

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL



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**MIRIAM SOLOMON — A HISTORICAL
TREASURE
1925–2003**

Mark L. Solomon



My mother was not a historian, as she would have been the first to admit; but neither was it merely her superb skill as a meticulous bookkeeper, so keenly appreciated by many businesses and organisations over the years, that fitted her for the position of honorary treasurer of the AJHS. Her own family background, for one, made her part of the rich and varied pageant of Australian Jewish history, since she was descended on her mother's side from Mordecai Moses, who was transported in 1836 for forging a Polish banknote, and went on to become sexton of Sydney's first Jewish cemetery, and later *shammes* of the York Street Synagogue.

Miriam's life, too, was bound up with the story of the Great Synagogue throughout much of the twentieth century. Born

Miriam Roseberg on 7 January 1925, she joined the junior choir shortly before her confirmation, and went on to sing in the alto section of the senior choir, serving for almost forty years until the mixed choir was disbanded in 1974. For much of that time she was also the choir's honorary secretary, and her correspondence file is a history of the births, deaths, marriages, comings and goings of choir members over many decades. She loved the music and the services of the synagogue, and even after leaving the choir her devoted, friendly presence was a perennial feature of the ladies' gallery at the Great. She wrote the history of the choir, which was published in the *Journal* in 1993, Volume XI, Part 6,

She attended Crown Street School and Sydney Girls' High (where she made deep life-long friendships), and after graduating from business college her first job was as a junior in the Great Synagogue office, where she came to enjoy a friendship with both David Benjamin, the synagogue's scholarly secretary, and Rabbi Falk. Over the years she volunteered her skill and experience to almost every group within the synagogue: as treasurer and later correspondence secretary of the Women's Auxiliary, treasurer of the Parents' Association, member of the Journal Committee, minutes secretary of the Services Committee, synagogue tour guide, an energetic worker for the Great Synagogue Youth (GSY, of which she had been a founding member in 1944) and even a contestant in the Great's victorious adult team in the annual Bible Quiz. In her latter years, she came in to the office periodically to update the burial register.

Her involvement in the Jewish community went beyond the Great. For a time she was secretary of the Maroubra Synagogue, and later of the Sydney *Beth Din*. When her children were at Clovelly Public School she became a scripture teacher there, and for many years she did voluntary work in the offices of the NSW Board of Jewish Education (now Academy BJE) where she was much loved.

It was through her friendship with Ralph Levy, the Great's long-serving choirmaster, that she met his cousin, David H. Solomon, whose Australian ancestry went back even further than hers, to the arrival of Mordecai Solomon in 1823. They married at the Great Synagogue in 1962 and had two children, Mark who is now a rabbi in London, and Keren who lives in Hobart. Keren married Andrew Wise in 1996, a few months before David passed away, and went on to present Miriam with two beloved grandchildren, Nathan and Shannon.

Miriam's involvement with the Historical Society came about through the encouragement of her dear friend, Phoebe Davis, whom she succeeded as honorary treasurer. Throughout her twenty years in the post, she did far more than just keep the Society's books. She

would spend many hours helping in the office, first at the Great Synagogue and later at Mandelbaum House, and she came to cherish in particular her friendship with the Society's archivist Helen Bersten. Many days were spent driving around the Eastern Suburbs hand-delivering the *Journal*, for as a scrupulous treasurer and a true daughter of the Great Depression, she believed passionately in saving the Society every possible penny. My visits to Sydney often coincided with *Journal*-delivery season, and our afternoon drives — when I would hop in and out of the car posting the journals, to save my mother's arthritis, while she would fill me in on everyone's news — were wonderful 'quality time' that delighted us both.

The preservation and celebration of Australian Jewish history was something extremely important to her, and the fact that her work as treasurer helped to facilitate it gave her deep satisfaction. Her correspondence, especially with far-flung members, went much further than matters of fees, and gave rise to warm interstate and international relationships. One particular example was her friendship with the late Hedi Fixel, the Society's correspondent in Tasmania, whom she visited on several occasions. Only last year, on her final interstate trip, Miriam felt enormously honoured to be the Society's representative at the launch, in Hobart Synagogue, of 'A Few from Afar', edited by the late Peter Elias and his wife, Ann.

Her sudden death on 14 November 2003 left her friends and loved ones with a sense of shock and deep loss, but also with a wealth of wonderful memories that will be a blessing through the years. Miriam was a woman of very firmly entrenched views on many things, and rarely shrank from making her opinion known. Her warmth and sense of humour, however, tempered her judgments and won her friendship and admiration. Her love of cricket, cryptic crosswords and dreadful puns gave a distinctive colour to her personality. She was a truly devout and upright person, who served God and her fellow human beings with a kind heart, sound common sense, undaunted integrity, a good head for figures and a wonderful, sharp, irrepressible wit. Her gift for friendship and laughter, for unassuming goodness and practical wisdom, made her a true historic treasure of the Sydney Jewish community and a memorable treasurer of the Australian Jewish Historical Society.

EDITORIAL

This 2004 edition of the *AJHS Journal* is the second part of Volume 17 and marks 65 years of continuous publication of our *Journal* since 1939. As such, it is an important milestone in the history of the Society whose founding fathers would have received great satisfaction at the ongoing vitality of their creation. While much of the recent historical research has focused on the development of the community since 1945, the articles in this edition of the *Journal* largely focus on earlier events, with five articles including material on the nineteenth century. We also pay tribute to our esteemed committee member and former honorary treasurer, Miriam Solomon, whose sudden passing last year left a significant gap in our midst. Her son, Rabbi Mark Solomon, addressed our annual meeting last year and we are publishing his tribute to his late mother. When I first joined the Historical Society as a committee member in 1970, Miriam Solomon was assistant treasurer to the late Phoebe Davis. Over the subsequent years that I have been associated with the Society, we became close colleagues and friends and I greatly miss her presence at our meetings. The Society was, indeed, fortunate to have had such a dedicated worker.

The first two articles aim to provide new insights and a reassessment of two Jewish convicts, Esther Abrahams and Samuel Lyons who, after their emancipation, played interesting roles in early colonial life. In his article on Esther Abrahams, Mr Forbes has drawn on recent publications dealing with George Johnson and early colonial history to reassess the place of Esther Abrahams in Australian Jewish history. Doctoral student, Nick Dreyenfurth, has provided a detailed picture of the life of Samuel Lyons and has also raised questions about the significance of his contributions to the development of the colony.

Two articles deal with late nineteenth and early twentieth century figures. Mabel Kaplan has provided a pen sketch of Joseph Jacobs, again drawing on more recent scholarship to add to earlier material published in this *Journal*, while as part of his ongoing

research on Australian Jewish involvement in the Boer War, Russell Stern has provided a detailed and fascinating picture of Rose Shappere, who grew up in Australia and New Zealand, trained as a nurse and served in South Africa during that war.

A somewhat neglected area in Australian Jewish history is migration from Eastern Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. East European Jewish migration in this period had a formative influence on the Jewish communities in the United States, Canada, England and South Africa, especially during the period of 1880–1920 when over three million Jews escaped from persecution in Tsarist Russia, with most settling in the United States. In this period, the long journey by sailing ship to Australia deterred most prospective migrants from Eastern Europe and those who did come often came via Britain. The personal stories of two families who migrated from Poland are told in this issue. Joy Dinte charts the migration of two Dinte brothers to Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century and the development of the family here, including their contribution to the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation. The Dintes arrived here after spending a period of time in England before seeking further opportunity in Australia. Diana Encel (nee Hovev) charts her parents' story of migration from Poland via Palestine in the 1920s. In both these stories, the patterns of Jews settling outside the main urban centres in this period, of creating new lives by living in country areas as tailors, hotel keepers, hawkers and storekeepers is highlighted. However, maintaining a Jewish lifestyle in isolated country towns was very difficult, and these East European Jewish migrants either tended to assimilate through intermarriage and lose their Jewish identity, or move back to the main centres of Sydney and Melbourne, as happened with the Hovev family. With their experiences in Palestine, it is understandable that both Hovevs became active in the Zionist movement in Sydney after they settled there.

The Jewish Welfare Guardian Society was one response to the increasing crisis of European Jews on the European continent after Hitler's assumption of power in 1933. John Wars created this program in Melbourne through the Australian Jewish Welfare Society and it has been discussed in Rodney Benjamin's history of the Melbourne Society¹, while Anne Andgel has also dealt with its history in Sydney after 1945 in her study of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society in New South Wales.² Paul Schiffres' article provides a further insight into how the Jewish Welfare Guardian Society operated through the personal story of one boy, Robert Halbert, who was sponsored to Australia as a Welfare Guardian boy. It is a detailed account, brought to life by the extracts from letters in the

correspondence of Robert Halbert and Ernest Schiffres who had been close friends in Vienna before the events of the Anschluss of Austria separated them, with one ending up in Australia and the other in the United States. Robert Halbert ended up joining the war effort but was only permitted to enlist in an Employment Unit. Morris Ochert deals with the story of three Jewish pilots, all with a connection to Queensland and all of whom fought in World War II. This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the tragic death of one of those pilots, Flight Lieutenant Frederic Bedrich Adler, whose plane crashed in Queensland in 1954. Sophie Caplan has reviewed the histories of two communal institutions in Sydney: Moriah College and The Temple Emanuel as well as Lottie Weiss' memoirs and Helen Bersten has received an educational publication on the *Dunera*.

Once again, I would like to thank wholeheartedly my *Journal* sub-committee without whose assistance this issue could not have been produced. As in past years Judy Shapira has done the sub-editing and I wish to acknowledge her eagle eye for spotting the gremlins that seem to appear. As always, I would also like to thank Helen Bersten for all her invaluable assistance both in the sub-editing and in supplying information and photos from our archives. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Sydney committee and the wonderful team of volunteers. I acknowledge the financial assistance we receive from the Jewish Communal Appeal (JCA), which enables the Australian Jewish Historical Society's archives in Sydney to function effectively, although its funds are unable to be used for publications.

Suzanne D. Rutland

NOTES

1. Rodney Benjamin, *A Serious Influx of Jews: A History of Jewish Welfare in Victoria* Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998, pp.114-126.
2. Anne Andgel, *Fifty Years of Caring: The History of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, 1936-1986* Sydney: AJWS & AJHS, 1988, pp.97-99, 102-103.

ESTHER JOHNSTON REVISITED: REVISIONISM IN HER STORY

Morris Forbes

THE BERGMAN, LEVI AND LEMCKE HISTORIES

In 1998, Geoffrey Lemcke, published a biography of his ancestor, Lt Col George Johnson entitled *Reluctant Rebel, Lt Col George Johnston (1764–1823)*. The writer set out to describe the eventful life of George Johnston who arrived in the new penal colony of New South Wales on the First Fleet as an officer in the Marines. He was destined to play an important part in the beginnings of the convict settlement, particularly because of his involvement in 1808, together with the instigator, John Macarthur, in the overthrow of Governor Bligh, which was followed by Johnston's unofficial assumption of the office of Acting Lieutenant-Governor of the colony for a few months. The Bligh affair, if I may term it thus, and its finale in the court martial of Johnston in England were without doubt the most significant episodes in the latter's career. Readers and students of Australian Jewish history may desire to know a little more of that career and perhaps to gain a closer insight into it, if only because of Johnston's liaison with the Jewish convict young woman, Esther Abrahams, who lived with him in a de facto relationship from 1788 to 1814 when they decided that it was time for a formal marriage in the Church of England. From 1790 until 1806, Esther gave birth to the seven children of the family. At various stages, their life together was interrupted by Johnston's absence from the colony, a total period of at least five years. After his being cashiered from the military for his part in the so-called Rum Rebellion he continued to live with Esther on his extensive estate at Annandale until his death in 1823. It was Dr George F J Bergman, noted for his detailed research relating to the founding period of Australian Jewish history, who was the first to unravel, as far as the records enabled him to do so, the story of Esther Abrahams. Until his definitive article published in this Society's *Journal*, entitled 'Esther Johnston — the Lieutenant — Governor's Wife — The

Amazing Life Story of a Jewish Convict Girl'¹, the fullness of that story remained largely unknown. Towards the conclusion of his article, Bergman mentioned an anonymous journalist who in 1947 wrote that Johnston had early married a girl whose only name was known as Esther, which ultimately caused Bergman to state that he had identified that girl as Esther-Abrahams-Julian, a Jewish convict woman of the First Fleet. In presenting his dramatic account of that life, Dr Bergman achieved much more than the mere identification of the person whom he made the subject of his historical narrative. As told by him, the drama fully emerges when a Jewish convict lass is suddenly translated from the situation — to use the language of *Australian Genesis*² — of a starving waif to become the companion of a leading officer, himself eventually to take over the administration of the colony some years later as a sequel to the forced removal of Governor Bligh. Had not that rebellion and its aftermath occurred, with Johnston and Macarthur being the central figures, Esther Abrahams' story would not have assumed the proportions which led Bergman to write that 'it must have been a curious feeling for Esther...when she realised that she had — unofficially at least — become the 'First Lady' of the colony and remained so during the six months of Johnston's Governorship'.³ Hence, Levi and Bergman as the co-authors in 1974 of *Australian Genesis* include much of the whole story in Chapter 3 under the caption, 'First Lady', all of which reappears in the recent New Edition. 'No one knows', they write, 'how Esther Abrahams felt about the caprices of a fate which had carried her far from the convict hold of the *Lady Penrhyn* to her position as First Lady of the colony...'.⁴ This story, it has been said, highlights some of the key features of the lives of the Jewish convicts and is indicative of the mercurial nature of their success, showing that many of them lost all connection with their former faith and the Jewish community.⁵

My original intention was to write a review of the biography of George Johnston by Lemcke, realising that it contained little information on Esther Abrahams. On reading this book, I began to feel that the account we have of the latter by the Jewish historians might justify some reconsideration some forty years after the original presentation. Lemcke's book aimed to give a more detailed narrative of his ancestor's career. There are scattered references to Esther Abrahams and to her daughter, Rosanna, but the author candidly states that the serious lack of personal records makes it very difficult to gain a full view of either of the Johnstons. All the historians who have written on Esther Johnston touch briefly upon the colonial affairs in which her husband was involved. In this process much of the notoriety which she may have acquired is closely asso-

ciated with George Johnston's actions and achievements, enhancing the interest in her own story. If we were concerned with her only as a mother of native-born children, or as one who assisted in the management of the Johnston farm property, the drama that the writers have seen in her experiences would be missing. Our historians have not critically questioned George Johnston's actions, but I think that a more analytical approach may lead to a realistic understanding of the precise place of Esther Johnston in Australian history. I certainly do not wish to detract from the overall value of the research and what has been written, though it is another matter if one is concerned to assess the Jewish value of her story. It is too easy, as it seems to me, to be attracted to the spectacular aspects, with all the highs and lows, the readers adding their sympathy and sentiment, and applauding Esther Johnston with a sense of pride by reason of her success in rising above so many others for whom, equally with Esther, the English criminal law had decreed deportation and rejection from society for offences viewed in many instances today as relatively minor. I would think, on reflection, that it would be wrong if the mere incident of Jewish birth set her apart from other victims of the social system. While some today regard those unfortunates as pioneers, others think that it is more appropriate to accept the convict era as an unpleasant feature of former Australian life from which the evil effects have long since gone.⁶

THE BACKGROUND OF THE JEWISH CONVICTS

It is estimated that of 145,000 transported until 1858, at least 700 of these involuntary migrants were Jews. This figure has been reduced from the previous assessment of a total of 1,000 Jewish convicts.⁷ The First Fleet's quota of Jews has been increased to about 14, and possibly a few more may still be identified as Jews.⁸ The unfavourable impact of these transgressors was too high for the honour and dignity of the establishment of English Jewry of the late eighteenth century. Even in this land of their banishment the convict stain was made as invisible as could be by the Jewish leadership of the early and even later congregations. Thus, when in 1845 the Committee of the newly opened York Street (Sydney) Synagogue issued its Report, believing that it would be of interest to give 'a short history' of the progress of Judaism in the colony, they described it as 'a rough and perhaps imperfect sketch'. They were obviously anxious to make no mention of Jewish convicts.⁹ They said that they had not found any very authentic records, and in so stating they had succeeded, if that was part of their object, to exclude reference to convict origins. If the Israelites of old experi-

enced a transitory period of desert wanderings before reaching the Promised Land, these Jews of the antipodes diaspora sought only to look back with pride to the Mother country from which they hailed, following the example of their British kinsfolk in ignoring the problem of convict co-religionists. Nevertheless, there were then too few colonial Jews, including a few emancipists and free settlers, to maintain a rigid social barrier in Sydney against convicts or ex-convicts.¹⁰ It is true, in a sense, that Australia became the only community of European people with Jews from the moment of its establishment, but within less than two generations the Jewish leadership was unable to recall the circumstances under which their own people had arrived in Australia. In falling foul of the law they could expect no indulgence. For instance, in 1840 the Jewish prisoners at Norfolk Island asked the Sydney congregation to assist them to obtain a suspension of labour on the Sabbath and holy days. The authorities were advised by the president of the congregation that the concession should be withdrawn if a convict failed to attend the religious services.¹¹

Prior to transportation, most of the Jewish convicts were paupers with little secular or Jewish education, and with scarcely any real connection to the religious life of their community. Their attitude to marriage was more casual than the religious law allowed.¹² There was a breakdown of traditional Jewish values among them, resulting in a lowered observance of the norms of family life. The Jewish authorities took no interest in their fate, and as has been pointed out, the relevant Minute Book of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1760–1828, contains no reference to convicts.¹³ It is by no means surprising that there was a marked drift away from Judaism in the penal colony, given the facts that there was no congregation and a dearth of Jewish partners to marry. ‘Common social origins and common afflictions’, it has been remarked, ‘seem to have been stronger than any religious divisions among the ‘founding fathers’, whether Gentile or Jew’.¹⁴ The religious outlook at that time was, indeed, a bleak one, and religion itself earned no respect from the convicts. When, in 1798, Governor Hunter required that they attend Church of England religious services, the immediate response was the burning down of the Church. The official Church was identified by the convicts with repression, particularly as represented by the Reverend Samuel Marsden, noted for his severity as ‘the flogging parson’. Debauchery and corruption was rife, the obnoxious trading in spirits extending to the New South Wales Corps, members of which took ‘all the law into their own hands turbulent beyond example’.¹⁵ The dominant note, as Manning Clark writes, was sounded by the Protestant evangelists who, he remarks

in passing, regarded Jews as belonging 'to a limbo between the Protestant paradise and the Catholic hell'.¹⁶ It was only too true that the negligible Jewish minority was for many years ignored by governors and officials until the York Street Synagogue was eventually able to claim that circumstances 'had raised the Hebrews in the satisfaction of their fellow colonists'.¹⁷ The relationship between Jewish and other convicts seems to have been one of assimilation, with many Jewish convicts generally disinterested in their Jewishness. They were usually English born, often young people, and few of them females.¹⁸ While some were active in the early congregational efforts, such as Abraham Elias, Vaiben Solomon, Mordecai Moses, Abraham Polack and James Simmons, others were beyond reform, such as Ikey Solomon, Joseph Samuel (the man they couldn't hang), or Edward Davis of the Jew-boy Gang of bushrangers. Successful former convicts fully considered in Bergman's writings included James Larra, Israel Chapman, John Harris, Solomon Levy and Samuel Lyons, many of whom did not continue to profess their original faith even if some were in touch with the small Jewish community. Of all these convicts or former convicts, Esther Abrahams has become the most well known.

The social, moral and religious situation within the early colony is discussed in general by the historians, aspects of which I have emphasised as having application to the case of Esther Abrahams. It is very largely the Jewish historians whose writings are enlisted on her behalf, and in some Jewish circles today there is no lack of praise for this lady. It is my purpose, however, to bring to bear, in assessing her position, some added historical perspective. As a friend and admirer of the late George Bergman, I well recall how elated and satisfied he was in bringing his research to a conclusion and having published, first in this *Journal*, the results of all his investigation into this subject, as none had previously attempted to do, perhaps with more drama than the story demanded. There were limits beyond which he could not usefully proceed as there were no personal records of George and Esther Johnston.

In addition to his paper read before this Society, Bergman wrote a short biographical item on the same topic for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* covering the same basic data in his principal article.¹⁹ The same volume of this *Dictionary* included longer biographies of George Johnston himself and of his eldest son George, junior, by a contributor who merely mentions Esther Julian, as she became known, in passing.²⁰ He speaks of her as 'the most beautiful convict girl', but I assume that he was influenced by what Bergman had written to the effect that Esther 'had been a very attractive woman, and as a young girl must have been of excep-

tional beauty'.²¹ The question of her beauty, judged by Bergman from a reproduction of a portrait later in life, made available by a descendant, was of course that writer's subjective impression. It influenced many others on the point. He introduced into her story a measure of hyperbole, which explains for me, for example, his statement that this extraordinary story was 'unique in Australian, as well as Jewish history'.²² He had turned her, I believe, into some sort of icon, and particularly so for Jewish readers.

Australian Genesis, written by Rabbi J S Levi and Dr Bergman was the first complete history of the Australian Jewish communities from the First Fleet to the gold rushes. As I have mentioned, an early chapter dealt with an account of Esther Abrahams. The authors stated that for the six months when George Johnston unofficially replaced Bligh as head of the colony, she would have been acutely aware of protocol and precedent. I would argue that Esther would not have been concerned with ceremonial even if the NSW Corps may have had a heightened temporary experience of it. In writing of a King's birthday evening entertainment, Lemcke remarks that it was unlikely to have been held at Annandale as 'Esther would presumably not have been regarded as an acceptable hostess by some of the guests'.²³ Perhaps some may consider that Lemcke was not sympathetic towards Esther. Nevertheless, Bergman himself wrote of her as seeming, as he thought, 'to have effaced herself and stayed in the background'.²⁴ He could have added that her persistence in an unmarried condition would have militated against her gaining social acceptance, especially in the upper exclusionist circles of that time. In a return of landholders in 1807, Johnston's family is shown as consisting of a concubine and six illegitimate children, which has elicited the comment from Lemcke that women such as Esther Johnston were unlikely to be 'invited to take tea with those ladies of the establishment who were both respectably married and free from convict taints'.²⁵ It has been pointed out that the great majority of children, predominantly the offspring of convicts or emancipists, were born illegitimate, at least to the end of the Macquarie era. Thus, the early colony was described by a well-known historian as suffused with an atmosphere of rum and rascality.

A SHADOWY PICTURE

After the passage of many years since the research of Jewish or other historians, it has to be noted that there are no direct papers, apart from the official and other such records, as source materials relating to our 'First Lady'. As is the case with George Johnston, it

has to be understood that there is no extant documentation to furnish information on his personal thoughts relating to himself, his family members and others, or respecting his motivations or aspirations. Lemcke properly admits that the real character of George Johnston remains elusive. All his records, consisting of diaries, letters and other personal papers disappeared entirely after about 1929. His descendants are believed to have been inhibited by some of the aspects of the Johnston history, particularly, as Lemcke indicates, by their ancestor's irregular marital situation over a long period and his association with a Jewish convict woman. Lemcke concludes that his biography was disadvantaged by the loss or destruction of family papers. 'We can only patch together', he says, 'a shadowy picture of the man', so that his subject is revealed as 'an elusive and private personality'.²⁶ It must follow, therefore, that the lack of historical sources equally affects the views we have of his association with Esther Johnston. In her case most of the principal events of her life are adequately recorded, such as her trial at the Old Bailey as well as the Inquiry held more than forty years later into her sanity. These two critical incidents in her life, together with events directly affecting George Johnston cover the main part of Bergman's article. There is not too much else of primary significance in Esther Johnson's life. However, in her case, there are also no personal records of the kind to which I have referred, leaving writers to substitute speculation and their imagination as questions arise. They are not to be criticised on that account, though it is not always made clear that Esther's character, her outlook and views associated with her life are not based on direct evidence in many instances. In that respect she is in the same position as George Johnston, and perhaps the historian in her case has even less documentation as a basis for what has been written on various aspects of her story. Even at her trial, and conceding her youth on that occasion, the court record shows that she said nothing more than, 'I leave it to my counsel'.²⁷ Again, when the curtain descended on her future at the hearing into her sanity long afterwards, we are able to learn only that she attributed oppressive acts to her family and wanted to quit the colony.²⁸ We do not know, Bergman wrote, of her reaction to this verdict as she prepared to live for no less than fifteen years at the estate of her son, David, at George's Hall. Nothing whatever is written anywhere of that period of her life. At that point Lemcke comments that what little is known about Esther Johnston suggests that she was a remarkable woman. That writer, as well as Bergman, goes on to say that on her death she was buried in the family vault beside her husband.

It will be seen, hereafter, that there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of Esther's original surname as Abrahams, yet

Bergman was able to tell us nothing more than that Abrahams was probably her maiden name. Nothing seems to be known of her family and its background, nor of Mr Julian, the father of Rosanna, born in Newgate Prison. What, it may be asked, were her views on her Jewish faith into which she was born? If her own thoughts were to be known, how did she come to be driven to crime? What were her thoughts on her relationship with Julian, and afterwards, her *de facto* association with Johnston? To all such questions there are no direct answers from Esther Abrahams, though surmises may be, and have been, suggested. At this point it may be useful to introduce the aid of historical theory which, I apprehend, has seldom be done. A distinguished modern historian and a theorist, E. H. Carr, observes that 'the historian must re-enact in thought what has gone on in the mind of his dramatis personae, so the reader in his turn must re-enact what goes on in the mind of the historian'.²⁹

While traditional Judaic teachings urge us to judge others charitably, that advice can be stretched too far if it is applied as the sole guide in the understanding of an exercise in history such as the present one. It has to be said, as Hilary Rubinstein points out, that Esther Abrahams' 'effective contact with Judaism ended on the day she boarded the *Lady Penrhyn*'.³⁰ She has been thought to have been about sixteen years old when she was sentenced. Presumably she was not living with her family. According to the authors of *Australian Genesis*, it was despair that led to her crime, having discovered that she was pregnant.³¹ She may have been suffering from impoverishment and perhaps homelessness, and it is not known what Julian was doing to protect her. About one year later she was joined by George Johnston at Sydney Cove where, within two months of the landing, she and her daughter, as the Chaplain, Richard Johnson, noted, were sharing George Johnston's accommodation.³² The latter's biographer writes of him that he would have held the view of the time that criminality was inherent in the convict nature. 'Presumably', it is added, 'he regarded Esther as an exception to this doctrine'.³³ Of the many females on the ship which included Esther, the lowest opinion was held of their characters. 'I never could have thought', Lt Ralph Clark wrote in his diary, 'that there were so many abandoned wenches in England'.³⁴ Nevertheless, Esther's was not the only romance, for it is recorded by our co-authors that ten marriages were celebrated during the convict women's first week ashore. Among these marriages, it is noted, was that of the Jewish convict, Francis Hart, to a non-Jewish fellow convict. About the same time there was the marriage of Flora Lara and John Hart by the Chaplain, described as 'the first contracted by two Jews on the Australian continent'.³⁵ The Johnston liaison, however,

was not to be regularised for a quarter of a century. Yet, Esther's first child born in the colony, as Bergman mentions, was duly baptised, and it may be assumed that the births of all her other children — apart from Rosanna — were registered in the Church of England. Rosanna herself in 1805 was a party to a regular marriage in the same Church to Isaac Nichols when Rev Marsden was apparently concerned to enter her maiden name as Abrahams. The suggestion has been made that Esther may have thought that the surname Julian, in any event, was less obviously a Jewish name.

COHABITATION WITHOUT MATRIMONY

Unpopular as he was, and hated by Macarthur, Rev Marsden expressed his strong concern about the low state of colonial morality, particularly the cohabitation of so many without marriage. 'Without matrimony', he stated, 'no instruction given by the schoolmasters, no labour of the Clergy, no power of the executive Authority can render any moral or religious Advantage to the rising generation. From this Source may be traced all the serious evils that have and do exist in the Settlement...'³⁶ In the course of an essay by him on this problem he offered advice which eventually reached the notice of the English authorities. 'Should Government', Marsden further proceeded, 'prohibit the single men whether Settler, Soldier or Prisoner from taking the female Convicts to live with them publicly, as their Mistresses, this would greatly tend to better their Situation as it would encourage matrimony.'³⁷ After his arrival as the new governor to succeed Bligh, and having been instructed to take some action to reform the laxity of marital morality, Lachlan Macquarie immediately issued a proclamation in 1810 against what he termed as 'a scandal to religion, decency and all good government' resulting from the practice of cohabitation in disregard of matrimony.³⁸ Notwithstanding this proclamation, another four years passed before the Johnstons decided upon a Church marriage. In attempting to explain the long delay, Bergman suggested that Esther may have been married in England to Julian in a private ceremony, and he further wrote that, if this was not the case, she may have regarded herself as married to Julian, and believed that Julian was still living. Whatever may have been the case, the remarks were intended to be based on speculation alone, Bergman conceding that, 'The full truth of her secrets may never be known'.³⁹ In my view, George and Esther Johnston may very well have been concerned that under the criminal law, assuming a previous marriage by Esther and with Julian still living, she would have been guilty of bigamy by agreeing to a further marriage in the

colony. That legal situation may well have motivated the parties in delaying for so long their marriage. It would be irrelevant to consider the Johnston cohabitation in Jewish law, and there is no indication that Esther had any concerns in this regard. As to her previous association with Julian, and Bergman's belief that she may have regarded herself as married to him, the Jewish religious law in question would not have been so simple as to allow a marriage to be dependent merely on the parties' personal ideas.

A TANGLED SKEIN OF PATRONAGE

By 1806 Johnston was a Major in the NSW Corps and a Lieutenant-Colonel only two years later. He had been commended for his action and courage in suppressing a band of Irish rioters at Vinegar Hill. He and others showed little mercy on that occasion, and it earned him a grant of 2,000 acres. Whatever the social and moral outlook of many others, he might have been expected to provide a better example than living in a *de facto* relationship. It will be recalled that earlier he had been charged with trading in spirits during the governorship of Hunter. He objected to being tried in the colony on this charge and he proceeded to England to face action against him there, only to further object to the jurisdiction of the hearing. The case was remitted to the colony, but no further action eventuated. In turning to the key event in his career there is of course the Rum Rebellion, but its events shed no light of any kind on Esther's position. The rebellion was in part the outcome of a deep quarrel between Bligh and Macarthur, and both of them had their political supporters in England, revealing behind the scenes, as it has been put, 'a tangled skein of patronage'.⁴⁰ It is more than likely that the influence of powerful people helped to secure a lighter penalty for Johnston, Macarthur having been the real instigator. The mutiny led to Johnston's dismissal from the military, which he must have regarded as an unexpected and drastic outcome. Writing in 1813 to Governor Macquarie, Sir David Baird, a member of the Court Martial, said that he had not heard 'the least palliative that was in my mind worthy of consideration'.⁴¹ Prior to becoming involved in the rebellion, Johnston had failed to recognise the seriousness of his action. The NSW Corps had an entrenched influence beyond the control of the governors and it is not surprising that in 1810 it was disbanded.

While Esther Johnston herself had no place whatsoever in the thick of the intrigues and colonial politics which obviously affected her husband, there are clearly arguable features of the latter's career which are overlooked in expressing admiration for Esther

PROCEEDINGS
OF
A General Court-Martial,
HELD AT
CHELSEA HOSPITAL,
Which commenced on *Tuesday, May 7, 1811,* and continued by
Adjournment to *Wednesday, 5th of June* following,
FOR
THE TRIAL
OF
LIEUT.-COL. GEO. JOHNSTON,
Major of the 102d Regiment, late the New South Wales Corps,
ON
A CHARGE OF MUTINY,
(While Major George Johnston, Captain of the said Corps, then under
his Command, and doing Duty at Sydney, in the Colony of
New South Wales;)
EXHIBITED AGAINST HIM BY THE CROWN,
FOR DEPOSING
On the 26th of **JANUARY, 1808,**
WILLIAM BLIGH, ESQ. F.R.S.
THEN CAPTAIN IN HIS MAJESTY'S NAVY, (AND SINCE APPOINTED
REAR-ADMIRAL OF THE BLUE,) CAPTAIN-GENERAL AND GO-
VERNOR-IN-CHIEF IN AND OVER THE SAID TERRITORY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES AND ITS DEPENDENCIES.

TAKEN IN SHORT HAND
By MR. BARTRUM, of CLEMENT'S INN,
Who attended on behalf of Governor Bligh, by Permission of the Court.

*Proceedings of a Court Martial for the
Trial of Lieutenant Colonel Johnson*

Johnston, whether as the mother of his many children or as one who was responsible for overseeing his interests during his absences from the colony.

Today, Esther Johnson is being applauded in some non-Jewish circles, and tours are being held in the Sydney suburb of Annandale to meet, as it were, 'Esther Abrahams on foot', and to meet thereby one of Sydney's 'most fascinating and controversial historical figures'. These lecture tours are presently being conducted by Mary Haire for the Workers' Educational Association. In addition, on 26 May, 2002, the Esther Abrahams' Pavilion in the Municipality of Leichhardt in Sydney was officially opened. Incised in the Pavilion floor is a carved portrait of Esther.⁴²

In isolation from the whole of their life story, it is a moot point whether the Annandale part of it adds much to the overall significance of George or Esther Johnston, other than the fact that they were colonial pioneers in common with many others. As I have said, for the purpose of the colonial history, Esther's Jewishness does not extend beyond her origins. It seems to me that in presenting her previously little known story, our writers have applied the dictum to this long departed figure of *nil nisi bonum*, an almost pious concern to speak only good of her. They have allowed her to develop into an extraordinary figure, which has begun to extend outside the Jewish community. She seems now to be accepted as the stereotype of a successful Jewish convict, and in the *Forefathers* she is listed among twenty emancipists who experienced such success. Rabbi Levi has argued that: 'In Australia, prosperity appears to have brought about stronger links with the Jewish community than adversity'.⁴³ If so, those links were often not religiously Jewish, and Esther Abrahams/Johnston was no exception in that respect; nor are there records showing that she maintained connections with the Jewish group. Even the Jewish Christian, Jacob Josephson, donated funds to the Building Appeal of the Sydney Synagogue, and Samuel Lyons, nominally a Protestant, also donated generously, but there is no record of Esther Johnson making a donation. Perhaps she did not donate because she was in virtual retirement.

GEORGE ROBERT NICHOLS

Dr Bergman has written that the marriage of Rosanna to the emancipist, Isaac Nichols, 'provides the solution for at least one of the mysteries of Esther Abrahams' life'.⁴⁴ It is not clear what he intended by this statement. He noted that Esther brought her illegitimate child, Rosanna, with her to Sydney, concluding his paper with the comment that Rosanna's son, George Robert Nichols, was aware of

his Jewish descent and heritage. His final remarks on this point seem to have ended on a religiously sounding note in referring to the latter's support for a measure of State Aid for the Jewish community. In 1854, G R Nichols, grandson of Esther Johnston, then a member of the Legislative Council, was able to have placed on the estimates an annual sum of £200 to secure the stipend for the Jewish Minister. After a few years' opposition to such a move, it was Nichols and others such as Robert Campbell, Wentworth and Parkes whose liberal views prevailed. This has since been described as 'more in tune with colonial opinion, and reflected more faithfully colonial reality.'⁴⁵

Nichols had been the editor and proprietor of the radical publication, *Australian*; he denounced transportation, and was a spokesperson for colonial independence. He supported the Jewish claims on behalf of a people who were the 'original propagators of Christianity', while Parkes, a noted democrat, was the 'unchanging friend' of Jacob Levi Montefiore. Writing in 1970, Getzler said that Nichols was 'possibly of Jewish descent', mentioning a comment in the *Jewish Chronicle* at the time of Nichols' action in the Legislature.⁴⁶ It will now be seen from a brief reference to that newspaper report in the recently published second edition of *Australian Genesis* that George Moss had there advised that Nichols was, in fact, of Jewish descent, stating also that he had donated £100 to the proposed Hebrew Grammar school.⁴⁷ Bergman himself had noticed an early article by Rabbi Porush in this *Journal* where he wrote that Nichols 'is said to have had a Jewish mother', which Bergman went on to say was indeed true. Jewish writers without sufficient research had expressed themselves cautiously on the matter of descent in question. Whatever the religious law, Rosanna Julian married Isaac Nichols in church and it is presumed that the children were duly baptised. It is not difficult to assume, however, that G R Nichols' pro-Jewish efforts may have been actuated in part by Jewish sympathies on his part. Educated in England, and later a well-known colonial lawyer and parliamentarian, he gained a reputation as a progressive democrat with a strong liberal outlook. It is consistent with his political attitude that he was supportive of the Jewish claim for equality.⁴⁸ In his very last words on the subject, Bergman, in effect, provided Nichols' grandmother, Esther Johnston, with an unexpected halo when he stated that 'the coming to Australia of Esther Abrahams-Julian became a blessing for Australian Jewry'.⁴⁹ If not poetic licence, I believe that this was expressive of his profound admiration for Esther Abrahams. Of G. R. Nichols' antecedents, on the other hand, our historians are much less grandiloquent in speaking of him as 'this son of an illegitimate Jewish girl and a convict'⁵⁰, which might be thought as inappropriate.

ate when applied to a figure of Nichols' repute and standing. His father, Isaac, was a highly respected colonist who, as far as I am aware, had suffered no opprobrium as a former convict. His wife, Rosanna, probably illegitimate, was unlikely later to be disadvantaged by the fact of her origins.

The efforts by G R Nichols on behalf of the Jews of Sydney, then called Hebrews, are referred to as 'a fitting sequel to her story', an allusion of course to his grandmother, Esther. In the same context, when mentioning the presentation to Nichols of a testimonial gift by the Sydney Synagogue in appreciation of his actions, it does not appear to be the case that the synagogue records indicated that the congregation was mindful of his relationship to Esther Johnston. The actual text of the letter to Nichols is quoted in this *Journal* without there being mention of this fact⁵¹ even though they were, no doubt, aware of that relationship.

The verdict of the Court-Martial against Johnston led to the termination of his military career, which came as a bitter blow to him. He had hoped to be exonerated, expecting, too, that his connections and patronage would have secured a full acquittal. The citizens had been invited at the time 'to join in thanks to Almighty God for His merciful interpolation in their favour'.⁵² A digression in lighter vein here suggests itself, derived from the Midrash of Jewish religious literature. It is told that certain prominent persons all benefited by heeding advice offered by their wives. Thus, in one such instance in the Scriptures concerning a rebellion against the authority of Moses, the conspirators incurred the most dire consequences while one of their number was saved from their fate, having decided to act on his wife's counsel urging him to abstain from what was being planned. There is, of course, no indication that Esther Johnston advised her husband prior to the Rum Rebellion. The proceedings in England against George Johnston deprived her of his company for over four years until 1813, when he returned as a civilian to the colony ready to embark on a legalised marriage in the following year.

