

Conferences. I have discussed these developments in my article.

All of the articles published in this issue of the *Journal*, with the exception of Alan Clark's and Suzanne Rutland's, have been presented as papers to the AJHS in Sydney over the last few years. I feel that, where relevant, it is important to encourage presenters of papers in both Sydney and Melbourne to submit their presentations in written form suitable for consideration for the *Journal*. In this way, valuable papers can be accessed by a wider audience over a longer period of time. While seeking to encourage the publication of oral presentations in this *Journal*, this does not mean that other material will not be accepted. Any article of historical value may be published in the *Journal* and in this context it was particularly pleasing to receive Mr Alan Clark's most interesting paper.

The four books reviewed in this issue incorporate historical, literary and genealogical interests. Arnold Zable's *Jewels and Ashes*, a book of both literary and historical importance, has been reviewed by Yvonne Fein.

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Suzanne D. Rutland

THE 1845 REPORT RE-VISITED

Presidential Address to the Australian Jewish Historical Society

by Rabbi Raymond Apple

6 December 1989

It is 145 years since the opening of the York Street Synagogue, Australia's first specifically-built edifice for Jewish worship. An impressive, well-proportioned building in the Egyptian style, it was designed by James Hume, who was associated with a number of Sydney's finest buildings. Though it was a time of economic difficulty, funds towards the building of the Synagogue were donated liberally by both Jews and Christians, but in the end there was a shortfall of 1000 pounds and the congregation were short of money for a minister's salary. These financial problems will loom large later in this paper, but for the moment let us leave them in the background as we echo the self-congratulations of the Synagogue committee, proud to have erected "a building which will reflect honor [sic] on its founders, and shew to posterity [perhaps by a printer's error the 1944 reprint of the 1845 report has the word "prosperity"] the great zeal evinced by a

handful of people, to do honor to the One all powerful Creator whom they worship”.

For a community of fewer than six hundred people (in New South Wales as a whole there were eight to nine hundred), the new Synagogue was a massive achievement. The intention had been to erect a building that was “elegant and stately”. Though the immediate environment, with its taverns, markets and police court, was unimpressive, the Synagogue was widely acclaimed as “a handsome building”, “chaste and classic”, and “beautiful”. It not only offered the Jewish community a worthy house of worship; it had a statement to make, a message to direct to the authorities and general public of New South Wales. It challenged gentile fellow-citizens to deny, if they dared, that the Jews were a decorous, respectable element of the body politic, conducting themselves as good citizens and entitled to the respect and privileges accorded to every recognised denomination.

In the first twelve months after the opening of the Synagogue, the congregational elders directed their attention to the publication of a report providing “a brief statement of the rise and progress of the Hebrew religion in this antipodean Colony”. The full text of the report was reprinted by the Australian Jewish Historical Society in 1944 to mark the centenary of the York Street Synagogue¹, and there has been a further reprint in more recent years,² so that this important document - the very first attempt at Australian Jewish history writing - has been spared the fate of other early records. Incidentally, just before I went to London as a student, the then honorary secretary of this Society, the late Sydney B. Glass, told me that there had long been a belief that somewhere about the turn of the century the late Coleman P. Hyman, a former Sydney communal leader and amateur historian, had taken valuable Australian Jewish historical records with him to England, and asked me to see if I could trace any of this material. I did find that Hyman was associated with the Royal Empire Society and officials at their headquarters remembered that he had kept certain possessions on their premises, but there was no evidence that these included Australian Judaica and in any case the building and its contents suffered much damage by enemy bombing during the Second World War.

