contributions to the Australian Commonwealth Games Teams.

Dr Serge Liberman, MBBS, is a medical practitioner, prize-winning author of five collections of short stories and compiler of *A Bibliography of Australian Judaica*. He has served as Honorary Treasurer of the AJHS (Victoria), was for long periods Editor of the *Melbourne Chronicle* and Literary Editor of the *Australian Jewish News* and at one time sat on the Literary Board of the AJHSJ. He has also been an essayist, reviewer and translator.

Dr Philip Mendes is a Senior Lecturer in Social Policy & Community Development in the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Medicine, at Monash University. He is the author of *The New Left, the Jews and the Vietnam War* (Lazare Press, 1993), *Australia's Welfare Wars* (UNSW Press, 2003), co-editor of *Harm Minimisation, Zero Tolerance and Beyond: The Politics of Illicit Drugs in Australia* (Pearson Education, 2004), and co-editor of *Jews and Australian Politics* (Sussex Academic Press, 2004).

Sam Moshinsky OAM was born in Shanghai and completed his secondary education there before arriving in Melbourne in 1951. He has been active in a number of Jewish communal organisations, as Federal Chairman and Treasurer of the United Israel Appeal of Australia, President of Temple Beth Israel and Chairman of the Jewish Museum of Australia. In June 2000 he received a Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of his services to communal and cultural causes.

Morris S. Ochert OAM, ASTC, (MechEng), MIEW 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 in Australia. He is an honorary life member of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation and Fellow of the AJHS.

Professor Bernard Rechter is a former Director of the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, communal activist and educator.

Rhona Rosenberg BA, Dip Ed. is the new Honorary Secretary of the AJHS Inc., a voluntary role she undertakes in addition to her work as a volunteer guide at the Jewish Museum of Australia. She is a secondary school teacher of senior history and commerce subjects at the Distance Education Centre Victoria where, she explains, her students are in 'cyber space'.

Dr Hilary L. Rubinstein, BA (Hons) MS, PhD, FRHistS, is the Associate Editor of *Journal of AJHS Victoria-Inc.*, and is a much-published editor and author of the whole Australian Jewish experience. Hilary currently resides in Wales, UK, with her husband Bill, and the distance has done nothing to abate her interest and involvement in Australian historiography.

Lionel Sharpe is a committee member of the AJHS Victoria and an honorary associate of the Australian Centre for the Study of Jewish Civilisation, Monash University.

Dr Rafal Witkowski studied at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, in the faculties of history and modern languages and was awarded his PhD in history in 1997. He is a member of the Historical Committee of the Poznan Society for the Advancement of the Arts and Sciences. Rafal has been a visiting professor at the Notre Dame University, Indiana, USA in 1999-2000, and is currently vice-director of the Institute of History at Adam Mickiewicz University.

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