THE CONVICT HERITAGE

An attitude of mind has developed after more than two centuries, casting the least aspersions on the national character as a result of the convict phase of history. Group opinions, it is pointed out, have been forthcoming from Australian nationalists, radicals, and 'old Australian families with a skeleton in the cupboard', as Manning Clark writes.⁵³ In the latter category have been some of the Johnston descendants who were responsible for the loss of their ancestors' records. There are others who welcome with pride a family link with

the colony's founders, whether convicts, or not. The sense of community among the convicts induced some to associate it with the Australian feeling for equality, which Clark describes as being a rather fanciful reaction.⁵⁴ The Jewish convicts, small in numbers, attracted no hostility from the others, which may have helped to strengthen their group consciousness as Jews, at least for those with residual interest to do so. Between the Jewish element and the others a process of integration was noticeable, as evidenced, for example, by the leadership role of Edward Davis in the Jewboy Gang. Today, it is unusual to hear of a member of the Jewish community being able to trace lineage back to the convict times. Only recently in Sydney, Allan Lesnie passed away. He was a well-known identity in the Jewish community and beyond, as were his parents before him. An obituary by one of the family, published in the general press, commenced with the statement that, 'Allan Lesnie was exceptionally proud of his Australian heritage, which included on his mother's side no fewer than three Jewish convicts, one of whom was Mordecai Moses...'.⁵⁵ He was transported in 1836 and his story is briefly told by Bergman who emphasised his services in the Sydney and York Street Synagogues.⁵⁶ The aforesaid heritage does not necessarily increase in proportion to the number of family convicts, even if as many as three is unusual. Two of those mentioned do not have any important Jewish historical interest, Mordecai Moses alone being of significance. Whether merited, or not, notoriety was gained for Joseph Samuel for his seemingly miraculous deliverance from the hangman's noose, and for Ikey Solomon and his reputation as 'one of the best known convicts in colonial Australia'.⁵⁷ Regarding Esther Johnston, it is her spectacular story which has attracted attention. In a visit to the Sydney Jewish Museum an enlarged reproduction of her portrait dominates the Australian Jewish history section, and I have asked for the reason for her being so featured. On the other hand, despite valuable communal services rendered by Mordecai Moses, he has in fact since been given but little recognition.

A bi-centenary has passed since the foundation of Australia, but it was only about a half century ago that our historians began to reveal to their community the various stories of early Jewish interest. The long delay was occasioned by the serious paucity of records, practically no previous research having been done, and a long prevailing disinterest to learn anything of the community's history, not least if there was a convict element in it. When the disclosures ultimately came to light, former illusions were shattered as some learnt of that past with almost disbelief, while others were happy to seize the opportunity to claim convicts as heroes. The more dramatic the

historical scribes were able to be in their writings, then, less perspective and analysis was applied by some in an understanding of the history. So it was indeed with our First Lady, not unlike Queen Esther of Biblical fame, who was selected from among all the maidens, pleasing the ruler and obtaining kindness of him, she being 'fair and beautiful'.⁵⁸ It is remarkable, therefore, that the presentation of Esther Abrahams reads much like a *megillah* (a scroll), though *per se* in all its details the Jewish relevance is largely confined to her origins. Towards the end of her life she appears to have retained some connections seen with the Jewish witness at her Sydney trial (Jacob Isaacs) and the Jewish lawyer representing her, David Poole. Apart from its intrinsic interest, her story conveys to my mind sadness, her success marking the onset of numerous losses of Jews from their community in the process of assimilation, which continued into the twentieth century. That was the stark reality under the conditions of the earlier times for which the leaders of Anglo-Jewry largely shared responsibility. The problems of intermarriage proved to be a festering sore in the body of Australian Jewry from the date of the beginnings at Sydney Cove. Against that historical background I would be slow to give credit to Esther Johnston simply because her grandson was later helpful to the Jewish community.

THE ANTI-HEROES

In a press review of *Australian Genesis* when it first appeared in 1974, a writer at that time introduced the book with the newspaper headline, 'The convict girl who became 'first lady''.⁵⁹ On the launching of the book, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* religion reporter at that time, Alan Gill, emphasised a facetious note by Sir Asher Joel who remarked that the book represented an unusual launching by him as it told (inter alia) of Jewish convicts and other evildoers. Sir Asher stated that Jewish families liked to claim descent from rabbis and community leaders but in Australia future generations would try to claim fellowship with thieves, pickpockets and prostitutes.⁶⁰ According to this same reporter, the women present at the function 'wore expensive jewellery and toasted the Jewboy Gang, whose members (light fingered where riches and jewellery were concerned) would surely have turned in their graves'. It was added, that religious and ethnic communal leaders frequently spoke of their heroes, but it was surely unusual to write of their villains, treating the occasion with 'quasi-religious solemnity'.⁶¹ After all this lapse of time it is questionable whether this report was a fair one since it did not indicate that the book provided the first detailed study of many aspects of the development of Jewish communal life in Australia.



Rabbi John Levi and Dr George Bergman with Sir Asher Joel at the launching of Australian Genesis in 1974

The co-author, Rabbi Levi, was quoted as saying that 'Australia was the land in which anti-heroes were the true heroes', and there was no reason to expect its Jews to be an exception to that attitude. There was no doubt a time when such views were more widely held, particularly at the height of convictism and for some time afterwards, including the bushrangers who were sometimes seen as folk heroes, 'wild colonial boys' whose fame symbolised for some a developing national spirit.⁶² In later times it was to be the Australian Diggers at war whose courage and spirit of mateship earned national admiration, though most of these fighters were among the first to reject claims for heroic status. Nevertheless, some are carried away by romantic and sentimental understandings of past history. Scholars of the convict period such as John Cobley and others have written that many of those transported were habitual criminals and ne'er-do-wells. Thus, in the study of Eris O'Brien on the subject, attention is drawn to the realities of the early colonial history, and it is correctly stated, that the 'penal era flourished in romance, but

did not attract historical curiosity'.⁶³ A calmer appraisal of the historical issues is now possible since those remote times. Yet, while the relevant Jewish history has been well covered, there are some romantic illusions that are still attached to it. Dr Bergman himself has been quoted as saying that, 'history written should be true', but I do not know that he meant more than to make a case for careful research. That is not to say, however, that there should not be reasonable scope for interpretation of what has been recorded, and bearing in mind that it is open for review. On that basis, and at the beginning of this twenty-first century, I would suggest that the *amour propre* of today's Jewish community is not so fragile as not to be able to visualise Esther Johnston and other Jewish convicts on the basis of their real and individual merits, as with non-Jewish convicts. Most of the facts of her story are now well established, and I cannot see that there is anything to be apprehended from a different approach under which most of the romance is dispelled. Viewed from the facts of her history, it is apparent from the circumstances that her future fate in the colony was merged with that of George Johnston for some thirty-five years until his death in 1823, after which we learn only of the Inquiry into her sanity, itself followed by her retirement over a substantial period and her passing in 1846. Then, several years later G R Nichols was able to assist the Hebrew congregation, a happy eventuality and probably the sole occurrence of Jewish value in the whole story after more than two generations of the Johnston and Nichols families residing in the colony.

A LETTER FROM SYDNEY TOWN

To commemorate the State's bi-centenary *The Bulletin* published a specially sponsored item entitled, 'An Australian History by those who wrote it'.⁶⁴ It consisted of selected extracts from letters sent between Great Britain and the new settlement, including one from a female convict who recorded 'the distresses of the women' as being 'past description'. There was mention of a letter of 1792 by Governor Phillip discussing his pet, causing the publisher to comment that the animals probably fared better than some of the convicts. In a different context altogether, however, in a book of 1996 relating to the career of a descendant of George and Esther Johnston, I was amazed to read therein the text of a letter dated 26 January 1792, purporting to be addressed from Sydney Town by Esther Abrahams to her 'Dearest Mother', presumably then in London, though that address is not specified. On enquiry of the book's author I indicated my doubts concerning the authenticity of this letter only to be given the assertion that the letter was authentic and originated in 'family

papers'. However, no further information was forthcoming.⁶⁵ I have discussed this letter with Jewish historians who agree with me that both the internal and external evidence make it highly unlikely that the letter was written by Esther Abrahams. A copy of it, if not the original itself, would be expected to be held by the Mitchell Library in Sydney. That Library knows nothing of the letter, and it is not mentioned in Lemcke's book. My considered opinion is that it was composed for some reason by one who has imagined the kind of remarks expected to be made by the supposed writer of the letter. It has been read, as published, by Rabbi Levi who thinks that some of the statements are not inappropriate had Esther Abrahams written the letter. However, I as well as others believe that it lacks the spontaneity of a person writing such a letter. I will not reproduce it here in all its details, and I think that it suffices to draw attention to some aspects of it. In the book in question a collection of various sources are provided by the author who specifically includes the 'First Lady' as a source, but referred to it as unknown. I would have thought that *Australian Genesis* had been intended.

The letter bears an unlikely address, 'Sydney Town'. The true site of the settlement was established at Sydney Cove. The area was then popularly referred to as 'The Camp', and continued to be known by this name for a number of years. Even in 1792, the Judge Advocate, Richard Atkins, wrote in his 'Journal' of his walking from the Camp, 'for so Sydney', as he said, 'is called'.⁶⁶ It is perhaps a coincidence that the letter was written on 26 January 1792, the colony's anniversary. The internal indications are, firstly, the stilted quality of the language used, such as 'It was a bitter thing to happen to a Jewish child and I am still ashamed that I have hurt the Abrahams name and all our family who have been good people in London'; 'Rosanna is growing to be a fine girl and in this healthy climate she thrives...'; 'Some day I am sure that George will marry me and we will have a family of many children'; 'George often says that I was the most beautiful girl he ever saw, with my black hair dangling below my shoulders, my oval face and almond eyes and many have said the same since and think me the beauty of Botany Bay'. There are further phrases of this nature, all of which are far too polished for such a letter.

Events as late as four or five years after their occurrence are spoken of by the letter writer, giving a reader the impression that this was the first letter to have been written by Esther to her mother since her arrival in Sydney Cove. She says that she now has a little boy of two years but she does not think to say that another child was due in about a month's time. She speaks also of Rosanna's father and says that he forced her to steal, an assertion made for the first time after

the event, of which there is no mention in the records of the trial. In May 1793, Johnston and others received land grants of 100 acres each. It would not be expected that it would have been the subject of premature discussion: 'George is trying to get some land and we hope that he will be given 100 acres at Petersham'. Finally, there is the *piece de resistance* near the close: 'Tell grandfather that I am happy and still worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the prayers that he taught me', ending on the note that 'George was a Christian, and had little George baptised'.

The literacy, style and contents of this letter, as Rabbi Apple believes, make it highly problematical that Esther Abrahams was its author, and one may question, understandably, how it has suddenly emerged in recent times. While I do not question the bona fides of those who released it into circulation, one can only be disappointed that nothing has been done to explain its provenance other than the vague claims that it originated from family papers. The family concerned seems to cling tenaciously to this extraordinary document as a token of their First Fleet heritage. It cannot be questioned that it has relevance to the subject of this paper, and I think that readers of this *Journal* should be fully aware of the claims being made for the letter and should reach their own conclusions in connection with it, a primary consideration being the interests of Australian Jewish historical research.

FIRST LADY IN COLONIAL STATUS

There are a few lines devoted by Dr Bergman to indicate some confusion respecting the actual status in which Esther Johnston was perceived in her time. For all practical purposes, and immediately after the Rum Rebellion and the completion of the ensuing six months period when Johnston ceased to exercise any further control, the writings, whether Jewish or otherwise, tell us little of Esther's position during the interregnum other than referring to her as the First Lady. That of course was a designation unheard of within the colony. There is nothing that shows in any way that she thought of herself in those terms or that she was so regarded. Digression though it be, this female style or rank first came into use in the second half of the nineteenth century in relation to the wives of United States presidents or governors. As George Johnston's unmarried companion, Esther appears to have remained unobtrusive while the colony was under the latter's control in an unofficial acting capacity. Speaking of colonial ladies, the wife of John Macarthur, Elizabeth, who cannot be overlooked, is described as the 'first lady of cultured manners and mind to set foot in the prison

colony',⁶⁷ She arrived in 1791 and has been the subject of a biography in her own right, entitled *Australia's First Lady*.⁶⁸ During an absence of her husband after the rebellion, longer than that of Johnston, she too, not unlike Esther, capably managed her husband's extensive estates.

The anti-hero sentiment referred to previously 'had been growing from within almost from the moment of the first unpromising landing in Sydney Cove'.⁶⁹ Whether Jews or not, many of those transported hoped for a better or fairer life than had been their lot under the harsh conditions of the English class system. Though the parallels are not quite comparable, the involuntary migrants would now be regarded as virtually a refugee class. Those who were eventually successful by reason of good fortune, or, their own resourcefulness and endurance, have merited recognition as founders and pioneers of the colony. During those times, and certainly among themselves these convicts preferred to be known rather as 'government men', the social environment being generally marked by their group solidarity. In the case of Esther Abrahams, however, on arrival in the new colony she immediately became identified with George Johnston, which of course removed her from the society of convicts. As self-effacing as she may have been, I would think that the anti-hero approach on our part would no longer be appropriate in her changed circumstances. Unless it is intended to continue with the drama surrounding her story, a factual account of her experiences seems apposite. I do not visualise today, if the report of 1974 was correct, that Jewish leaders would nowadays react in like manner to her story and that of others. While it may be unexpected, I introduce here as an expression of national sentiment, the folksong, *Waltzing Matilda*, composed by the poet, Paterson, about a century ago, and described by a former Prime Minister, Paul Keating, as relating to happenings 'in the realm of the spirit', telling us that we are Australian... 'without beating drums or waving flags or pounding our chests'.⁷⁰ It speaks of the egalitarian quality in the Australian legend, which is relevant, I believe, to the Jewish segment of the history as far back as 1788. The Jewish convicts equally with others shared the same fate and the struggle to survive and succeed. Whatever may previously have been the Jewish attitude towards that history, which was the subject of change over the years, I think I have made it clear that the Jewish community of the present day would acknowledge the efforts of the convict and emancipist settlers, looking at that history objectively and with a minimum of drama. The current multicultural outlook ought not to affect that situation except, as I have attempted to point out, that the assimilation on the previous scale, had it been allowed to continue,

would have boded ill for survival of the Jewish community. The fascinating historical stories of the past, as it appears to me, have tended to obscure that reality, even if the historians had no intention to do so. It will be seen that I have not discussed the Jewish free settlers whose numbers steadily increased from 1828 onwards. That is another phase of the Jewish history, which is covered by *Australian Genesis*, but it obviously has no immediate connection with the subjects of this paper.

Johnston's claim to notice as a colonial figure rests on his part in the Rum Rebellion. At his Court Martial he argued that he had made himself 'the saviour of the colony'. That was probably an exaggerated claim, seeing that he had acted under the influence of Macarthur. In the background entirely of that episode of the history there looms his *de facto* wife, Esther Johnston. As Dr Bergman is careful to note, even as late as 1817 she was entered in the *Musters* as a 'housekeeper' under the name of Julian and as a 'female convict'.⁷¹ It is strange that Johnston had remained unconcerned or without influence at least until then to correct these details in their effect on his wife's position. Important records as they were, Dr Bergman's only comment was that they were unreliable. If such were the difficulties of the Johnston contemporaries on these matters of that family status, it is understandable that they give rise to problems of interpretation for readers of the story as it has been presented to them. The basic facts and events of the story, and Esther Johnston's position as a colonial pioneer are not at issue. If the history is approached as a disciplined inquiry, it is desirable to recognise that more than one interpretation is available. This Historical Society's founders saw fit to adopt the scriptural message, 'Remember the Days of Old', which indicates to me that the research and writing of Jewish history is not necessarily a purely secular exercise, and that it may well be possible to find a spiritual value and dimension in it. In our plural or multicultural present day society it would be regrettable, when recalling the past, if due emphasis is not sufficiently given to the Jewish struggle to maintain group identity rather than diverting an excess of interest in learning what former Jews achieved through maximum assimilation. There are, therefore, aspects of Australian Jewish history with a continuing moral to it, though it is not always transparent to the casual observer. Perhaps, then, I may be excused in returning to the Australian folksong and to listen carefully, as the poet wrote, 'His ghost may be heard as you pass by the billabong'. As I have mentioned, the message is egalitarian, a quality which can be appreciated in the Jewish mind and conscience. When all the narrative and other interest is extracted from some of the spectacular accounts of

the earlier history, it becomes timely from the Jewish angle to want to know something more of those whose lives were not extraordinary but who endeavoured to hold on to the heritage of their people of origin. While, in Esther Johnston's instance she might have been reduced to an equal level with so many others as a convict, fortune smiled on her so as to make that experience relatively transitory, beginning a totally new pattern of life with George Johnston, which inevitably then resulted in her complete removal from her origins.

THE THEORY OF HISTORY

It will not be thought surprising, then, that for the purposes of Jewish history, I find it difficult to place Esther Johnston on a special pedestal. Therefore, I return to the theory of history, which casts illumination on these topics. It has been observed that history is neither theology nor literature. Quite clearly, the meaning of Australia's past, two centuries ago, is not sought in supernatural influences, and equally, not in a collection of stories and legends however skilled the writers, for, if without meaning or significance, there is a lack of a sense of direction which is always so basic for the historian. Hence, as Carr explains, 'History cannot be written unless the historian can achieve some kind of contact with the mind of those about whom he is writing', and as he proceeds further to say, that there 'is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and past'.⁷² Theory though they may be, these thoughts should be of particular relevance to the study of the Jewish community's history in this multicultural or pluralistic society when there is the perception that Jewish consciousness has been growing in a positive direction. Accordingly, and unless motivated towards it by passing curiosity alone, the accounts given of Esther Johnston and others should cause us today to pause and reflect upon the accumulated losses of personnel sustained by the earlier Jewish communities in this land, commencing indeed with their first experiences. Even though Australia has been depicted as a land of equality and freedom, during its early years many of the Jewish minority gained personal success at the cost of abandoning all the traditions of their people of origin.

There are broad trends in historical writings and it becomes apparent that the writers are the products of their particular society, and it is not an unfriendly criticism to invite attention to changes in social outlook. It is not enough to look only for the writer's name and the date of publication as important factors.⁷³ The research relating to Esther Johnston and others was published after

a prolonged drought in the production of such history within the Jewish community. Now that two generations have passed since the stories were written, it is appropriate to reconsider the interpretation placed by the readers of this history featuring a personage such as Esther Johnston. The time has long gone when the community was embarrassed to admit to the fact that there was a quota of transported convicts from within their own group. On the other hand, noting the current advance in Jewish consciousness and identity, it has to be appreciated that many of these stories, however otherwise interesting or entertaining in general, are very much incidental to Jewish endeavour in our communal history. 'Old Jewish religious and family loyalties', it is proper to notice, 'were erased by the pressures of penal life, the struggle for existence precluded the development of a Jewish community.'⁷⁴ Nevertheless, I have emphasised that a figure such as Esther Johnston should not be treated as an icon of the history, for I think that a reassessment of her story may well be justified.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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THE COMPLEX COLONIAL: THE CASE OF SAMUEL LYONS

Nick Dyrenfurth

ABSTRACT

The story of colonial Jewry is a complex and often fragmentary topic. Much is now known about the origins and early development of this small antipodean community. However the lives of early Jews are often discussed as cursory or somehow free-floating in the fluid and rapidly transforming colony. The life of Samuel Lyons is one such example. His story conforms and contradicts the general Jewish experience but is unexplainable without a contextual understanding of his contemporary society — its debates and peculiarities. My aim is to explain and place Lyons within the context of colonial Sydney whilst also paying attention to his often tense and contradictory, though ongoing, ties with his original faith and its wider diaspora.

The story of Samuel Lyons, the Jewish-born convict, entrepreneur and emancipist, who became one of the ‘more substantial’¹ members of colonial Sydney, is full of contradictions and tensions. Lyons’ experience arguably runs parallel to the trajectory of Australian colonial society. His was the ‘classic’ and mythologised story of sin and redemption within an (idealised) upwardly mobile and often fluid antipodean society. Indeed, four years after his death, Godfrey Charles Mundy observed that Lyons provided ‘one satisfactory instance in connection with the subject of wealthy emancipated prisoners of the crown’.² However, Lyons’ story is more than pure material gain or conformism. Indeed, his tale is part of a relatively forgotten tradition of Jewish emigration before the onset and aftermath of the European Holocaust. Traditional accounts have tended to highlight the Jewishness of certain early Australians, as an end in itself, or constructing the diaspora as

practical necessity or conscious development. Yet, Lyons' story cannot stand as a blueprint of the typical Jewish experience.

I will argue that he developed his own self-interested sense of new class-consciousness, which was both within and against traditional religious and cultural ties. Most of Lyons' exertions after he achieved his prosperity and social standing were spent defending a sense of masculine 'colonial honour', particularly within the realm of the emancipist struggle. Moreover Lyons, despite his implicit denials (witnessed in his clashes with the newspapers during the 1830s), was an important political agent in the developing 'free' colonial society — largely demonstrated through his involvement in the emancipist cause. His personal struggle for 'respectability' created a clear distinction between the public and private spheres of his life. In addition, accounts such as Mundy's have consciously or unconsciously removed elements of his character forming a popular though very partial historical memory. Lyons almost Machiavellian nature, his mistress, illegitimate child, and Jewish heritage have frequently been ignored or understated. My approach is two-fold within a chronological framework. Firstly, I will explain and identify his role and experience within colonial society, particularly amidst developing constructs of an increasingly colonial liberal commerce. Secondly, I will aim to explore and understand Lyons' relationship with his religious faith and the small Jewish community during its formative period in Australia.

Samuel Lyons was born in London in 1791, the son of Levy and Hannah Lyons. The Lyons family was likely to have come from an Ashkenazi background,³ the dominant Jewish group in London by the late eighteenth century. Given that Lyons was convicted at the 'Old Bailey', like 74% of his fellow Jewish felons, he is more than likely to have lived and worked in the East End of London.⁴ Whilst little is known about his formative years, Lyons appears semi-literate, and his family relatively anglicised. His listed occupation was as a tailor (in keeping with the large Jewish representation within the apparel trade), yet work may have been infrequent and indeed marginal. Lyons' semi-literacy, and initial trade, would later prove crucial in a developing colony in which capital and government sought pragmatic responses to growing levels of demand for producer and consumer durables. Perhaps owing to economic difficulties or the low paid nature of his employment, Lyons, through individual necessity or group influence drifted into petty crime. In fact, before his arrest, Lyons was apparently well known to police 'as a member of a gang of three'.⁵ Lyons, aged 23, was charged and convicted on 16 February 1814 with stealing a handkerchief worth five shillings from a passer-by, Mr Robert Goodsall, on London Bridge.

Lyons was sentenced to 'transportation for life'.⁶ This 'harsh' sentence resulted from the British courts' attempt to permanently 'rid' London of petty criminality, but also indicates Lyons' likely, though undocumented involvement, in previous offences and association with criminals.

In January 1815, after an eight month journey, Lyons arrived on the *Marquis of Wellington* in Sydney and was made the assigned servant to a 'Mrs. Armitage'. Lyons arrived with a relatively large number of fellow Jewish felons,⁷ (ten — the equal highest number transported on one ship alongside the *Lady Castlereagh* of 1818) which may have assisted his adjustment to his new environments, but also provided for his initial 'incorrigible'⁸ state. In any event, Lyons would later use his Jewish heritage selectively, listing himself as Protestant in the 1828 census and later, challenging any early sense of Jewish solidarity. Lyons, like many other convicts with little or no experience as 'proper servants' may not have been used to such regular or long hours within his assigned service.⁹ Just three months after his arrival, according to the *Sydney Gazette* of 22 April 1815, Lyons absconded with a fellow Jew, ten year old 'John Morris'.¹⁰ Both were eventually found and in February 1816 Lyons was corporally punished and reassigned as a convict in Sydney. Lyons' rejection of authority had a cumulative effect, yet he had the clear advantage of youth, and apparently time to reform. As Robson has argued, 'convicts were not vicious thieves incapable of reformation, or unable to cease their criminal activity'.¹¹

However the young Lyons failed to reform and as a result of likely misbehaviour was sent to Hobart Town in late 1816, on the brig *Kangaroo*, for secondary punishment. Lyons, perhaps aware of conditions in Van Dieman's Land, made furtive arrangements with Lieutenant Captain Jeffreys for passage back to England, in apparent return for the safe journey of 2000 gallons of rum to be smuggled into Hobart Town.¹² Whether this represents Lyons' ability to bluff or a reality of substantial contacts in colonial society or back in England is open to interpretation. Nevertheless, Lyons was hidden beneath the decks of the ship with four other convicts but before the ship sailed Lyons and company were captured and found guilty of secretly planning to leave the colony.

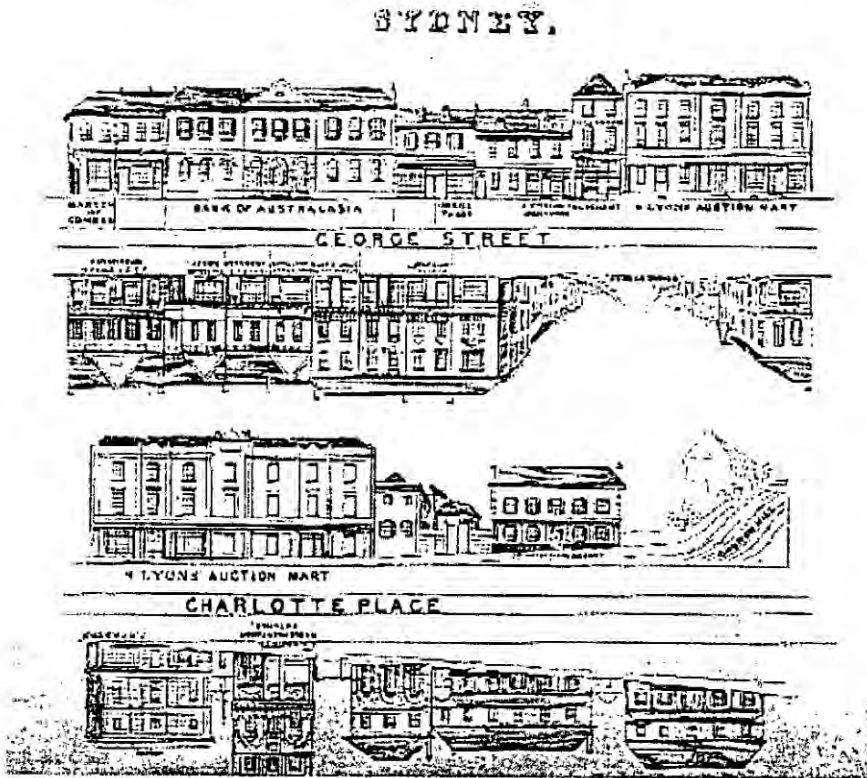
After a somewhat lenient sentence for a period of confinement, Lyons appeared to take steps towards respectability. In the pragmatic settings of the new colony, Lyons was not limited to his former occupation. Whether he bribed an official to guarantee his self-employment is unknown but highly likely. So whilst re-applying himself as both a tailor and general dealer,¹³ such was Lyons' durability that he competed (unsuccessfully it seems perhaps owing to

his diminutive stature of 5'5") in amateur boxing matches alongside friend and fellow shipmate, Moses Moses.¹⁴ In addition, Lyons, like numerous other Jewish emigrants, prepared plans to open a tavern and 'set up house' with a woman who would later become 'known' as his mistress, 'Ann Lyons'.¹⁵ Perhaps struggling to pay his debts, or still attracted to a rebellious life made possible by criminal contacts, Lyons had 'unfortunately ... not rid himself of an itch for other people's property.'¹⁶ In July 1819, he was charged with robbing government stores.¹⁷ He received 200 lashes, and was sentenced to four years at the 'dreaded' Hunter River Coal mines at Newcastle.¹⁸ The psychological glimpse of respectability offered in Hobart may have acted as a catalyst for Lyons' eventual reformation, but being physically 'lifted out' of Hobart had important practical effects.

This presumably depressing experience appeared to finally reform Lyons. As Mundy, speculating on his transformation, rather dramatically suggested: 'Perhaps the devil was whipped out of him. Perhaps reflection cast the foul fiend out.'¹⁹ Lyons, probably on account of good behaviour or skilful cultivation of connections, was sent back to Sydney in early 1822 as the assigned servant of fellow Jewish emancipist and publican Joel Josephs. Josephs may have been the steadying influence that Lyons required. On 28 May 1822 Lyons, aged 31, married Mary Murphy, the daughter of a former Irish convict, who it appears was aged between 15 and 16 years of age. Significantly, they were married 'according to the rites and ceremonies of the Holy Catholic Church.'²⁰ Whilst Lyons appears ambivalent to Judaism in a strict religious sense (his social and related business ties were less so) his marriage to an Irish Catholic was a practical response to the fact that very few female Jews were transported. Only six were transported between 1810 and 1819, and only 7% (28) of the Jewish convict group of were women.²¹ Furthermore 'because women of their own age group were missing, (convict) men married into the next generation.'²²

The role of paterfamilias and married life transformed Lyons. Lyons was keen to please his new wife and as a testament to Mary's likely influence, or an act of religious compromise, all three children were baptised in the more socially respectable Church of England.²³ On 24 March 1825, Lyons received a Conditional Pardon. By June 1827, Lyons appears to have accumulated or been sent enough funds from England (an undocumented but seemingly important link), to open his own drapery business in Pitt St, Sydney. In the same month he received a Ticket of Leave. Within the new few months Lyons had expanded his business, moved to George St, and opened a general store. By 1828, he gained the 'key to his fortune': an auctioneer's licence.²⁴ Revealingly, in the same year he

described himself as a Protestant in the census. His newfound respectability saw him granted an Absolute Pardon in May 1832, becoming a 'free and equal citizen' of colonial New South Wales. The governor of New South Wales supported his case by asserting that he had become a 'very industrious and respectable' member of the business community.²⁵ Somewhat earlier, in August 1827 the *Sydney Gazette* noted that Lyons was 'getting a tolerably fair share of the public patronage (of the auctions)' and was 'deserving what he is acquiring by his extra-ordinary application to trade.'²⁶ As a clear measure of Lyons' increasing economic influence, particularly as an auctioneer, it was reported that in 1834, he transacted £61,872 out of a total of £117,537 of land sales in Sydney. This would clearly make Lyons the most prominent and successful auctioneer in colonial Sydney. Lyons also expanded his range of business dealings, acting as financier and moneylender. Lyons' developing expertise was particularly important within real estate and the emergent Australian wool markets.²⁷



Lyon's Auction Mart, 1848 (sourced from 'Sydney 1848', Sydney: Ure-Smith, facsimile edition, 1962, p.10.)

Lyons' success owed much to his pre-transportation trade and literacy but also to the pragmatic requirements of colonial Sydney. Lyons fitted the mould of 'men with scarce skills ... who had developed a useful business [and] were granted indulgences and given early pardons.'²⁸ As Nicholas and Shergold contend, skilled tradesmen were assisted by 'strong demand for consumer and producer goods requiring non-rural occupational skills which the convict workers were able to provide.'²⁹ Moreover, Lyons was aided by the absence of a significant free-landed population.³⁰ Like many colonials there was a clear nexus between the acquisition of land, wealth and social standing.

In 1831, Lyons bought his own large block of land on George St in Sydney, on which he built 'Lyons' Auction Marts'. Lyons Auction Marts, including the residential quarters, were reputedly hailed as the 'finest rooms south of the line.'³¹ At around the same time, Lyons' first wife, Mary died in March 1832, presumably aged 25. The reasons for her death are not documented and Lyons' subsequent 'call' to Ann from Hobart Town provides substantive evidence of a mistress or at least an ongoing contact throughout his first marriage. Though Lyons never remarried, he had a child with Ann two years later, ironically and sentimentally baptised Mary on 27 February 1834. Paradoxically, despite his 'new' relationship and illegitimate child with 'Ann', Mary's death appeared to have had a profound influence. In 1832, and presumably after Mary's death, Lyons joined the newly formed Sydney Synagogue. While Lyons' distance from the Jewish community may appear to reflect his religious ambivalence, in practical terms, the entirely logical 'late' establishment of the Sydney Congregation in 1831 is a more sufficient explanation. However, Lyons lacked a general sense of Jewish 'camaraderie'³² present in colonial New South Wales. For instance, in 1823, as an assigned servant, 'bent on securing a ticket of leave, Lyons did not hesitate to betray two fellow Jewish convicts who attempted to stow away on a ship bound to England'.³³ Later, in 1837, Lyons rabidly pursued and had his Jewish debtor Michael Phillips placed in a gaol in Hobart Town.³⁴ For Lyons, a pragmatic sense of individual economic and social development outweighed community loyalties, particularly as he sought respectability and honour within developing constructs of colonial commerce. By the mid 1830s Lyons had largely, if only materially, escaped his convict origins, being entrenched as a wealthy member of the emerging upper-middle class. However, his sense of respectability and class-consciousness, amid the growing animosity of various Sydney newspapers, meant that elitist acceptance would demand more than material success. As Hilary Rubinstein suggests, 'During the 1830s

and 1840s at least one-fifth of the emerging middle class were Jews. People tended to notice successful Jewish merchants such as ... Lyons and assume that all Jews were people of substance.³⁵

Lyons' increasing economic and political influence aroused strong feelings amongst the 'free settler' elites. Whilst Lyons was ostensibly a member of the newly formed metropolitan elite, he spent much of his latter life defending middle-class 'respectability' within his de-limited conception of a public sphere. Moreover Lyons rapid accumulation of wealth coincided with what McKenzie has described as a 'turbulent period of social change for ... New South Wales [in] a world in flux, where social position remained unfixed and in need of vigorous defence.'³⁶ Lyons played a somewhat 'janus-faced' role; defending against 'exclusivists' attacks while asserting a bourgeois sense of 'respectability'. The emancipists, often newly established landowners but typically always former felons, who felt they had a 'stake' in the colony sought to emphasise occupational identity by repudiating rank derived from birth.³⁷ Aspiring middle class businessmen such as Lyons were instrumental in creating a 'particular brand of masculinity' or narrow fraternity, as they sought to create a society in which they would demand 'earned' political rights.³⁸ In this patriarchal sense of bourgeoisie masculine identity, a cleavage was formed between a 'masculine' and exclusionary public sphere and the 'feminine' private sphere. Unfortunately for Lyons, the emancipist political challenge, with a class, racial and religious specificity of its own, did not go unanswered.

Lyons' growing stature prompted public attack and in 1836 Lyons claimed the substantial sum of £2000 as compensation from the *Sydney Morning Herald* for libel. Lyons' action was the culmination of an ongoing and at times bitter debate. The 'polite world' saw the emancipist threat as the realisation of their old world inspired, 'depraved' colony fears.³⁹ Exclusivists were attempting to send a clear message that New South Wales was 'exclusive' and that emancipist attempts to assimilate would be resisted.⁴⁰ The *Herald* had earlier complained on 2 December 1833 of a large and 'unjust monopoly on the part of the tribe of Israel' to 'the exclusion of the Gentiles' who were turning the Sydney market into 'a fair'.⁴¹ The implication was clear to most. Apart from Lyons' Jewishness, it suggested that a small, noisy minority was exercising power and influence out of proportion to its 'place' in colonial society. And Lyons, whilst not always a devout religious Jew was keen to defend himself and the broader Jewish community against (largely economic based) antisemitism. Old world stereotypes and assumptions of disproportionate Jewish power, 'greed' and 'trickery' still seemingly

persisted.⁴² On 14 March 1834, the *Sydney Monitor* explicitly personalised the attack, accusing Lyons of being the 'head of a small political faction, which if not exposed, will ruin the cause of the emancipist cause.'⁴³ Lyons' fierce response, a sign of his growing stature within colonial Sydney, printed in both *The Australian* (with its qualified editorial support) and the *Sydney Gazette* asserted:

It is no disgrace to be a member of a trading community, and if the Jews do monopolise the retail trade ... it is a more creditable and legal manner of obtaining a livelihood than the fore-stallers who have the honour and distinction of being members of other sects ... calculating on the census the solitary Israelite stands at the ratio of 1 to 273. Why, have the gentiles a deed of settlement more than the infidels, or do they pay more taxes, are they more patriotic?⁴⁴

Though the enemy here was the 'gentile', because of their earlier experiences, emancipists such as Lyons often 'regarded themselves as better patriots'⁴⁵ than the free-landed, perhaps conflated with the gentiles, whom they perceived as transplanting themselves into a newly constituted and oppressive aristocracy.

On 20 June 1836, amidst growing public and elite anger at the auction system, and heightened emancipist and exclusivist tensions, the *Herald* launched a spiteful personal attack on Lyons within a series of articles entitled '*Auctions and Auctioneers*',⁴⁶ referring caustically to a 'foster father' 'Mr.L'. The *Herald* echoed the cries of the exclusivists, who were appalled but nervously conscious that a thrice convicted former felon could actually claim 'respectability' — it was the 'greatest' of all 'the anomalies in this anomalous community'⁴⁷ that:

Outright low scoundrels, who have lost all character, be permitted to annoy and rob respectable persons with immunity, under the pretence of seeking to vindicate their good name, forsooth — even though the sensitive gentleman ... should be three or four times convicted felons, whose backs may yet bear the mark of the lash which, for their crimes, had been justly administered ...⁴⁸

The *Herald* repeated its attack on the 26 October. Again, as a sign of Lyons' political or economic influence (by virtue of the threat of withdrawing advertising), the *Herald* printed his vitriolic reply of 29 October 1836. In essence, Lyons, as a thrice-convicted felon, sought legal recourse against those who sought to 'rob him of his

good name.'⁴⁹ As Mackenzie argues, 'The Lyons case centred on the integral link between commerce, masculine honour and the claims of rising men to political influence.'⁵⁰ The *Herald* claimed that it was 'not our intention to fit any man with a cap — we merely assailed a system.'⁵¹ However, and despite the religious overtones being overlooked, Lyons was eventually awarded the sum of £200 for libel.⁵² Despite the successful judgement, the bitter experience remained with Lyons even after his return from England. For instance, in 1837 Lyons prevented the release of 'free-men' Lawrence and Stephen Spyer from gaol on account of their inability to meet their debts.⁵³ Lyons was somewhat contradictorily signalling his 'respectability' in opposition to the free men's forfeiture of such a social standing as debtors.