The 1845 report was gracefully written. Some of its phraseology has found its way into almost every subsequent work of Australian Jewish history. The language is likely to have been that of George Moss, whose elegant English style is seen not only in the letters he wrote as honorary secretary of the congregation but in his newspaper, the Sydney edition of the London *Voice of Jacob*, and in his contributions as Sydney correspondent of the London paper. But it is not just the language but the contents of the report that provided the foundation for Australian Jewish historiography. From 1845 until about 1959, well over a century, nobody seemed to question the facts as the 1845 report put them. Rabbi Falk is only one of a sheaf of writers to assert:

This report is a most important basic document for Australian Jewish history, summarising as it does the course of development of Australian Jewry from the beginning, from 1817, when there were only twenty-seven [in fact the report says twenty] Jews in the colony who formed themselves into a society, which probably would have been a Chevra Kadisha, as the first Jewish burial took place in that year.³

In a generation inspired by *Australian Genesis* by Bergman and Levi, edified by *The Forefathers* by Levi, and intrigued by the now easily available stories of Esther Abrahams and other colourful convict characters, it comes as a shock to be told that Australian Jewry began only about 1817. The report says:

It appears that in 1817 there were about 20 Hebrews in the Colony [the truth is that by then there were closer to two hundred], but little versed in the faith of their ancestors; however they formed themselves into a Society, and raised a subscription for the internment of their dead.⁴

Who were the twenty - never mind the other 180 or so - Jewish persons in the Colony in 1817? How did they get there? How long had Jews been in Australia? If the authors of the report knew, they were not telling. They disarmingly excused themselves by saying, "Your Committee in what may be termed the early age of the Hebrew religion in this Colony, have not found any very authentic records, but from enquiries they have made, it appears that ..." and there follows the statement about twenty Jews in 1817 and the Society they established. Who compiled the report? It was a sub-committee comprising Moses Joseph, the Synagogue president; Israel Solomon; Lewis Barnett; George Moss; and P.J. Cohen. Of the sub-committee, at least two - Joseph and Cohen - had been in the Colony since the late 1820s. Joseph had arrived as a convict in 1827 and Cohen as a free settler, bearing credentials from the Chief Rabbi of London, in 1828. Their own personal knowledge of events since their arrival would have been significant. Of the 111 seat-holders of the Synagogue, at least forty were former convicts, and many, like Moses Joseph himself, had not yet received an absolute pardon (for Joseph this came in 1848 after he had become a wealthy and influential commercial figure). None of the committee of the Synagogue had been in the Colony before 1820, but about seventeen seat-holders were. If, then, there was a lack of "very authentic records", there were enough people with personal and probably unpleasant memories of the early years to have been able to provide information. But one is reminded of the rabbinic comment on the first chapter of Exodus: "There arose a new king over Egypt who knew not Joseph", and the rabbis say, "It was not that he knew not Joseph but that he did not want to know Joseph". Bearing in mind the surname of the Synagogue president, perhaps it was not that Joseph did not know the true facts but that he did not want to know them.

That there was a conspiracy of silence is made even more obvious by the fact that as early as 1789 a list of First Fleet convicts, including some unmistakably Jewish names, was available in the appendix to James Shortland's *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay*.⁶ (Since modern research began on the Jewish convicts, a considerable body of information has come to light about the Jewish First Fleeters, and in one of his last letters to our Society our former Israel correspondent, the late Rabbi Shmuel Gorr, wrote that he believed he would soon be able to identify further Jews amongst the 1788 arrivals.) Moses Joseph could also have made enquiries, had he wished, about Jewish communal records in London relating to convicts sent to Australia. The minute-books of Solomon Hirschel's *Beth Din* record rabbinic anxiety that the wives of men transported to Australia might commit adultery in their husbands' absence. There are details of *gittin* (religious divorces) written, sometimes aboard ships in the Thames estuary, for convicts who

wished to free their wives. Solomon Hirschel tried, at least once, to appeal to the Duke of Sussex, who was well-disposed towards the Jews, to save a Jewish man from being transported.⁷ In the congregational archives of the London Sephardi community there are also references to Jewish convicts.⁸ I am not yet aware whether these begin as early as 1788, but some decades later there are records of the congregation providing financial assistance for the wives and children of men sent to Australia. This material suggests a whole range of research work that needs to be carried out in order to gain information on the type of people that the Jewish convicts were. We also need to see if we can discover any first-hand accounts of the experience of being a Jew and a convict. Readers of the *Bulletin* will have seen, during the bicentenary year, a letter from Esther Abrahams to her mother in England, but I suspect it was a clever piece of bicentennial ghost-writing. Authentic material of this kind may, however, exist, possibly in England, and it would greatly assist the historian.

The 1845 cover-up of the true origins of Australian Jewry is not difficult to explain. Men who had risen above their past to become respectable citizens did not, in the type of society that was forming in the flux of mid-nineteenth century Australia, want to advertise certain things. The obscuring of the convict period had a second, political motive, as we will soon see. Anti-Jewish prejudice was already difficult to contain and at various crucial points had stood in the way of gaining official approval and assistance for the emergent Jewish communities. It was essential to present a picture of the Jewish citizen as a cultured, respectable, responsible person, and if this meant deliberately creating and perpetuating a myth, it was a price that they considered well worth it.

In the drive for respectability, it was a great advantage for the fledgling Jewish congregation in Sydney to have J.B. Montefiore, a member of the famous Montefiore family and a founder of the Bank of Australasia, as its first president. When Montefiore arrived in Sydney in 1829 there were little more than a dozen free Jewish settlers apart from the convicts and emancipists. Abraham Polack had, the previous year, asked Governor Darling for the use of a house in Elizabeth Street "on behalf of himself and other members of the Jewish persuasion to celebrate Divine services".⁹ Darling refused, with the remark that the Jews could have found a worthier person as their spokesman. That "worthier person" was found in Montefiore, who succeeded in officially establishing the congregation in 1832. But he was soon disappointed in his congregants. He urged them to work towards the erection of a proper house of worship but, as J. Maclehouse put it in 1837, he was defeated by "a cabal" and eventually withdrew from the congregation.¹⁰

Not all the convicts made good by any means but the congregation turned to those who had to become its leaders and representatives. Moses Joseph himself was president of the Synagogue from 1840 to 1848, and had extensive land holdings, especially in the New England area, owned whaling ships, and traded with Hobart Town, New Zealand and elsewhere. Abraham Elias, many times treasurer of the Synagogue, owned property and was a retired publican. Samuel Lyons was a highly successful auctioneer, financier and money-lender, was a philanthropist and was active in politics.

There is a received tradition that the convicts as a whole were the dregs of society. In a recent work, *Convict Workers: Re-Interpreting Australia's Past*, edited

by Stephen Nicholas, 1988, the argument is advanced that the convicts were basically decent working-class people, more sinned against than sinning.¹¹ How far this is true of the general body of convicts needs more research. We also need to know whether the Jewish convicts were more likely to have been decent or dregs. Levi points out that most of the Jews had been transported for larceny, the result of the desperate poverty of most of the influx of Ashkenazim who entered England in the latter part of the eighteenth century.¹² Does this mean that former Jewish convicts had special reason to be ashamed of what had happened to them and were anxious to consign their convict years to the limbo of convenient amnesia?

Whatever it is, the 1845 report, which makes not the slightest concession to the fact that there had been any Jewish convicts at all, was long accepted as reliable and subsequent writers quoted it uncritically. Not until the last thirty years or so was it found to be seriously flawed. But in the meantime, the reader need only examine the early volumes of the *Journal* of this Society to see how greatly the report influenced the first generation of our historians. In Volume 2 (1944), H.I. Wolff writes on "A Century of Hobart Jewry". He speaks of Jewish settlers, and only at the end of his paper does he give, without comment, a statistic that in 1837 there were 132 Jews ("124 free, 8 *in bond*").¹³ D.J. Benjamin writes about Norfolk Island in Volume 3 (1953), "Unquestionably, there were Jews sent to Australia as convicts", but he cannot offer much evidence.¹⁴ Rabbi L.M. Goldman, in Volume 4 (1958), says with a touch of amusement, "A small number of Jews had no option but to migrate to Australia".¹⁵ At best then there is tentative acknowledgment that there was some sort of Jewish convict presence. Only in Volume 5 (December, 1959) does George Bergman stride bravely into the fray and write on Jews on the First Fleet.¹⁶ Bergman, with Rabbi John Levi, must be counted amongst the pioneer historians who were able to get the Australian people to admit publicly that the convict period could be talked about. Bergman and Levi are acknowledged to have made a so far unrivalled contribution to the subject and their study of the convicts and settlers of a particular ethnic or religious group is said to be a trail-blazer.