Lyons' emancipist claim represented the juncture between an emergent colonial middle-class and newly developing definitions of masculine honour. His successful defence of 'name and honour' was indicative not only of the 'exclusionary practice'⁵⁴ of masculine honour, but also by virtue of Lyons' political and economic influence of 'whose opinion mattered ... and whose reputation was deemed worthy of a particular kind of defence.'⁵⁵ Indirectly, Lyons' libel action influenced contemporary debates about transportation and the development of self-government. Despite his denial of an allegiance to any 'political faction', as Lyons' public standing increased he somewhat unintentionally became politically active. Earlier in 1832, he had been a signatory to a petition requesting trial by jury and cessation of taxation without representation.⁵⁶ By 1836, and the symbolism is stark, Lyons was the 'honorary collector' of the Australian Patriotic Association.⁵⁷ However, Lyons' emancipist credentials were limited by his newfound sense of class-consciousness. For instance in 1842, Lyons petitioned to the City of Sydney that the franchise 'be restricted to those who could claim property worth £100.'⁵⁸ Lyons' rather paradoxical and elitist assertion, which arguably conformed to the growing hierarchical divisions within the emancipist cause, was violently resented, and in November 1842, 'a mob of 200 angry citizens shouted threats and threw stones at his George Street house.'⁵⁹

Despite making his fortune within colonial Sydney, Lyons, partially as a result of the Sydney newspaper attacks, likely (proudly) visiting relatives and his three children who were educated in England, and perhaps burdened with the ongoing reality of his 'convict stain',⁶⁰ announced that he would be retiring from business and returning England on 12 August 1836,⁶¹ for the first and last time since his transportation — though he did not depart until February 1838. However, his stay would be short. Lyons had seem-



A contemporary drawing of Samuel Lyons — a picture of respectability and affluence with auction hammer at hand — though the allusions to his Jewishness are also prominent.
Source: Heads of the People, 1847 cited in Bergman and Levi, Australian Genesis, p. 98

ingly acquired a taste for public life and ‘repelled by the anonymity of London he returned to rebuild his business’⁶² in March 1839. Lyons encountered difficulties on returning from England, particularly after the onset of the 1840s depression. For instance, he was a shareholder in the Bank of Australia that failed in 1844. Mundy later claimed that Lyons failed for an ‘immense sum’ close to £50 000. However, as Mundy also pointed out, Lyons, ‘at the time of the general money quake ... unlike his compeers in mischance, bond and free, who sheltered themselves in the court ... [actually] succeeded in paying up twenty shillings in the pound.’⁶³ Despite the obvious harm to Lyons’ financial position after 1841, he would have received assistance from relatives, and thus was not critically weakened by the depression.⁶⁴ Again the contradictory question of

respectability in public and private spheres emerges, as well as his continuing connections in London: were those connections themselves respectable or indeed criminal in nature?

Within Lyons' pragmatic sense of ideology and community there existed certain ongoing tensions. Despite a long-term religious apathy, Lyons increasingly involved himself in certain aspects of Jewish life, particularly after his return from England. He had a keen interest in education (perhaps realising the practical benefits of his own literacy) and alongside fellow successful emancipist Solomon Levey, was a committee member of the prestigious Sydney College. The college apparently taught the 'Jewish legacy' and possessed 'a compatibility with Jewish needs.' Lyons accordingly provided his children 'the highest education England could furnish'⁶⁵ sending them 'home' without their father and deceased maternal mother, Mary. Ironically, Lyons did not insist on a secular education or religious upbringing, probably as a result of their mother's influence and an attempt to assimilate into the elitist and sectarian public sphere. In this context, tension exists within Lyons' relationship with Australian Jewry. Whilst a critic of antisemitism Lyons exhibited certain ambivalence towards, and in fact did not acknowledge his faith or heritage in an explicit manner. This may have been understandable yet the 'death of his wife, the absence of his children in England, the presence of his brothers and sisters ... and organisation of a Jewish congregation'⁶⁶ combined to bring him back into his ancestral faith. When Lyons died in Sydney after a short illness on 3 August 1851, aged sixty, he was buried in the 'Jewish burial ground, accompanied by the usual ceremonies of that community.'⁶⁷ Lyons' funeral certainly impressed Mundy who glowingly described it as 'perhaps the most numerous procession ever seen in Sydney on similar occasions.'⁶⁸ Indeed his 'cortege consisted of a hearse, nine mourning coaches, sixty private and hired carriages and ten gigs, altogether 80 vehicles.'⁶⁹ Lyons, despite his religious ambivalences played a significant, though unconsciously indirect role in the foundation years of Australian Jewry.

Lyons performed an important role in defining the nature and role of the small emergent Australian Jewish community. As a measure of his success, Lyons brought out his brother Saul Lyons⁷⁰ from England in 1827, his nephew Lewis Samuel in 1829, and his older brother, Abraham and aunt Lydia Samuel in August 1832. Yet, no account of Lyon's life mentions his seemingly fractious relations with his kin, particularly his brothers Saul and Abraham. In June 1833 Lyons sought to recover the sum of £269, 'being ... for the passage-money of the defendant, board and lodging, washing, &c.; as also £100 which the defendant undertook to pay as past of the pas-

sage-money of Mr. Abraham Lyons.⁷¹ He brought a separate case against Saul Lyons for 'the recovery of £100.'⁷² It would seem that Lyons' sense of self — in terms of respectability and honour, at least at this stage, overrode familial ties — yet the later attacks of the exclusivists and newspapers seemed to reverse this tendency. Nonetheless, Lyons' example explicitly points to the long lineage of the Jewish community in Australia. The Jewish community, are arguably the second oldest (after the Aboriginal nations) non-Anglo-Celtic group in Australia, with an estimated eight to fourteen Jews on the First Fleet, and its first free settlers arriving from 1809. The experience of successful emancipists created the ongoing process of chain migration. As Rubinstein has argued, Jewish convicts were the first example of 'forced' or 'non-consensual' Jewish emigration, later overshadowed by the great influx of Jewish refugees after the Holocaust.⁷³ Moreover, examples such as Lyons 'gave it (the Jewish community) its Anglo-Jewish tone'⁷⁴ as derived from London.⁷⁵ Paradoxically, the experience of Lyons perhaps overshadows the majority Jewish experience in colonial Australia, as people tended to notice successful Jewish emancipists and assume certain stereotypical traits — which would reverberate in the increasingly antisemitic nature of accusations against the so-called money power interests after 1820. However, Lyons' Jewishness has often been unrepresented, and 'by the 1820s, Lyons appeared in the historical memory ... solely in the guise of respectable and wealthy Sydney merchant — his convict status, his mistress and illegitimate child, and ... Jewish heritage are excised.'⁷⁶

Samuel Lyons played a prominent, if at times contradictory role within the development of colonial Sydney's economic, political and social life. Lyons pragmatically used his experience in England and was aided by a sense of 'luck',⁷⁷ the practical requirements of the developing colonial economy and perhaps, though undocumented, continuing London links. After his reformation during the late 1820s, Lyons achieved substantial material success, yet elitist acceptance, given his convict (and cockney-Semitic) origins, was far more difficult. Lyons performed an important 'political' role, by virtue of his economic influence, in the development of a 'free' society. However, the 'free' society Lyons and other middle-class emancipists were demanding was exclusionary, articulating a masculine, landowning class view. It articulated a clear distinction between public and private spheres. Lyons spent the first part of his life fighting elite authority and the latter demanding elite acceptance: a contradiction that could never be resolved. Such a contradictory position was arguably mirrored in Lyons' relations with the Jewish

community. Lyons' ambivalent and at times tense relations with the developing community (and his family) perhaps overshadow his indirect influence upon an emergent Australian Jewry. Lyons acted as a prominent critic of antisemitism, and wittingly or unwittingly, made possible the basis of future Jewish emigration.

NOTES

1. G. F. J. Bergman and J. S. Levi, *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers, 1788-1850*, Rigby, Adelaide, Australia, 1974, p.98.
2. Godfrey Charles Mundy, *Our Antipodes, or, Residence and rambles in the Australasian colonies, with a glimpse of the goldfields (3rd ed.)*, Richard Bentley, London, United Kingdom, 1855, p.102.
3. Hilary Rubinstein, *Chosen: the Jews in Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, Australia, 1987, p.7. As Rubinstein demonstrates, the Ashkenazi Jewish population constituted the majority of Jews in the United Kingdom, as opposed to minority elements of Sephardim. As such the majority of Jewish emigration both convict and free was from an Ashkenazim and logically anglicised background.
4. John Levi, *The Forefathers: a dictionary of biography of the Jews of Australia 1788-1830*, Australian Jewish Historical Society, Sydney, Australia, 1976, p.8.
5. Suzanne Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: two centuries of Jewish settlement in Australia (2nd ed.)*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Rose Bay, Australia, 1997, p.15.
6. Levi and Bergman, op. cit., p.95. It is likely that the theft of a handkerchief would have been used as a tool and/or materials within his trade, and thus his crime resulted probably not from idleness but the requirements of his employment, or alternatively, utilised for a speedy sale.
7. Levi, op. cit., pp.129-130. Furthermore, according to Levi (p. 3) 32% of all Jewish convicts sent between 1788 and 1830 were sent to Australia between 1810-1819.
8. Mundy, op. cit., p.102.
9. John Hirst, *Convict Society and its Enemies: A history of early New South Wales*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, Australia, 1983, p.32.
10. Levi and Bergman, op. cit., p.95.
11. L.L Robson, *The Convict Settlers of Australia (2nd ed.)*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Australia, 1994, p.135.
12. Levi and Bergman, op. cit., p.96.

13. *Ibid*, p.96. Such general dealings, according to Levi and Bergman, included providing the colonial Police Department a quantity of pencils.
14. *Ibid*..
15. *Ibid*..
16. *Ibid*..
17. Lyons was charged alongside Morris, John Faulkner and his son John Pascoe Faulkner. Incidentally, Faulkner Jnr was later to become one of the founders of Melbourne. Ann's reaction is undocumented, though moving elsewhere was impossibility, but her quick departure to Sydney upon the death of Lyons' first wife is suggestive.
18. Levi and Bergman, op. cit., p.97.
19. Mundy, op. cit., p.102.
20. Levi and Bergman, op. cit., p.97.
21. Levi, op. cit., p.12.
22. Robson, op. cit., p.108 (my addition).
23. Mary Murphy and Samuel Lyons had three children in three years: George Joseph Lyons born on 4.4.1823, Hannah Lyons on 10.10.1824, and Samuel Lyons Jnr on 9.6.1826. All three were baptised in the Church of England. This may have been easier for Samuel the Jew, as many Jews listed themselves as Protestant, than Mary the Catholic.
24. Levi and Bergman, op. cit., p.99.
25. Darling to Goderich, 20 October 1831, Dispatches, Part 4, p. 444, A1267 Mitchell library, cited in Kirsten McKenzie, 'Of Convicts and Capitalists: Honour and Colonial Commerce in 1830s Cape Town and Sydney', *Australian Historical Studies*, v.33, Special issue no.118, 2002, p. 209.
26. *Sydney Gazette*, 14 August 1827 (my addition), cited in Bergman and Levi, op. cit., p.99.
27. Levi and Bergman, op. cit., p.102.
28. Hirst, op. cit., p.85.
29. Stephen Nicholas and Peter Shergold, 'Unshackling the Past', in Stephen Nicholas (ed.), *Convict Workers: Reinterpreting Australia's past*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, Australia, 1988, p.9.
30. Hirst, op. cit., p.85.
31. Rutland, op. cit., p.15.
32. Hilary Rubinstein, *Chosen: The Jews in Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, Australia, 1987, p.8. Rubinstein explains this general sense as well as exceptions like Lyons.
33. *Ibid*, p.8.
34. Bergman and Levi, op. cit., p.202. This is despite Lyons'

knowledge of Phillips' ongoing support of a pregnant wife and five children. However, putting debtors in gaol until they paid up was the normal if apparently contradictory method of dealing with debt.

35. Rubinstein, op. cit., p.10.
36. McKenzie, op. cit., p. 1.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. Hirst, op. cit., p.190.
40. *Ibid*, p.192. As Hirst also points out, the emancipist were not simply a deprived group battling against a ruling class of emigrants: neither had rights to representative government (p.120).
41. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1833.
42. Hilary L. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: a thematic history*, William Heinemann Australia, Port Melbourne, 1991.
43. *Sydney Monitor*, 14 March 1834, cited in Bergman and Levi, op. cit., p.102.
44. *Sydney Gazette*, 17 March 1834, cited in Bergman and Levi, op. cit., p.103.
45. Hirst, op. cit., p.191.
46. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 June 1836.
47. —, 24 October 1836, cited in McKenzie, op. cit., p. 210.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Sydney Gazette*, 29 October 1836.
50. McKenzie, op. cit., p. 209.
51. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 November 1836.
52. *Lyons v. Stephens and Stokes* as reported in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 November 1836.
53. Levi and Bergman, op. cit., p.202.
54. McKenzie, op. cit., p. 220.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Bergman and Levi, op. cit., p.105.
57. The Australian Patriotic Association was a movement founded in 1835 that sought to simultaneously lobby for representative government and broad emancipist rights.
58. Levi and Bergman, op. cit., p.103.
59. *Ibid*, p. 104
60. *Ibid*, p.104.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Rutland, op. cit., p.16.
63. Mundy, op. cit., p.102.
64. Whilst not remarkable in itself, according to Bergman and Levi, 4% (bearing in mind that Jews made up 1% of the popu-

lation) of the 1500 firms were owned by Jews. As such the depression had a particularly devastating effect upon Australian Jewry.

65. Rubinstein, op. cit., p.328.
66. Bergman and Levi, op. cit., p.105.
67. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 August 1851, cited in Bergman and Levi, op. cit., p.106.
68. Mundy, op. cit., p.103.
69. Bergman and Levi, op. cit., p.106.
70. A future long-serving parliamentarian in Henry Parkes' Government, and also later knighted.
71. *Sydney Gazette*, 15 June 1833 cited at [http://www.law.mq.edu.au/scnsw/Cases1833-34/html/lyons v lyons_1833.htm](http://www.law.mq.edu.au/scnsw/Cases1833-34/html/lyons_v_lyons_1833.htm), 18.2.04
72. *Sydney Gazette*, 29 June 1833 cited at [http://www.law.mq.edu.au/scnsw/Cases1833-34/html/lyons v lyons_1833.htm](http://www.law.mq.edu.au/scnsw/Cases1833-34/html/lyons_v_lyons_1833.htm), 18.2.04
73. Rubinstein, op. cit., p.5.
74. *Ibid*, p.7.
75. According to Levi, 89% of Jewish convicts were born in London and another 3% were born outside London but lived in England.
76. McKenzie, op. cit., p.214.
77. Rubinstein, op. cit., p.5.

**JOSEPH JACOBS (1854–1916)
— A BOY FROM OZ — ONE OF
AUSTRALIA'S FORGOTTEN SONS.**

Mabel Kaplan

In 1949, David Benjamin wrote an article on Joseph Jacobs, which was published in this Journal. The present article adds to that piece, incorporating insights from his daughter's memoirs published in 1952 and more recent scholarship dealing with Jacobs. In secular circles Joseph Jacobs is probably best remembered for his contribution to children's literature and as an English folklorist. In his six volumes of English, Celtic, Indian and European tales he gave the world versions of its best known and most representative folktales in a form suited to children while remaining true in all essentials to the original oral versions of the folklore. Writing in 1952, his daughter, May Bradshaw Hays, shared these insights into his continuing passion for children's literature:



Until I was nearly eight, I thought all fathers wrote fairytales to earn a living for their families. As a matter of course every morning I would watch my father, Joseph Jacobs, take his bowler hat from the hallstand, place the crook of his umbrella over his left arm, and start out for the British Museum 'to find more stories to put in fairy books'.¹

Elsewhere she also paints a delightful picture of his returning on a cold London evening having bought two hot baked potatoes from the old man on the corner by the museum and using them to warm his hands in his pockets on the way home ... where they shared the eating of them.²

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND CAREER

Born in Sydney, New South Wales, to John and Sarah Jacobs on the 29 August 1854, Joseph was the fourth son — his elder brothers being Sydney, Edwin and Louis. (The death record of John Jacobs, dated 8 February 1885, in the Great Synagogue Burial Register indicates there were also a further five males deceased). A younger sibling — Frances — is also recorded.

A Londoner by birth, Joseph's father, John Jacobs, came to New South Wales about 1837. He married Sarah Myers in Sydney. Some records indicate Sarah was John's second wife and that the eldest son, Sydney, was by his first wife but the evidence for this claim is by no means conclusive.

Interestingly, there appears to be no official record of Joseph Jacobs' birth. In his article on Joseph Jacobs Benjamin argues that:

Jacobs was born before registration of births was compulsory in New South Wales. There is, therefore, no record in the Registrar-General's Office. The York Street Synagogue birth registrar makes no mention of him — but no parent was compelled to record his child's birth with religious authorities. The date (of birth) given ... is that contained in an article on him in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, 1905) written by his friend, Israel Abrahams, and as Jacobs was the editor of the *Encyclopedia*, its accuracy may be assumed.³

From an early age the young Joseph exhibited all the signs of a child prodigy: he was a voracious reader and had an insatiable curiosity in all things. As was noted in an editorial in 1916: 'He had a remarkable memory for the things he had once read or heard and would delight his friends "by reeling off" anecdotes and stories without end.'⁴ At the age of six, according to Professor Graham Seal, Director of the Australian Folklore Research Unit at Curtin University, Western Australia, Jacobs was told the tales of 'Henny Penny' and 'Jack and the Beanstalk'.⁵ That 'Henny Penny is No. 20 in Jacobs' first anthology of *English Fairy Tales* (London, 1890) bears testament, not only to the impression this early telling had but also, to the prodigious mem-

ory of Joseph, the child. The original text is reproduced in Seal's article.⁶

Of Joseph's early formal schooling little is known, but given his father's close association as a member at the York Street Synagogue from 1842, it is likely that he was taught privately at the Jewish day school then already in existence. In 1863, by the time Joseph was nine, his father was licensee of the Post Office Hotel on the west side of York Street, between King and Barrack Streets.⁷ This position John Jacobs retained until 1874 when he went into business first in Elizabeth Street and later in Redfern. It is known that the young Joseph entered Sydney Grammar School in the April 1867 at the age of twelve years, eight months. Grammar was a non-denominational selective school for gifted boys and attracted many Jewish boys of the period. A.B. Weigall, who was to become one of Sydney Grammar's most noted academics, had taken up the position of headmaster in January of the same year.

From the very beginning, Joseph proved himself an exceptional scholar. In his first year he won his form prize for mathematics. The following year he won a prize for English, while in 1869 he topped his form in mathematics, English and the physical sciences. At the end of 1870, when he was just over sixteen, he won the Knox Prize for the highest aggregate of marks in the upper school competing against others a year older. In 1871, his final year, he won the Senior Knox Prize,⁸ as well as the coveted title of Captain of the School, given not to outstanding footballers, but to the Dux in languages. Interestingly, by the end of his life Jacobs reputedly knew forty different languages. From Sydney Grammar Jacobs won a valuable scholarship to the University of Sydney, having taken honours for general proficiency in English, mathematics and classics. In addition to his academic pursuits during 1871-2, Jacobs was an honorary teacher of the Sydney Jewish Sabbath School. This interest in Jewish faith, culture and history developed into a major thrust of much of his later writings.

The significance of Joseph's Grammar School days is underlined in a letter he wrote from America which was later published in the school's magazine, to his former headmaster, Mr Weigall, still at Sydney Grammar, to congratulate him on being named in the King's Honours List. Jacobs wrote:

Dear Mr Weigall: Permit me to congratulate you most heartily on the distinction conferred upon you by His Majesty, of which I have just heard from my brother Sydney. As one of the oldest of your 'Old Boys' I feel that I have a small share in the joy it must have given you. I always look back to my School days under your charge as the happiest times of my life, and per-

haps the most successful in intellectual acquirement. Whatever I have of scholarly tendency and method, I owe to your influence and training.

You may be interested to know that about ten years ago I left England to carry through a big 'Jewish Encyclopedia,' in twelve volumes, which I succeeded in doing in about five years which was regarded as a great triumph of constructive scholarship, as the materials for such a work had never been gathered together. In recognition the University of Pennsylvania conferred upon me (at the same time with the Emperor of Germany!) the degree of Doctor of Letters (Litt. D.), and I was thereupon appointed Professor of English and Rhetoric at the great Jewish Seminary here. This, with the Editorship of the *American Hebrew*, the chief Jewish weekly published in this country, occupies my time so fully that I am afraid I cannot look forward to much literary work for the rest of my life. ... I thought you would be interested in these details of the fate of one of your oldest pupils, and with the kindest regards to yourself and any of my old fellow-students who may happen to remember me," — Yours very sincerely, JOSEPH JACOBS.⁹

In March 1872 Jacobs entered the Faculty of Arts of University of Sydney where again he had a most successful year, winning his class prizes in classics, mathematics, chemistry and experimental physics. By this time, at the age of eighteen, the breadth of his reading was amazing. He owned an extensive library of classics, and both English and European History. Instead of completing his degree at the University of Sydney, Jacobs' father and elder brothers, who by now were well established in business, decided to send him to St John's College, Cambridge in time for the opening of the academic year in October, 1873. This was reported in *The Australian Israelite* as follows:

Mr Joseph Jacobs, son of Mr John Jacobs of York street has been announced as "first" amongst the first year University students in classics, mathematics, and physics, in the examinations just concluded at our local Alma Mater. This gentleman gives great promise of future distinction in his educational career, and is about proceeding to the mother country to enter the lists at Cambridge.¹⁰

Although, Jacobs never returned to Australia,¹¹ according to his daughter, May Bradshaw Hays, when he left Australia Jacobs fully intended to study law and return here to practise.¹²

In Cambridge Jacobs resumed his run of academic successes, including the Freshman's Award in his first year and in his final year, the Wright Prize — a highly valued distinction among Moralists — and the College prize for an English essay. This interest in literature and anthropology continued to shape his future. Upon receiving his B.A. (Hons, First Class) in 1876 Jacobs went to London to become a writer.

For Jacobs, life as a student and academic was accompanied by the problems that plagued many a student — not the least of those being financial. For someone who was to become such an eminent writer in so many fields it is amusing to note that his first published book in 1876 was one he wrote as a ghostwriter for a dentist entitled *Dental Bridges and Crowns*.¹³ According to Fine: 'Until he moved to America, he had no teaching position, and probably lived off his writings'.¹⁴ Shaner argues that Jacobs never gained financial security and needed the extra income he earned through his work on translations and reviews.¹⁵

In 1876, George Eliot's controversial *Daniel Deronda*, a book that foreshadowed the movement for a Jewish Palestine, was published. The ensuing controversy made a deep impact on Jacobs, fresh out of Cambridge, in love with literature — and painfully aware of the antisemitic feelings in Britain as evidenced by the adverse criticism of the book.¹⁶ In a spirited defence of Eliot's book, Jacobs responded with his first published article, 'Mordecai' in *MacMillan's Magazine* of June 1877. In it Jacobs set out to show the adverse criticisms directed at *Daniel Deronda* were 'due to lack of sympathy' and 'want of knowledge on the part of critics'. So strong was his reaction, it had the effect of directing Jacobs' immediate attention to the historic development of Judaism.¹⁷ Bergman suggests it was this incident led Jacobs to devote most of his life to Jewish studies.¹⁸ Shaner also asserts the *Daniel Deronda* controversy aroused in Jacobs 'a desire for a deeper knowledge of his own people and culture'.¹⁹

In 1877, Jacobs spent a year at the University of Berlin studying Jewish literature, philosophy and ethnology under the distinguished Jewish scholars, Moritz Steinschneider and Moritz Lazarus. On his return to England in 1878, he studied anthropology and statistics with Sir Francis Galton, an eminent statistician of the period, as his mentor. During this period also, from 1878–1884, he was secretary of the Society of Hebrew Literature. These activities laid the foundations of Jacobs' knowledge of folklore and racial history.

Jacobs never lived the life of an isolated scholar indifferent to the world outside. Deeply shocked by the Russian pogroms in 1881 he used his pen to stir the conscience of the English people. His

series of articles published in *The Times* in January 1882 drew attention to the persecution of the Jews in Russia²⁰ and led to the formation of the Russo-Jewish Committee and the historical Mansion House meeting.²¹

His anthropological studies naturally led him to folklore and in 1888 he edited *The Earliest English Version of the Fables of Bidpai* followed by what appears to be his first contribution to folklore scholarship in a series of articles on the diffusion of Jewish Folktales, entitled 'Jewish Diffusion of Folktales' published in *The Jewish Chronicle* of June 1888.²² By 1878 the anthropological folklorists had organised the Folk-Lore Society in London. Through the society, Jacobs met and became friends with the prominent folklorists of the day and by 1889 had become a member. It was not long before he was co-opted by the so-called 'great team' into the Folk-Lore Society.²³

Jacobs' theoretical orientation of 'diffusion' in respect to how folktales spread around the world soon brought him into conflict with the prevalent theory of 'survivalism'. An energetic debate between Andrew Lang (later, also well known as folklorist and compiler of children's literature) and Joseph Jacobs ensued. Jacobs was a strong and enthusiastic proponent of the 'diffusionist' theory in which tales diffused outward from a central place of origin. He contended that up to 50 per cent of the 'common stock' of European folklore originated in India and was dispersed via oral transmission to Europe by merchants and travellers. Andrew Lang, on the other hand, argued that many folktales, however similar to other tales throughout the world, arose independently at different times in different cultures; that the needs of the culture at a given point in time generated the folklore that emerged — that they were an independent invention.²⁴

Given Jacobs' background and experience with Jewish history, literature and its dispersion, his sympathy for the migration hypothesis should come as no surprise. Perhaps, even the memory of English folktales told to him in Australia as a six-year-old added strength to his view of the ways in which tales may be dispersed through migration, war, gypsies, travellers and trade routes.

Despite Jacobs' deep involvement in the study of folklore and the activities of the Society throughout the 1880s and 1890s and his voluminous output of writings — articles, reviews, lectures, literature studies and his numerous compilations of fairy/folk tales for children — his interest in Jewish History never waned. Nonetheless, his series of fairytales — *English Fairy Tales*, *Celtic Fairy Tales*, *Indian Fairy Tales* and many others in 1890 — make him one of the most popular writers of fairytales for English speaking children.

Professor Stewig credits Jacobs by the age of thirty-six years with being 'the person most responsible for preserving the body of British folk tales'.²⁵ The collection's greatest significance is that it recorded old tales at a critical time when they were in danger of being lost. As Eloise Ramsey credits, Jacobs rescued the fast-disappearing English tales from a threatened oblivion and rekindled interest in them by rewriting them in a style he himself once described 'as good as an old nurse will speak'.²⁶

JOSEPH JACOBS, THE MAN, THE HUSBAND, THE FATHER AND GRANDFATHER

It is difficult to offer much insight about the man, Joseph Jacobs as, apart from a short biography written by his daughter, May Hays, it has been left to the writers of his obituaries to speak of his wit, warmth, humility, gentleness, and kindness. Mathilde Schechte²⁷ recalls her first meeting with 'the slight blond debonair Joseph Jacobs walking into our study' shortly after his arrival in London; and records Jacobs response to a question as to whether he thought he had talent or genius, as 'I have perhaps more than talent, but I am too sane for a genius.' She also reports on conversation with a friend as follows: 'A Cambridge lady friend once said to me of Jacobs who was an Australian by birth: "You see, he is a Colonial, and a Colonial has all the nice English traits, but in addition he is more free and warmhearted"'.²⁸ Schechter also reported how Dr Donald McAlister, one time tutor at St John's, Cambridge 'spoke of Jacobs' kindness ... how he had tended a student through a dangerous infectious illness and insisted on doing any number of kind little things for him'.²⁹

In his 1916 memorial passage to Jacobs, Sulzberger wrote: 'His was a pure soul and uncontaminated, a mind engaged in high thoughts, unalloyed by that striving for material advantage which to many is the goal of high ambition. He was withal, as simple as a child, as unaffected and sincere'.³⁰ Such tributes provide a timely balance to be set along side the numerous accounts of the lively and sometimes seemingly acrimonious debates within the Folk-Lore Society to which Jacobs was a major player. While little is known of relations between Jacobs and other members of the folklore circle, the positions he held within the Society between 1889 and 1895 as an elected member of its Council and editor of the *Journal, Folklore*, suggest he was respected and accorded firm friendship. Certainly a comment by Alexander Marx, a contemporary, describes Jacobs as 'free of egotism and self consciousness... a man of sweet disposition of an unusual modesty which never gave the outsider the idea of his

eminence in many respects, a staunch friend and one who bore malice to no-one, not even if attacked.³¹

Perhaps the difficulties of interpreting the rough and tumble of the debates written and reported in this period are due to the tendency to compare these to the somewhat restrained style of contemporary academic discourse. Despite some apparent vitriol and sarcasm on all sides there is no evidence of any deep personal rupture between Jacobs and his colleagues.³² Indeed, Shaner asserts that 'Jacobs had a gift for friendship'.³³

His daughter, May Hays, recalled one such stormy argument between Jacobs and Lang during which Andrew Lang complained about folklorists who would not publish any story for children that had not been handed down from Granny to Granny. She wrote: 'To which my father mildly replied, "Now Andrew do me justice, old man. In collecting stories for my fairytale books I have had a cause at heart as sacred as our science of folklore — the filling of our children's imaginations with bright trains of images. If a story will advance that cause I have always used it whether I knew its derivation or not, I simply want to make children feel that reading is the greatest fun in the world; so that they will want to get books for themselves at the earliest possible moment."' ³⁴

During his time as a writer in London, Jacobs met and married Georgina Hall. All evidence points to their having enjoyed a happy marriage with Jacobs being a devoted father to his three children — a daughter, May, who married David Hays, and two sons, Sydney and Phillip. May Hays describes his nightly homecoming as a child's delight — surprises in his pockets, stories on his tongue. The children were his test cases; he tried out on them the tales he would publish in his fairy tale collections. In writing for children, Jacobs rarely failed to consider his audience. According to his daughter, he trusted their responses absolutely. The centrality of these children to the shaping of the fairy tale volumes is reflected in the tenderly worded dedications of three of the works to his three children. His 'deep affection for and compatibility with children extended to the next generation: his last fairy tale collection ... is dedicated to his granddaughter, Margaret in all her diminutives: To Peggy, and Madge, and Pearl, and Maggie, and Marguerite, and Peggotty, and Meg, and Marjory, and Daisy, and Pegg, and MARGARET HAYS (How many granddaughters does that make?)' ³⁵

Jacobs' cheerfulness, wit, and lively intellect won him many friends in many countries — many of whom worked with him closely on various projects and had known him almost thirty years. Throughout his life, he retained his passions and his warm personality. As his daughter recorded: 'People age in different ways — the

lucky ones age only on the surface and keep the sensitive core of childhood within. After his death, the editorial the family treasured most was one that read:

‘THAT FOUNTAIN OF FUN FROZEN — impossible!’”³⁶

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8. Sir Edward Knox was the founder of Colonial Sugar Refining Co. He was a Trustee of S.G.S. from 1863–1866. His son E.W. Knox, who was later a Trustee from 1884–1923, was a student in 1863 and won the prize in the first year. The prize (from 1863) is awarded annually for proficiency in the Upper School (6th Form). There is a similar Knox prize for the Lower School. The name of each winner is inscribed on honour boards at the School. It is still awarded today and is highly regarded.
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**THE ANGLO-BOER WAR 1899–1902:
AN AUSTRALIAN JEWISH PERSPECTIVE
PART II: ROSE LENA¹ SHAPPERE**

Russell Stern

In the first part of my study of the contribution of Australian Jews to the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902, I presented the overall picture of that involvement. In this article, I am going to discuss the fascinating story of Rose Shappere, the Australasian Jewish nurse who contributed to Australia's role in this war. To date there has not been a specific study of Rose Shappere's work as a nurse during the war. In his 'official' Australian history of the Boer War, *Australia's Boer War*,² published in 2002, Craig Wilcox refers to her on three occasions so that she has been accorded her place in history. In contrast, in Jan Bassett's *Guns & Brooches*³, Oxford 1992, a history of Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War, there is no mention of Rose Shappere. In the book it is noted that:

14 members of the NSW Army Nursing Service Reserve (formed May 1899) sailed on the *Moravian* with the Second Contingent of the NSW Army Medical Corps on 17 January 1900. This was the first group of military nurses sent to any war by any of the Australian colonies. The NSW Government paid their fares and salaries.

Prominent South Australian citizens and nurses raised the funds to pay for the return passages (£62), uniforms (£18) salaries of 15/- a week for 6 nurses — the South Australian Transvaal Nurses — who sailed on the *Australasian* from Melbourne on 21 February 1900. These nurses were to be under the authority of the British Army Medical Service while in South Africa.

Miss Marianne Rawson and the nine other nurses who sailed on the *Euryalus* with the Third (Bushmen's) Contingent from Victoria on March 10, 1900 went under a different

arrangement. The British Government paid their fares and employed them under British Army Nursing Service Reserve conditions and rates of pay. (£40 a year plus board and lodging).

The number of Australian nurses who went individually to the Boer War is very difficult to establish. A survey of contemporary newspapers, early nursing registers, my personal correspondence with friends and families of the nurses involved, and secondary works, suggests that it may have been about fifteen or twenty. Some Australians in England, including Emma Maud McCarthy (English trained but Australian born) and Gertrude Fletcher, also went to South Africa as members of the British Army Nursing Service Reserve.

The book also refers to nurses who paid their own fares to South Africa where they found employment, in most cases with the British Army Nursing Service Reserve... including Jane M. 'Janey' Lempriere of Victoria but not to Rose Shappere.

On commencing my research into the Boer War in 1999–2000, I wrote to Jan Bassett in an attempt to ascertain her reasons for not recognising the services of Rose Shappere as an Australian, a nurse in South Africa, and clearly visible as one of the volunteers. Her identity is not difficult to establish. Unfortunately, at the time Jan was ill, and she died before I could get any response.

Rose Shappere⁴ was born in Ballarat in 1859. Her parents, Solomon Shappere and Catherine Asher followed a traditional pattern of Jewish migration to Australia with her father being born in about 1829 in Marianpol, in the part of Poland under Russian rule — apparently now Marijampole, Lithuania. At some stage he migrated to England where he became a watchmaker. His original surname may have been Shapira. Her mother, Catherine Asher, was born on 18 December 1834 in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England. They were married on 24 July 1850 in Birmingham, England where their first child, a daughter, Catherine Ann, was born in 1851. The family travelled to Melbourne on the *Gambia*, which arrived in Melbourne in October 1852, having sailed from Liverpool on 23 June 1852, and initially settled there. A second daughter, Rebecca was born in Melbourne in 1853. The family later moved to Ballarat where their first son, Phillip, was born and then, in 1856, another daughter, Seraphina. born before Rose, their third daughter. A second son, Asher Joseph was born in Ballarat on 28 April 1862.

In 1864–65 the family moved to New Zealand⁵. Historical records show that in 1865 the family was living at Hokitika on the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand, where Solomon had

set up as a watchmaker. He was recorded in the Hokitika register as a watchmaker in Revell Street in 1865–66. Following the move to New Zealand the family continued to expand. A son, Nathan Victor was born on 29 March 1867 in Hokitika. The family returned to Melbourne in 1869 as the genealogical notes provided by Jon Nathan show that a daughter, Ada Elvina was born at Collingwood in 1869. They returned to New Zealand later that year, with their six children, sailing to Auckland on the *Hero*, departing from Melbourne on 23 August 1869. The family settled in Auckland where Nathan Victor died on 23 April 1870 as a young boy aged three. Rose's name was registered in the attendance roll of the Auckland Synagogue Hebrew School. Another son, Albert Edward, was born on 21 July 1870 at Karangahape Road, Auckland and their youngest daughter, Rachel Leah Maude Shappere, was born at Karaka, Thames, New Zealand on 19 December 1873.

After about five years in Auckland and later in Thames (also on the North Island), the family moved to Timaru on the South Island where Henry Elijah (known as Harry) was born on 14 March 1876.⁶ Rose continued with her studies there as a pupil teacher. In 1875, the *Canterbury Gazette* reported the examination of pupil teachers and candidates held on 28 July and 29 at Timaru. Rose Shappere's marks were: 'Arithmetic 27/50; Grammar 30/30; History 15/50; Geography 19/50; Spelling 22/50; Writing 35/50 and Reading 40/50'. Thirteen out of fifteen candidates passed. The report stated that Rose had omitted to state her age and consequently could not be classified until this was provided. It stated that she had passed, and if she were thirteen would be classed for the first year.⁷ While living there, Solomon Shappere was involved in a land dispute. He was in charge of servicing the town's town clock and had to give evidence in court as to the accuracy of the clock in regard to the exact time when applications for a land transaction closed. After about ten years the family decided to return to Melbourne. On Friday 4 November 1881, *The Timaru Herald* carried an advertisement to the effect that: 'Mr. S. Shappere, jeweller, watchmaker and tobacconist of Main North Road, Timaru, having decided to return to Victoria, thanked the public for its liberal support for the last seven years and intends offering his entire stock'. The same advertisement appeared on subsequent days. When they left, two of Rose's sisters, Rebecca and Seraphina, who were married, remained in New Zealand.⁸ The remaining siblings returned to Melbourne and most married later.⁹

While in Timaru, Rose undertook further study and commenced her working life as a schoolteacher. However, she did not enjoy teaching and she decided to become a nurse¹⁰. In the meantime, her parents

had moved back to Melbourne, where, according to Rose, much against the will of her family, who were opposed to her adopting a laborious career, she trained to become a nurse¹¹. She received her nursing instruction first at the Homeopathic Hospital and then at the Prince Alfred Hospital in Melbourne. Having passed her examinations, she commenced work as a private nurse for a number of Melbourne doctors. Later, she is reported to have remarked to an interviewer that she chose nursing because she wanted to show that Jewish girls did not mind how hard they worked¹². It was also reported of Rose that she became a nurse for the love of the profession and in no way through the financial necessity of choosing a calling.

Rose's nursing career in Australia does not seem to have involved an extended period in the one place. Indeed, wanderlust appears to have gripped her. After a brief period in Melbourne, Rose travelled to Western Australia to work as charge nurse at the Perth Hospital, following which she moved to Kalgoorlie also as a charge nurse at the hospital there. Then, at the end of twelve months, she returned to Melbourne to take up private nursing and subsequently she became the night sister at the Adelaide Hospital. Rose was in Adelaide at the beginning of 1899. She learned that trouble was brewing in South Africa¹³, and, with her love of adventure in new places calling her, she at once attempted to resign her Adelaide Hospital appointment. However, the hospital authorities are reported not to have accepted her resignation. Rose was not prepared to accept this decision and, having sent her clothes ahead, Rose spirited herself away from the Adelaide Hospital, leaving the hospital authorities a letter of apology.

It is suggested by the *Jewish Chronicle* journalist who interviewed Rose in 1902¹⁴, that Rose adopted a cold and calculating method of leaving Adelaide Hospital and was also cool and determined in making her way to South Africa in early 1899. First she looked around the country and then in June 1899 she left Durban for Johannesburg.¹⁵ Once in Johannesburg, Rose worked as a nurse for a number of doctors including Dr. Croghan.

By late September 1899 war was threatening to unfold, and the Boer Republics issued the call to arms of their citizens. When the Boer Ambulance Brigade was being formed at Standerton in September 1899, Rose volunteered to serve with them and she was the first nurse to join a Boer commando that went to the Natal border from Johannesburg at the start of the war in October 1899. Rose had been determined to be at the front from the very start of hostilities.