The 1845 report prefers to see the beginnings of Australian Jewry in 1817. Here too there is a strange cover-up. Even if they could not admit that the earlier Jews were convicts, did they really have no information at all about earlier Jewish activity? Material is there in the records. The annual lists of convicts frequently mention the word Jew or a synonym of it. The newspapers were aware that certain people they wrote about, such as Joseph Samuel, "the man they couldn't hang", were Jewish, but more important, Samuel was reported to have been "prepared by a person of his own persuasion",¹⁷ presumably Joseph Marcus, making this in 1803 the first public Jewish act of worship in the new Colony.

But this of course was long before 1845, and hardly within living memory, and the 1845 sub-committee might be pardoned for being unaware that it had happened. Personal testimony from the older members of the congregation would, however, have indicated that if there was as yet no organised community there was a sense of kinship amongst the early Jews. Coming mostly from London they would generally have known each other, used colloquial Jewish expressions when they met, and been aware of each other's nicknames such as Izzy the Hebrew Dreamer and Teddy the Jewboy. Jewish emancipists also tended to employ Jewish servants. But there was no *kehillah* as such, and if there was a level of Jewish consciousness

one wants to know why. The answers might include the following. The Jewish convicts, like most of their English contemporaries, would have had little if any Jewish religious education and, contrary to what some people imagine, came from a community where religious observance was not very strict. If a convict could say the *Shema* and recall a smattering of Hebrew prayers, that would already be an achievement. The Jews were few in numbers, geographically scattered, and aware that any approach to the authorities for permission to hold Jewish services would not have been likely to succeed. The Colony had no place for religious dissent until the growth of religious toleration in the 1820s and '30s. No matter how poorly served the Christians were in terms of religious leadership, the Jews were far worse off. Apart from that strange man Jacob Josephson, who arrived in 1818 calling himself a Hebrew teacher when in fact he was a teacher of Christianity to Hebrews, the only Jew with much religious knowledge was Joseph Marcus. In London Chief Rabbi Hirschel was aware that there were Jewish convicts in Australia but as far as we know there was not the slightest thought of sending anyone to enquire into their welfare or even of getting some prayer-books and religious appurtenances to them. The 1845 report is therefore not entirely wrong when it asserts that it was not until about three decades after the First Fleet that moves commenced to set up a Jewish community. But why speak in vague terms about a "Society" founded in about 1817 which dealt with the interment of the dead when, as we know now, it is possible to be specific and say that regular meetings for prayers were organised under the leadership of Joseph Marcus? Why totally ignore Marcus when enough people were still alive and active in 1845 to have testified to his religious activity?¹⁸ And a second question - if people apparently did not remember Marcus, how did they remember the 1817 Society? After all, we have no other evidence that there ever was a *Chevrá Kadisha* during those years, though we do know that on occasions there was a Jewish funeral ... and Marcus is likely to have officiated.

After considerable thought I would like to put forward the proposal that the 1817 Society and Marcus' unofficial congregation, which lasted about three years from 1819 until he became too infirm to continue with it, were one and the same thing, and the Society was not merely a *Chevrá Kadisha* but a rudimentary congregation. I know that the report speaks of the Society meeting occasionally "to regulate their financial affairs" but I do not see that this precludes the possibility of it being identical with Marcus' group. This then gives the Society a credibility that is otherwise lacking since there is no independent evidence of its existence. But if I am right, why does the report studiously ignore Marcus and give him neither credit for his work nor even a grudging acknowledgment? It seems that he was not an uncontroversial character and not all his co-religionists regarded him with respect. He had been in Sydney since 1792 and by now was (in the words of the *Sydney Gazette*) a "palsied and infirm old man",¹⁹ treated cruelly by his Christian wife whom of course he had married in church. He was debt-ridden and had been refused a grant of land due to his "not being of a good character". The source of our information about his religious activities is the Rev. William Cowper, who advises his superiors in London that Marcus, "Australia's only acknowledged Levite"²⁰ (whatever the phrase means it does not denote that he was a rabbi), was very interested in Christianity. We can only surmise that some of Marcus' Jewish contemporaries were suspicious because he was too friendly with Cowper and may