Rose's parents in Melbourne learnt of the whereabouts of their daughter in a letter sent by Dr. Croghan in Johannesburg and dated 4 October. They were informed:

You will be pleased to hear that your daughter, Nurse Rose, was the first British nurse who went forward to the border with the Dutch commando. She volunteered her services, and as I had the selection of nurses in my hands, I gave her the very first chance and she took it. She left here a very few days ago, and is now at a place called Standerton. Other nurses will join her very soon. She is making a great name for herself. And the doctors for whom she has nursed in Johannesburg, as well as her patients, speak in the highest terms of her ability and her cheerful, kindly disposition.¹⁶

Eloff, Kruger's grandson, offered her every possible necessity if she would take charge of the ambulance, but finding that it would be limited to Boer wounded and that she would not be able to nurse British wounded, Rose Shappere left the vicinity of Standerton, returning by rail to Johannesburg, before going to Delagoa Bay in Portuguese East Africa again by rail, travelling thence to Durban in Natal by steamer. Then, travelling once more by rail, she made for the front of the British line, which by that time had retreated back to Ladysmith. When she later narrated her journey, she said that she saw the refugees leaving the Transvaal and encountered the refugees at Durban and Delagoa Bay sleeping in the streets at night because they had no shelter. She reported that: 'It was a pitiable sight that the poor people presented, many of them spending the nights in open boats, others lying in pools of water'.¹⁷

Rose Shappere arrived at Ladysmith by one of the last trains, just as the first bombardment of the town began. She went to the authorities and though, according to Rose, many other applications for positions on the nursing staff were refused, she was appointed. As she later told the London *Jewish Chronicle* reporter: 'Well I got into Ladysmith and got tanned in the broiling sun whilst endeavouring to get appointed on the nursing staff. I went straight to the head people, and by persistence won my point. I saw many other nurses refused'.¹⁸ With this appointment, she was attached to the Volunteer Military Hospital.

Another letter from Dr. Croghan arrived in Melbourne, sent from Pietermaritzburg, to which the doctor had gone, after also travelling as a refugee from Johannesburg. Dated 6 November, he wrote:

Your daughter returned to Johannesburg after a somewhat eventful and exciting experience with the Boers at the border. After a few days she left to join the British at the front. She went to Delagoa Bay by train, thence to Durban by steamer, thence to Ladysmith by rail, arriving just as the bombardment

of that town by the Dutch was going on. Her services were immediately accepted by the British, and she is now in the Volunteer Military Hospital, Ladysmith. She is nursing British only, and I need scarcely say has lots of hard work. Her colleagues are Netley Hospital trained sisters, and a very high honour has been conferred on Rose in accepting her services in that hospital. She is quite well, strong happy and cheerful.¹⁹

Here it should be noted that the siege of Ladysmith started on 2 November 1899, four days before the date of the letter of 6 November. Ladysmith has been described as a small galvanised iron-roofed town of 4,500 citizens, in a small plain through which the Klip River flowed, this being a northern tributary of the Tugela River. Immediately beyond the town there was the junction of the railway lines from the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, these then connecting with the railway line to Pietermaritzburg and the port of Durban. The siege lasted for 118 days until it was lifted when the town was relieved on 28 February 1900.²⁰

The doctor's letter was soon followed by another. Dated 11 November, it read:

Rose is having a rather hard time in Ladysmith. You will see by the paper that I send you that that town is besieged by the Boers. A shell actually dropped into the hospital, in which she is; another into the dining room of the principal hotel. The general (Joubert) of the Boer commando at first refused to allow non-combatants to get out of Ladysmith, but afterwards consented to the neutrals and wounded, and women and children, being removed about four miles out of the direct range of artillery. As all communication is cut off,²¹ I have no word as regards Rose's safety. Probably she is, so far, safe.²²

I have not come across any observations as to the operations of the Volunteer Military Hospital, during the siege, apart from what Rose Shappere either wrote in letters following the conclusion of the siege, or as may be gleaned from the interviews which she gave to *The Jewish Chronicle* or to *The Jewish Herald* where she stated:.²³

At first they had a hospital in the Town Hall, and as the Boers fired everywhere, she had to do service under fire. ["We had a splendid operating theatre there."] 'But the real siege began' says Miss Shappere, 'when we were ordered to encamp at Intombi²⁴. There I had charge at one time of eighty-four patients. The tents were badly pitched; in the wind-storms

they nearly blew down, and actually went down in the rain. The tents filled with water and the poor patients, who were lying on the ground, were simply wetted through and through. I remember a storm one night when I was writing my night report. The rain came down so hard and plentiful that it covered my knees. The marquee looked a sheet of glass inside and outside. It was a really pretty sight except for the misery that it entailed. After the storms we would open up the tents and they would get dry as quick as they got wet. The patients were laid out to dry, they were given a sun bath.

Following the lifting of the siege, Rose Shappere wrote to her sister in Melbourne from the military hospital. Sections of the letter also find their way into a letter that Rose wrote from the hospital to her brother. The # in the text of the following letter indicate where there is a lengthier commentary in the letter to her brother:

Thank God the siege is over. Ladysmith is relieved. Oh, how we all looked forward to it, praying day and night, for at the last the scenes were heart-breaking, and I am sure that if it had not come when it did, a great number of us would have died. I was just on my last legs, so ill I had not taken any food for days.

Our daily ration the last fortnight or three weeks, consisted of one-sixth ounce of tea, 1 oz sugar, 1x2 lb of bread made from mealies²⁵ (not edible) or 1x2 lb of bully beef. Sometimes in place of tea we got awful coffee, and at 7 p.m. a cup of horseflesh soup and it was generally bad. In Ladysmith they had it made into sausages, but by the time we got it, it was high. Breakfast 7.30 black tea and bread. Dinner 1 p.m. meat and a little rice, 4 p.m. black tea, and at 7 p.m. soup. Imagine working in wards like a Trojan on that diet, often until 10 p.m. at night.

#

It was an awful Christmas Day, one never to be forgotten; blazing hot and patients dying all around us, and very little comfort we could give them. If I never would be nursing again, I can say that I was able to give some relief to our poor Tommies. They rarely murmured, and their hardships were great, many of them sometimes lying for days in the hot sun and then in the rain, their clothes were not off their back for three weeks. Do you wonder they were covered with vermin? And then when we got them we had no shirts to put on them.

The sisters suffered in the same way. I have given all my clothes that I wore in the siege to the Kaffirs.

But the want of food and comforts was the worst of the siege. Even our starving stomachs revolted at the food and the drink, and as for the patients, all that we could give them at night was water; in the day they were allowed half-a pint of milk. It was terrible in every phase, and in the midst of it shells would come flying into the hospital. It was very hard work too; going from tent to tent with orderlies who did nothing, and delirious and dying men to attend to.

Once I broke down for three days and had to take to my bed, and again for two days, and then I broke down again 8 days before the convoy came.

I got rheumatics from having to sleep in a soaking bed while on night duty. With hard work, anxiety and no food, I was a skeleton. I was invalided to Mooi River, being the first nurse to be conveyed by Princess Christian's Ambulance Train. I wanted to go to the front again, but as a change I was made nursing superintendent of the *SS Tagus*, which conveyed 14 officers and 312 men to Southampton. I am going back to South Africa. I was [there] at the beginning, and mean to be at the finish of the war. I shall come back to England on my way to Australia, where I hope to be the first Australian nurse in Princess Christian's reserve of nurses'.

A slightly different slant appears in a letter dated 16 March 1900 stated in the newspaper as having been written to her brother in Melbourne, and ascribed to Yombi Camp Military Hospital, Ladysmith. This letter appeared in *The Age* on 17 May 1900:

It was so delightful to get your warm and nice letter, although in bed. Am up for the first time in three weeks, and such pain as I went through. I am ordered away for a month. I refused to go, but the doctor said I was not fit to go on without a rest and insisted on it. Wired and sent to Maritzburg for a room, but there was not such a thing to be got. It would have been nice as it is the head of the military, and I know so many staying there, and would have had a nice time, a month's holiday. You know I offered and gave my services voluntarily on behalf of Australia, and came on with that understanding, but found I was put on the pay list, so I will have a nice little cheque. We were to get £2/2/- a week, but after we had been here some time word came that on account of the privations we were undergoing we were to have 3/- a day extra, and the soldiers to have 12 months' full

pay, and so much for sleeping without beds. I hope you can read this letter. The ink is on active service, and my pen disappeared out of my tent. I am very weak and this is my first day up and dressed. Dr. Hunter came and asked me this morning if I would like a trip home. Of course I said yes, but did not care to give up nursing until the war was over. He said "You are not fit to nurse for some time, and we insist on you taking a rest". The whole camp is scurvy, and we all suffer more or less. Its just a bed of fever. Any day next week I may leave here for Durban and catch the mail boat in Capetown for England. We are all to be sent home for a trip, and the sick ones are to be first. First class passage, to be presented to the Queen of England, and get our medals and stripes from her hands! I then shall feel proud and have lived for something, and my dear parents will then at least have something to be proud of in me.

The letter repeats much of the text of the suggested letter to her sister. At # of the letter to her sister, there is added in this letter:

One night I drank a cup of soup. I was past starving and had a long day (several operations in my marquee). That day the soup was quite bad, but I had to drink it as there was nothing else till next morning, and then not much, on a weak stomach. I never felt well after that, and gradually had to take to my bed. I was so ill three days before I gave in I could not bear my clothes on, and had to go into the ward with just my dress (the bodice is all in one) and my apron on, and at night I just rolled over and over with pain. You know dear one does not like to give in. The patients were getting tired, thinking that Buller would never come, and if he had not come when he did, there would have been none to relieve, for all the patients were simply dying of starvation. We had run short of medicine, stimulants and all medical comforts. I would have given £1 for a little brandy, and could we have got it, many would have been saved an illness. You could get nothing like that unless you went on the sick list. After all Providence was good to us, for not one sister died, though several have been very ill, but we kept up till February. There are now two in bed, but doing well. I have seen my brother Harry, who came here from India, and is in active service and had a long chat...

Then General White sent all the sisters a Christmas box — a bottle of wine, two tins of tongue, 1 lb. of arrowroot, maizena, 4 lb. Flour, 1 tin cocoa, lime juice, currants, raisins and sugar and 2 tins of milk.

17th — I am so weak from walking about yesterday that I am not able to get up today. I cannot regain my strength, so have made up my mind to leave at once for England — I think by the *Germania*, so by the time this letter reaches you I will be in London and will write from there. My letters will be sent on to me. The troops are just getting the presents sent from different people. Some are nice and useful, especially the woollen comforters, as the cold weather further up is just coming on. We were supposed to have had tinned vegetables, fruit and butter, and I don't know what; but we have had nothing as yet. They must have gone to other hospitals, and our poor Tommies had no Christmas dinner or anything else but biscuit and bully meat that day.²⁶

As noted in the letter, a co-incidence is that Rose's brother, Harry, who was a permanent member of the Royal Horse Artillery, and prior to the war had been stationed in India, was also in Ladysmith during the siege. It is recorded that they met at least once and that was by accident and they had difficulty in recognising each other, as they had been separated for many years.²⁷

After Ladysmith had been recaptured by the British and following her stint in hospital recuperating, the authorities sent Rose Shappere, together with five other nurses, to England to recuperate. First class passages were provided for them. On their arrival in London, it was stated in the newspaper report that these nurses would be presented to Queen Victoria. It was also stated that Rose Shappere had offered her services as a nurse gratuitously but that the British authorities had insisted on her receiving a small salary.²⁸ She received a mention in despatches from Cape Town by Sir George White for devotion to duty and especially good services.²⁹

Later in 1900 Rose Shappere returned to South Africa on the *Carisbrook Castle* from England where she had joined the Princess Christian's Army Nursing Reserve. According to *The Jewish Chronicle*³⁰ she remained in England for only about ten days. She then went on duty at various hospitals in South Africa. Hospitals in which Rose Shappere nursed include those at Woodstock, Elandsfontein, Bloemfontein and Johannesburg,³¹ besides various other hospital and transport ships. The conditions under which she nursed varied. Bloemfontein was considered by her to be:

One of the best hospitals I have ever been to. The management was simply perfect; both the Sisters and the men were well looked after. But at Elandsfontein complaints of the bad food were very rife. Woodstock was well managed, but it was a very

small hospital, and only kept for acute cases coming off the boat trains — it being near Cape Town.³²

Rose then had a short period of service at Johannesburg, but was invalided and decided to return home to Australia. The exact date of her return cannot be ascertained, but it may have been in early 1901, as reported in *The Jewish Chronicle* 15 March 1901. *The Jewish Herald* of 1 February 1901 reported that Rose Shappere had returned to Melbourne about ten days previously in the *SS Dominion* and was visiting her parents residing in Villiers Street, Elsternwick. It quoted her as saying:

“When the various contingents left Australia it was thought that many of them, after they had gone successfully through the war, would not return, but would settle in the Transvaal, where there would be splendid openings for young energetic men.” She did not share that view. “The country can hold out no comparison with Australia. The climate is much too severe, and the conditions, especially the sanitary arrangements, are altogether primitive and unfit for white people to settle there. If a person can make plenty of money it is all very well for him to remain a few years, and then enjoy the result of his labours in a more civilised part of the world; but if a man can do no more than earn a living, he is better off in Australia. Neither can the Boers people whose friendship it is either easy or desirable to cultivate. There are many educated people among them, but the generality, especially the rural population, are hopelessly ignorant. The farmers’ wives in particular, entertain a deadly hatred against the British, and have often proved treacherous. Looking at a photo of one of these creatures, of goodly proportions, clad in a simple dress as remote from fashion as the North Pole is from the South Pole, and wearing a large sub-bonnet that hides the swarthy face, one would hardly imagine that there is much fighting spirit in this specimen of humanity; but the contrary is the case. These women are good marksmen, if that expression is permissible, and have often inflicted severe injury upon our brave soldiers”.

When Rose recovered, she returned to South Africa on board the troopship *Orient*, which carried the 5th Victorian Mounted Infantry contingent and departed Melbourne on 15 February 1901. After further nursing service in South Africa, she arrived in England in August 1901 in the transport ship *Assay*, then went back to Africa in September, and served on hospital ships after that, including

doing duty on a hospital ship moored off Durban, and then proceeding to London on board the *Avoca*. She described the voyage as follows:

The ships on which our nurses [serve] are splendidly fitted up, and the men have every comfort. Nursing on board ship is not easy work. In the performance of your duties you get knocked about with the winds and gales that blow, and soaked to the skin. The remuneration is much less than for the hospital nursing, swallowed up as it is in fees, it practically amounts to nursing for nothing.³³

In 1902 Rose Shappere gave an interview to *The Jewish Chronicle*. She had been on a flying visit to London, having arrived in the hospital ship *Avoca*, in which she had been nursing a contingent of soldiers invalided 'home' to the United Kingdom. Apparently she returned on duty to South Africa in the same ship, after utilising her brief stay in London to procure comforts for the men committed to her charge. Rose Shappere stated in that interview that she had not had any special Jewish nursing to do. She was asked whether she had nursed many Jews. She answered: 'I have come across them wherever I have been... A large number of Jewish soldiers do not make profession of their religion, because the prejudice against Jews in South Africa is so great, particularly in Natal; Durban is a dreadful place in this respect. It is better, however on the Cape side.'³⁴

By February 1902 Rose Shappere was again in Melbourne, where a reception was given to her in the Montefiore Hall, St. Kilda, on 26 February. She had arrived in Melbourne about the middle of February.³⁵ She then returned to South Africa to continue her nursing. In June 1902 Rose Shappere was once more in Australia. She visited her brother in Bondi. *The Hebrew Standard* of 20 June 1902 noted her visit and reported that she had also served at the hospital at Winburg, and had returned from South Africa to England on three occasions, as superintending nurse in charge of invalided soldiers. It also recorded that she had been gazetted by Sir George Grey (sic White) to receive the Royal Red Cross of Honour, and that she was to receive four clasps in recognition of her having nursed the sick and wounded in four separate states in South Africa. That report concluded with the note that she was to return to Johannesburg after spending a few days with her relatives in Sydney. *The Jewish Herald* of 20 June 1902 reported that she had left to return to South Africa.

Following the conclusion of the Boer War on 31 May 1902, Rose was apparently appointed matron of the Western General

Dispensary, London and later, on her return to Australia, Matron of the Infectious Diseases Hospital, Heidelberg, Victoria. She then married Edmund Julius Elkan at Ballarat in 1908 and apparently retired from nursing duties. In November 1933, Rose Elkan was living at 34 Davis Street, South Yarra.³⁶ She died, aged 84, on 12 June 1943 at 53 Park Street, South Yarra, and was cremated at the Spring Vale Crematorium. She had no children. Her husband, Edmund, had predeceased her.³⁷

NOTES

1. In a family tree provided by Jon Nathan of Avne Eitan, Israel, a descendant of Solomon & Catherine Shappere, the middle name of Rose is given as Anna, but Rose's death certificate gives the name as Lena.
2. Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899-1902*: Oxford University Press, Melbourne in association with the Australian War Memorial, 2002.
3. Jan Bassett, *Guns & Brooches: a history of Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War*: Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992.
4. Rose Shappere is described by the reporter of *The Jewish Chronicle* in the article which appeared on 10 January 1902 as 'so fair of countenance, with features of so Saxon a type, that no one would take her to be a Jewess. But her picturesque uniform proclaims her profession, while the badge that she wears distinguishes her as belonging to the Princess Christian Army Nursing Service Reserve'. I suggest that the photo of Rose that accompanies this article does not really bear out that statement.
5. I have not been able to fix the date of the family's move from Victoria to New Zealand.
6. In Sands & McDougall's Street Directory of Melbourne for 1887 the name of Philip Shappere appears, located at 19 Canterbury Road, South Melbourne. I can find no entries for Solomon Shappere. However the Australasian Insurance & Banking Records held by Victoria University, Wellington New Zealand, indicate that a fire occurred on 11 July 1888 at premises insured by S. Shappere in Timaru.
7. Regulations regarding the training and remuneration of pupil teachers published in 1874 stated that such persons had to be aged between 13 and 17, after which age they would be eligible to be employed as assistant teachers.
8. Rebecca Shappere, the second daughter of Solomon and

Catherine, married Benjamin Henry Solomon of Dunedin on 17 January 1872 in Auckland, *Australian Israelite* 9 Feb 1872. She remained in New Zealand when her parents and siblings returned to Australia, but later came to Australia. She died in 1944 in South Melbourne.

Seraphina Shappere married Isaac Salek on 12 August 1885. They initially lived in Ashburton before moving to Wanganui, New Zealand, where Seraphina died in 1931.

9. Phillip Shappere married Leah Miriam Fletcher Anderson in 1885. He is described in the newspapers of the time as being of Little Collins Street. He died aged 71 at St. Kilda in 1926.

Asher Joseph Shappere, who was described in the *Hebrew Standard* 10 November 1899, p.6 as a traveller for Feldheim Gotthelf & Co of Sydney married Annetta Abrahams at the Great Synagogue, Sydney on 6 December 1862 and died in Macksville, New South Wales on 25 December 1933.

Ada Elvina Shappere married Robert Gadsby Newton in 1903. They lived in New South Wales, where she died on 23 December 1920.

Albert Edward Shappere apparently did not marry. He died in Sydney on 18 July 1944.

Harry Shappere married Lottie Maud Mary Jenkinson on 23 July 1901. After a period in India, the family came to Australia. He died at North Bondi in 1954.

Solomon Shappere died on 24 November 1904 in Elsternwick, Victoria.

Catherine Shappere died aged 83 at St. Kilda on 1 January 1917.

(The note in the *Hebrew Standard* of 10 November 1899 also referred to Rose as having volunteered as a nurse and being accepted by the British authorities, and it also stated that Harry who was in the Royal Horse Artillery, stationed at Meerut, India, had volunteered to serve in South Africa with the Royal Field Artillery.) This additional family data was supplied by Janet Salek of New Zealand, wife of Seraphina's grandson, Arthur.

10. In *The Jewish Chronicle* interview of 10 January 1902 it is stated that Rose Shappere adopted nursing as a profession 'more than 12 years ago' — that is about 1889–1890.
11. Rose's sister, Ada, was also a nurse.
12. Presumably this assertion was a bit of *braggadocio* by Rose.
13. A friend had written to her from Johannesburg to say that he was sure war would break out presently, and advising her to come, and she decided to act on this advice. *The Jewish*

Chronicle 10 January 1902, p.10.

14. *The Jewish Chronicle* 10 January 1902, p.10.
15. There are suggestions that Rose did not go directly from Australia to South Africa. I have seen a note that she first travelled to India, and then went from India to Cape Town in June 1899.
16. *The Jewish Herald* 22 December 1899 p. 26
17. *The Jewish Chronicle*. 10 January 1902, p.10. The interview states 'She spoke of the suffering of the refugees at Delagoa Bay and elsewhere, who in great crowds slept and herded in the open squares. Miss Shappere told me all this with the utmost *sang-froid*. The suffering had impressed her, as it was to impress her still more later on, but her own tone was cool, decisive, precise and correct in word pictures, and therefore, intense in a peculiar way. She saw everything, from the street crowds to the masses, huddled on bad transports, presenting a sickening spectacle which did no credit to those who had charge of the transport of those people'.
18. *Ibid*.
19. *The Jewish Herald* 22 December 1899, p.26.
20. Notwithstanding that Ladysmith was besieged, channels of communication between the town and the British areas of Natal continued and runners brought out mail, as well as the newspaper which was printed in Ladysmith during the siege, and military information.
21. As noted, communications with Ladysmith were not 'cut off' as contact with the outside world continued through use of the heliograph, and runners were able to pass through the Boer lines with letters and other communications.
22. *The Jewish Herald* op. cit. This is the last of Dr. Croghan's letters to have found its way into print in the Australian Jewish press of the day. Although it was common for letters written by Jewish servicemen to appear in the general press, I have found only one letter written by or about Rose Shappere.
23. *The Jewish Herald* 20 July 1900 p. 245 contains a report of the *Jewish World* interview which had featured in *The Jewish Chronicle*. This also appeared in *The Hebrew Standard*, 13 July 1900, p.8.
24. In *The Jewish Chronicle*, 4 May 1900, p.11, there is a description of Intombi 'It was the neutral camp near Ladysmith, established by Sir George White. Under the frowning Umbulmana, no fewer than 650 soldiers, civilians, women and children are interred — victims of the "entanglement of Ladysmith"'. In the *Times History of the War in South Africa*

written by L.S. Amery and published in 1909, in Vol. 3, p.157, it is noted: 'The bombardment of Ladysmith began on 2 November, and increased on 3 November and 4 November. Trifling as the fire was from a military point of view, it succeeded in unnerving many of the civilians, and induced Mr. Farquhar, the Mayor, to address Sir George White on the subject of the removal of the non-combatants, more especially the women and children, to some place of greater security. The principal medical officer also pointed out that the sick and wounded in the Town Hall, which had been converted into a hospital, were exposed to great danger from that fire. This resulted in the formation of a neutral camp on the southern end of the Intombi Spruit. Trains were run down to Intombi on 5 November, hospital tents pitched, and before the armistice expired, most of the sick and wounded were transferred to the new camp. The majority of the civilian population refused to avail themselves of Joubert's terms. A certain number came out in wagons with their belongings....The camp was placed under the control of Mr. Bennett, the resident Magistrate of Ladysmith, while Major Mapleton R.A.M.C. was made responsible for the hospital arrangements. Under agreement with the besiegers, a daily train was allowed to ration the camp, provided it only made the journey in daylight. This was a remarkable act of clemency on Joubert's part'.

Under Amery's entry for 25 November 1899, there is noted the following: 'Reduction in meat ration after the Boers stampeded a herd of 228 oxen into their own lines. Shell-fire was also concentrated on the Town Hall, which was used as a hospital for less serious cases, and was flying the red cross flag, apparently on the ground that with a hospital already at Intombi, the British could only be using the red cross in the town to cover some illegitimate purpose, such as storage of ammunition. By the end of the month White was compelled to move the hospital to a ravine out of the line of fire'.

25. Maize on the cob.
26. This letter stated to be dated 17 March 1900 is referred to in the Note 20 in Craig Wilcox's *Australia's Boer War* Oxford University Press, Melbourne 2002. It is included in the volume of letters about the Boer War, Chamberlain & Droogleever (eds) *War with Johnny Boer*, 2003 referred to by Craig Wilcox.
27. *The Lismore Chronicle and Richmond River Courier* 17 July 1900. In this article it is stated that Harry had been invalided to England and had arrived at Plymouth on board the *Orient*.
28. *The Jewish Herald*, 27 April 1900 p. 157.

29. *The Hebrew Standard*, 22 March 1901 p. 5.
30. *The Jewish Chronicle*, 15 March 1901 p. 12.
31. Sheila Gray, *The South African War 1899–1902. Service Records of British and Colonial Women*. notes that Rose Shappere transferred from the 8th General Hospital Bloemfontein to 16th General Hospital Elandsfontein on 3 June 1901, and left the 5th General Hospital on 23 September 1901 for Cape Town.
32. *The Jewish Chronicle*, 10 January 1902.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. *The Jewish Herald*, 28 February 1902 p. 88. Presumably after the February sojourn in Melbourne, Rose had returned to South Africa — if so that would have taken her to the end of March 1902 and thus with another four week voyage back to Australia in May, there would have been little time, just April and part May, for nursing in South Africa in the meantime.
36. *The Alfred*, December 1933 p. 11. In the article describing the afternoon tea at the Alfred Hospital in November 1933, Rose's married name appears as "Elkan" though her death certificate ascribes her surname as "Elkin".
37. Victorian Death Certificate No. 6211. I have been unable to ascertain the date of death of Edmund.

THE DINTE FAMILY HISTORY: FROM KALISZ POLAND TO AUSTRALIA

*Joy Dinte**

This is a brief history of two Jewish cousins and their families over the past two centuries. Hyman and Herman Dinte originated from Poland around 1820 and fled to England to escape war and hardship in their country. Later they journeyed to the unknown vastness of Australia by ship. Their surviving families are testimony to the courage of their ancestors who dared to challenge the 'unknown'.

ORIGINS OF THE NAME

Dinte is a surname of two possible origins. It means 'tooth' in Romanian (pronounced "deenteh"). It could also be linked with 'ink' in German (Dinter shortened to Dinte). Several listings of 'Dinte' appear in recent Romanian phone books. A record has been located of the birth of a Marie Elizabeth Dinte, daughter of a David Dinte, in Switzerland in 1742. The name 'Dinte' is not a typical Polish name and there are no people named 'Dinte' currently known to be residing in Poland. There are no phone listings of Dinte in Poland. Various branches of the family believed that Hyman/Herman adopted the name 'Dinte' after they left Poland, and that their family name in Poland was a typical Polish name. Research efforts concentrated on trying to identify the reason why the family adopted the name 'Dinte' (such as 'Dinteloord' in Holland) as a symbolic point of departure from war ravaged Europe.

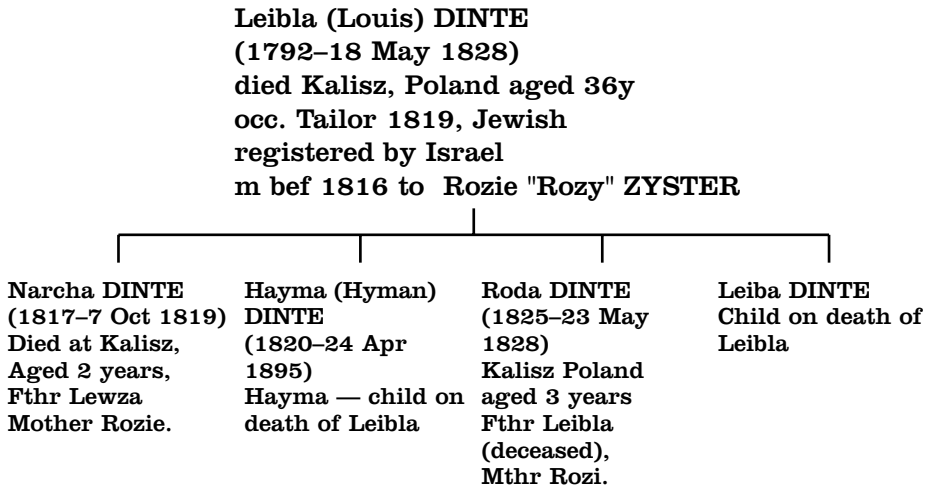
The recent discovery and translation of documents from the original Polish (a form which is not now spoken) proved that the name 'Dinte' was the family name well before Herman and Hyman left Poland. The record of the birth in Switzerland in 1742 may have some significance. However, the existence of people by the name of Dinte in Romania, and the name having a word with a meaning in the Romanian language, tends to point one in that direction.

* Submitted by Joy Dinte conjointly with Judy Hall, Del Benfer and Jenny Ivin

POLAND

Hyman Dinte, whose birth name was possibly Hayma, was born about 1820 in Kalisz, Poland. His parents were Leibla/Lewza (Lewis) and Rozie Zyster. Lewis, a tailor by trade, died on 18 May 1828, aged 36 years and his death was registered by Israel Dinte. He was survived by his wife Rozie and children Hayma and Leiba. From the translations of Polish Birth, Death and Marriage records the following scenario became apparent:

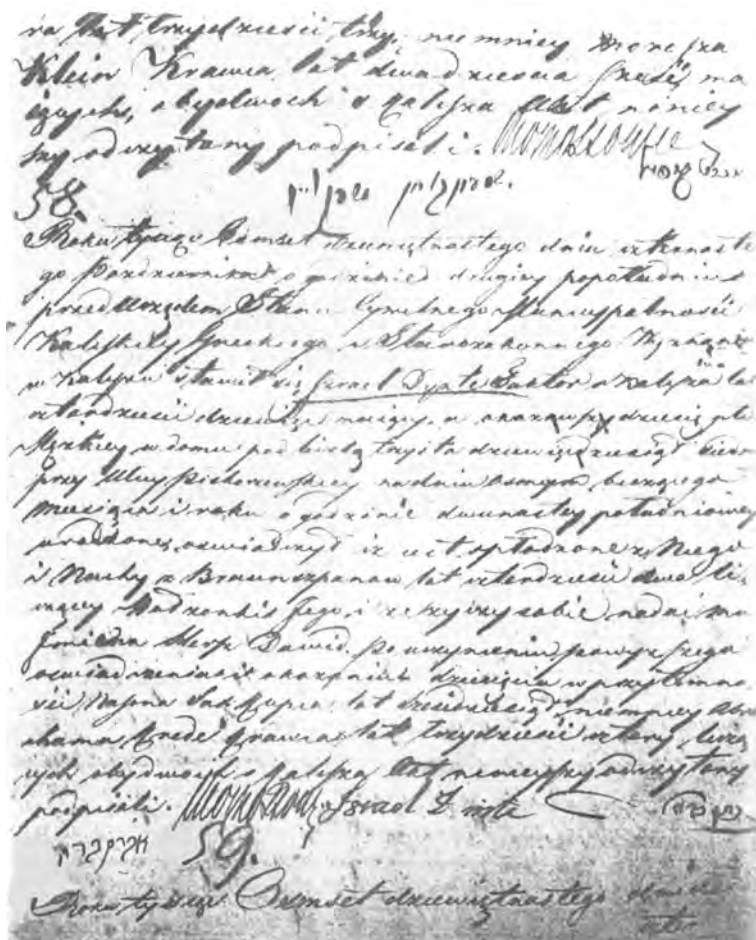
The likely parentage of Hyman Dinte:



Narcha may also have been known as Abraham since children often had many variations of their given name.

Following in his father's footsteps, Hyman, as he was known in later life, was also a tailor by trade. According to the marriage certificate of Philip Dinte, Hyman married Malazetcha and their son, Philip James, was born in September 1847 in Kalisz. Philip's mother died, probably in Poland, when he was small.

Herman David (Hersa Dawid) Dinte, Hyman's cousin, was born on 8 October 1819 at 397 Pichonew Street, Kalisz to parents, Israel Dinte and Narcha (nee Braunszpaw). Israel was very active in the Jewish community of Kalisz as seen by the fact that he signed many important documents for the official records including birth, marriage and death papers. Israel traded as a broker and wine merchant, but he was also known as a tailor. From research and translation of Birth, Death and Marriage records from the Polish archives, the siblings of Herman were: Esterka- b 1806; David b 1810; Ssayja (Simon) b 19 Jan 1812; Mazya b 1812; Jette b 1814; Dina b 1815; Tauba b 1817 and Mozes b 1821.



Polish birth details for Herja (Herman) David Dinte
1819-LDS film 743141

On the basis of family tradition, it is presumed that Hyman's father Leibla (Lewis) and Herman's father Israel were brothers. The two families kept in close contact all their lives in Poland, England and Australia. Due to the continuing political unrest in Eastern Europe, Herman, Hyman and his son Philip fled to England in the late 1840s or early 1850s to start new lives.

ENGLAND

Herman David Dinte married Henrietta Hannah Esther Robottom at St Pancras, London on 9 March 1851. Henrietta was the eighth child of a family of twelve children. Her parents were Henry and

Ann Robottom (née Glazbrook). Julius Alexander Dinte was born in 1851 in Islington, Middlesex, London to Herman and Henrietta. The family travelled to Melbourne on board the ship *Arrogant* arriving in April 1853.

Hyman Dinte and his son Philip lived in the Whitechapel area of London. Although no records have been located of exactly when Hyman married Alice Flance, in the early 1850s, a son, Henry Lewis (Louis) Dinte was born 5 June 1854 at 54 Lambeth Street, Whitechapel, London to Hyman Dinte and Alice Flance. Family stories recall that Alice died about 1857 in England, survived by Hyman and his two young sons.

AUSTRALIA

Herman Dinte

Herman & Henrietta Dinte would have spent time in Sydney after arriving via Melbourne as this was where a daughter Amy Toba Dinte was born 18 February 1854. A second son Frederick Robottom Dinte was born 25 November 1861 in Queensland. Sadly he died in 1862. From official records Herman David Dinte was a very enterprising and busy man. He was a hotelkeeper for several years at various locations — he worked as a postmaster and also operated a gold mine. All of these activities were carried out in the Warwick area. Herman was either totally or partly responsible for bringing a battery to the goldfields. For a period of twenty years or more, Herman, Henrietta and family would have experienced many endeavours as shown below:



Herman David Dinte

1863–1865	Licensee of Royal Hotel Warwick, Queensland
1864–1867/1868	Licensee of Talgai Quartz Reef Hotel
1866–	Dinte (Gold) Mine near Warwick
1866–	Postmaster at Talgai Reef
1883/4	Cosmopolitan Hotel Warwick
1887	Cosmopolitan Hotel Warwick

Also during the 1883/84 years H.D Dinte & Son was listed as Jeweller & Watchmaker. This indicates Julius may have been in business with his father.

In 1881 Herman David Dinte presented a left-handed *Yad* (Torah Pointer) to the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation. The *Yad* was silver and on the forefinger is a gold ring, set with a diamond, around the wrist is a bracelet set with three diamonds. Herman was vice president of the congregation at the time. During this time Herman and family built a sandstone house, *La Mascotte*, at 57 Victoria Street, Warwick. This is the home where Herman and Henrietta spent their retirement years. The house has been restored and is now part of the Comfort Inn, Warwick. A magnificent building now stands as an historical link to the Dinte family heritage.



*Yad-Torah Pointer donated by
Herman Dinte 1881*



Family Home c1880 — Warwick

Herman died in Warwick as result of pneumonia, asthenia and cardiac failure on 26 April 1900 aged 81 years and was buried in the Jewish section of the Toowong Cemetery, Brisbane. On his death certificate it states that J.M. Myers was the Jewish minister in attendance. The Hebrew inscription on the monolith translates as:

Here is entombed

An upright and trustworthy man, devoted to Acts of Piety

TSVI David, the son of Reb Israel

Who died aged 85 years on the 26th of Nissan, 5659

May his Soul be bound up in the Bond of Eternal Life



Current home as part of Motel, Victoria St Warwick, Queensland



*Hebrew Inscription — Herman Dinte Jewish Section
Toowong Cemetery Brisbane*

Hyman Dinte

In 1860 Hyman aged 39 years, with his older son Philip James, aged 11 years, arrived in Melbourne on the ship *Mermaid* leaving Henry Louis (six years) in England. They travelled as steerage passengers; the vessel left London on 17 July 1860 and arrived in Melbourne 16 Oct 1860 with 108 passengers bound for Auckland, New Zealand. On his arrival in Melbourne, Hyman launched into a career as a tailor and within four months married the sister of the wife of Herman David Dinte. Ann Elizabeth Robottom's arrival in Australia was on the ship *Florence Nightingale*, which docked in January 1859 with other members of her family on board. Hyman and Ann probably knew each other in London.

On 13 February 1861, Hyman Dinte married Ann Elizabeth Robottom at St Peters Church, Melbourne. Hyman and Ann's marriage certificate states that Hyman was a widower, April 1851. It is not clear what this date represents. The certificate also stated that he had one child living, born Kalisz, Poland, tailor by trade, living Clarendon Street,¹ East Melbourne, father Louis Dinte, Tailor, and mother Rozi. Tailoring was a skill that followed from father to son in this family line. Records reveal that Hyman started a tailoring business in Little Collins St Melbourne in 1861 and Philip joined his father's business several years later.

The following entries in the Victorian Post Office directories and also Sands & Kenny directories help track his movements:

PO Directories Melbourne:

1862 Nil

1863/4 Hyman, tailor, 6 James Street, F.

1865 Hyman, tailor 238 Bourke Street East

1866 as 1865

1868 George Dinte, Pascoe Street, Wmn

1868 Hyman, tailor, 238 & 22 Bourke Street East

Sands & Kenny Vic, Directories

1861 Hyman, tailor 16 Little Collins Street West

1863 Hyman, tailor, 6 James Street

1865 Hyman, tailor, 238 Bourke Street East

1867 Hyman, tailor, 238 & 22 Bourke Street East

1868 Hyman, tailor, 238 & 22 Bourke Street East

1868 George Dinte, Pascoe Street, Wmn

In 1866 Hyman Dinte was advertising his business at 238 Bourke St East Melbourne as tailor and habit maker in the *Yearly Advertiser* circulated in the Gippsland area of Victoria. The adver-

tisement stated: 'Begg to inform the Gentry & Public in general Melbourne and Suburbs that he has taken over the business of C E Jones & co. and hopes for a continuance etc'.



H. DINTÉ,
(Successor to C. E. Jones & Co.)
TAILOR AND HABIT MAKER,
238 BOURKE STREET EAST,
Begg to inform the Gentry and Public in general, of Melbourne and suburbs, that he has taken the above business, and hopes for a continuance of those favours bestowed on his predecessors.
H. Dinte begg to call attention to his low scale of prices :
Good Tweed Suits, to measure, £3 to £4 10s.
Frock or Dress Suits, from £6 to £8.
Ladies' Habits, from £6 to £8.

*1866–Advertisement published in the Yearly Advertiser,
Gippsland, Victoria*

Henry Louis Dinte, Hyman's son, who by this stage was aged 11, arrived in Melbourne aboard the ship *Champion of the Seas* in November 1866, in the care of a Joseph and Margaret Penny.² An entry in the 1869 Sands and Kenny Directory lists Hyman Dinte and Sons and changes back to Dinte and Son in 1870:

1869 Hyman Dinte and Sons, tailors, 238 & 200 Bourke St East
1870 Dinte & Son, Hymen & Philip J., tailors, above address
1871 as above

Melbourne Post Office Directories

1872 Hyman, tailor, 76 Bourke Street West
1873 Nil

Hyman obviously decided to make Australia home according to a Letter of Naturalization dated 6 June 1870. His details are given as:

- Hyman Dinte of 238 Bourke Street, Melbourne, Tailor,
- born Kalisz, Prussian Poland,
- 50 years of age,
- Arrived per *Mermaid* 17 Sep 1860 from London,
- Residing in Victoria for nine years and eight months.³

The business had run into trouble by 1871 when Hyman and Philip James were declared insolvent. By 1872, the Sands and Kenny Directory lists only Hyman at 76 Bourke Street as does the Melbourne Post Office Directory and by 1873 the entries had disappeared.

However, according to his marriage certificate, Philip James Dinte was still working as a tailor in 1872. On the 22 September 1872, at the residence of the father of the bride, the American Hotel in Simpson's Road, Melbourne, Philip James Dinte, aged 25 years, married Maria Baragwanath, aged 21 years. He gave his status as bachelor, no children, born in Poland, tailor by trade, residence Smith Street, Collingwood, father Hyman Dinte, tailor, mother Mulzazetcha. Maria was a gentlewoman, daughter of carpenter James and Maria Baragwanath and had been born at the Cape of Good Hope and was living at 21 Simpsons Road. A daughter was born the following year and a son in November 1875. On the birth of son Claude, Phillip's occupation was given as tailor and his address as Simpsons Road, South Richmond.

In 1876 tragedy struck with the death of baby, Claude, and two years later in 1878, four year old daughter, Ethel, died of laryngitis, from which she had suffered for two days. Ethel's death was registered by an aunt and her father's occupation was given as cutter. This is the last reference found about Philip Dinte. Perhaps the death of the two babies drove the couple apart and Philip left, for his father and brother had moved to Brisbane around 1873 or 1874.

According the marriage certificate for Maria Dinte, dated 7 April 1888 to William Crawford, Maria was a widow in 1876 with no children living, two children deceased and had been born at Cape Town, Africa and was now aged 32 years. This would suggest that Phillip died soon after the birth of baby Claude in Nov 1875 but no proof of death can be found. Later research has found that a person named Philip James Dinte was registered on the Electoral Roll in Charters Towers Queensland in the years 1889–1892. This place was a network of goldmines around this time.

Hyman & Ann Dinte had moved to Queensland around 1873/74 and started a tailoring business in George St Brisbane possibly with

son Henry as his apprentice in the trade. By 1878, Henry Louis appears to have started his own tailoring business. Records reveal that Hyman had tailoring businesses at various addresses in George & Queen Streets, Brisbane over several years. They lived in the Kelvin Grove and Ashgrove areas. He worked as a tailor until the he was around seventy years old as shown by the following entries:

QLD Post Office Directories

1874 Dinte H., tailor, George St, Brisbane

1876 Dinte,H, tailor or hosier, Queen Street, private resid
George St

1878 H.L. Dinte, tailor, Bradley Street, Spring Hill

1878 Hyman, tailor, Kelvin Grove, Brisbane

The Record of Allegiance Vic for Hyman Dinte of Queensland is dated 10 April 1885 and stated he was born in Poland, he was 65 years old and a tailor by trade.

Queensland Post Office Directory

1883-4 Hyman, tailor, 9 Queen Street p.r. Kelvin Grove

1885-6 Hyman, tailor, 9 Queen Street, p.r. Kelvin Grove

1887 Hyman, tailor & clothier, 9 Queen Street, p.r. Latrobe
Terr. Kelv. Gr.

1888 Hyman, tailor, 9 Queen Street, as above

1888 Henry L Dinte, tailor, Union Street, S.H.

1889 Hyman, Kelvin Grove, Brisbane

1889 Hyman, tailor, 9 Queen Street.

Hyman died of fatty degeneration of the heart and syncope on the 24 April 1895 at Grove Estate, Ashgrove. He was buried two days later in Portion 3 Section 8 of the Jewish section of the Toowong Cemetery with Rabbi A. Chodowski was in attendance. His wife, Ann, died on 23 July 1898. Hyman's burial plot is unmarked and his death certificate does not help to fill out the missing pieces of history. It does tell us that he was born in Kalisch [Kalisz], Russian Poland, and spent 23 years in Queensland. It also states that he was married twice with details of first marriage unknown. The only child listed is Philip and the informant, wife Ann, obviously did not know what happened to Philip as she has not shown an age or death for him.

Henry Louis Dinte

Henry Louis (Lewis) Dinte loved to play the piano and sing. He met Elizabeth 'Lizzie' McFarlane, daughter of Andrew McFarlane

& Jane Wright, at a musicians' gathering. They married on 16 March 1876 at the residence of the bride at North Brisbane and lived at Spring Hill, Brisbane. Family stories recall that Henry was connected with the Tivoli circuit, which was a song and dance group that travelled around various towns and cities. Henry was also in the tailoring business with his father, Hyman. The business may have failed or Henry may have chosen a different profession at this stage. Around 1882 Henry, Lizzie and their three children, Frank Douglas born on 21 July 1877, Ida Lenette born on 28 February 1879 and Hector Vivian born on 11 November 1881, went to live on St Helena's Island in Moreton Bay. Henry worked as a warden at the penal settlement where they were provided with a house. On the island there was a school and a sugar mill. St Helena was home to many hundreds of society's outcasts. The prison operated for many decades and closed in 1933.

Sometime later they moved to Gympie where Ruby Hymen McFarlane was born on 17 December 1884. Henry was in charge of a shop that sold pianos and sewing machines. Possibly this is where Frank Douglas learnt the tailoring trade. Later they opened a shop at Childers with possibly both Henry and Frank working as tailors in addition to selling pianos and sewing machines. The family may have moved back to Brisbane about 1896 when Frank married Frances Masters. Lizzie Dinte died 1 June 1911 aged 50 years at Goodna after years of debilitating illnesses. She was listed as dress-maker on her death certificate. Henry Louis Dinte died as the result of heart failure in the far western Queensland town of Tambo on the 4 May 1915 at the age of 63 years. He is buried in the Tambo Cemetery.

THE DESCENDANTS

Frank Douglas Dinte

Frank Douglas Dinte married Frances Emma Masters, daughter of Joseph Rudolph Masters and Francis Elizabeth Rowe, on 20 August 1896 at Braeside Vulture Street, South Brisbane. They were both 19 at the time. Frank also was a tailor by trade and he conducted businesses around Brisbane — in St Lucia, off George Street and finally in Wilston. The large family home was on the corner of Dalrymple Street and Eighth Ave, Wilston. There was also a corner store as part of the home. Frank died 8 August 1942 and Frances, 'Fanny' as she was called, died 27 March 1958

The children of this marriage were:

Florence Gertrude 'Gertie' Dinte, born 21 April 1894;
died 10 January 1921
George Ernest Dinte, born 29 December 1898;
died 22 December 1949
Frank Douglas Dinte, born 7 November 1902;
died 5 August 1937
Victor Herbert Dinte, born 13 November 1907;
died 7 December 1971
Frances Ruby Dinte, 'Ruby' born 13 December 1912;
died 22 December 19724

Ida Lenette Dinte

Ida Lenette Dinte married Joseph Dobson, son of William Dobson and Mary Ann Faigh, on the 24 February 1897 at Industrial Home, Normanby Hill, Brisbane. Joe's unusual occupation was as a clicker (a person who cuts out the shoe leather in preparation of making shoes/boots). He died on 22 May 1944. Ida loved to sew and knit and over the years was deeply involved in charity work. She donated clothing articles to many organisations such as Peel Island Leprosy settlement and other charitable institutions. Ida died in her ninetieth year on the 8 September 1968.

Children of this marriage were:

Eva Lillian Dobson, born 24 March 1897;
died 30 April 1975
Arthur Edward Dobson, born 20 December 1902;
died 18 September 1976
Ellen Joyce Dobson, born 30 October 1905;
died 17 February 1995
Grace Annie Dobson, born 15 January 1908;
died 1 October 1908
Kathleen Maud Dobson, born 15 January 1908;
died 2 October 1908
Ernest William Dobson, born 4 November 1910;
died 26 December 1955
Josephine Ida Dobson, born 31 December 1911;
died 3 August 1995
Joseph Stanley Dobson, born 12 July 1914;
died 10 September 1994
George Thomas Dobson, born 20 August 1916, died c1986
Leah Mary Dobson, born 6 September 1918
John Fredrick Dobson, born 15 July 1921;
died 24 November 1984⁵

Hector Vivian Dinte

Hector Vivian Dinte married Hannah Amelia Masters, daughter of Joseph Rudolph Masters and Francis Elizabeth Rowe, on 21 August 1900 at Bowen Hills, Brisbane. Hector joined the AIF on 11 November 1915. He was discharged months later but rejoined in July 1918. In 1923 Hector joined the crew of the 167 ton steamer *Douglas Mawson* as a fireman/driver on a regular trip to Gulf ports. This ship arrived safely at Normanton, one of the many ports en route to dispatch its cargo, but Hector tragically lost his life aboard when it shipwrecked in the Gulf of Carpentaria about 28 March 1923 during a wild storm. Hannah died 14 February 1955 in Brisbane.

Children of this Marriage were:

George Edwin Dinte, born 6 June 1900; died 17 May 1980

Alice Amelia Dinte, born 17 August 1901; died 13 February 1974

Harriet Vivian Dinte, born 24 August 1903; died 28 April 1974

Henry Louis Dinte, born 9 December 1905; died 9 December 1905

Frances Emily Dinte, born 26 April 1906 and died 7 October 1980

Ernest Gregory Dinte, born 19 November 1907 and died 10 March 1909

Rudolph Joseph Dinte, born 26 September 1909 and died 7 July 2001

Florence Amy Dinte, born 17 October 1911

James Harold Dinte, born 12 May 1913 and died 15 August 1980

Sidney Albert Dinte, born 18 October 1915 and died 14 November 1968

William Ernest Dinte, born 1 May 1918

Thelma Ethel Dinte, born 21 October 1920 and died 19 May 1999⁶

Ruby Hyman McFarlane Dinte

Ruby Hyman McFarlane Dinte married Francis Stanley Windridge, son of Samuel Windridge and Sara Jane Clarke, on 17 December 1913 at Mackay. Ruby had worked as a nanny to an army officer's family in Victoria prior to her marriage to Francis. The family lived in the Mackay area when the children were born. Francis worked in the railway and also on sugar cane farms. He died at Hughenden on

27 May 1948 after moving to a drier climate for health reasons. Ruby died on 24 June 1975 in the Eventide Home Sandgate, Brisbane.

Children of this marriage were:

Leslie Eric Windridge, born 25 December 1915;

died 18 January 2003

Reginald Francis Windridge, born 25 June 1917;

died 14 September 2001⁷

Julius Alexander Dinte

Julius Dinte, son of Herman & Henrietta, married Dora Osoki in London on 19 February 1879. The marriage took place at 'Ann House', Bow Road, Islington, London. At the time Julius was 27 years old and Dora was 18. They journeyed to Australia on board the ship *Chimborazo* with Julius' parents returning to Australia also as passengers. They arrived in Melbourne September 1879. Julius & Dora would have travelled to Queensland as their twelve children were born in Brisbane.

Children of this Marriage were:

Miriam Dora Dinte, born 10 December 1879; died 6 January 1906

Louis Herman Dinte, born 8 April 1881; died 1 February 1954

Ruby Olive Dinte, born 1 July 1883; died 7 December 1883

Rudolph Julius David Dinte, born 24 August 1884; died 1940

Vera Zara Ruth Dinte, born 11 December 1885; died 30 May 1886

Thyra Irene (Dolly) Dinte, born 17 January 1887

Baron Roland Dinte, born 19 October 1888; died 13 May 1954

Olive Ruth Dinte, born 31 December 1889

Solomon August Dinte, born 24 August 1892; died 12 December 1939

Francis Louis Leopold Dinte, born 3 March 1894; died 17 May 1949

Dora Amelia Dinte, born 17 September 1896; died 3 November 1896

Ernest Harold Dinte, born 18 December 1897

Julius died on 23 February 1903 in Brisbane. Dora lived till she was 67 and was buried next to her husband in the Dinte Plot at the Jewish Section of the Toowong Cemetery, Brisbane, on the 29 June 1926⁸. There are numerous descendants of this line who reside in

Sydney and have a strong Jewish connection. The Great Synagogue in Sydney is the place mentioned as the place of celebration according to the rites of the Jewish faith for many of the bridal couples.

SUBSEQUENT GENERATIONS

- Miriam Dora Dinte married William F. Spode, 11 September 1905 (No descendants)
- Louis Herman Dinte married Rachel Gomes, 30 August 1905 Their children were Julius Alexander, Colman David, Joyce Sylvia and June Estelle)
- Rudolph Julius David Dinte married Rose Stella Joel, 30 January 1910 (Child: Miriam)
- Baron Roland Dinte married Rachel Bennett, 10 April 1911 (Children: Kathleen Miriam Dodo, Philip, Alexander)
- Solomon August Dinte married Florence Emily Eggert (Children: Leopold, Donald, Gladys, Elva, Norma, Olive, Fay, Irene)
- Francis Louis Leopold Dinte married Rosa Ada Bernstein, 9 February 1916 (Children: Nathan, Dora Rosa, Esther Miriam, Bella Olive)

Julius Alexander Dinte, son of Louis Herman Dinte, was the founder of JA Dinte Pty Ltd in Sydney. This company is one of Australia's leading non-ferrous foundries. It has been involved in manufacturing since 1930.⁹

Morris S Ochert, Queensland representative of the AJHS, recalls that, when he was young, his father's tyre company was supplying tyres to the large carrying firm of Myers & Dinte. Possibly this person was Louis Herman Dinte. In the 1920s the press would carry regular advertisements for that firm which featured a great lineup of large drays each drawn by four large draught horses and many motor lorries. All these advertisements displayed the firm's name. Morris also worked with an engineering fitter named Myer Dinte, a grandson of the founder of Myers & Dinte.

CONCLUSION

This outline of the Dinte family history is illustrative of much of the story of Jewish settlement from Eastern Europe to Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century. Most of these immigrants spent some time in Britain before migrating to Australia; they often settled in the countryside rather than in the city centres of Melbourne and Sydney, so that during this period forty per cent of Australian Jewry

lived outside the main capital cities, and there was a high rate of intermarriage. However, this wave of Jewish migration did assist in the development of Jewish life and, as with the Dinte family, some branches have remained within the fold of the Jewish community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks must go to Judy Hall, Del Benfer, Jenny Ivin, Rhonda Casalanguida, Neville Hjort, Val Eames, Josie Fry, Joy Dinte, Brian Askew and others who have provided the material to collate this history.

Family History could not evolve without the many hours, weeks and years of research. Special thanks go to Judy who mastered the art of translating the Polish Birth, Death and Marriage records from the early 1800s into English so as to give a rewarding insight into Herman's and Hyman's family and their connection to Poland. Thanks also to members of the Jewish Committee for the Aging (COA) in Sydney who translated some of the Polish records on which we based the format of these BDM translations.

The assistance of Morris Ochert OAM is acknowledged for the translation of the Hebrew on Herman Dinte's headstone and for the data relating to the 'left handed *Yad*' donated by Herman which is still in use in the Brisbane Synagogue. Morris Ochert's guidance and encouragement has helped this history come together.

Birth, Death and Marriage records have been searched, newspaper articles read, the internet 'surfed', plus sifting again and again the family tales that have been passed down through generations.

NOTES

1. The number 'six' is after the word child and it is not clear if this means six deceased or maybe the child was aged six,
2. Vic Shipping Records on Line, Microfiche ref. B 261 003.
3. Information from Joy Dinte researched April 2000. Australian Jewish Historical Society:
Insolvency of Hyman & Philip James Dinte both tailors, of Melbourne Aug 1871 and Oct 1873. Records available from AJHS Melbourne.
4. For further details of this branch -please contact Joy Dinte joydinte@hotmail.com
5. For further details of this branch please contact Del Benfer—jbenfer@acenet.net.au
6. For further details of this branch please contact Judy Hall —jahall@intas.net.au

7. For further details of this branch contact Josie Fry davojos@squirrel.com.au
8. Location Portion 3, Section 18/19
9. For further details of this branch contact Jenny Ivin wren@gil.com.au

FROM COUNTRY TOWN TO CITY COMMUNITY: ROSE AND ISRAEL SAMUEL HOVEV IN AUSTRALIA

Diana Encel

Some time before he died, I took my father to the Chinese Garden in Darling Harbour. We walked slowly; he was already over ninety and frail. I was reading all the labels to him and suddenly he stopped, looking at a large rock. I had just told him where it had come from. 'Cumnock!' he exclaimed. 'I remember Cumnock.' And he started to tell me how he had been there many years ago. It was a story I had heard often, from my childhood years onwards. My father, Israel Samuel Hovev, had immigrated to Australia in 1926, on the *Ville D'Amiens*. He was then a young man, six months older than the century. He left behind him in the Palestine of the time his wife who was anxious to follow as soon as he made a place for her. He had been sponsored here by my mother's aunt, Rose Bornstein, but had arrived in Sydney without English and without money, or at least, almost no money: 'I had twelve and sixpence,' he told us. So he found a job, by word of mouth, picking peas in Oberon. He had been working as a farm labourer on a settlement in Palestine and liked the outdoor life, so pea-picking was no trouble. However, it was a lonely experience for him and one Saturday morning he strolled through the streets of Oberon hoping for company. He spotted a sign over a shop selling menswear with a name that looked, if not familiar, at least foreign enough to encourage him to try his luck. Inside he found Michael Dobrinski, an immigrant originally from Russia (via China), who was to become a lifelong friend and eventually my uncle (though that's another story). He had come to Oberon to sell goods on consignment. Taking advantage of the fact that there was no store stocking the kind of goods he carried, Michael Dobrinski had opened a store himself and became a successful businessman.

Michael persuaded my father that pea-picking held no future for a young man with a wife and some ambition (and indeed the pea

crop ran out in the next few days). He mentioned a man, Martin Lapin, who had a good reputation for helping young immigrants. So, on Michael's recommendation, my father went to Bathurst where Martin Lapin had a shop. Sam, as my father became known, asked for some suggestions and Martin Lapin was most helpful. Sam returned to Sydney where my mother's aunts bought him a suitcase, sent him to Rawson Place where there were warehouses; they told him to buy sufficient clothes to fill the case, take it west and sell the goods. That is how my father became a pedlar, a hawker, a door-to-door salesman, a very typical way for Jewish newcomers in Australia (and indeed in the New World) to earn a living.

In those days, and even later, all through the thirties, housewives were used to opening their doors to travelling salesmen, inviting them in to display their wares: a sort of travelling supermarket. Women, more or less confined to their homes, often welcomed the opportunity for a break in their routine. The Rawleigh's man brought flavourings of all kinds; the American Fuller Brush company operated here at the time. Knives, cleaning materials and other goods were all available at the door. My father sold ladies' underwear.

He started with two suitcases full, took the train westward, alighted at some small station and took his wares from door to door. When the suitcases were empty, he returned to Sydney and replenished his stock from wholesalers recommended by his benefactor in Bathurst. I sometimes try to imagine what it must have been like for him, knocking on doors, never knowing what to expect, hoping for a sale, speaking in his poor English, which he picked up slowly from those same housewives. By 1927 he had saved enough to send for his wife to join him in Australia.

In those early years he stayed in hotels near the railway: the Commercial or the Station. Here he met other travellers, mostly men employed by companies, such as Mr Jay who became a personal friend of our family, who sold from catalogues of the large city department store, Marcus Clark's. These men were known as commercial travellers, more secure in their jobs than men like my father who had no wages and who had to depend on their own skills, but had the chance of rising up in the world.

Sam's life changed a little after my mother arrived. Rose (nee Weintraub) was a lively person, more enterprising than her husband. She quite quickly became dissatisfied with the rhythm of his travels: a week away, a few days in Sydney to stock up and then off on the train again. She went with him to the wholesalers and soon began to choose his stock for him. Then she looked at the railway map and worked out a central stop. They decided on Orange.

Orange at that time was a town of some 10 000 people, on the western outskirts of the Great Dividing Range. It has its own extinct volcano, Mount Canoblas, giving it the rich soil that made it just right for growing orchard fruits: mainly cherries and apples.

My father arranged to stay in a boarding house in March Street, Orange, run by the wife of Mr Jay, who had befriended him. My parents settled into a new routine. On Monday morning, my father would take the train west and my mother would go east. She would buy the stock in Sydney and he would sell it in a series of towns along the railway line. They would meet again for the weekend in Orange, a shorter trip for him and more time together. Soon my mother moved from the boarding house into a dwelling behind a shop in Summer Street. She opened the doors and displayed the extra stock she bought in Sydney. Her English was very limited and the women who came into the shop taught her the words for the garments, the sizes and the colours. I often wonder how she bought them in the first place: I think she pointed, with a winning smile on her face, though I suspect that they spoke Yiddish in some of the warehouses where she bought her stock.

It was not long until they were able to afford a car: an old Ford 'Tin Lizzie' with running boards on the side and a hessian bag of water for drinking tied on the front. (My earliest favourite taste is water from that bag.) The car allowed my father to visit towns not on the railway line, frequented by fewer salesmen. It also enabled him to carry more stock than could be accommodated in the two



Rose and Sam Hovev with baby Diana, Orange, 1928

suitcases he had managed on the train. In the meantime, Rose was becoming a successful businesswoman in her own right. They were both becoming well-known personalities in the town.

I was born in 1928, my sister a year or so later. My father continued to travel and it is stories of those years that returned to my mind when he stopped at the rocks from Cumnock. Nyngan, Bourke, Coonabarabran, Cowra, all these and others became familiar words in my vocabulary, though I did not have any idea of what the towns were like. Dad used to describe them in his own terms: a one-horse town, a two-pub town, a Rexona town (from the biggest billboard he encountered as he drove in). He always had a tale to tell on the weekend. Once he was lost on a track alongside the almost dry bed of the Darling River and had to spend the night in the car. On another trip his car turned over and he lay beside it, concussed, for some unmeasured length of time till he came to and managed to right it with the help of a passer-by. He just drove on. Once he didn't come home and we heard from a hospital where he had been rushed with food poisoning. He still tried to make contact with other newcomers wherever he had to stay a night and had some strange encounters. In Kandos, I think, he went to meet someone he had been told was called Cohen, only to find a man whose name was Kow Yin. I wish now that I had taken more notice and written down his tales; too late now.

Orange was kind to our family. The people who had taught my mother to speak English at first treated us as a sort of pet family, unique and special. My father joined one of the active Lodges and they learned to play euchre and other card games; my father became a constant solo player from those times on, later progressing to bridge, both of which games have the same elements as the more simple euchre. He played solo with friends in Orange, a small group who took turns at meeting in one another's homes. There were comments about how different (and welcome) my mother's suppers were from those prepared by the other wives. She made strudel where they made sponges, and her savouries were unlike their sandwiches. My parents played tennis with other shopkeepers. I remember best the weekends when we set out on expeditions in the old Tin Lizzie: picnics where we gathered mushrooms, or picked blackberries, or pieces of fallen timber for the old wood stove. We visited places like Sunny Corner and Lucknow, old mining towns now almost derelict, with our neighbours, the Roberts, who owned the bakery next door.

I don't remember any antisemitic or anti-foreign prejudice ever being spoken about at home. Certainly, I did not experience it when I went to school though my sister's memories are slightly different.

So far as I knew, my sister and I were the only girls in the school whose parents did not speak English at home. That did remain a curiosity among my friends. My parents never lost their foreign accents and always stood out in company, but it made no difference to the way they were treated, at least in my experience.

We became very 'comfortable'. Not only did my parents have the shop at the top end of Summer Street, but sometime in the mid - 1930s they opened a larger shop in the business centre in the lower end of town, opposite Robinson Park. My mother was an equal partner in all their enterprises. We had our own home in Moulder Street, designed by my father. He satisfied his 'agricultural' urges with a very large vegetable garden and a chook run (though it became my job to feed them, and to pop over the back fence to gather manure from the cows grazing there to feed my father's vegetables).

Although we paid visits to Sydney, mainly associated with Jewish holidays, my mother missed the city life and all her compatriots. Even Michael Dobrinski had long left Oberon and was settled in Sydney, now married to my mother's sister. My father, too, missed contact with other Jews. He tried to keep Jewish customs, but it was difficult. The shops were all open on Saturday morning and Friday was 'late night shopping night'. Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashannah were the only days I can remember that they actually stayed home from work.

My brother was born in 1938. He was a fussy baby, crying a lot, hard to feed, not sleeping much. My mother felt that she needed help. So we were joined in Orange by one of the Lapin girls from Bathurst who was a trained nurse. Later she was replaced by a 'mother's help', a girl who became part of our household for many years. Nita had recently arrived from England, coming on one of those large boats that carried passengers in those days. She told us stories about her fellow passengers, her widowed father and her young sister, a team of Australian footballers returning after a tour, and a young man from Poland who was learning to speak English as they sailed. It was not long until the young man arrived in our house, not to visit Nita, but to see the uncle who had sponsored his immigration to Australia. The coincidence made us all feel strange. He was Peter Liebhaver, the son of my father's sister, Chippah.

I should go back a little and tell of my parents' earlier history, briefly. They had both been born in Poland to Orthodox families, my father in Gniewoszow in 1899, my mother in Amshanov (in the province of Skiernewicz) in the early 1900s. My mother's family had moved to Warsaw where she grew up in a poor but cultured background. She talked of going to the opera, standing room only. The house was the meeting place for other young people and it was there



The House that Sam built, Orange, 1938

From l to r: Diana (Hovev) Encel, Sonia Dobrinski with Leon Joshua, Blanche (Phillips) Goldstein, Fanny (Faigele) Phillips, Judith Phillips (Jacks), Rose Hovev with baby Lionel Joshua and Leah (Hovev) Zander

that she was introduced to other young Zionists. Although her older brother emigrated in the early years of the century to America, Rose went in the early 1920s to Palestine.

My father was educated in a Yeshiva, with no secular learning at all. In 1917 he left Poland and escaped to Germany. He survived the remaining war years there, partly in hiding and partly working in the coalmines. After the war he found himself alone, with no papers. However, he was able to obtain an entry permit to Palestine from a British consulate somewhere in Germany. I wish I knew more about that process. His name in Poland had been Liebhaber, which means 'lover'. In Palestine he changed it to Hovev, which has a similar meaning. (You may wonder how his sister's son had the same surname: it was the result of her marriage to a Liebhaber cousin.)

My parents met in Palestine. He was working in Hartuv, a settlement near Jerusalem. She was working in a laundry in Tel Aviv and living with a family related to my father. They met and married in 1926. The late twenties in Palestine were difficult years and the work they were doing held no prospects of improvement. Rose had an aunt settled in Australia and through her they were able to get papers to emigrate yet again, this time to Australia where the economic situation was more promising.



Rose Amshanov shortly before she left Poland for Palestine

My father was not an overtly sentimental man. Nevertheless, he had a strong family feeling, and as the treatment of Jews in Europe became harsher he felt it necessary to get as many of his family as possible to join us in Australia. My mother already had helped two of her sisters to come here: Sonia who came in the mid-1930s and later married Michael Dobrinski; and Fanny and Maurice Oppenheim who arrived with two young daughters in 1937. The Oppenheims settled briefly in Orange. Their surname was changed to Phillips. Maurice Phillips became an important figure in the movement to support the continuing use of Yiddish, a stalwart member of the Folk Centre, which was established during World War II.

Peter was the first member of my father's family to come. He was then in his late teens, already very political. When I was older he fed me Communist literature: a book by J.D. Bernal when I showed an interest in science, Russian folk songs when I was learning to play the piano. Peter did not stay with us long. He returned

to Sydney where he found a training place and then work with the help of my mother's cousin, Eve Bornstein (later Popper), who worked in the Department of Education. When war broke out in 1939, he joined the Australian forces and served in New Guinea during the war. His politics changed in later years and he was no longer the firebrand leftist I first encountered in his later years. Peter died in 2004. In 1938, my father's half-brother, my Uncle Yitzhak (Jack) Liebhaver, also arrived in Australia from Poland.

Early in 1939 my family left Orange and moved to Sydney. After a short time we took up residence behind a Ham and Beef shop in Bondi Junction, what would now be called a delicatessen. It was a tall building, several stories high, with the bedrooms on the upper floors, bathroom off a landing, and the only lavatory at the bottom, below the shop level. It was no fun to have to go to the toilet in the middle of the night. My parents had the top floor with a balcony overlooking Oxford Street and I shared with Nita, and probably Leah, but my memory is not perfect. Uncle Jack had the room above the bathroom. His wife Leah (Lonia) arrived on one of the last boats to leave Europe before the war.

Work in the shop was not easy. It began early and ended late, with all the uncertainties associated with a passing sandwich trade. Neither my father nor Uncle Jack enjoyed it. They had to handle bacon and ham; they had not come into contact with these meats before. Worse still was the trade in rabbits. The rabbits were delivered cleaned but uncooked. One or two mornings a week they were boiled up in the wood-fired laundry copper. The smell pervaded the house, right up to the top floor. We held our noses for hours afterwards. I think it was Jack who rose first to get it all done before the rest of us came down for breakfast.

I don't remember how long we were all together behind the shop. Then Lonia became pregnant, Jack found another smallgoods shop, on the corner of Dover Road and Old South Head Road, Rose Bay. Both my father and Uncle Jack gave up the food business in due course, moving into women's dress shops, becoming separately successful. My mother was a major figure in this move as she was always an inspired businesswoman.

The last member of my father's family to arrive in Australia did not come until after the war. This was his niece, Peter's sister, Hannah, and her husband Sigmund Gerichter (later Guerry). All in all, my family's early immigration to Australia has been a good thing for many people.

My parents became significant members of the Jewish community (especially the Zionist movement) in Sydney. Their home was often used for money-raising activities for Zionist causes. Rose was

the founding president of Carmel WIZO in the 1940s.¹ She was encouraged in the task by Ida BenZion, later Ida Wynn.² Ida had married my mother's relative, Sam Wynn (originally Weintraub) and they were both well-known Zionist workers in Melbourne.

Rose was devoted to Carmel WIZO and its members, most of whom were or became close friends. Over the years she held almost every office in the group: president twice, treasurer, hospitality chair and in 1960 she was made a life president.³ She represented Carmel on the State WIZO Council and was a member of the executive of NSW WIZO: as treasurer from 1960 to 1964,⁴ state president from 1964 to 1966⁵ as well as being a delegate to the Australian Federation of WIZO. In 1974, she was made a life member of the Federal Executive.⁶ She was actively involved in the purchase and running of Beth WIZO in Sydney⁷ and was Chair of the House Committee in 1968.⁸ One of her major positions was as Chair



Rose Hovev (left) with Ida Wynn, 1946

of the Committee on Wills and Bequests.⁹ I have lists of the slogans she and her colleagues devised to treat this delicate matter with sensitivity. Her greatest satisfaction came from her involvement with Ahuza, a home for children on Mt Carmel (Haifa).¹⁰ She visited the home on several occasions and a plaque in her honour is on one of the walls there.¹¹ My parents were made life governors of the Home in 1958.¹² When the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies was established, Rose was one of the original Deputies, representing her beloved WIZO.

Rose was also involved in the work of the Jewish National Fund (JNF); in 1947 she was 'Convenor of Emblems'.¹³ At various times, she was WIZO delegate to the State Zionist Council.¹⁴ She and my father were active workers for the United Jewish (later Israel) Appeal and our home was often a venue for money raising parties or visiting speakers.¹⁵

Sam Hovev became a trusted member of the Jewish business community, often acting as a go-between for other businessmen. He was also involved in mediating communal disputes within the com-

munity, at least once forming part of a group invited to do so in Melbourne where he was seen as an impartial 'judge'. When he was not at home or at work, he could often be found in the Tarbuth rooms at 333 George Street in Sydney, the scene of several communal meetings and discussions in the 1940s and early 1950s. Sam was an early activist in the State Zionist Council and was on the Executive Council throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.¹⁶ In 1948 he was chair of a sub-committee on the promotion of the teaching and use of Hebrew,¹⁷ a subject dear to his heart, and in 1967 he was chairman of the Aliyah Committee.¹⁸ He was treasurer of the New South Wales State Zionist Council from 1962 to 1968, some of its most successful years.¹⁹ He was similarly active in the JNF, being on various committees and on the Executive Council from the 1950s²⁰ and he was frequently elected as a delegate to the Australian Zionist Conferences.²¹ His JNF activities were not confined to committee meetings: he was chairman of the JNF Bellevue Hill Committee²² and remained a door-to-door collector of Blue Box donations till he could no longer walk distances. Sam was made a Life Member of both the Executive of the JNF of NSW and of the State Zionist Council of NSW. In 1969 they jointly held a dinner in honour of his 70th birthday. A *Nachla* was established in Kerem Maharal, the JNF Project Centre in Israel,²³ in the name of my parents at that time.²⁴ In 1970 they were in Israel and attended the dedication ceremony.

Rose and Sam visited Israel several times, especially after my sister, Leah Zander, settled there in 1956. Their involvement with Zionist activities in Australia never flagged. In addition to their love of Israel, my parents also imbued us with an appreciation of our own good fortune to be living in Australia. My mother often said 'Isn't this a great country!' My mother died in 1982, my father survived till 1993. They were part of the small group of East European Jews who had contributed significantly to the growth of the Zionist movement in New South Wales, moving it from the periphery of communal identification to a central aspect of Jewish life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of the information in this article is garnered from cuttings my mother kept. Many of them are undated and even where a date is given it is often partial. Sometimes the source is not identified. I have tried to source as many as I can, consulting the Archives of Australian Judaica held at the University of Sydney, and also back numbers of the Sydney Jewish News. My thanks go to Sister Dr Marianne Dacey who tried valiantly with limited resources to compile and maintain a useful set of records.



Opening of the Nahala at Kerem Maharal, 1970



*Rose and Sam Hovev standing next to the plaque in their honour
at Kerem Maharal*

NOTES

1. Undated cutting from the *Sydney Jewish News (SJN)*, Rose Hovev's Book of Cuttings, personal archive, Diana Encel and *Australian Jewish News (AJN)*, 25 October 1984.
2. *Ivriah Journal*, September 1948.
3. *SJN*, 25 November 1960, September 1961, p6 and *AJN*, September 1971, Book of Cuttings, op. cit.
4. *SJN*, 6 July 1962.
5. *WIZO Journal*, October/November 1964, *SJN* 12 August 1966, and *Australian Jewish Times (AJT)*, 25 October 1984.
6. *AJN*, September 1974, Book of Cuttings, op. cit.
7. Beth WIZO was bought in 1966, *AJT*, 15 April 1966, *AJN* September 1966, Book of Cuttings, op. cit.
8. Annual WIZO Report, 1968.
9. *WIZO Journal*, December 1968 and Annual Reports, various years during the 1970s, Archive of Australian Judaica.
10. *Ahuzat Yeladim* was established in 1935 and was adopted as a major WIZO project, *WIZO Journal*, June 1975.
11. Letter from Josie Lacey, WIZO president at the time, 5 March 1984, held by Diana Encel.

12. *SJN*, 1958, Book of Cuttings, op. cit.
13. Annual Report of JNF, 1947, Archive of Australian Judaica.
14. Minutes of the State Zionist Council (SZC), 1964, Archive of Australian Judaica, Fisher Library, University of Sydney.
15. *SJN*, 15 April 1966, March 1968, Book of Cuttings, op. cit.
16. Minutes of the SZC, held on Microfiche, Archive of Australian Judaica.
17. Minutes of the SZC, Archive of Australian Judaica.
18. *SJN*, 3 November 1967.
19. Minutes of SZC.
20. See, for example, JNF Annual Reports, 1947, 1951–2, Archive of Australian Judaica.
21. Minutes of Zionist conferences, Microfiche, Archive of Australian Judaica.
22. *SJN*, 1958, Book of Cuttings, op. cit.
23. *AJN*, June 1969, Book of Cuttings, op. cit.
24. Invitation to celebration, held by Diana Encel and *AJN*, June 1969, Book of Cuttings, op. cit.

AUSTRALIA BOUND ... ONE BOY'S JOURNEY FROM PERSECUTION TO LIFE

*Paul Schiffres**

PROLOGUE

On 9 May 1939, when his ship docked at Fremantle, Rudi Halberstadt (later Robert Halbert), a fourteen-year-old Jewish refugee from Vienna, was handed a letter from Hymie Marks, a gentleman unknown to him. Rudi later wrote: 'He welcomed me to Australia, introduced himself as my 'Guardian' trustee, ... and referred to me as his 'little brother'. Hymie's promise to board the ship in Melbourne 'improved my disposition slightly ... it is always helpful to know someone awaits you'.

Rudi was one of twenty children arriving in Australia under the sponsorship of the 'Welfare Guardian Society', which had been established in Melbourne by John Wars to assist Jewish refugee children from Europe. Members of the Perth Jewish Community were waiting at the port to welcome the newcomers and escort them on a tour of the city. The day's activities did much to lessen the youngsters' apprehension as they set foot on their new homeland.

Their arrival was the culmination of a rescue plan conceived by John (Jack) and Elsie Wars who had persuaded nineteen like-minded men from the Melbourne business community to sponsor twenty boys for resettlement in Australia to learn farming. Appreciative of the urgency, the group had acted boldly and decisively to support the ambitious British sponsored 'Children's Transport' already under way in Europe. Known in Vienna as the *Kindertransport*, the operation was a valiant effort to save Jewish children from the clutches of the 'Third Reich'. Initiated by the British in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, the ghastly pogrom the Nazis unleashed on 10 November 1938, it hoped to rescue thousands of desperate children from Germany and Austria.

* This article is dedicated to the memory of my brother Ernst Schiffres and his close friend in Vienna, Robert Halbert.

The program soon ran into difficulties, however. By year's end a great many refugee children remained housed along the English coast waiting for families to adopt them. The temporary quarters in vacant summer campgrounds soon proved a problem. Winter conditions in England, the worst in decades, made life miserable for the weary children. Heavy rains and strong winds battered the coast, flooding both lodgings and surrounding fields. Relief was urgently needed, but appeals to other nations to admit refugee children were unsuccessful.

One notable exception was the generous response that came from a small group of compassionate Australians who called themselves the 'Welfare Guardians'. They asked London's Bloomsbury House, the *Kindertransport's* central refugee registration bureau, to find agreeable children. Convincing male children to volunteer to go to Australia was not an easy task. The refugee children expected to be reunited with their parents shortly and travelling to a distant continent far from Europe was not an enticing prospect. In fact, a mere fourteen accepted the offer in England, amongst them my late friend Robert Halbert who had arrived in England from Vienna in December 1938 and now languished in the camp. The other six volunteers had to be found in Nazi Germany and brought to England. On 9 April 1939, twenty teenagers left London for Southampton, boarded the steamship *Jervis Bay* and journeyed five-weeks to start life anew in Australia.

This is the story of Robert Halbert, whom I knew growing up in Vienna as Rudi 'Micky' Halberstadt. Most of the narrative is taken from letters written when he was a teenager although recollections provided by Bob at the age of seventy are included. Bob's inspiring story is one of triumph — the tale of a courageous fourteen year old forced to leave his Viennese home alone and, through the generosity and foresight of twenty virtuous strangers, was able to rebuild his life in Australia.