even have introduced into Jewish services he conducted an occasional Christian sentiment. He seems to have been sufficiently mentally confused for this to be possible, though in his favour it must be recorded that his tombstone, now relocated in the Pioneers' Memorial Section at Botany Cemetery, proudly bears in Hebrew lettering the last two lines of *Adon Olam*. In their search for respectability the men of 1845 might well have regarded Marcus as an embarrassment.

Instead of crediting him with some form of religious leadership, they preferred to suggest that the coming of free settlers, especially Phillip Joseph Cohen, gave the impetus to the creation of a *kehillah*. In their enthusiasm they referred to "an influx of respectable Jewish merchants". The number of free settlers by 1828 was still only 19, so that it was not much of an influx. But in this section of the report we find the only implication that there had ever been convicts; between the lines you read that the earlier Jews were other than "respectable Jewish merchants". But that is as far as they were prepared to go in acknowledging the fact of the convicts.

A further problem is caused by their singling out P.J. Cohen as the founder of the congregation. But seeing that Cohen was himself a member of the editorial sub-committee and by 1845 had been through a number of ups and downs, he was clearly concerned to establish himself in history as the leading light.

After Cohen's death his family published a Memorial which called him the person who "by drawing together the Jewish residents for Holy Worship ... founded the nucleus of the first Hebrew congregation in the Antipodes".²¹ This claim was based on a statement in the 1845 report that it was he who, by offering his home as a venue, took the initiative in establishing regular services, though the report adds that "from some difference of opinion then existing amongst the members of the faith, Divine Service was also occasionally performed in a room hired by Messrs. A. Elias and James Simmons".²² We should not minimise the work that Cohen did but it seems clear that even before his arrival in Sydney in May, 1828, services had been held in private homes by the well-established emancipists. We know that Walter Jacob Levi, one of the free settlers who died after less than a year in Australia, had urged his co-religionists to unite to establish a Synagogue,²³ and that Abraham Polack, an emancipist who at that stage was a tavern-keeper, petitioned Governor Darling in August, 1828, for a Synagogue but was refused permission in rather insulting terms.²⁴ Although Polack later became president of the Synagogue, his initiative, which clearly arose out of feelings that had manifested themselves amongst the small group of Jews before Cohen's arrival, is ignored by the 1845 report, though he is listed as a member of the congregation. The latter-day reader of the report may be forgiven for imagining that when some of the seat-holders read the account of events compiled by the sub-committee, they would not have been too pleased.

The reference to "some difference of opinion" is explained by Bergman as concerning religious issues less than personality clashes between the old emancipists and the group who supported P.J. Cohen.²⁵ I believe, however, that religious issues did play a part. Cohen, though not a rabbi, was more learned than most or all of the Jews he found in Sydney, and was stricter in his approach to Judaism than many of them were. He was not impressed to discover that one after another of the leading Jews of the Colony had married out of the faith. In the birth register he compiled for the Bridge Street Synagogue he omitted the children of

James Simmons, whose wife was a Christian - though Simmons himself specified in his will that his children were to be disinherited if they married out. Years later, at the time of the Macquarie Street secession, Cohen was one of those who left York Street Synagogue in protest at the refusal of the then minister to say the customary prayers at the circumcision of the son of a woman whose Jewish status may have been in doubt, but the secession may have involved personal tensions between groups in the community and Cohen's involvement does not necessarily imply that his religious views had weakened.²⁶