AFTER 50 YEARS A LETTER REKINDLES A FRIENDSHIP

'Dear Paul, I was extremely intrigued by your letter. I am sure I am the person you are looking for as the name checks out and I did come to Australia in May 1939 from Vienna via England.' In February 1994, Bob Halbert's reply from Moorabbin, Australia, to my letter of inquiry confirmed that I had contacted the boy I knew in Vienna during the late 1930s. For half a century I had wondered what had become of my brother Ernst's friend after their correspondence ceased in 1944. He wrote briefly his story as follows:

I was brought to Australia by an organisation called the 'Welfare Guardian Society', a group of Melbourne businessmen who undertook to look after twenty lads from Austria and Germany, who were in a refugee camp in England. Their idea was to send us to school in rural areas whilst living with farmers and learn all about agriculture. This worked well until we were old enough to join the Australian army, which we were all anxious to do to get a crack at Hitler. Nearly all of us spent four years in the services but being big city boys none wanted to go back to the farms. We drifted apart and I only see one of them occasionally.

The plan to make these Jewish refugees into farmers had not succeeded, but the rescue from the Nazis had. Bob's story begins in 1938, the year Hitler annexed Austria. I was then ten, my brother Ernst and Rudi (Bob) fourteen. Rudi, my late brother's friend, was a daily visitor to our home. I last saw Rudi¹ on the afternoon of 10 December 1938 when he came to our Vienna apartment to bid us farewell. He was leaving for England. When we parted that day we expected to soon meet in England. At least that was our hope. At midnight the next day Rudi was on board the first *Kindertransport* train to leave the city's Western Railway Station. Exactly one month had passed since the Nazis unleashed the brutal *Kristallnacht* pogrom in which his father was arrested and incarcerated in the infamous Dachau concentration camp. His mother had died in 1936, so Rudi was on his own. His dire predicament was the reason he was selected to be among the initial four hundred 'lucky' children headed for the safety of England.

The 10 November pogrom against the Jews had galvanized Britain's 'Refugee Children's Movement' (RCM) to organise the children's rescue mission. The venture received official government support with the promise to 'facilitate entry for all child refugees whose maintenance was guaranteed either through their own funds or by other individuals'. Special travel documents issued in London expedited entry by removing the need for passports or visas. An unspecified number of unaccompanied children up to the age of seventeen were stipulated with a target number of 10,000 being set. England was intended primarily as a transient haven for these young refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia for it was thought they would soon immigrate to other countries.

Vienna's Jewish Community Organisation responded magnificently to the extraordinary British offer. To choose from amongst an estimated 35,000 eligible children would have been a formidable challenge under the best of circumstances but Adolph Eichmann

made the selection process exceptionally chaotic when he imposed special obstacles by giving the organisers a mere twenty-four hours to submit a transport list. The required documents included a signed questionnaire, two photographs, a valid passport and a medical certificate for each child. Acting in great haste the Jewish community met the capricious deadline and the first train departed on schedule. All on board were desperate, helpless children, some descendents of 'Polish Jews' threatened with imminent deportation, others like Rudi 'orphans' with no parent to look after them. Until they abruptly ended with the start of World War II, the *Kindertransports* saved nearly 10,000 youngsters from extermination, 2,844 of them from Vienna.

Scores of parents, mine among them, wishing to send their children to safety, registered them for these transports. Ernst and I were sent for a medical examination in January 1939. Our parents began preparing us by buying clothing and necessities as if we were headed to summer camp. At the age of ten I thought travelling to England with my brother an exciting prospect but did not correctly appreciate its implications. Our cousins, Kurt and Jackie Schwarz, fourteen and ten like us, left for England that March. We bade farewell to them as well as to other departing friends, but our turn never came. On 23 November 1939, almost one year after Rudi's departure, Ernst and I immigrated to the United States with our parents.

In the intervening fifty-five years the memory of Rudi remained a treasured memento of my Vienna childhood. My brother and he maintained an unbroken, if not always regular letter exchange until Ernst's death in 1944. He had stored the letters amongst his belonging when he left for the Army. There they remained, untouched, until I read them years after my parents' death. Phrases and expressions I had not heard in decades made the past come alive for me. Many letters were written in German. These I translated, placing the entire collection on my computer. The material fascinated my wife who called them a treasure and urged me to find Rudi. I procrastinated for years using various rationalisations to excuse my inaction. I thought it an impossible task, particularly since I believed he had resettled in the United States after the war. Then, in January 1994 a chance encounter at the New York Gift Show indicated that my assumption was incorrect. An Australian importer's booth displaying opal jewellery caught my eye. The Berlin-born proprietor, Manfred Anson, mentioned that he had lived in Australia for many years, arriving there as a youngster in 1939. I replied that a friend from Vienna had reached Australia the same way. He confirmed that he knew Rudi and had attended the same

school in Australia. Manfred Anson had left Australia 35 years ago and he suggested that I contact the Australian Trade Commission and ask them to look for a Robert Halbert² in the Melbourne telephone book.

Manfred's advice propelled me into action. I made the suggested phone call and soon a brief note of inquiry was on its way to the only 'R. Halbert' listed in the Melbourne telephone book. Ten days later a reply arrived in my mailbox. I was unprepared and disheartened by the opening paragraph:

I don't remember you although the name seems vaguely familiar. What puzzles me is why would you be looking for me after fifty-five years, why at the Australian Trade Commission and how would they have a record of my name change? Please tell me a little more about yourself!

It had not occurred to me that Bob's remembrance of me might not be as vivid as mine were of him. Although my letter was lacking in particulars he readily accepted our Viennese acquaintance as fact. My subsequent letter was more explicit and I quoted extensively from his 1939 letters to my brother. Again his response disappointed me:

I was amazed that you found letters of mine written to your brother. I must admit I have no recollection of writing to him. Perhaps you could write again and tell me from where you know me.

Had Bob forgotten so much or was I unreasonable in having expected more? He provided a summary of events in his life during the past fifty-six years starting with his marriage to Millie in 1946, which produced one daughter and two lovely grandchildren. He had made the automotive parts industry his career rather than farming and was now seventy and fully retired. The letter closed with an often-heard observation from Holocaust survivors:

I have no living relatives (that I know of). My father survived Dachau, went to live in West Virginia, worked there as a Textile Engineer for some years, changed his name to Hilborn, remarried an American woman and died of a heart attack. I never saw him again, as at that time he could not afford to visit Australia nor could I go to the States. That's Life!

Bob's request I write again encouraged me to identify myself in more detail hoping it would enable him to better recall our relation-

ship in Vienna. He began with a comment on my meeting Manfred Anson:

What an amazing coincidence that you should run into Manfred Anson. We were very close friends in the Army and just after the war. We played tennis together and he often had breakfast with my wife Millie and me when he could not be bothered to cook for himself. I was amazed about your knowledge of me. You seem to know more about our life after the *Anschluss* than I do. I must admit that I am terrible about remembering names, but I do remember having a close friend who lived across the road at the corner of *Zirkusgasse* and *Rotensterngasse* (my father and I were at No.36³). He used to look out the window and if there were no S.A. men [storm troopers] or Hitler Youths in sight he would get on the phone, let it ring three times and then hang up. That was a signal for me that it was safe to come over. That must have been your brother Ernst ... It is quite amazing that Ernst kept a dairy. The activities he mentioned become quite real to me, particularly the sledding ... My father's knitting mill was ... just around the corner. It was there he was arrested, taken to Dachau and I never saw him again. My mother died in 1936, just before I was due to have my *bar mitzvah*, then I contracted Scarlet Fever and was in isolation for six weeks and consequently was not *bar-mitzvahed* at all. I remember we had a housekeeper named Thekla who stayed with us until after the *Anschluss* when she was forced to leave. I did four years schooling in the *Realschule* ... then switched to the *Textilschule* ... where the Nazis expelled me. I was in training as a textile engineer when I was kicked out of the Textile School, but I remember running a class in my father's factory until he was arrested and sent to Dachau. When I left for England in December 1938 I was unable to take anything with me. No photos or other memorabilia exist other than a photo of my late mother, which my father sent to me after the war.

This is how our correspondence began in 1994 and as the letters crossed the Pacific they grew in congeniality until six months later we were finalising plans for a reunion on the Hawaiian Islands.

BOB'S NARRATIVE — A TRANSITORY STOP IN ENGLAND

Bob's journey to Australia via England is an extraordinary saga of courage and good luck. Of the thousands of children saved by the British '*Kindertransport*' only a very small handful reached the far-

away continent. With the *Anschluss*, the German invasion of our Austrian homeland in March 1938, the Jews of Vienna lost their legal status as citizens, followed closely by loss of jobs, property, businesses and, for some, life. The city to which they had contributed learning and culture, the country for which they fought in World War I was promised to be 'cleansed of Jews' by 1942 (made *Judenrein*). Unhappily, the vow was not an idle threat. Ordinary security ceased as Jews lost the protection of the state. Danger lurked everywhere. In the first few weeks after the *Anschluss* 'street scrubbing parties' became a favourite Nazi sport throughout the city. Bob recalled his own ordeal in our neighbourhood:

We used to chase after a girl named Edith whose father had a shoe shop in the *Praterstrasse* [a nearby shopping street]. It was in that vicinity that I was picked up one day by some S.A. hoods [Storm troopers], given a scrubbing brush and bucket, taken to the Danube Canal, punched and kicked in the kidneys all the way, made to fill the bucket dozens of times and forced to scrub the pavement. This went on for hours and when they finally let me go I was black and blue all over. Incidentally I had been wearing a brand new suit, which was now in shreds! I have often thought of going back to the place of my youth but it sticks in my gullet to let those bastards have any of my hard-earned money.

The 10 November pogrom, which came to be known as *Kristallnacht*, erupted without warning. Jewish homes were searched, plundered and destroyed. Synagogues were torched and allowed to burn to the ground. Jews of all ages were arrested, beaten and murdered. Three weeks after his father's arrest Rudi was headed for freedom in England. During the trip rumours circulated that if just one child in the group was discovered smuggling anything out of the country the entire transport would be turned back. Rudi managed to mail a post card en route, signing his nickname 'Micky'. It was the start of the prolific correspondence that continued until Ernst's death in 1944. His delight at departing Germany was apparent in his words: 'Dear Friend! For the moment I am well and satiated with food. In approximately one hour we will cross the border. Hurray! Best regards from 'Micky'.

In Cologne more children boarded the train. At the last station in German territory suitcases were randomly opened for inspection as the frightened children watched in silence. Gestapo guards were inclined to steal items of value and frequently vandalised luggage. One boy had his cherished stamp collection pilfered by an inspector

who remarked he could start another in England. The surly Nazi guards were promptly forgotten the moment the train entered the first Dutch station. Smiling people stood on the platform waving to the children who stared out from the windows. Dutch refugee personnel boarded the cars to warmly welcome them with refreshments. The contrast to the Germans could not have been greater.

After a rough overnight ferry crossing from Hook of Holland they disembarked at Harwich, England in the morning. Here the sponsored children left for London by train. The non-sponsored ones like Rudi boarded buses for the two miles trip to the Dovercourt Camp. It was one of two holiday camps rented by the Refugee Children's Movement (RCM) as temporary shelters while the refugee children awaited sponsors. The accommodation designed only for summer living soon proved an unfortunate choice as the winter of 1938 was one of the coldest on record.

Rudi slept in one of the many small 'chalets' that overlooked the dry mud flats from which one could see the North Sea. The bungalows were poorly insulated, had no provision for heating, and adding to the youngsters' discomfort, the adjoining grounds lacked surface drainage, becoming a quagmire in wet weather. To keep warm the children slept in sweaters and coats, covering themselves with an abundance of blankets. During Christmas the cold intensified, temperature fell below the freezing point, solidifying water pipes and preventing washing or toilet use. When the arctic colds reached the point that even the urine in chamber pots froze, Dovercourt was hurriedly evacuated. Some went to quarters at the Salvation Army Sailors' Hostel in Harwich while others like Rudi were transferred to the St. Felix's Girls School, a public school near Clacton. They remained there until the first week of January 1939 when the regular students returned from their holiday. Rudi's first letter from England is lost but the second one, sent on 3 January 1939, following his stay at St. Felix, described the situation at Dovercourt when he responded to Ernst's inquiry about the political 'weather' in England:

In spite of the fact that I understand quite well your meaning when you inquire about the weather, I will report to you about the weather we had here a few weeks ago. During the night we had a terrible rainstorm that was so bad we thought the bungalows would collapse. It continued that way until mid-day. The bungalows closest to the ocean were already 33 centimetres [almost one foot] under water. Raincoats and rubber boots were promptly distributed to us more fully grown boys, and we were forced to scoop up the water and pass the buckets until 11pm. I fell into bed at night lifeless.

Thank you for your letter of 30 December. I only received it yesterday because I moved again and it had to be forwarded. Since we are constantly relocating much of our mail gets lost in delivery. My ambition to reach London has unfortunately not been realized. I am again in a camp, sleep on a cot, play a lot of soccer, and suffer daily muscle pains. It will be a long time before we are assigned to families. As you may already know S. suffers from inflammation of the throat, middle-ear infection, and may have measles to boot. He is now in a hospital somewhere and because of the infection we are all quarantined in camp. Until I am assigned to a family I can't do a thing for anyone, not even for my father.

The first mention of Australia in a postcard dated 9 January 1939 stunned us all. He wrote: 'I initiated something quite unusual. I have registered my name as a farm labourer for Australia. After a year on an English farm it's off to Australia.' On 25 January Rudi qualified his optimism about registration as a farm labourer by explaining 'I am not going to Australia so soon.' He continued:

This is my first opportunity to reply to your two letters. There is nothing special doing here, except that I again had to move. The former camp is less than five minutes away. We are six hundred people in the new camp, which is very modern and much better than the previous one. We are strictly a boy's camp. I am corresponding with an English girl who is my age. She has already sent me a picture. Very nice!

The camp directors had decided to separate the sexes. The girls were now quartered at Dovercourt and the boys at Pakefield. The change became necessary when evidence surfaced that a few older youngsters had gotten a bit too friendly with each other at night. There was also the episode in Harwich when a few boys on an outing to town discovered the red light district. The incident seems funny now but had even a hint of scandal reached the public then it would have had serious repercussions for the entire rescue program.

Ernst and I had expected to leave for England and were awaiting selection when Rudi's letter of 6 February brought discouraging news:

I have heard from many sources that the transports are being halted until further notice because, in the first place, apportioning us to families, schools, etc is presenting great difficulties, and secondly, there are reports that they are not satisfied with the quality of people that have been sent here to date.

I obtained the girl's address in the following manner ... we were in a girl's college during Christmas. There, we all recorded our names on door nameplates and the girls then wrote to us. I answered immediately. I know just barely enough English to enable me to correspond. As a precaution I omitted a photo of myself, although she had requested one. If one of the boys ends his correspondence, I will send you his girl's address at once. Having contact with someone could be advantageous for me. The girls must all come from wealthy families, as the college fee is £40 per year. There is another approach you could try. Address it to: A girl in the St. Felix School, Gardiner House, Southwold, Suffolk, England. Write that you have a friend in the Dovercourt camp, and that you too would very much like to correspond with an English girl. Make yourself one years [sic] older, and don't send a photo for the time being. You are sure to get an answer.

I have now been assigned to an extraordinary chore. I had volunteered for work in our library, but the camp director informed me that there were no further positions open. However, he said, you could clean the toilets daily, if you wish. Since it was impossible to say no, my friend and I are now cleaning all forty-eight toilets. However, our efforts have made us his 'darlings'.

All the children left in camp were 'unsponsored' which meant they were still the committee's responsibility. The situation needed to be remedied if more children were to be brought over from Germany, but finding sponsors was difficult. Visitors to the camp looked at the youngsters but few offered to take older children. As Rudi explained to Ernst 'that ladies are visiting us daily is an exaggeration, but visitors do come every Saturday and Sunday'. The majority was seeking younger children, generally preferring girls to boys. Boys over twelve were especially hard to place; yet it was exactly this age group for which placements were needed because early transports had contained a high proportion of them. Neither did re-emigration, still the official government policy, offer a viable solution. Only 113 refugee children re-emigrated during the first six months of 1939 and that included the 'Guardian' boys leaving for Australia.

By mid-February the prospects for Australia had become more definite. As Bob wrote in his letter at that time:

My Australian situation has now been settled. I am to travel directly to Australia in the near future!! I am not yet sure of

the exact date; it could be tomorrow, but in eight weeks at the latest. For the first year I will attend an agricultural high school, and afterwards secure employment. Naturally, I will then be more than just an ordinary farm worker.

Meanwhile my cousins, Kurt and Jackie, had been selected and left for England on 13 March 1939. Ernst's persistent plea to find a guarantor for the two us obligated Rudi to reply with logic that was as irrefutable as it was discouraging:

The situation with the visitors is as follows. If they plan to take a child, they select one; if not they only come to observe life in the camp. It is unreasonable to expect a woman to choose two boys unfamiliar to her, whose appearance she does not know, nor have knowledge if they are well behaved or naughty, etc., when she can eliminate that uncertainty by choosing from among the five hundred boys here. Even if I tell her extraordinary tales about the two of you, there is no assurance that she would believe me ... I have heard that transports without guarantors will not resume until the number of boys that have arrived and still in camp falls below two hundred ... Our relatives and acquaintances are attempting to obtain an entry authorization for my father, but to no avail as far as I know ... I cannot write you anything regarding the weather prospects because I know nothing. We are totally cut off from all news here that I know neither what is happening in Germany nor in England.

Camp life is slowly becoming extremely wearisome. In spite of soccer tournaments, variety shows, jujitsu and a jazz band there is no diversion. Like the cursed *Hakoah*⁴, my group was eliminated from semi-finals of the soccer tournament. Literally in the final second of the second extension of play we, that is I, received a goal. It was impossible to halt this final goal (by unanimous agreement). The shot, coming from 22 meters, was so powerful that I thought it would tear the netting. That's all the news.

Except for playing soccer and the cold weather, Bob remembered few details about life in camp when I asked him in 1994. He wrote then:

Don't count on much help from me. I could not even remember the events I wrote to Ernst about. All I can remember about the big camp in Harwich was playing soccer nearly everyday, the

freezing cold winter in a holiday camp in Lowestoft, my introduction to porridge, corn flakes and a horrible sweet called 'Spotted Dick!'⁵ I remember nothing about the train trip from Vienna to the Hook of Holland or the trip across the Channel.

In his letter of 1 March 1939, Rudi announced his departure for Australia as follows: 'I am to travel to Australia this month. My permit is already on its way. I am extremely pleased. In Australia I will attend an agricultural school for a year and then have a good job.' At the age of fifteen Rudi had made the crucial decision to relocate far from Europe. An important consideration had been his expectation that it might be easier to assist his father from Australia. He ended his letter with the following request:

I have an enormous favour to ask of you. If you happen to have some time, would you be so kind as to walk up to our apartment, see if Rosa is at home, and if she is, make some inquiries about my father, but try no to let on that it is I who sent you. The people are all so crazy (*meshugge*), and one can't determine what is really happening.

Ernst had written to a girl at the St Felix School as suggested and Rudi's 7 March 1939 letter asked:

Have you received a reply from the girl yet? If not, don't give up hope. The English are very peculiar people. I am convinced that she is making every effort on your behalf without informing you. Suddenly you will receive the permit without knowing how it came about. I will recount an incident to you to demonstrate how very friendly and honourably they behave towards us and how unselfishly they treat us. A benefit performance was organized for us in Harwich. It was well publicized, and although the cost of admission (2 shillings) was very high, it was sold out. Fifty of our boys were invited to attend. After we arrived and were seated it was discovered that our seats, valued at 5d, had also been sold. In other words, fifty English ticket holders were without seats. Actually we should have returned home at this point, but the performers declared themselves ready to perform another show free of charge for these fifty people. This enabled them to sell additional tickets, also for our benefit. Isn't that nice? I would so very much like to help all of you, but I can't even do something for Papa. I am really sorry that I won't be able to welcome you to England anymore, but I am convinced that we will see each

other again if we maintain our correspondence. At the moment I am just longing to mail the first postcard from ship-board. Our permits have arrived in London, and we have already been asked what clothing we require. Naturally everyone prepared a long list of his needs and we were promised that we would receive everything. The committee has an enormous amount of money. Just consider the cost of the journey to Australia for fourteen boys which is not cheap, and that the committee is probably also contributing something for our schooling in the first year when we won't be earning a salary.

It is dreadful that the American quota is unavailable for so long. Last Sunday a distinguished committee official, a 'Lady', visited us here and reported to us that a project is in the works, which will enable 10,000 youngsters to travel from Germany to America.⁶ This resulted in a five minute long 'Stadion-like' [Vienna's soccer stadium] eruption, celebratory shouts and cheers that so moved the Lady that she sent her servant into town, naturally in her automobile, with instructions to buy us sweets. Can you imagine, candy for 450 boys? The car returned crammed to the hilt. These people are loaded with money.

I thank you very much for your effort to find Rosa at home. You don't have to go up there any more, because a Nazi storm trooper might abuse you. We no longer own the apartment. Who knows who might be living there now?

My correspondence with the girl has ended. She apparently resented my asking her if she wouldn't care to come for a visit. I was extremely disheartened but it wouldn't have come to anything anyway. In 5th grade the girls are either eleven or fifteen, in other words no older than you.

Rudi wrote his final letter from camp on 16 March 1939. Anxious for the mail to continue uninterrupted on his forthcoming journey he listed all ports with docking dates. In his penultimate letter from England he wrote:

I am answering your letter immediately, but I probably won't be able to mail it until Wednesday when I am allowed another letter. I am surprised that your girl is taking such a long time to answer but it will happen ... to comfort you let me assure you that the mood here in camp is no better than the way you all feel. You can't imagine how dispirited and despondently most of us walk around here. We hang around from one meal to the next and go hungry in between. Our only activity is

playing soccer or writing letters. If I could, I would write three letters a day, just to have something to do and for the opportunity to unburden myself to someone. On a dreary, rainy day like today for example, one really knows not what to do with oneself. I have heard that we will leave this camp on the 30th of the month. I feel so sorry for those who still have not found a place for themselves and must move into this new 5th camp.

To prevent an interruption in our correspondence I am providing you the following listing with exact details for my departure and the trip.

Departure on the *S.S. Jervis-Bay* from Southampton on April 8

Malta	15 April
Port Said	18 April
Aden	22 April
Colombo	29 April
Fremantle	9 May
Adelaide	13 May
Melbourne	15 May

Naturally you can write to me even during the trip. All you have to do is to address one of the harbours where we dock. Of course it must be done in a timely manner, lest we are already elsewhere when your letter arrives. As an example the address should read as follows: Rudi Halberstadt c/o onboard the ship *Jervis-Bay*, Colombo, Ceylon. I imagine you can look up the letter's travel time at the post office. I assume that only airmail is possible (from Australia, naturally), for otherwise I would have to wait twelve long weeks for a reply, which I couldn't stand!

Thank God we are now well informed about political events because they are providing us with an 'oral newspaper' each evening that lasts ten minutes.

Three weeks elapsed before Rudi's last letter from Europe arrived. Mailed from London on 7 April 1939 it described a misfortune that almost prevented his departure for Australia. He wrote:

Due to two relocations and a few days illness I was unable to write to you until today. I hope you are not too angry with me. When I received your letter I was lying in the sickroom with a 103°F (39.6°C) fever. Although I only had a mild tonsillitis I had a high fever for two days. Of course with my customary bad luck I was still sick when my Australian comrades departed for London. The doctor must have done it to spite me

because at 8AM they all left and at 10AM he allowed me to get out of bed. You can imagine how infuriated I was. I immediately rushed to the camp supervisor urging that he allow me to chase after them, but that was not possible. He could not allow me to travel until he received notification from the committee. As a result of my dilemma I had to endure a move to a new camp as the old one had to be readied for Easter guests. Moreover they kept heaping more and more chores on me as the camp looked like a pirate's lair. We slept on the floor on mattresses, which I had already experienced so it didn't bother me anymore, but the others began to mutiny. Their complaints were useless and only served to get additional work chores assigned to us.

When I was finally allowed to travel to London a new misfortune befell me. Three others and I were driven by car to the railway station but our luggage was to be transported on a next second trip. While the driver was getting our luggage the train arrived and we had to leave for London without our luggage. I immediately went to the Committee, feigned desperation, whereupon the necessary steps were taken to make sure I obtained my luggage. I met very many acquaintances there among them Kurt who seemed to wander about the place all day long as if at Vienna's Palestine Agency, or the Jewish Community Organization ... you can't possibly imagine how this committee operates. Before I came to London and saw how immense it was I had envisioned it as a small office with four to five people. There is much turmoil at the place ... one department adjoins the next, employees dart back and forth, and rooms with fifty to sixty stenographers are not unusual. They have links to everywhere and work closely with the Home Office.

Rudi was fortunate to have recovered from his illness in time but not everyone was as lucky as he later recalled:

The only close friend who came to England with me on the same transport was N., who also wanted to come to Australia. Unfortunately on the way to the medical examination for the final selection he had a very bad cold (1938 was one of the coldest winters in England's history). He failed the medical, stayed in England, was drafted into the Land Army and wrote me bed-by-bed descriptions of his adventures with the Land Army girls! Eventually he joined the British Army and unfortunately was killed during the landing in France. A twist of fate!

The 'Committee' Rudi visited in London was the Refugee Children's Movement's (RCM) head office, which managed the children's rescue operation. Located at Bloomsbury House, it was mostly staffed by volunteers. Visitors seeking information were ushered into two large rooms, formerly the ballroom and dining room of the Palace Hotel. Refugee children sometimes waited hours before being able to talk to someone. Conditions at the place reminded Rudi of the turmoil he had witnessed at Jewish agencies in Vienna.

My cousin, Kurt Schwarz was staying in London at the time but his eleven year-old brother, Jackie, had been sent to live at a hostel in Glasgow, Scotland. Kurt had a guarantor but was seeking ways to get his parents and us to England. So many of our Viennese friends had already left that my brother Ernst lamented in a letter he wrote to Kurt of being the 'Last of the Mohicans'. Kurt responded with pragmatic advice but not before attempting to be witty by stating 'this is not an accomplishment for you, but someone has to be last'. Kurt continued:

Regarding the permit I could do nothing although I tried everything possible. When you write to people in England always emphasize that you will shortly be continuing your journey to the U.S.A. ... I offer you the following recommendation: write to 'Mrs. Schwab, Welfare Dept., Bloomsbury House, Bloomsbury Street' and besiege her with letters. One young boy did just that and now he is in London. Compose utterly desperate letters. Maybe that will work. Naturally, do likewise on Paul's behalf. Mrs. Schwab can only provide a guarantee, but she can't expedite matters. To expedite matters you must write to the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany.

At this time, Rudi was enjoying London for a few days in the care of people acting on behalf of his Australian benefactors. Later in reminiscing about this he wrote:

In London I lived in a boarding house, went to movies daily, to the cabaret, to the theatre, feasted in the very finest restaurants, visited chocolate factories where they offered us whole cartons of bonbons and chocolates and even encouraged us to pocket as much as possible, provided we did it surreptitiously. We received new suitcases, a pair of pants and a jacket, a pullover sweater, shoes, etc. Whatever you had ordered, you received. Tomorrow morning we travel to Southampton ... I expect your next letter will reach me in Malta. I think you will

have to mail it on the 11th at the latest in order to make certain that it arrives there by the 15th. Should you mail it later, then write to Port Said to be on the safe side. I will probably have no more than six to ten hours stopover time at each harbor. That will just have to suffice ... I have had no proper news from Papa for a terribly long time.

On 9 April 1939, Kurt wrote to us that: 'Rudi departed yesterday. It was even mentioned in the newspaper'. By mid-June 1939 he too was planning immigration to Australia. Kurt was learning farming in England whilst Ernst was doing the same at a Zionist farm in Moosbrunn's, just outside Vienna. Here is how Kurt described his training experiences:

I changed my address on April 8th. Now I am on a farm training school, Flint Hall Farm, Hambleden Near Henley on Thames. After approximately two months I will be going to Tasmania. I hope to be able to better help my parents from there. Both of us seemed to have landed in the same occupation. You must not think that I am not going to Palestine because I am not a Zionist. The reasons are quite different. As always I am still the old 100% Zionist. The reason is that I cannot obtain an entry for my dear parents in Palestine, while in Tasmania I am certain I can because I will have a good future there as I will be given pasture land from the government. That it is far away makes me happy, the further away the better.

Like Rudi, Kurt, was similarly motivated in seeking to migrate to Australia. He believed Australia offered a greater possibility of help for his loved ones left behind in Vienna. In late July 1939, Kurt wrote to Ernst at the Moosbrunn farm:

Like you, I had imagined farm work to be much more strenuous. Please write me in detail what you do there, etc. I am not in a camp but on a farm where seventeen young boys are learning farming. We primarily learn milking, an art at which I am already quite proficient. Do you also milk?

With the outbreak of war in September 1939, all mail between England and Germany ceased but on 21 January 1940 Kurt wrote to us in New York from Stotley Rough School, six weeks after our arrival in the US. Without further explanation he stated the 'Tasmania plans unfortunately miscarried ... the guarantor insisted I leave the farm and attend a farming school'. Kurt was probably

ineligible for Australia, which only accepted orphaned or semi-orphaned children. Later he was interned as an 'enemy alien' and then transported to Canada where he worked at logging for one year. When his status was changed to 'friendly alien', he volunteered for the Black Watch, the very regiment that had guarded him, quickly rising in rank to Captain. After the war Kurt served the British High Command in Austria as chief interpreter during the four-power occupation of Vienna. The boy who had fled the city of his birth had returned to it a British officer, living in the *Schönbrunn* Palace where Austrian Emperors once resided. He was refused English citizenship, left the army, decided Austria was not the place for him and settled in Brazil where he married and had one daughter. His brother Jackie also rejected Austria deciding instead to settle on a kibbutz in Israel. Their parents perished in Theresienstadt and Auschwitz.

ON BOARD THE HMS JERVIS BAY EN ROUTE TO AUSTRALIA



Rudi sent two letters from onboard the *HMS Jervis Bay* describing events during the journey. The first was mailed on 17 April from Port Said, Egypt and the second on the 26 April 1939 from Columbo, Ceylon. Upon reaching his adopted homeland Rudi Halberstadt legally changed his name to Robert Halbert, as suggested by the 'Guardians'. Only one letter from Australia reached us in Vienna prior to the start of the war. In his first letter from the sea voyage he wrote:

Now I will report to you all that is talking place on board this ship. The farewell with our leaders in Southampton was not

especially affectionate. Nonetheless, we were sorry that those enjoyable London days had ended. Once on board the ship, which we had envisioned as much bigger than it actually was (although it is very large) we began to explore it exhaustively in all directions. At first it was extremely difficult to become oriented. I had to search more than two hours before I found my cabin.

Eating consists of four meals per day at which everyone eats so much that no one can move about afterwards. At the 7AM wake up call you are greeted with a tray of fruit from which you can select whatever and as much as you wish. Breakfast starts at 7:45AM opening with an appetizer of mixed compote or porridge, followed by a main entree that is selected from the menu. If it tastes good one repeats the order again. There are also cold meats, ham, or bacon, followed by tea or coffee with cakes, biscuit and tiny breads. The ship also has twenty-two English youths onboard who are on their way to Sidney [sic] to pursue agricultural studies. They are much more brazen than we are, literally devouring the entire menu from top to bottom at every meal.

While in the Bay of Biscay the desire for eating eluded us all. We encountered an absolutely dreadful storm. You couldn't take two steps without the need to grasp for support somewhere. This was the time when I realized my sea worthiness. Of the five to six hundred passengers there were probably no more than sixty that did not vomit during the two days the storm lasted. Among our group of twenty boys six were absolutely unable to move and lay stretched out in bed like wax figures, while another ten ambled about with painful expressions. Just four, myself included, remained steadfast continuing to eat as before. After the storm ended several very pleasurable deck games were set up which now occupy my entire day. Two days ago we arrived in Malta where we sighted fabulous warships and aircraft carriers. Unfortunately we were not allowed to disembark.

Since this letter will not be leaving the ship in Port Said until tomorrow (18 April), it will be impossible for you to write me in Aden. I think there should be enough time for Colombo, then Ceylon [now Sri Lanka]. The most unpleasant part of the trip will be passage through the Red Sea, which is at the same latitude as the Sahara.

His second letter of 26 April 1939 was written on 'Aberdeen & Commonwealth Line' stationery en route to Ceylon. Rudi wrote:

Your postcard addressed to Port Said did not reach me until Aden because it probably arrived too late. In the interim you must have received the letter I mailed from Port Said. I am extremely happy when I receive a letter from you because you are the only one who writes to me. Our current correspondence arrangements seems to function very well, because soon after mailing a letter to me my reply to your previous letter reaches you. Nothing special happened on board the ship. There was no problem getting permission to go ashore in Port Said. It is a dreadful city. You can't walk a step without being accosted by a beggar or stopped by a peddler. Children lie or run about the street 3/4 naked, the stench is awful and it is impossible to fend off the flies.

In this city I have learned the art of bargaining. These crooks raise their prices three or four fold when they sight a European. We needed to purchase tropical hats for ourselves. The dealers demanded 8/6, in other words 8 shillings. One of the youngsters said 5 shillings, another 3 shillings and I had the chutzpah to offer 2 shillings expecting him to throw us all out the door. Quite the contrary. He reacted with a friendly laugh and said, 'Only because you are Jews'. We all purchased hats for 2 shillings. Afterwards we were sorry we hadn't offered even less. If you believe that you struck a great bargain you can be certain the hawker did three times as well. I purchased nothing except the tropical hat that I needed for passage through the Red Sea and beyond, thereby I have already saved myself 12 shillings. This is because we are each paid a 5 shillings weekly allowance. By the time we reach Australia I want to have £1.

Let me describe another larceny that befell one of our youngsters: This lad, an enthusiastic stamp collector, wanted to exchange 6 or 7 postage reply coupons for a set of Egyptian stamps. So we walked to the post office with him. An Egyptian with some knowledge of English waited in front of the counter. The boy asked him where he might exchange the coupons. The man contemplated a moment, seized the coupons shouting 'just a moment!' and disappeared never to be seen again.

You need have no fear of being able to speak English. I have befriended several English boys on board ship and converse in English all day long. Occasionally when I am stymied for a particular word I simply look it up in the dictionary. Although the style of English that you learned in Vienna is hardly heard here, for everyone without exception speaks in slang (dialect). However, one soon get accustomed to it.

ARRIVAL AND FARM LIFE IN AUSTRALIA

On arrival, Rudi anglicised his name to Robert Halbert and his first letter from Australia dated 6 June 1939, five weeks after his arrival, was signed with his new name. He was working as a farmhand for Vic Walpole at Hurdle Creek, Whorley South, Victoria, and described his experiences to Ernst:

Upon our docking in Melbourne I received the airmail postcard you had addressed to Colombo. You mailed it on April 22, and it did not arrive there until May 2nd, in other words too late. I replied to you immediately as I am certain I wrote you once, if not twice, after Port Said. First let me respond to your postcard queries and then report to you my other adventures.

I will get to the question of my name change later. You appear to have a mistaken impression in regard to my adventures on board ship. Of course we weren't just boys on the ship. Did you think that a special ship would travel to Australia with just twenty lads? It had approximately five hundred passengers and naturally there were several girls among them. The war danger appears not too great at present, but in any case, the Australians are not too worried about it. That pretty much takes care of the items in your postcard.

I will begin my report with our arrival at Fremantle, the first Australian port in which the ship stopped. The primary item of interest to us upon arrival at each port is the mail that is brought on board. I obtained at least one letter or post card at every stop but in Fremantle something extraordinary occurred. I received an English language letter from a gentleman of whom I had not heard before. He welcomed me to Australia, introduced himself as my 'Guardian' trustee, related to me his entire family structure and referred to me as his 'little brother'. In summary he was extraordinarily kind. Furthermore, he wrote that upon our arrival in Melbourne he will come on board ship. As you can imagine this improved my disposition slightly. It is always helpful to know someone awaits you. All twenty boys received similar letters, each from a different individual. Quite by chance my guardian, Hymie Marks, and my friend's are brothers. Several gentlemen from the committee also came on board, at Fremantle, loaded three or four of us in each of their cars, and showed us Perth, the capital of West Australia. We received a fabulous lunch and toured the entire day.

In Adelaide several more gentlemen from the committee

came on board, the president, the vice president and the treasurer of the committee. The latter was the one who conceived of the good idea to bring us over. This triumvirate, all of them also 'Guardians', travelled with us to Melbourne. We didn't have a free moment on this part of the trip and had not time to tour the city of Adelaide either. There was an awful lot to accomplish. We altered our names. Mine is not particularly attractive but it is English⁷. Then each of us was medically examined and assigned to one of two schools. One is an agricultural college and the other, which I attend, an agricultural school.⁸ All of us live with farmers. Afterwards we had to sign a declaration that we would obey our guardian, that we would write to him, that we would remain on the farm until we are twenty-one years old, etc. Those sorts of things occupied all of our time until we reached Melbourne where a very special surprise awaited me on my arrival. I received my first letter from Papa who had finally returned home at the end of April.

My guardian had also boarded the ship and he immediately struck me as very congenial. We secured my luggage and he took me to his home, of course driving his own car. Like almost everyone here he owns his own home, has an exceptionally friendly wife, and two sons, six and one year old. I spent the entire day with them and they showed me Melbourne as best they could. In the evening there was a marvellous reception party for us with approximately four hundred invited guests. There were tedious speeches, glasses were raised to toast the president and us and there was much feasting and drinking. Reporters accosted us by the dozens, making us feel like movie stars. Afterwards we fell into bed dead tired.

On the following morning we were transported into 'the wilderness'. The ensuing account refers only to ten boys as the others went elsewhere. We ten who were to attend the Wangaratta Technical School were taken to Wangaratta, a city with 10,000 inhabitants, where the farmers who will be our guardians and with whom we are to live for the next year took custody of us. My farmer lives twenty-six miles (40km) from school and I travel almost an hour by bus each day to reach it. To arrive at the bus stop takes an additional ten-minutes on the bicycle given me by the committee! The daily bus trip is the best part of the entire schooling. We entertain ourselves wonderfully and boys and girls are intermixed. My farmer has six children between the ages of two and fifteen years of age. The eldest attends the same school as me and is a decent chap.

The school itself is remarkably good. Courses involve pri-

marily practical subjects: Machine Shop, Sheet Metal Shop, Carpentry, and Forge. In addition we also study Chemistry, English, Agriculture, and Physics. It's child's play for us because the teachers think our English is inadequate for comprehending their lectures. They are forever giving us magazines and newspapers to examine. The grades range from 10/10 to 1/10 with the latter being the lowest.