The differences in the community in the late 1820s certainly expressed themselves in rival services being held but the report is in error when it speaks of Abraham Elias and James Simmons in the one breath. Elias, who had arrived as a convict in 1817, was by now a merchant in Windsor and only moved back to Sydney in 1831, subsequently becoming the first treasurer of the Synagogue. But we do know from the newspapers that in 1830 several householders arranged *Sedarim* for family and friends on Pesach. The *Gazette* said that "all the Jews in Sydney, and many from the country" would attend P.J. Cohen's Passover services.²⁷ A person signing himself "A Hebrew" wrote to the *Monitor* that other prayer assemblies took place at James Simmons' house and at that of Vaiben and Emanuel Solomon²⁸ (these were brothers who both arrived in 1818 and later founded the family that long dominated South Australian Jewry).

The nucleus of the community was always conscious of the need for respectability in the eyes of the general public. The report has a nice turn of phrase when it speaks about the coming of free settlers "coupled with other circumstances [which] had raised the Hebrews in the estimation of their fellow colonists". By 1829 the *Sydney Gazette* could earnestly assert that "the respectable Jews of the colony are anxious to form a congregation that they may observe the solemnities of their own Sabbath, but many difficulties are in the way".²⁹ The "many difficulties" included the negative attitude of Governor Darling which was common knowledge in the Colony. Positive attitudes towards Jews were far from assured. Myths and stereotypes about Jews abounded. Bergman and Levi give a range of illustrations in *Australian Genesis* and show that the authorities, the newspapers and the public often made gratuitous and generally uncomplimentary references to a person's Jewishness. Hence the importance that was attached by Jew and non-Jew alike, but for somewhat different reasons, to epithets such as "honest Jew" applied to James Larra, and "honest Israelite" used of Joseph Aarons. The Goulburn Jewish community became famous because of the byword, "as solid as a Goulburn Jew" (another version is "as honest as a Goulburn Jew"). Such expressions of "grudging respect" as Bergman and Levi call them enhanced the standing of the community,³⁰ and care was taken in the 1845 report to avoid mentioning persons who in truth had well served the community but whose reputations were possibly a little clouded. This may be why Abraham Polack is not given credit for his endeavours; before long he was to become insolvent. We presume that the report was not circulated only to members of the Hebrew congregation but was published more widely, and like any public relations document it was designed to impress and create a climate of favourable opinion.

But what particular advantage did this campaign have in mind in 1845? The answer is made clear by juxtaposing two passages towards the end of the report.

One urges the congregation to recognise the need for facilities for Jewish education for the purpose of "imparting to youth the knowledge of their Creator, their religion, their duty to mankind, and giving them that instruction which will enable them to become good citizens". In addition to whatever financial support the congregation itself would give the project, the committee recommended "if necessary to apply to the Government for aid, which your Committee have every reason to believe would be granted".³¹

The second passage reads as follows:

Your committee in now retiring from office and resigning the trust you have reposed in them, hope you will exercise discrimination in the appointment of their successors, and elect such persons who will carry out the objects pointed at in this Report, and not allow party feeling or petty jealousies to influence your minds in the selection of persons to fill so important an office as Committee man; as a crisis has now arrived, which will if properly followed up lead to important results to the Jewish community, which in after ages will be viewed with gratitude and affection, to those spirited individuals who have exerted themselves in the noblest cause that human beings can accomplish, the good and welfare of their fellow creatures.³²

It is noble prose, and one cannot fail to be impressed. If, as seems likely, the style is that of George Moss, the congregation was fortunate to have him. Incidentally, Moss' father, Mordecai Moses, the congregation's Shammash and collector, had a fine style in Hebrew, and examples abound of his beautiful Hebrew calligraphy. George Moss had come as a free settler in about 1831; Mordecai arrived as a convict five years later, being referred to in the ship's indent as a "Scripture reader and dealer", aged 58.

To understand the tenor of the paragraphs I have quoted from the report it must be explained that the years 1844 and 1845 saw high drama over the question of education in the Colony. Hitherto the Jewish congregation had not sought state aid in spite of the urging of George Moss. In 1844, however, public debate erupted over proposals for state-supported non-denominational but nonetheless Christian education. The Jewish community favoured general rather than denominational education, though George Moss was more inclined towards a denominational system. A well-attended meeting of the Jews of Sydney was held on 17 October, 1844, and resolved to submit a petition protesting that the Jews should not be excluded from state aid no matter which system of education was adopted. Some of the newspapers were sympathetic. The *Examiner* was optimistic about the Jewish community's chances of success: "We know", it wrote, "that if the Hebrew religionists will ask for the boon it will be cordially conceded". W.C. Wentworth represented the Jewish cause in the Legislative Council and the vote of the majority was in favour, though of course there were fierce voices that objected to "unchristianising" the government of the Colony by officially subsidising Jews as well as Christians. The progress of the campaign for state aid has been charted by Israel Getzler, in his *Neither Toleration nor Favour*, and others, and does not need to concern us here.³³ But it now becomes clear that the 1845 committee believed its

efforts in this direction would succeed, but only if the congregation realised that "as a crisis has now arrived", they had to be careful to choose the most suitable leaders to articulate their case. The obvious message was that respectable and respected persons were needed in this role, and the cause could be completely jeopardised by the choice of people based on "party feeling or petty jealousies".

Other, minor aspects of the 1845 report also warrant examination. The statistical section listing births, marriages and deaths from 1830 to 1845 could prove a fruitful subject of study and amongst the questions that would have to be asked would be why there is said to have been no marriage in 1831 when we know that P.J. Cohen conducted or at least witnessed the religious marriage ceremony of John and Rebecca Moses née Mary Connolly, whose *ketubah* we possess. The list of members, donors and donations could also repay study and analysis.

Looked at as a whole, the report is a most skilfully constructed weapon in a fight for recognition, status and equality of treatment. It is part of the struggle for Jewish emancipation in Australia, mild and limited though that struggle was in comparison with other communities in other countries. It is therefore an important part of the maturing of Australian Jewry from a tiny group of outcasts of society, too frail in their situation and too weak in their Jewish identity to establish a community, to an articulate, determined, organised congregation prepared to take a stand on a matter of principle and to enter the fray of public debate as a segment of society with pride in itself and its historic tradition.³⁴

The pity is that after the dust of that battle had receded, the report came to be relied upon merely for its historical information. For so many decades, no-one realised that that information had been tailored to suit a certain purpose, and myths inevitably grew and Australian Jewry was denied the real, colourful and even inspiring story of its foundation and beginnings. Now that re-assessment of the document is possible, we can recognise its strengths and weaknesses. Indeed, the weaknesses even become strengths, for they enable us to understand better the pressures and priorities of a significant generation and to add to our own capacity for communal self-awareness.

NOTES

- 1 Report of the Committee of the York Street (Sydney) Synagogue, 1845 — 5605', Reprinted for the *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, 1944 (Hereinafter, Report).
- 2 *Idem*, Reprint Approx. 1986.
- 3 L.A. Falk, *AJHS Journal*, Vol. 3, Part 3, 1950, p.134.
- 4 *Report*, p.7.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 James Shortland, *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay*, 1789.
- 7 Personal communication from M.A. Simons, author of *Forty Years a Chief Rabbi: The Life and Times of Solomon Hirschel*, 1980, which makes occasional references to Australia. Re Hirschel's Beth Din: H.J. Zimmels, 'Some Decisions and Responsa culled from the Minute-Book of Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschel's Beth Din', in H.J. Zimmels, J. Rabbinowitz and I. Finestein, eds, *Essays Presented to Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Hebrew Vol)), 1967 e.g. pp.223, 232.
- 8 Occasionally reprinted in *Congregational Bulletin of Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation, London*, in the 1980s.
- 9 J.S. Levi and G.F.J. Bergman, *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers, 1788-1850*, 1974, p.220.
- 10 Cited in Levi and Bergman, *op. cit.*, p.227
- 11 Stephen Nicholas, ed., *Convict Workers: Re-interpreting Australia's Past*, 1988.
- 12 Introduction in J.S. Levi, *The Forefathers: A Dictionary of Biography of the Jews of Australia*, 1788-1830, 1976.
- 13 H.I. Wolff, *AJHS Journal*, Vol 2, Part 1, 1944, p.16.
- 14 D.J. Benjamin, *AJHS Journal*, Vol 3, Part 8, 1953, p.362.
- 15 L.M. Goldman, *AJHS Journal*, Vol 4, Part 7, 1958, p.336.