The Welfare Guardian Society (WGS) had assigned a guardian ('big brother') to each immigrant ('little brother'). This arrangement not only emulated the British 'Big Brother' movement's approach but also served in meeting Australia's entry requirements. The formal agreement stated each party's obligations explicitly. The guardian would provide material, practical and spiritual guidance, keep the migrant in a rural occupation, provide clothing, equipment and reading material, visit him and compensate for the absence of parents by assuming moral responsibility until he reached the age of twenty-one. The migrant youngster promised to work diligently at school, accept the guardian's advice and guidance without question or dispute, refrain from drinking or gambling until age twenty-one and open a bank account to save a fixed amount each week. Furthermore, he agreed to write to his guardian at least one a month, not leave his employer without written permission and behave in an upright manner to reflect credit on his Welfare Guardian, his faith, his new country, and on himself. In 1994 Bob reminisced about Jack (John) Wars, the founder of the Guardians, and the boys who came to Australia with him, writing that:

Jack Wars was a wonderful man. He died about ten years ago. Incidentally he was the man who introduced 'Ready Mixed Concrete' to Israel. Previously all building sites mixed their own concrete. My own Guardian, Hymie Marks and his wife Lena were like parents to me. They were in the Fur Trade as manufacturers in partnership with Hyman's brother Morris, who was also a Guardian (of Manfred Burns). Hymie amazingly is still alive, drives a car and plays bridge two or three times a week at the age of 93! Lena died about ten years ago. You asked if all the boys were Jewish. They were, not all of them practicing. At least two of the boys were raving Communists and tried their hardest to convert us to the Cause. No success there!

On 3 September 1939, the Australian Prime Minister speaking to his nation declared: 'It is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that in consequence of a persistence by Germany and her

invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her and that, as a result, Australia is also at war'. The war severed mail to Vienna and nearly eight months passed before another letter from Rudi reached us when we were already in New York. We had arrived on 5 December 1939 in accordance with U.S. immigration law that had prevented the consul in Vienna from granting us a visa until our quota number was reached and our affidavit of support approved. The affidavit, I later learned, was not really required by law but was used only to insure that we would never fall burden to American taxpayers. Bob, writing from Wangaratta on 5 February 1940, was overjoyed to hear of our liberation. He wrote:

I was happily surprised to receive a letter from you with such a wonderful report. It is hard to believe that the Nazis even allow anyone to leave during the war. I hope your wait along the English coast wasn't too long, but that's a situation one happily endures. I don't think you need to tell me much about the ship. I too couldn't find my cabin either and had to keep searching for two hours until I found it. I never knew whether I was lying towards the bow or stern direction of the ship and when I awoke in the morning I always thought the ship was moving the wrong way. I too saw Rotterdam but very briefly and at night. There were many illuminated billboards and it was very modern. There were just two sittings on our ship and we too ate at the first one because then the tables were immaculately set and we were always able to order things that would no longer be available at the second sitting. It was a wonderful time and we didn't even realize what a regal life we were leading.

Most likely you didn't receive my last letter. I had sent it to N. in England, but the mail between England and Germany was already suspended by then ... I am in regular correspondence with N. He is also on a farm learning all sorts of things about cattle, pigs, sugar beets, etc. and expects to also come to Australia in about a year.

I already have received two letters from my father in America. He was barely one or two weeks in New York and now lives in Virginia with a good job in a gigantic knitwear factory.

As for myself I continue to do very well as before. I work very hard, but that doesn't matter. We have just completed the harvest (wheat and oats) and now we again start with sheep. Every morning and evening I milk six to seven cows. I wake at 6 AM and never get to bed before 10 PM; sometimes it's past 11 PM.

Tomorrow school opens again after the Christmas vacation. Prior to the recess we had examinations on which we all did extremely well. We surpassed all the Australian boys in our class by wide margins. One among our ten was best in the entire school! I was second best in the class and the third best in the school! All the Victoria and New-South Wales newspapers carried reports about our splendid achievements and we received congratulations from all over. We only attend school until May here after which we will go to other farms and start earning pay. I don't yet know how much I will be paid but I am confident my guardian will find me a good job. I expect at least £3/4 per week with meals and lodging included.

Reporting on the Wangaratta Technical School's Annual Speech Night, *The Wangaratta Chronicle-Despatch* of 20 December 1939 referred to the Farm School as 'the most important section of the activities because of its relation to the industry of the district'. Dr. Davies, the vice-president of the school's council, spoke with pride of 'the five honour certificates in the farmer's class (that) had been won by boys who had come out from England under the auspices of the Welfare Guardian Society. Ten of these boys were at the school and ten had gone to Dookie. Their success was a phenomenal achievement as they had commenced at Wangaratta Technical School some time after the school had commenced this year.' One of the boys attending Dookie 'topped the second-year class in English' although 'he never did well in practical work' and was told 'If ever you go on a farm you won't earn enough money to keep you in tobacco.' In his 5 February 1940 letter, Bob asked my brother, Ernst:

How is your English progressing? Now you will learn it very fast. I speak so little German that I can no longer talk without sometimes inserting English words. You can't even imagine how hard it is for me to write a German letter. You will have to forgive me if you discover many grammatical errors. Please write your next letter in English, because I have heard that the censor won't pass many of the letters written in German. Each letter is opened.

In a letter found in the files of the WGS⁹ Bob described the farm life to his guardian as follows:

I am working on Mr Walpole's farm. This farm is about 4,000 acres large¹⁰ and carries at the present time 3000 sheep, 300 head of cattle, 30-40 young and old racehorses, 7 draught-

horses, 30 hens, 8 dogs and lots and lots of rabbits ... at the present time our sheep are lambing. They want lots of attention in this period and we got to go every day among them. Last week I sold the rabbit skins that I caught [sic], I got £1/19/3 for them. On Sunday I sometimes ride with a horse 10 miles to see some of our boys. I love the life and work in the country very much.

Vic Walpole's son, Dick, only twelve at the time Bob worked at the Hurdle Creek farm, could still remember him vividly sixty-four years later. 'Because it was believed that "Robert" could easily be confused with my brother Robin, called Bob, and cousin Robert also known as "Bob" it was decided that "Hal" was a less confusing name. Hal did not mind, as he said it was not his right name anyway ... I remember my father telling the family ... that a Jewish lad was coming to stay and his religious customs were different from ours, and must be respected ... Hal observed his religious fasts and ceremonies. He was very homesick, and sometimes dressed in his Alpine Costume: leather pants, climbing boots, a special shirt and beret hat with feather.' Three boys 'were given refuge in Whorouly South'. George Upton worked at Silverlea, a property 'owned by my father's brothers.' Dick Walpole commented further on farming life during the war years as follows:

Farm life was as always, hard work with little pay, but we all love being our own masters. The meat was killed on the farm, and the vegetables grown of course, and jams made with the orchard produce. The milk came from the cows (as did the) butter made and cream consumed. Oats etc grown, and chaff cut for the horses. The wood was cut with handsaws and axe. Bread was delivered to the farm once a week, and when (we) ran out, mother cooked scones.

Hal started midyear at the Wangaratta Technical School. He caught the bus with Robin at 7.30 am and got home at about 6pm. Since the other Walpole children attended a nearby school they did the daily milking of the cows etc, before going to school, and all the farm duties when they got home. Robin and Hal had the longer journey, so they did not work on the farm except at weekends and holidays. My brother Robin was a big lad, as was Hal, but Robin was a bit of a bully ... Robin knew Germany would cause a war (and) did not like Germans. He did not like Hal and I don't think Hal liked him much either. The animosity between Hal and Robin grew worse, until it came to a head in the cowshed. I was milking a

cow in the middle bale, Robin in the far bale. Hal (had) just finished milking one cow in the first bale and was pouring the milk into the can, when Robin said something that infuriated Hal. Hal yelled, 'I fix you' and attacked him with fists and feet. He left Robin underneath the cow. He ran past me, stopped and yelled, 'I give you one too' and pushed me over off the milking stool. The cow kicked, put its foot in the bucket, oh what a mess.

In contrast to his brother, Dick wrote that he 'got on well with Hal.' They 'worked together in the milking shed' and, as Dick Walpole wrote:

He was teaching me German, until my father suggested it was not a good practice ... when local lads started to be killed in the war — three lads in this little valley — animosity started towards any that spoke German.

One dark night Dick accidentally smashed his bike into a closed farm gate. He described how:

I knocked out 6 teeth, broke the tops of 5 others, and was a mess. Hal was kind, and he went next morning and found my lost teeth. He also gave me his precious camp utensils, a folding fork and knife ... Hal lived with the family, sat at the table, and shared family life ... the children slept on the open verandah, even during the winter, and when it rained, they covered their beds with horse blankets ... Hal slept in a smaller room off the end of the verandah.

These memories of Dick Walpole of Bob Halbert add to the picture of his life in rural Victoria during the war years. Bob's letter of 25 February 1940 was the last he wrote to Ernst in German:

I am thankful to have received your dear letter of January 10th. Your English letter is quite in order save for a few minor errors. I am sorry that you suffered seasickness on your voyage, as it is such a great opportunity to relax and gorge oneself on food. I took full advantage of the occasion.

I hope that you have already received my reply to your first letter. It is dreadful how long the mail takes. When I ask something of you or my father I have to wait almost four months for a reply. Thus I will barely receive three letters a year from you! I arranged matter[s] with my father that each

of us send a letter on every departing ship without first awaiting a reply from the other.

You write that you ice skate after school. I wish I could ice skate. Instead I sweat half to death every day. As you probably know 'bushfires' cause immense damage here yearly. Most fires are started by bits of glass that act as lenses in the fierce heat but at times it is simply due to carelessness. If I were now to describe to you what that looks like you would laugh at me thinking I was telling you fairy tales. For a European the immensity of these fires is unimaginable, unless he has seen it for himself. For hundreds of miles there is just one single flame and columns of smoke are visible throughout Victoria. The roar of the fire is the equivalent of ten thunderstorms and it spreads with incredible rapidity. Even so the farmers are always able to bring the fire under control. At such times they unite and cooperate by placing themselves under the command of the oldest and most experienced farmer. Everyone has a big bucket strapped to his back that can hold about twenty litres of water and aided by it rushes into the battle.

Last week a brush fire erupted right in the vicinity of our farm. Instantly the fire bells rang in the entire neighborhood. My farmer loaded his truck with filled water cans and off we went. It was already near dusk but it was almost like daylight with all the hills surrounding our farm in flames. The entire night I carried water up the steep incline, each load weighing 40kg. You can imagine how I felt by dawn. I didn't have one minute of sleep. My farmer remained at the site until 3PM but he sent me home at 6 AM for I had to milk the cows on all the neighboring farms since the farmers were all tending to the fire. That morning I milked about twenty-five cows. When I was finished I slept for two hours and then had to get up to bring chow to the men. Each farmer's wife sends five times as much as her husband can consume so that everyone has enough food to eat. When I arrived up on the hill I was immediately assigned to guard a particular stretch of ground. I was 'on duty' at my station until late in the evening. The grass was already totally consumed. Only trees and tree trunks remained ablaze and I had to watch that no fallen tree rolling down the hill would set the unburned grass on fire. I found it terribly difficult to stay awake as staring into the flames makes one very sleepy and I was already quite exhausted. Since I was an immigrant and persevered I received high praise for it.

I am still on the same farm but no longer attend school. I

already have a job on another farm and will move there next week. The address is: R.H. c/o Mr.A.Cook, Bobinaworrah, Victoria, Australia. I will be paid 10/- per week including my meals, lodging and with laundry washed and mended. This farm is not as large as the present one but it is two and a half sq. km. They own forty cows but have a milking machine and there are sheep and pigs, wheat, oats, tomatoes and other vegetables. The people are reported to be extremely congenial and very well liked. They have three little girls and except for the farmer I will be the only male there. I will report more about it in my next letter to you. I am very encouraged.

Bob's first English language letter was written on the Havendale farm in Milawa on 28 April 1940. He wrote:

I received your letter from 18 March 1940 last night and it takes a terrible long time, does it not. I am glad you wrote in English because it would have taken about a week longer had it been in German. Your letter was really not bad at all, very few mistakes.' Responding to Ernst's difficulty in finding work he contrasted the situation in Australia as follows: You should only have one look in a newspaper here and you find about fifty advertisements every day where boys are wanted for all sorts of things, delivery, messages, to learn trades and so on. You would most surely find a job in a day. Not bad wages either, up to 30 shillings a week (\$6). If you wanted to go on a farm you could get dozens of jobs.

Well I think I wrote enough rubbish to you for now but I will add a few lines about my new job. The farm (two and a half sq.km) is small by Australian standards but very nice and my boss is a great fellow. It is a pleasure to work with him. He's got a lot of confidence in me too, because he went away for ten days and left me to look after the place. There was a lot to do of course but I managed it and was very pleased with myself. The food here is more than I can eat five or six meals a day, breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, sometimes supper. I am trying not to eat too much because I am getting too fat.

In a further letter headed, Havendale, Milawa, 8 May 1940, Bob wrote to Ernst:

I am glad to hear that the mail works better now and I am ready to write to you with every second ship, that is about

every four weeks, sometimes a few days more, sometimes less. If you should happen to read the New York Times you could find out when ships sail from San Francisco to Sidney [sic] and make sure that you do not miss a ship.

You want to know about my further plans. I wrote you something about it in my last letter but they have changed a bit since then. I will stay in Australia; try to get into a decent position and save as much money as possible. My father will do the same and in three or four years he will come over to me (if conditions permit it) and we will buy a little farm. I will be able to manage it by then. What do you think of this plan? It would mean a good future for me and for my father a life without worries or work. I do not by any means intend to give up farming and learn something else.

I am trying very hard to learn to ride a horse now. Here in the country one must be able to ride a horse and ride it without saddle. You would not believe how hard it is to keep your balance if you [have] got nothing to hang on to. I was riding along the road, suddenly the horse stopped and I did not, so I fell right over the horse's head and made a somersault in the air. I did not hurt myself, only a bit of skin off my cheek. It is just like learning to ride a bike, only harder. Once you can keep your balance you are all right. I have not learned it yet. People say, one has to fall off seven times before one can ride, so I have a long way to go yet. I will learn it some day, I am sure.

My guardian is wonderfully kind. I thought when I started to earn money he will stop sending me things but I was mistaken. Together with your letter I got a parcel with two pajamas, two overalls and a pair of rubber boots for the winter, so I will be warm at night and won't get wet feet! Tonight I got a six page long letter from his wife, 'my big Sister'. She writes to me, just like she was my sister, asks how I am getting on with the girls, and thinks I better not marry a Yankee film star, because she would not be able to come to the wedding! She sends me love and kisses and I get the latter ones too when I go to Melbourne. She kisses me every five minutes but I do not mind at all, because I like her very much too.

In a letter written almost three months later from the same farm, dated 28 July 1940, Bob wrote:

Received your letter from 18th of June last week but so far I did not get the one in German you are talking about. But it can still come because the Walpoles are in no hurry to send letters to

me. Of course it could be censored and seized too. I am afraid you did not get my last letter because it was on the *NIAGARA* and this ship sunk off the New Zealand coast after an explosion¹¹. Have you heard about that? It is not known whether the mail was saved or not.

My work here is going swell and I had very interesting jobs lately. It is just 'lambing time' now, (that means that the sheep get young ones) and these little lambs got to be watched very carefully against crows, foxes and wild dogs. Three times a day I take my horse and look through them. Very often a sheep has trouble with lambing or the lamb is too weak to get up on his legs to get a drink from his mother. In this case I have to drive the ewe (mother-sheep) into a corner of the paddock and catch her (not an easy job) and pick up the lamb and give him his drink. Sometimes the mother will not have him after he has been touched. If this is so I have to catch her again, lay her flat on the ground, put some dirt over her eyes and place the lamb beside her. Then I walk slowly away and see what happens. Usually the little lamb knocks the dirt off and the mother looks around quite astonished. When she sees the lamb she sniffs at it and everything is O.K. There is always trouble about but one has to learn to see it.

When the lambs are about a month old they get an inoculation (injection) against a very common disease, which would kill them. I have learned to inoculate. It's a very interesting job. I felt like a doctor. Every lamb gets 5 cm of a serum under the skin. Immediately afterwards the male lambs are castrated and all the tails are cut off with a knife to prevent fly blowing. I bet you know very little about that sort of work, do you?

I really don't get much free time. I get up at 6:15 AM and knock off about 6:30 PM and it is dark by then. Last week I rode the bike 15 miles to a town to meet friends at the movies. I got home at 2:30 in the morning. The work the next day was 'not too hot'. I do not ever hear any music, because the boss turns the wireless on only for the overseas news (to save battery!). But I can't be worried. I am quite satisfied with my life apart from the wages. We got no right not to be.

In the 1 August 1940 letter to his guardian (in the WGS files¹²) Bob again described his work on the farm and expressed his appreciation for being in Australia as follows:

I am working on this place ... a mixed farm with a dairy. I am enjoying my work with my new boss very much ... I am the

only labourer in the place and as Mr. Cook is councilor [sic], I often work on my own ... I had to manage on my own for eleven days when he went to Melbourne ... I conclude I must be doing alright[sic].

Now that I have been more than a year in this beautiful country, which gave us shelter from Hitler's claws, ... I think this year was more valuable and full of experience than any other before.

Despite his appreciation of life in Australia and his enjoyment of the farming experience, his life in Milawa was very isolated. He did manage to maintain contact with his father in the United States and with his guardian in Melbourne and on 7 September, when he was still working on the same farm in Milawa, Bob wrote to Ernst with what he thought was exciting news:

There is a big chance that I will be with you in the USA within a year. My father is already starting to fill in papers for an affidavit. He says he won't wait until this war is finished, because if Britain can stand it, the war will be long, and if they can't, then Australia will not be safe from Japan.

We are at present deep in winter, no snow of course, but frost in the mornings. During the day it is as hot as hell. It is a mad weather, but the year is bad like in all the rest of the world. I remember last year at the same time there were floods and perpetually torrential rain lasting for weeks. This year there was so little rain that there is already a shortage of water in some parts of New South Wales.

In about three weeks I am going to Melbourne for a weekend (Yom Kippur) and I will get in touch with a Vienna girl with whom I was very friendly seven or eight years ago I have not seen her since then but I believe she is not bad looking at all. I got a letter from her where she tells me she would be very pleased to meet me, as she hasn't got any friends in Melbourne. She is working as a domestic servant.

I suppose you heard about the Jewish army of 100,000 men to help Britain. I think the Jews in Germany will have to suffer badly for this, but whatever they do is wrong, so they might as well help Britain. One of the boys who came to Australia with me has his brother in England. Last week he got a letter from him. He had joined the British army, went to France, back to England, and to Dunkirk. After the evacuation he is back in England now. N. writes me it is an uneasy feeling to have the German bombers above you nearly every day and I bet it is too.

Arrangements had been made for the boys to spend the Jewish High Holydays with their guardian's family. Bob travelled to Melbourne by train from Wangaratta. When he returned to the farm, he wrote to Ernst on 15 October 1940 describing his time in Melbourne:

You must be having a great time at the World's Fair. It is a pity they don't keep it open until I come. Would be better for your mother too¹³. Would you mind explaining to me what these 'girly shows' are? There is nothing of the sort in Australia. I wish you would tell me WHAT you SEE and HAVE there. If you spend 85¢ for it, it must be pretty good.

Yesterday I came home from the Yom Kippur weekend in Melbourne. I had an easy fast and a pretty good time afterwards. I went to a party with fourteen boys and about seven or eight girls, everyone a beauty. I played tennis with one and when we sat down for a rest she told me she comes from Heidelberg. I went with her to the movies in the evening. She is the prettiest girl I have seen for a long time, tall, fair, a real sports figure (It took me all my time to win the tennis match against her) and very intelligent ... She asked me to write to her and I will although I see no chance of seeing her again within the next six months and there are so many boys in Melbourne!

I feel just like you about soccer. It is not popular here and everybody is mad about football (Australian) and cricket. I go to sleep at a cricket match but I played a bit of Australian football at school. It is played with hands and feet and an egg-like ball. The forward picks up the ball and kicks it forward and then runs after it. Everybody looked at me when I dribbled past half a dozen backs and scored one goal after the other. Dribbling is hard with this ball because it does not roll as nicely as a round ball and is harder to kick true. My friends and I gave the whole school an exhibition what a soccer match looks like and nearly all of them wanted to learn it right away. But as we left school soon after they did not get the chance. I have not touched a football since. I got a new pair of football boots lying idle in my wardrobe.

Bob's letters to Ernst continued to provide a clear picture of rural life in Victoria. They also show how successfully he had managed to acclimatize himself to his new life and how hard he tried to ensure that he fitted into the local lifestyle, to the extent of learning to ride a horse bareback. On 23 November 1940, he wrote to Ernst, including a photo of himself sitting bareback on a horse and explained as follows:



...I thank you very much for the nice snapshot. I don't suppose you have any of me, so I am enclosing one too. Don't laugh about that horse, I admit it is too small but you would be surprised about its speed. I can ride pretty well now. The snap was taken on a Sunday and I am in good clothes. You would not recognize me in my working dress. I look like a real cowboy. You might notice that I got no saddle on the pony. I have learned to ride like this from the start although it is much harder because the saddle helps to keep balance. In the rear at the left you can see a shed to store hay. It will hold approximately 30 tons. When I came here last autumn this shed was full. At the end of the winter it was empty (we fed it all to the milking cows) and now that we have finished harvesting it is two thirds full again. There is nothing else to say about this picture except that right below the pony's nose, but far at the back, there are some sheep. I think you need a magnifying glass to see them.

The pictures here are not too bad. You always see two at a time. The first one is generally a funny picture with no sense in it or a Wild West film with nothing but shooting. The second one is what you actually come to see. 'Gone with the Wind' has been going in Melbourne for four months and still brings a full house. I have not seen it yet, but I will not miss it. 'The Great Dictator' is just starting in the city tomorrow and it will be a long time until it comes up here into the country towns. Have you heard of 'Rebecca'? I am going to see that next week. I believe it is an outstanding picture.

From N. (in England) I am getting no word lately. In

his last letter he wrote me that he and four other German boys are the only aliens not interned in the whole district. They have been searched and cross-examined dozens of times and expect internment daily. The same thing can happen to me but I don't worry, as an internment camp here is as good as any place to live in.

The farm work is going good. I have learned to drive a team of three and four horses in a plough, harrow, cultivator and roller. Yesterday we have started very interesting work. We are putting electric light into the house. We only have kerosene lamps so far, as there is no electricity anywhere near. Now we bought a dynamo and a 1.5hp petrol engine to drive it and a 12 volt battery to store the power. Today we built a shed for this business and on Monday we will lay the wires into the different rooms. A farmer really has to know something about everything, carpentry, blacksmith, plumber, bricklayer, engineer, electrician and hundreds of other jobs.

Farming is what they call 'a lifetime job'. You often see farmers of sixty and more years attending to lectures of a fellow perhaps twenty or thirty just because he is an expert in something and can beat their forty years of experience. That's why I am studying anything I can get hold of. I suppose farming will be different in America, but it certainly can't be more up to date than here. I think I will be able to get quite a good job over there with my excellent school report and the references of my two bosses.

At the age of sixteen Bob had chosen farming as his lifetime occupation. Working long days as a farmhand in the sparsely inhabited Australian hinterland with few friends his own age nearby made life very lonely. The mail interrupted the monotony keeping him connected to his dad and his old friends. Surface mail was slow but the faster airmail was much too expensive for regular usage. The strategy they had established to time letter postings for alternate ships seemed to work well. Instant electronic mails as we know it today was then still an inconceivable technology. Writing from Milawa on a hot summer Christmas Eve 1940 Bob discussed the mail situation:

Well today is X-mas. I am not working except milking the cows. I spent about £1 for presents and got four lousy handkerchiefs back for it. But still I just had a grand dinner and last night I had a pretty good time in town. I met half a dozen of my mates there and we had no trouble to pick up some girls. Nothing per-

manent of course but they gave us a nice evening. I got home at 3 AM and only had two hours sleep afterwards. It is getting pretty uncomfortably hot again and I sweat like a radish all day long. I think I will be fighting bush fires before long.

Well you might call me mad but I am starting to study sexology next month. I am buying a book containing a quarter of a million facts and thousands of photographs on this matter. It is definitely very interesting. There are very few people who are aware of 'the facts of life' into the last detail and it is a great advantage if you are, don't you think? I already got a list of blokes who want to read it after me.

I am glad you got somebody to spend a Sunday with. A Sunday in Brooklyn might be very monotonous, but what about me? I got to ride a bike many miles if I want to see anybody I know and when I get home at five I can work again until eight. There are no movies on Sundays in Australia, which I consider very foolish. I very often like a day of work better than a Sunday. What about that? One day last week the boss told me that a windmill which pumps water out of a well into a place for the sheep to drink has gone bad. I have a day to fix it up. Of course, as I did not know what had gone wrong I had to take a lot of tools with me. Then I took food for the whole day and a billy to make some tea. I carried all that riding the horse for four miles. I was on my own so I hopped into the job and my training in turning and fitting proved very useful. It was a pretty complicated defect. At lunchtime I lit a little fire and made some tea and had my lunch and then I slept for an hour in the shade. Then I went on with my job and at about 3:30 PM. I had it all finished and fixed up. Don't you think that is very interesting? One feels more important when doing a job his own way without any instructions. I am starting to like the technical part of farming. Of course there are other jobs, which are not pleasant at all, but in general I think a farmer has a bigger variety of jobs than any other profession.

The mail was now functioning quite well as Bob's letter of 26 January 1941 letter attests:

Many thanks for your letter of 20 December, it went remarkably fast across to me. I suppose you got letters from me since then, I wrote some anyway ... I am going ahead as fast as possible with my immigration plans. I expect my father's affidavit any day and as I got no passport at all I applied for a Certificate of Identity, which will act instead. As soon as I get

that I will hand everything to the American Consul who is already waiting for it. I hope I will not be very long but I am not as optimistic as you to think that I will be able to go by spring (here autumn).

On the farm I am at present pretty busy because it is summer (not like you thought winter!). The weather is completely mad. Melbourne experienced a cloud burst and in fifteen minutes Elizabeth Street was three feet under water! As it was in the evening, all shops were closed and the street crowded with people who could not get shelter anywhere. Women were washed down the gutter and were only stopped by cars, which were standing everywhere and the owners unable to get out. A man and a woman narrowly escaped drowning. I was only sorry that I could not see all this. It would have been a 'pretty sight' to see women swimming in the streets!

My boss does know that I intend to go to America but I don't tell him any details. He was certainly surprised when I received letters from the American Consulate, the Department of the Interior and the Union Steamship Line! He does not dare ask me when I will be going. However I expect to get either double wages or another job altogether in two or three months. Two of my mates have changed their jobs and get forty shillings a week compared with 15/- on the first one. I think my guardian will announce me a new job for my birthday next month. I also expect a new bicycle as birthday present. My bike is fit for the rubbish heap. If I were not alien here, I would have a motorbike long ago. I need to ride about 50 miles every week on the pushbike and I could make better trips if I had a motorbike and a friend to go with me. Now I usually sit home on Sunday's and write letters. In a few hours I start milking again and that is the end of the Sunday. Well I mustn't complain, I am lucky to be here.

'I am lucky to be here!' Ernst expressed the identical sentiment in a letter two years later when he was with the American Infantry fighting in the wretched jungles of New Guinea. They were contrasting their situation to the suffering of defenseless Jews in Europe.

Bob's following letter to Ernst was not as positive. He had experienced a setback in his plans to rejoin his father in the United States and disappointment on the romantic front. On 26 February 1941, he wrote to Ernst of these disappointments as follows:

Yesterday I received your letter of January 13th. It beats me why you had to wait seven weeks for a letter from me. I wrote

pretty regularly I think. Thanks very much for your birthday wishes. I am glad you liked that photo but I did not know that I have changed so much ... You are wrong. I can't go to the USA without a quota. My father is not citizen yet. I only get second preference quota ... I am not writing anymore to that girl. She wants to talk highbrow stuff all the time and it got on my goat. I want cheer up and not talk about the position in the Far East. It's lousy all right without a girl and I am blowed if I can find one. The next time I go to Melbourne I must learn to dance. That will at least increase chances to meet one ... You never write my complete address on the envelope. With the bad postal organization here it can cause long delays in delivery. Write it like that: R.H. c/o A.H.Cook, Milawa via WANGARATTA, VIC. Australia.

It took Bob another three months until he was able to write to Ernst again because he had developed an abscess on his jawbone and in the end needed an operation. In his letter of 31 May 1941, he described his experience:

I think I owe you an apology for not writing so long, but with my Melbourne holiday, terrible cold evenings and nights, and a certain amount of laziness I have put it off and off. I received your last letter just when I returned from Melbourne (about the end of April). I have put it away somewhere and can't find it again, so I will have to answer without it.

My Melbourne holiday which was to be for a week, had to be extended to seventeen days on account of an operation which I had to have done. I developed an abscess on the jawbone. One doctor (a German Jew) said it was nothing to worry about, but another doctor had an X-ray photograph taken and he found that this abscess reaches from the root of a bad tooth right down to the jawbone and had to be lanced at once as there was danger of affecting the jawbone. I did not worry much about it as I felt no pain at all neither before nor after the operation. I was put asleep with 'laughing gas' and had the funniest dreams. It lasted only for five minutes, but I had two teeth pulled and the abscess lanced and drained. The best of it is that you can get up and walk away in ten minutes and you don't feel sick like after chloroform. I had a great big plaster over the whole side of the face and the doctor would not let me go back to work until it was cleared up.

Although I met some girls, I could not go anywhere but to the pictures because of this big plaster. I saw some good pic-

tures anyway ... I went nearly every day, as I had nothing else to do.

I could do no good at the American Consulate, as expected. The Consul is a very decent chap and he thought there is no way to appeal against this rejection. Otherwise my papers are in perfect order and the visa ready to be issued. I will have to wait until the war is over.

Ernst had written about a New York club where old friends from Vienna meet. As already discussed, Bob was very isolated on the farm and he wrote to Ernst:

Let me learn all about it and the girls and boys from Vienna, which you meet in this club. I have not got a damned soul here to go to. Fortunately my work keeps me pretty occupied and at night I go to bed very early and read some library books. I may not stay on this job much longer depending on the wages Mr. Cook is prepared to pay me in the future. I will be here another three months at any rate. Well, I better get to bed now. The boss got rheumatism and I have to do everything on my own. Tomorrow is Sunday and I am going on a thirty-eight mile bike trip to see a mate.

Why Bob's attempt to join his father in the United States failed is not clear. He may have been a victim of a reversal in American immigration policy. In an unannounced policy change the US State Department, in agreement with the Visa Division severely tightened



Ernst on furlough 1943



Robert in the Army

immigration in mid-1940. Public sentiment had not favoured immigration in general and there was even less enthusiasm for accepting Jewish refugees. Possibly his father's support affidavit was judged insufficient to overturn the rejection. On 8 December 1941 America entered the war, an event that would bring the two friends physically closer but with no opportunity for a reunion. Ernst wrote several times but the mail failed to reach Bob and their regular correspondence was interrupted for two years.

By 1943, both young men had joined the army, Bob serving as a non-combatant in Australia and Ernst undergoing basic training in the United States. Ernst's troop transport stopped in Australia on the way to the Southwest Pacific Theatre of War. When Ernst arrived in Sydney the correspondence resumed. On 28 January 1944 Ernst's letter home brought news of Bob:



*Rudi (left) with Ernst
1938*

I wrote to Rudi immediately on arrival in Australia and to my amazement I actually received a reply. He was extremely happy to hear from me again. Apparently my last letters of approximately two years ago had not reached him. For the past fifteen months Rudi has been in the Australian army where he served 100% non-combatant duties. Australia is not as broad minded on the alien question as the U.S. and he is not a citizen. Hopefully it will be possible for us to meet sometime but that will be difficult as he is stationed in Melbourne in the south. Well we will have to see.

On New Year's Day 1944 Ernst was with the infantry forces wading ashore at Saidor along New Guinea's north shore. The American military met with little resistance from the Japanese who were retreating along an inland jungle route. General Mac Arthur wanted the site to establish a strategic airbase to further his plan for liberating the Philippines. When Ernst wrote from 'Somewhere in New Guinea' on 5 February 1944 he had already been on the island for almost two months. He told his family:

Although I have adapted myself surprisingly fast to the life here I could very easily forbear it. I tend to think that in anoth-

er three months I might get a furlough and then attempt to reach Melbourne. In any case I will try. I could then get together with Rudi if at that time he is still there.

Subsequently, on 20 March 1944 Ernst wrote:

A few days ago I received a very engaging letter from Rudi. It is really a shame that we can't somehow get together. He is in Melbourne. But after the war he plans to go to the U.S. and then we will be able to meet. In June he is to become an Australian citizen and he enclosed a photo that shows him hardly changed. He asked after all of you and sends his regards.

Later on 24 April he commented: 'I don't know when I will be able to visit Rudi. Hopefully soon as each day is more bleak and tediously boring in spite of the bits of entertainment provided us.' On 4 May, Ernst advised his family that another letter from Rudi had reached him. He told us:

He continues to do well and sends regards. His father has remarried as you probably know and he is doing quite well. Rudi longs very much for a reunion but of course that must await the end of the war just as ours must. I cling to Paul's advice 'Let's get the war over with' which is the motto of millions but we must be patient.

With every passing week the prospect for a reunion with Rudi became less likely. On 6 June 1944 Ernst informed us, 'I will have to wait quite some time for a furlough and even if I receive one it will be very difficult to travel south as far as Rudi. But being away from here for several weeks would be a delight in itself.' By 27 June his pessimism deepened. He wrote: 'As things stand now it is almost certain that I will not be able to meet with Rudi. I know neither when I might get a furlough in the future nor to where.'

Two of the September letters contained references to Rudi, indicating that they continued to correspond across the Pacific. Ernst wrote:

He is working hard in the Army and is generally doing well. Rudi at present is performing some kind of unique work. That's as much as I could ascertain from the letter since the censor had cut out some parts. His father is superintendent of a huge textile factory and earns good money. He now has a

very good job, earning \$150 a week and can retire with a pension at age sixty.

A reunion in wartime was unrealistic as Bob confirmed in 1995 when discussing his wartime activities. I had sent excerpts from Ernst's letters and Bob responded:

Ernst's letters brought a lump to my throat. I must have been a prolific letter writer during the war, but I don't remember any of it. There was very little chance that Ernst and I could have met. Most of the U.S. servicemen spent their R & R leave in Cairns, Townsville, the Gold Coast and Brisbane. Not many came further south than Sydney, because of the distances involved and the problem with transport limitations. In any case, I was not in Melbourne but stationed on the Victoria-New South Wales border. My Army career was not very illustrious. The Australian authorities were very nervous about refugees in the early part of the war, suspecting that there might be some Nazi spies amongst us¹⁴, particularly those who could not prove that they were Jewish and claimed to be political refugees, mostly Communists. We twenty all volunteered and were put into one unit. None of us were shipped to any war areas, were not issued rifles, nor did any Rookie training until V.E. Day. We were given mostly menial tasks such as trans-shipping cargo going north to the war zones, erecting barracks, and building copies of Japanese bunkers for the Air force to practice bombing and strafing and all that type of work. Our unit was employed transshipping hundreds of tons of goods from the Victorian Rail line (5'3" wide) [wide gauge railroad] onto the N.S.W. trucks (4'8") [standard gauge railroad]. As you can imagine the troops stationed in Queensland and in New Guinea needed everything from corn flakes to tanks and it all had to be man-handled at two railheads on the border. One of our jobs was the 'Lashing Gang'. We used to meet trains of flattops, some many hundreds of meters long with trucks, armoured cars and tanks, which arrived in the middle of the night in Albury and Tocumwal. These were held down with thick ropes, often with icicles a foot long. We had to undo the ropes, drive the vehicles onto the narrower gauge N.S.W. trucks and lash them down again. In the winter it was like working in a freezing chamber and in the summer the metal burnt your hands. We needed gloves nearly all of the time. Not a very glamorous job, but someone had to do it and we, who could not be trusted with a rifle, were the ideal men to do it.

On 3 November 1944, Ernst wrote to us from Morotai, an island in the Dutch East Indies. He knew with certainty where he was headed but could not tell us it was the recapture of the Philippine Islands. Again the letter mentioned Rudi, this time to indicate he was headed in a direction away from Australia:

You might as well forget about a visit to Rudi, as that isn't possible anymore. Times have changed, you know, and the war over here is progressing. A year ago today I arrived in Sidney. That one-year has really passed by very fast and I hope that the next one will pass too (Yes, I do really expect to spend another year over here).

Ernst's last letter was sent on 17 November 1944 from Leyte Island, which he identified only as 'Somewhere in the Philippines'. He wrote:

As you can see above my outfit has moved again, and I have now been in the Philippines for a few days. The stay on the ship took longer than I expected and therefore I wasn't able to write you for two weeks. Hoping to hear from you soon. With many kisses, your loving Ernst

Two days later the Japanese fatally wounded him when his patrol was ambushed by an enemy machine gun position and was forced to retreat. December 16th brought a telegram reporting Ernst 'missing in action on Leyte since 19 November 1944'. We knew what that meant; yet we continued to hope, until the 'killed in action' telegram confirmed our fears on 5 February 1945. Ernst's death brought to an end the connection with Bob (Rudi) Halbert and I did not hear any further news about him until 1994 when we reestablished contact as previously explained.

EPILOGUE

Bob's post-war life in Australia began to emerge in his 1994 letters. He began his narrative with the most significant event of his life, his marriage:

Whilst on leave (furlough) in Melbourne I went to a dance for Jewish Servicemen and women. I met Millie, we married whilst I was still in uniform and we have been happily married since 1946.

Prior to joining the army Bob had been very enthusiastic about farming, intending to make it his life's work. At war's end he thought differently as he explained:

When I received my discharge I was determined not to return to farming. You can probably tell from my letters to Ernst that my time on the farm was anything but exciting. Just bloody hard work for ten shillings a week in temperatures of 40 degrees and millions of flies. It was quite a relief to go to school after milking thirty to forty cows by hand. This is such a huge country, houses are miles apart and I found life on the land very lonely. My first boss owned 3,000 acres, which is considered a fairly small property and apart from his family I saw no one except my classmates at the school who were also studying Agriculture. We came to school by bus from a 60-mile radius after getting up at 5AM and helping to milk the 50 cows by hand. No milking machines in those days! My only entertainment was a 25-mile bicycle ride on Saturday nights to see two cartoons and a double feature movie in the closest town of about 6,000 people. I usually arrived home at 2AM and had to be up again at 5AM to round up the herd who were dozing in the paddocks with an inch of frost on their backs, it was that cold. I decided this was not for me.

I found a job in an automobile parts warehouse selling parts and accessories ... found this to my liking, worked my way up and eventually got a position as Spare Parts Manager of a dealership. Millie and I lived in a seaside suburb named Carrum nearby. In 1948 our daughter Rosemary was born, we built a new larger home and lived there happily until Rosemary was twelve. As there was no Shule and very few Jewish youngsters for her to mix with we moved to Moorabbin, a suburb of Melbourne about eleven miles from the centre of the city where we have lived ever since. It is a very peasant middle class suburb with every facility, close to the beaches, not far from the hills and has a Jewish community without any great problems with Anti-Semitism.