- 16 G.F.J. Bergman, *AJHS Journal*, Vol 5, Part 2, 1959, p.50.
- 17 Levi and Bergman, *op. cit.*, p.57.
- 18 J.S. Levi, 'The Tale of Australia's First 'Rabbi' — Joseph Marcus, 1767-1828', *AJHS Journal*, Vol 8, Part 2, 1975, pp.29-36. The list of members of the York Street Synagogue, 1845, may usefully be checked against J.S. Levi, *The Forefathers*, for the pre-1830 dates of arrival of some seatholders.
- 19 J.S. Levi, *The Forefathers*, *op. cit.*, s.v. 'Marcus'.
- 20 J.S. Levi, 'Australia's First "Rabbi"', *op. cit.*, p.30.
- 21 Copy in Rabbi L.A. Falk Memorial Library, The Great Synagogue, Sydney.
- 22 Report, p.7.
- 23 Levi and Bergman, *op. cit.*, p.220.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 G.F.J. Bergman, 'Phillip Joseph Cohen', *AJHS Journal*, Vol 8, Part 2, 1975, pp.48-81.
- 26 *Ibid.*, CF. Contemporary Letters on the Subject in the AJHS Archives.
- 27 Cited by Levi and Bergman, *op. cit.*, pp.221-2.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 Levi and Bergman, *op. cit.*, p.247.
- 31 Report, p.9.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 I. Getzler, *Neither Toleration nor Favour: The Australian Chapter of Jewish Emancipation*, 1970 (based on his MA Thesis, Melbourne University, 1960).
- 34 This conclusion is reinforced by the 1847 Report of the Synagogue (Reprinted in the *AJHS Journal*, Vol 5, Part 2, 1959, pp.72-82), though the convict origins of the community are still ignored. Apparently a Report was also prepared in 1846 (See York Street Synagogue minutes for 23 August 1846) but no copy is extant.

HENRY MOSS : HE HAD A VISION FOR NOWRA

by Alan Clark

Nowra scarcely existed when he arrived in 1851, but Henry Moss had a vision that it would be the major town in what is now the Shoalhaven City Council area. He gave 36 years of his life to the district, and became involved in many of the organisations functioning at that time. A powerful, influential personality who had a hand in most of the important decisions of his era, Moss was known to the townsfolk as "The General".

He was born Henry Moses on 1 June, 1831 in Sydney, the second of four children from the first marriage of John Moses. Henry's father was one of three brothers transported to Australia from London as juvenile delinquents. First to come was 18-year-old Moses Moses who was convicted at the Old Bailey in 1813 and transported for life; John was sent to Van Dieman's Land for seven years after his conviction in 1820; and Isaac, who was convicted in 1822, received 14 years. A fourth brother, Abraham, migrated as a free settler in 1833. All were later successful businessmen.

John Moses married the Irish-born Mary Connolly at Hobart Town in 1826. She assumed the name "Rebecca" when she became the first gentile woman to be converted to Judaism in Australia. The couple then went through a "proper" Jewish marriage on 4 August, 1831, the first to be performed in Australia.

The early life of young Henry can be traced through the movements of his father. After his emancipation, John owned a store in Hobart, but then moved to Sydney where he was in business as a pastry cook when Henry was born. He was unsettled for some years, taking a trip home to England. He returned in 1832 to open a restaurant and confectionery shop in Sydney, and then went back to Tasma-