Rosemary did well at school, got a job... as Private Secretary ... married a nice Jewish boy ... and after raising her kids went back to work as a Legal Secretary ... they have two children, a boy named Reuben and girl named Melanie ... They are both good kids, no worries with drugs or alcohol, thank God.

I also worked as a Senior Buyer ... until I turned sixty-five in 1988 ... I now do some volunteer work ...at a Freemason's Hospital and at a Citizens' Advice Bureau.

Both Millie and I are very keen lawn bowlers, a sport ... very popular in Australia ... We both have represented Victoria in games against South Australia and have won many tro-

phies. Our social life centres around our Club and a few friends we made in Shule, the Bentleigh Progressive Synagogue. During the coldest part of the year we generally head north to Queensland and bowl to our hearts content up there in the semi-tropical climate. As a bowler you are always welcome wherever you go.

After reestablishing contact by mail, we decided to meet in person in Hawaii. In anticipation of our planned 1995 reunion Bob had ordered a bowling shirt for me as a birthday surprise with my name embroidered in capital letters. After we were forced to cancel the trip due to Bob's illness the shirt arrived by mail. On the enclosed card Bob had written his final message to me shortly before he died:

To Paul: I had this shirt especially made for you intending to give it to you on your birthday before visiting the Bowl Club together in Honolulu. This is not going to happen now. ... You are now an honorary member of the City of St Kilda Bowling Club! *C'est La Vie!!* Wishing you all the very best — particularly good health! From Bob & Millie.

My wife, Hannah and I planned our first visit to Australia in February 2004. Our cruise ship docked at Melbourne for one day. Sadly, I arrived too late for a reunion but when I disembarked the ship I was wearing the bowling shirt to honour my late friend Robert Halbert. 'That's Life!'

NOTES

1. The names Rudi and Bob are used interchangeably as appropriate.
2. Bob Halbert was the anglicised name suggested by the *Guardians*. Rudi Halberstadt made it his legal name on his arrival in Australia.
3. We lived across the street at Zirkusgasse 38
4. Vienna's Jewish Athletic Club to which we once belonged. In the 1930s, its soccer team was generally at the bottom in league standing
5. Spotted Dick is a British concoction, a steamed, log-shaped suet pudding studded with currants, hence the 'spotted.' But why the 'dick'? I can see 'pudding' become 'puddink' becoming 'puddick' and then just 'dick.'
6. In February 1939, the Wagner-Norris bill was introduced in

the U.S. Congress allowing 20,000 German refugee children over fourteen to enter the country over a two-year period without affecting the quota. The legislation initially won public support but powerful opposition groups soon rallied to defeat the measure and it was never brought to the floor for a vote.

7. In 1994 Bob provided a few names. 'Of the twenty boys who came to Australia under the Welfare Guardian scheme only a few were from Vienna. I remember Otto Schustig, Egon Kammermann, Hans Reiner and Henry Zipper'. An article written by Manfred Anson in 1989, listed all twenty original surnames and their new English equivalent. Baron became Barton, Elsasser ... Eltham, Berstein ... Berns, Bernstein ... Berns, Halberstadt ... Halbert, Schustig ... Sherwin, Bacharach ... Baxter, Apt ... Upton, Kahn ... Cann, Kammerman ... Kamer, Reiner ... Raynor, Sommer ... Somers, Reiss ... Rees, Neuman... Newman, Lustig ... Lester, Bauer ... Bower, Jachman ... Kackman, Traugott ... Traynor, Dreyfuss ... Drayton, Ansbacher ... Anson. *Australian Jewish News*, 19 May 1989, p.11.
8. Ten attended the Dookie Agricultural College between Shepparton and Wangaratta; Rudi and the others were enrolled in the Wangaratta Technical School
9. Rodney Benjamin *A Serious Influx of Jews*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1998, p 119
10. Vic Walpole owned only 1500 acres, Bert Walpole about 2000 acres, but Horace Walpole had 4000 acres.
11. On 19 June 1940 the passenger ship *Niagara* (bound for Suva and Vancouver) struck a mine, laid by the German raider *Orion*, and sank two hours later, shortly after leaving Auckland Harbor. The 349 passengers and crew aboard all survived.
12. Benjamin, op. cit.
13. Mother was working at the fair's 'Midget Town' as personal cook to the midget performers.
14. One of the twenty refugee boys was accused by the farm manager at Werribee of being a German spy when he was seen identifying United States planes from a booklet as they landed at Laverton. So to complete the farce, he joined the army where, as an 'enemy alien' he was used initially in a labour corps. Later he was a volunteer for malaria control experiments. On naturalisation he was allowed to serve overseas — as a batman to the commandant of a detention barracks in New Guinea. Aldridge and Keen, *Dookie College: The First 100 Years*, VCAH, 1986, on the webpage <http://www.landfood.unimelb.edu.au/dean/book2/ch3.html#Enfant>

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THREE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH PILOTS: 1936–1954

Morris Ochert

In general, Jews are not readily associated as soldiers, and even less so as pilots. Yet, during both World War I and II, Australian Jews made important contributions to the fighting forces, with the role played by Sir John Monash being the most important. This article deals with the story of three Jewish pilots, Oscar Nathan Diamond, Lionel van Praag and Frederic Bedrich Adler, each of whom made interesting contributions, either during or after World War II. Only one of these three stories, that of van Praag, is discussed by Gerald Pynt.¹ There are, of course, many other Jewish pilots of renown, notably Peter Isaacson of Melbourne.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT OSCAR NATHAN DIAMOND, DFC²

Oscar ('Ossie') Diamond was born in Brisbane in 1917. He was the son of Rosetta and Joseph Diamond. Joseph was born in Russia and fled from the anti-Jewish pogroms in 1905. Arriving in the United States, he changed his name from Dashevski to Diamond, choosing this name because the Diamond Match Company was near his first job in New York. He met Rosetta when he was in Brisbane on business and they were married in the Brisbane Synagogue in 1916. After their marriage, Joseph opened the long-running Diamond's Dry Cleaning business. Oscar was their only child. He celebrated his bar mitzvah at the Brisbane Synagogue in Margaret Street. In 1939 he gained a pilot's licence and enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) before the outbreak of war.

By 1941 he was a flight lieutenant, based in Northern Malaya. On 7 December 1941 at 12.30am, a Japanese convoy was observed approaching the coast near Kota Bharu. Flight Lt Diamond captained a Hudson Bomber and attacked at mast height dropping four 240-pound bombs on the *Awasaki Maru*, a 10,000-ton Japanese transport that exploded and sank. This was the first Japanese vessel to be lost in the Pacific War. As this action took place at 3.32am



Flight Lieutenant Oscar Nathan Diamond, DFC, in uniform

and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour commenced at 4.52am, both Malay time, it can be seen that Flight Lt Diamond and his crew struck the Japanese an hour and 20 minutes before the attack on Pearl Harbour, making this an historic event for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. One of his engines was shot out in that action and he managed to limp back to base on the other.

The following day, 8 December 1941, Australia declared war on Japan. The reason why the RAAF attacked that convoy was that Japan had struck first. A few days before 7 December 1941, the

Japanese had invaded Malaya, near Kota Bharu and a delay in response would have been foolhardy. On another occasion, Diamond strafed a Japanese landing force and damaged a railway line. Finally he was shot down over Sumatra and after an adventurous attempt at escaping, he was captured and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner of war (POW). Much of that time was spent working in a Manchurian coal mine.

At the end of the Pacific War, Diamond commandeered a Douglas DC3 and flew a number of his fellow POWs to India where he was hospitalised after suffering from amoebic dysentery. Later, he reached Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) where he booked himself into a luxury hotel, charging his bill to the RAAF. From there, he 'jumped' a DC4 and flew to Perth, reaching there in September 1945. He then returned to Brisbane and took over the management of his father's business until his retirement in the early 1980s.

Flight Lt Diamond passed away in August 2003. In October 2003, members of his family joined the Squadron No 1 at Amberley Airbase for a ceremony of remembrance. A framed picture of 'Ossie', together with an account of his achievements was unveiled at the Squadron No 1 Headquarters. The description of his contribution to the war effort is headed: 'The RAAF Pilot who struck the first blow in the Pacific War'.³

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT LIONEL MAURICE VAN PRAAG, GEORGE MEDAL

In his book, *Australian Jews of Today and the part they have played*, Rabbi Rudolph Brasch introduces Lionel Maurice van Praag as follows: 'From a sheltered Jewish home he became a (cycle) racing champion, an expert speedboat driver, a war hero and one of Australia's leading early (aerial) survey operators'. Rabbi Brasch refers to his father, Louis, as 'a Sydney Jewish tailor' and mentions that his mother, Mozelle was dedicated to helping the Temple Emanuel, Sydney, where she would pray for the safety of her daredevil son.

Lionel Maurice van Praag was born in Sydney in 1908. It is interesting to note that while his name shares a similarity with well-known Australian Jewish dancer, Dame Peggy van Praagh, OBE, they were not related.⁴ His early training and experience was in mechanical matters and he took naturally to the newly introduced sport of motorcycle racing, known also as 'dirt track racing', 'speedway cycling' or 'cinders racing'. He joined the English circuit in 1931, became captain of the Wembley Team, and won a world championship in 1936. In the following years he won many cham-

pionships and awards and raced in many parts of the world. In the United States he took up flying and during the Second World War he joined the RAAF. On his first mission he was piloting an unarmed plane when it was shot down by Japanese fighters and crashed into the Timor Sea. Van Praag and his crew of three were injured and bleeding and had only life jackets to keep them afloat. After 30 hours in shark-infested waters they drifted close to land and swam ashore. It was considered that without van Praag's strong leadership and initiative, together with Officer Webster, none of the crew would have survived.⁵ He was awarded the George Medal⁶ for his leadership role in this incident and spent the remainder of the war on aerial transport duties.

After the war, van Praag returned to speedway racing as a promoter. He then became a commercial pilot, carrying goods and passengers and crop-dusting.⁷ A serious accident put him out of action for a year. On recovering, he became a senior pilot in Pakistan where he contracted a serious tropical illness from which he eventually recovered and joined Adastra, an aerial survey operation.⁸ For many years he was engaged in the aerial survey of the Australian continent and he became Adastra's senior pilot.

Van Praag was described as an intense man who drove himself as hard as he drove his planes and motorcycles. He was very dedicated to the dangerous and exacting task of aerial surveying. He explained why he carried a lightweight motorcycle on his plane so that he should not waste time travelling on land.⁹

In 1964, van Praag decided that it was time to slow down and he bought a beautiful little island near Mackay, on the central Queensland coast, where he built an airstrip and tropical style home. He settled down to what would appear to be an idyllic retirement, but life was too quiet there and after twelve years he returned to live in Sydney. There he resumed his lifelong hobby of tinkering with things mechanical in his workshop. He passed away in 1987 and in 2000 the ACT government honoured him by naming a street after him as 'van Praag Place' in Canberra.



*Lionel van Praag, GM,
in 1960*

**PILOT OFFICER FREDERIC BEDRICH ADLER — 0311305,
RAAF**

Frederic Bedrich Adler (Efraim ben Avraham) was born in England on 28 March 1923. After service with the Royal Air Force (RAF), he fought in the War of Independence in Israel, where he was later joined by his mother. The Israeli Air Force arranged for him to return to England to obtain further skills as an Aeronautics Engineer. He became highly proficient with Canberra bombers and, before he returned to Israel, it was decided to send him to Australia where he was to receive further instruction. He was also delegated to assist in engineering research on Canberra bombers as Australia was building up its own air force.

While engaged in the latter capacity, he lost his life in a shocking accident at the Amberley Air Force base, near Ipswich, Queensland.¹⁰ Extracts from the Unit History Sheets recorded the details of the accident as follows:

Pilot F.B. Adler (0311305), an Engineer employed by the Aeronautical Research Laboratories, Melbourne and as a member of the RAAF Reserve, was carrying out some technical research for Air Force Headquarters connected with Avon engine flame stability and re-lighting problems.

16 June 1954: whilst carrying out a period of continuation training at RAAF Amberley, Canberra Bomber A84-202, with Flight Lieutenant F.N. David as Captain, Flight Lieutenant D.C. Nicholls as pupil and Pilot Officer F.B. Adler (ACTIVE RESERVIST) of RAAFHQ as Observer, crashed and all crew members were killed. This was the first Canberra accident to occur in the R.A.A.F.¹¹

...The plane, while taking off, failed to maintain altitude. It tilted; a wing touched the airstrip and the plane cart-wheeled along the ground for a great distance. It disintegrated and its entire load of kerosene jet-fuel ignited. Air Force personnel gathered the remains of the personnel. Their bodies had been mutilated and badly burnt in the accident.¹²

The late Rabbi A. Fabian, then minister of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation and chaplain of the Forces, Northern Command, went to Amberley to supervise the preparation of Pilot Officer Adler's remains for burial. The funerals of the three pilots killed in the crash took place on 18 June 1954 and were described as follows:

A combined service was held in the chapel at R.A.A.F. Amberley after which the remains were ceremonially escorted

to the main entrance of R.A.A.F. Amberley. The remains of Flight Lieutenant Davis and Flight Lieutenant Nicholls were then escorted to the Brisbane Crematorium where last rites were carried out. Those of Pilot Officer Adler were escorted to the Lutwyche Military Cemetery where last rites were administered according to the Jewish Faith.¹³



*The plaque over the grave
of P/O Adler*

The RAAF provided a full military escort at the Lutwyche Military Cemetery. The Brisbane Chevra Kadisha and a large number of congregants assembled at the graveside. Soldiers carrying British, Australian and Israeli flags, followed by high-ranking RAAF officers, led the cortege. The coffin, draped in flags, was borne on a gun carriage. Then followed the Air Force band and a large party of servicemen carrying guns reversed. On reaching the graveside, the deceased was honoured by a salute of guns. The O/C RAAF, Northern Command, and Rabbi Fabian gave addresses. The latter then proceeded with the Jewish ritual.

Subsequently, Rabbi Fabian corresponded with Adler's mother who was in Israel. She was very pleased to learn that the Queensland Ex-Servicemen's and Women's Association (QAJEX) conducts an annual memorial service at her son's grave on the Sunday closest to Armistice Day (now called Remembrance Day). Though she passed away some years ago, this is still done. After that service, similar



*Members of QAJEX at an annual Remembrance Day service
at Adler's graveside, Lutwyche Military Cemetery*

respect is shown to Raphael Grose, AIF, who is buried in the same cemetery. The group then moves to the Toowong Cemetery where a service is held for departed Jewish Servicemen interred there. The same procedure has been inaugurated at the newer Jewish cemetery at Mt Gravatt. Adler's name is also included in all Yiskor (Memorial) services in the Brisbane Synagogue.

Rabbi Fabian is to be commended for his compassionate services in all the above matters, as are the QAJEX members who carry out the annual memorial services. The QAJEX president, Sid List, continued to organise and conduct these services after Rabbi Fabian left Brisbane in 1962.

NOTES

1. Gerald Pynt, (ed) in cooperation with Jack Epstein, *Australian Jewry's Book of Honour World War II*, Australian Federation of Jewish Ex-servicemen & Women, 1973. Lionel van Praag is discussed on pp47-48. There is also a chapter on the 'War in the Air', pp.104-108. The three pilots discussed in this article all have a link with Queensland.
2. This section was written with the assistance of Wing

- Commander, No 1 Squadron, the State Library of Queensland and the *Courier Mail*.
3. Rudolph Brasch *Australian Jews of Today and the part they have played*, Sydney: Cassell, 1977.
 4. These surnames represent a wave of Jewish migrants who left Prague in Czechoslovakia and settled in Flanders, at the time in Holland (two thirds of that area are now the provinces East and West Flanders in Northern Belgium, extending slightly into the Netherlands). At the time many European Jewish families did not have surnames and they were allocated the names 'van Praag' 'from Prague' or van Praagh' 'of Prague'. See M.Ochert, 'The Brief, but Eventful Life of Lewis Flegeltaub, AJHSJ, Vol XV, Part 2, June 2000. It was purely coincidental that families with these names later settled in Sydney. See also AJHS Newsletter, No 64, May 2004, p.7.
 5. Pynt, op. cit., pp47–48.
 6. The George Medal was instituted by King George VI in 1940 to acknowledge acts of great bravery.
 7. This involves spraying fertiliser, pesticide, insecticides or top dressing onto farmlands and has to be done from a very low level to ensure that the material lands on its target area. It requires considerable skill and many planes have met with disaster by impacting power lines, fences, trees or low hills.
 8. The term *Adastra* is made up of the Latin words *Ad Astra* — 'to the stars'. This is part of the motto of the RAAF — '*Per ardua ad astra*', that is 'by hard work, to the stars'.
 9. Comments from a friend of the author's who has a large hotel in Cairns where van Praag stayed whenever he was flying in North Queensland.
 10. It is regretted that very few details could be obtained from the RAF Management Centre in England and the Ministry of Defence Air Staff, Israel. It has not been possible to contact P/O Adler's widow, Violet Elizabeth, who lived at that time in Warrandyte, Melbourne. A VAJEX officer believes she returned to Israel and remarried. Appreciation is expressed to Stephen Locke of the RAAF's Historical Section and D. Pullen of the RAAF's Discharged Personnel Records, Department of Defence, for some of the data produced in this section on Adler.
 11. Unit History Sheets, No 82 (Bomber) Wing Headquarters.
 12. Ibid.
 13. Further extract of RAAF's Historical Records, 18 June 1954.

BOOK REVIEWS

IF YOU WILL IT, IT IS NO DREAM, THE MORIAH STORY 1943–2003

*By Suzanne Rutland, Playwright Publishing Pty Ltd,
Caringbah, Sydney, 2003, 376pp.*

This, the sixth book by Dr Suzanne Rutland so far, is probably the best. With an introductory chapter outlining the sparse history of Jewish education in NSW from the First Fleet onwards and in particular the two and a half decades of the Certified Hebrew Denominational School, she sets the scene of a community largely bereft of Jewish education before the 1940s until the establishment of the North Bondi Jewish Day School and Kindergarten, which later became Moriah College.

With a myriad of details she shows the development of the school from its beginnings as the Sydney Talmud Torah and a kindergarten at 115 Glenayr Avenue, Bondi, in 1942, where the main Moriah preschool kindergarten still stands, to the infant school established there in 1943, and in 1952 the move to Vivian Street, Bellevue Hill, with the school renamed Moriah College, and its many extensions and rebuildings. Then came the amalgamation in late 1967 with King David School, originally established to rival the North Bondi Jewish Day School, thus becoming the infant school of Moriah College in Strickland Street, Rose Bay. And finally the move of the primary and high school to the custom built current premises at Queen's Park in April 1994.

The Moriah story also shows the dedication of Abraham Rabinovitch, the first president and provider of both Glenayr Avenue and Vivian Street premises, and his band of pioneer board members dedicated to Torah education. Dr Rutland does not shrink from showing how many decisions by Abraham Rabinovitch actually hindered the growth of the school during his lifetime by his policy of only encouraging board members of the same opinions as himself, and steadfastly rejecting Jewish teachers and headmasters who were not strictly Orthodox, in favour of staff of other religions, particularly those who would accept lower emoluments.

Proper attention is paid to the diverse personalities, educational experiences and backgrounds of headmasters, principals and leading staff members over the decades, from the intelligent and charismatic Rabbi Dr Hans Elchanan Blumenthal to the lackadaisical Ezra Shereshevsky, not avoiding mention of the unfortunate Robert Mitchell, who committed suicide. More recent principals, their work, philosophy and achievements are treated in greater detail, particularly the late Harold Nagley who set the high school on its path to success, Lionel Link whose quest for locally trained Jewish Studies teachers started local training, Maurice Finberg, who kept the school going during four years as Acting Principal, and the present energetic dedicated incumbent, Roy Steinman, whose new initiatives have created a vibrant multifaceted school.

Anyone who reads this history carefully will gain encyclopaedic information about Moriah College from its early days to the present, for the author has included a plethora of additional features which aid our understanding -not only copious endnotes and a well-furnished index, but also a glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish words used in the book. Then there is a timeline of Jewish education in NSW, and a number of lists of names that answer everything one might want to know about the school.

For illustration, there is a panoramic and very clear aerial photograph of the Queen's Park campus, including the areas recently ceded as an additional lease by the NSW government. Then a plan of Jewish Sydney 1788-1888, showing the location of forty-five places of Jewish interest in the city of Sydney, together with a photo of Rabbi Francis Lyon Cohen (1905-1934 at Great Synagogue) and photos of educators associated with early Jewish education in Sydney.

Then there is a list of School Board Presidents from 1942 to 2003, a list of board members with years of service given from 1942 to 2003, stated to be incomplete for the early years. Also lists of headmasters and of principals, a list of trustees and one of life patrons from 1973 to the present. Then there is a list of college captains, male and female, from 1970 to 2003, and one of college vice-captains from 1973, the first year they were chosen, to 2003, and a list of students of the year from 1970 to 2002 as the 2003 student of the year was not nominated at the time of going to press. Also a list of all students in 2003, the year of the book's publication, section by section, alphabetically listed by school year, for example, each preschool kindergarten campus, the King David Preparatory School, the primary school by year, and the high school alphabetically also by year. It is inspiring to see how many children of com-

munity leaders seem to be pupils of Moriah College nowadays. Far away are the days when friends and acquaintances asked one pittingly why one sent one's academically bright children to be educated at Moriah College.

Finally there are lists of all Moriah College staff in 2003 by function and by section of the institution, and of members of Yedid, the Moriah Alumni association, alphabetically listed, with married female students' maiden names in brackets and year of sitting for HSC. Also Parents and Friends' presidents from the inception of the P.and F. in 1953 to the present, and the P.and F.committee members in 2003.

With all this, the style is lively and engaging, and there are biographical details on all the leading personalities of the school and on their families, as well as many telling details and fascinating anecdotes. This is particularly noticeable in the chapter on the Nagley years, which brings Harold Nagley back to life for anyone who knew him. My favourite anecdote is of the Christian neighbour who sold the school under Sam Fisher a large chunk of additional land and then insisted on paying for a kosher afternoon tea for the contracting parties.

The author includes a detailed discussion of financial constraints, and how this aspect of running a school with a dual secular and Jewish curriculum has been solved over the years. The roles of treasurer and bursar are shown as extremely important and the incumbents described.

I found only two shortcomings. No mention is made of the stream of former Masada College primary pupils who reinforced Moriah High school numbers from 1971 to 1981 before Masada College opened a high school in 1982, three of whom became Moriah school captains. Since there were less than forty students per year, even this handful mattered. Another omission was not mentioning Henri Amzalak, who had a thirty-two year connection with the college as class teacher, provider of textbooks, and associated Barmitzvah teacher.

Nevertheless this is a magnificent school history, enhanced by the rich lode of photographs from various sources, which illustrate the text and adorn most pages. *Kol hakavod!*

A group of founding subscribers paid the cost of the printing and made possible the distribution of copies to donors to the Moriah College 2003 capital appeal. Copies at \$60 are available from the college.

Sophie Caplan

KEHILLAT EMANUEL, A HISTORY OF THE
CONGREGATION OF THE TEMPLE EMANUEL,
WOOLLAHRA, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

By Lee Albert Maurice Simmons, Cirils Digital, Fyshwick, ACT,
Australia, July 2003, 988pp.

In researching and writing this monumental history of Temple Emanuel Woollahra, Lee Simmons undertook an immense task, which was obviously a labour of love. Indeed he states that Temple Emanuel is his and his family's spiritual home. Unfortunately some of the ways of accomplishing this work are quirky, unusual and questionable.

Firstly the very heavy tome has been divided into five books, within the one volume, each with its own pagination and separate index. Book One, 204 pages, describes the foundation of the Temple Emanuel congregation from 1938 to 1949, its quick growth, the selection of its first minister Rabbi Max Schenk of New York, and the problems in finding suitable land for building until the site at Ocean Street, Woollahra was chosen. The various details of choosing a site, of the many activities initiated, of the great work of many committee members and of Rabbi Max and Mrs Faye Schenk, are also mentioned. Almost all the information is derived from the congregational minutes, as shown by the footnotes, with an occasional footnote showing use of *The Hebrew Standard*, one of the two local Jewish weeklies of that time. That the author has made very scant use of the weekly journals is shown by his not knowing the fact that Rabbi Dr Alfred Fabian, later the spiritual leader of Orthodox congregations in Adelaide, Brisbane, and Sydney, officiated for the Temple Emanuel congregation at services held for Chanukah 1938, a matter of relevance in view of continuing differences between Liberal and Orthodox clergy in Australia, and a fact reported in the *Hebrew Standard* of December 1938. The use of the Board minutes of the congregation as almost the sole source of information also results in a totally uncritical viewpoint on everything connected with the Temple, its clergy and its membership, and a somewhat triumphalist tone.

Book Two is the largest in the volume, having 347 pages and covering the period from 1949 to 1979, the ministry of Rabbi Rudolph Brasch. It also contains, after its own index, six pages of photographs of all the rabbis of the congregations and their spouses, and of the cantors, the only illustrations in the book. Emphasis is given to Rabbi Brasch's work for the children of the congregation, in particular the establishment of a flourishing Sunday school and

also to his ceaseless public speaking activities within the Jewish community and to a great variety of outside bodies. One of Rabbi Brasch's many books — *Reminiscences of a Roving Rabbi* — is quoted from a number of times, but none of the others. The roles of lay leaders of the Temple community such as Cecil Lubner, Gerald and Rose De Vahl Davis, Rose Corrick, Ted and Betty Waxman, Heinz Gerstl, are also mentioned frequently, as well as the various choir-masters over the years from Fritz Coper to George Pikler, to Werner Baer, Wolfgang Simon and Joseph Toltz. The first cantor, Gunther Hirschberg who went on to make a career in USA and the long incumbent beloved Cantor Michael Deutsch are also well described.

Book Three is about the period from 1979 to 1989 and the ministry of Rabbi Brian Fox and the arrival of Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins in August 1989. It was Rabbi Brian Fox who established The Emanuel School in Randwick on the site of a former convent school, and some mention is made of the beginnings of this school in 1983 and its early years, and the many changes of headmasters, as well as the difficulties in acquiring a proper permanent site. The Emanuel School, with King David School in Melbourne, became one of the few twelve-year day schools of Liberal Judaism in the world. The establishment of the Netzer Reform Zionist youth movement, its activities and leadership are also dealt with in the Books dealing with the Fox and the Kamins rabbinates. Rabbi Fox also made a rapprochement towards traditional Judaism by instituting two days' celebration of Rosh Hashanah. His household also kept kosher.

Book Four, from 1990 to 2000 describes Rabbi Brian Fox's last decade before Rabbi Kamins became Chief Rabbi and Rabbi Jacqueline Ninio was appointed. In that period a Conservative service paralleling the Liberal service was introduced by Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins in the Neuweg chapel and this has continued.

The descriptions are accurate though pedestrian, and the several hundred pages recording meetings, annual general meetings, accessions and ends of terms of office-bearers, religious services, changes of rabbis and of lay leadership without any anecdotes or critical insights, make for very dull reading, except perhaps to those mentioned in these pages, or their descendants. The language is correct though the use of commonly used Hebrew words is often marred by inappropriate use of plurals and gender endings. The text is easily readable, and well expressed, except on page 9 of Book Four where the word 'partition' is used twice when it should be 'petition'.

Book Five is a record of all presidents and all board members year by year, then all *B'nei Mitzvah* and all *B'not Mitzvah* plus all marriages, with the partners to each union listed. This is a geneal-

ogist's delight and will be most useful for all family history purposes. The occasionally shared surname of bride and groom seem to indicate a Jewish marriage, which took place after conversion in a couple previously married civilly. It is also interesting to note a Barmitzvah or marriage in the Temple by those who subsequently became members of an Orthodox congregation.

Much of the text of the four first books reproduces sermons and speeches of the rabbis and leading congregants, or articles written by them in congregational journals. One of the major activities of the Temple about which comparatively little is mentioned is the establishment under the guidance of Mrs Otto Lucas in 1958 of a pre-school kindergarten within the Temple building and later the Temple Emanuel grounds. Lee Simmons describes it as an interdenominational kindergarten and seems surprised that it was the first which could be described as such in Australia. Indeed when I visited it as part of a study in December 1973 it had very little of Jewish activities, except for *Kabbalat Shabbat* run by Cantor Michael Deutsch on Fridays and no Jewish artefacts, decorations or books. At the time it was described by Rabbi Brasch as a public relations exercise of the Temple towards the general community. Indeed this seemed directed at upper middle class inhabitants of Woollahra and surrounding suburbs. This state of affairs prevailed until the arrival of Rabbi Brian Fox who changed the kindergarten to become an institution serving the Jewish community.

One problematic aspect of the volume is the fact that there are separate indices for each book. In addition, the alphabetical system used for indexing is not common as rabbis are all listed under the letter R, as for instance 'Rabbi Abecassis, Rabbi Bamberger, Rabbi Brasch, Rabbi Brian Fox, Rabbi Dr Brasch, Rabbi Dr Eisendrath, Rabbi Dr Rudolph Brasch.' and so on. Similarly under the letter M there are three mentions of Ted Waxman: Mr Edward (Ted) Waxman, Mr Edward M. Waxman, OAM, and Mr Ted Waxman, as are many others. It appears that this is a result of indexing by computer, which means it forgoes all the utility of an index, and makes a strong case for manual indexing.

In conclusion, this is indeed a labour of love which has required an enormous effort, but which could do with a revision, particularly the indices. This was a first printing of only one hundred numbered volumes, sold at a cost of \$125, with all profits going to the Temple, a most generous gesture. It is to be hoped that future printings will include some changes.

Sophie Caplan

MY TWO LIVES

By Lotte Weiss, Community Stories Collection, Sydney Jewish Museum , Sydney, 2003, 152pp . Foreword by Neville Wran, AC, QC.

Until the age of eighteen in 1942, Lotte Frankl was a member of a loving family of eight, two parents and six children, four girls and two boys. They lived in Bratislava, Slovakia, then in the Czechoslovak Republic. The father was a small-time accountant who managed to keep his job even in the Depression of the 1930s, and the lives of the family were hardworking, modest, traditionally Orthodox, and happy.

In late March 1942 all this ended. The three older Frankl girls were in the group of Jewish girls from Slovakia, aged 18 to 25, selected to build the death camp of Birkenau or Auschwitz II, six kilometres from Auschwitz I. They endured what became the usual arrival procedure of being totally shaved in all body parts, losing all belongings including clothes, being tattooed with a number, endless roll-calls outdoors in freezing weather, hunger and exhaustion.

They were put to work building roads in sub-human conditions and lived through the first gassings which took place in Birkenau . The three sisters drew some comfort from being together. Lotte caught meningitis, but managed to survive against the odds, but her sisters both became ill with typhus in September 1942 and were gassed. Lotte wanted to die too, but her former *kapo*, a non-Jew, got her a job in the area where prisoners' clothes were sorted, nicknamed 'Canada', because it seemed like being in a land of plenty. Despite continuing hardship, she was chosen for indoor office work in January 1943 in the German Mineral and Stone Works, one of the industrial concerns, which used camp slave labour, and this gave her the possibility of surviving. After stays in other minor camps, she ended the war in Theresienstadt and later found that she was the only survivor of her nuclear family of eight. Thus ended her "first life".

Freedom in Prague started her "second life", and she was helped by non-Jewish friends of her late parents when she returned to Bratislava. Throughout her book Lotte Weiss gives credit to various non-Jews, fellow-prisoners in Auschwitz, who helped her to survive. She kept in touch with some of them until they died. Her surviving uncle and aunt did not believe her story of how the rest of her family perished in Auschwitz, and this created a gap in their relationship. "We almost felt we had to apologise for surviving! Some deep feeling of disbelief was mixed with shock at having been spared. It

was a complex mix of emotions and for years and years many of us could not speak about these feelings or fears.” (p72)

Slowly she regained her faith in God, and in Bratislava met the four young men including Alfred Wetzler and Walter Rosenberg, later named Rudolf Vrba, who became famous for escaping from Auschwitz in April 1944 to warn the world. This was the first eyewitness report about Auschwitz and Birkenau, which was couriered to many Allied government representatives and to the Vatican, but nothing was done to stop the deportations or the gassings.

Eventually Lotte married Alfred Weiss, a widower with family connections, who had also survived Auschwitz. When she had previously met by chance a pre-war boy-friend who had wanted to marry her, but who had no concentration camp experience, she felt that this meant they would not have enough in common.

Her husband's brother Leo, who had survived with him, also married in Bratislava. The two families emigrated to Wellington, New Zealand, where each had children and settled down. After the death of her husband, Lotte followed her two sons to Sydney where they had preceded her and gradually became settled in Australia, although it took time. Lotte's nephew is Peter Wise, chairman of the Jewish Communal Appeal, and with most of her surviving family in Sydney, happiness and contentment have come to Lotte Weiss.

Her style is simple but very readable and, despite the horrible events through which she lived, mostly cheerful. Lotte's positive personality has always helped her to make the best of any situation. If you can only bear to read one book on surviving Auschwitz, this should be the one. It costs \$25 and is available from the Sydney Jewish Museum.

Sophie Caplan

THE DUNERA BOYS

By Robyn O'Sullivan, Rigby Heinemann, Port Melbourne, 2003

This slim volume is part of an educational series of publications for schoolchildren called 'Our Voices'. It was published as a collaborative project with the National Museum of Australia and won an award for Excellence in Educational Publishing in 2003. Its aim is to highlight part of Australia's multicultural history and emphasise the contributions to Australia made by those 'Dunera Boys' who chose to remain in Australia.

Coming out of Melbourne, it relies on the memories of Melbourne 'Dunera Boys' through interviews as well as research via the eleven publications identified in the bibliography. These include definitive books by Bartrop, Patkin and Pearl. The men featured in the story are: Werner Lowenstein, Felix Werder, Max Bruch, Steven Strauss, Henry Talbot, Horst Jacobs, Fred Lowen, Irwin Frenkel, Bern Brent, Karl Guttman, Harry Jay, Alfred Lewinsky. Also mentioned are Erwin Fabian Karl Kayser, Kurt Hannach, Herbert Baer, Gerd and Hans Buchdal, Fred Gruen, Hugo Wolfsohn, Henry Mayer, Franz Philip, Harold Weinberg, Gerhard Schaefer, Gerald Cunningham, Ernest Rodeck, Franz Stampfl. They are represented in the fields of law, photography, design, drama, music, sport, dentistry, politics, philosophy, computer science, stockbroking and movies.

This publication has interesting illustrations and is well presented with large enough text for youngsters to read and unusual words highlighted in bold and explained in the glossary. The story of the voyage and the men's experiences is told simply with historical background and direct quotations from interviews or excerpts from biographical and historical publications.

As an historical reference it is very simple, but as an introduction to the subject it serves its purpose well.

Helen Bersten

GENEALOGICAL ENQUIRIES

This list represents enquiries made to the AJHS until April 2004, where we were not able to supply information. If you did not initiate the enquiry but would like to add information, please write to our genealogist at 385 Abercrombie Street, Darlington, NSW, 2008.

BUSHMAN, Clara. Child of Kate (nee Pollock) and Alexander. Died Goulburn February 1880 aged one month.

COHEN, Benjamin, married to Fanny Brown, Sunderland, 1876.

FOREMAN, Peter. Born Russia, died Dubbo 1916.

HARRIS, Private Stanley William (acting Corporal), enlisted 1916 in 20th Battalion Australian infantry. Embarked Sydney, November 1916 on *Suevic*. Died Flanders October 1917. Relatives sought.

MOSS, Morris of Maitland, son of Alexander Moss and Rachael Hyam, grandson of Mordecai Moses. Family photos sought by Ray Moss of Wellington, NSW.

NATHAN, Samuel and Catherine (Elkan), UK, parents of Lewis, married to Maria. Latter couple arrived Sydney 1853.

PERLMAN, Fishel. Migrated early 1990s. Connected with the Zionist Library in Sydney.

REVEITT, Fred and Bruce. Seeking evidence of Jewish ancestry.

RITTENBERG, Israel and Rachel (nee Lyon), parents of Benjamin (married to Lily Moss in Melbourne, 1879)

SAMUEL, Sampson, descendant of Israel Samuel of Brighton, England (fl. 1766). Seeking information on descendants.

SCZYDLOWSKI (JULIUS), Samuel, wife Anna, b. Poland, living in London 1901. Seeking descendants.

SHAFFRAN, Harry, married to Rachel Isaacs, 1862. Seeking information re divorce in Queensland and remarriage to Rosa before 1871.

TYFIELD, Mabel. Child of Esther (nee Winberg) and Jacob. Died Goulburn December 1883, aged 7 months.

VAN HEEKEREN, Abram John. Doctor in Sydney 1867–77, lived in Double Bay. Came from New York.

NEW MEMBERS 2003–4

A.E. Benjamin
Beulah Blieden
J.M. Bowen
Alexander Boyarsky
A Firth-Mason
Walter Firth
David Fletcher
Michael & Sonia Gold
Glenn Gordon
K.R. Harpur
R. Hirst
Marsha Horton
Alan Jacobs
Rodger Johnson
M.J. Kensell,
C.S. Lazarus
Felicity Newman
D. Nichols
John & Barbara Radzevicius
Lancia Roselya
Blair Stead
Margaret Stevens
Christopher Templeton

U.K.
Rabbi Mark Solomon

CONTRIBUTORS

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

Sophie Caplan, BA, Dip Ed, MEd (Hons), a child survivor, has worked in both Australian Jewish history and Holocaust history. She is an oral historian who interviews survivors and prewar refugees and lectured on the Shoah at the University of NSW. In 1991 she founded the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society. Her work has been published in anthologies and journals in English, French and German.

Joy Dinte, is a keen researcher of family history. She was assisted by Judy Hall, Del Benfer, Jenny Ivin and other researchers in collating this history.

Nick Dreyenfurth, B Com and B Letters (1st Class Hons), Monash University, Clayton, lectures while undertaking a PhD in the School of Historical Studies. His topic is 'Inventing tradition: Languages of Australian Labor, 1890–1920'. He is interested in Australian political, social and religious history, political parties, ideas and ideologies and general biography.

Diana Encel, BSc, was research officer at the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of NSW. Since her retirement she has been researching and writing. She has indexed Volumes XV and XVI of the *AJHSJ* and has agreed to index Volume XVII.

Morris Forbes, OAM, BA, LLB, Fellow of the AJHS Inc, previous past president and editor of the *Journal* and patron of the AJHS.

Mabel Kaplan, BA, Dip Ed, M prelim (Psych), M Ed, Post Grad Dip (Arts) psychologist, researcher, educationalist and writer. She is a member of the Peter Cowan Writers Centre and honorary life member and past president of the Storytelling Guild of Australia (WA) of which she has also served as editor of the newsletter and treasurer.

She is a published author of a number of short stories and non-fiction articles as well as a teller of tales in the oral tradition.

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

Russel Stern, BA, LLM, honorary treasurer of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Inc.

Paul Schiffres BEE, MEE, PE, Life Member IEEE, is a retired electrical engineer who was radar manager on Project Apollo's Lunar Module, which landed men on the moon, authored technical papers and a personal account of *Kristallnacht* as he witnessed it in Vienna on 10 November 1938. He emigrated to the United States in December 1939 where he now resides.