

Australian Jewish Historical Society

JOURNAL AND PROCEEDINGS.

Vol. 1.

1940.

Part IV.

The Society is not responsible for either the statements made or the opinions expressed by the authors of papers published in this Journal.

The Australian Jew in the Great War, 1914—1918.

By LIEUT. HAROLD BOAS

in collaboration with

LIEUT.-COL. A. W. HYMAN, O.B.E., V.D.

Australia, as part of the British Empire, is again at war with Germany, and it is right to recall and place on record the part which Australian Jewry played in the Great War, 1914-1918.

Unfortunately, no official account was kept of Jewish enlistments during the war. The only available records are those made by Lieutenant Harold Boas. In 1919, under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association, he published in London a book entitled *The Australian Young Men's Christian Association with the Jewish Soldier of the Australian Imperial Force*. This gives details of Australian Jews who were on active service. In 1923, with the help of a number of Jewish citizens, he published a brochure, *Australian Jewry, Book of Honour*. This work comprised 88 pages, and had a nominal roll of Australian Jews who served abroad in 1914-1918, with their photographs and records, so far as he was able to obtain them. The data contained in these publications was obtained by Lieutenant Boas from many and varied sources, including the Commonwealth War Records; information supplied by the Secretary for Defence; the Jewish Chaplains with the English and Australian Forces; the different Jewish communities in

Australia, and from records kept by Lieutenant Boas himself. Lieutenant Boas was appointed, in 1916, to act as Jewish representative with the Australian Imperial Force abroad. He was given the honorary rank of Lieutenant, and served in that capacity till 1920, supervising the welfare of the Jewish soldiers.

The compilation of these books involved exhaustive editing and verification, and, although they did not pretend to be complete, everything was done to make them as authoritative and official as possible. Owing to the absence of any properly constituted Australian Jewish authority, and realising its necessity and value, Lieutenant Boas felt that the special opportunity given him while he was abroad justified him in voluntarily undertaking the task.

Lieutenant Boas' figures have been checked and verified by Lieutenant-Colonel A. W. Hyman from the available records, and the necessary adjustments made to make them as accurate as possible up to the date of this article. Every effort has been made to make this paper, and the figures herein, authoritative and conclusive, but in view of the absence of certain data the task has been difficult, and in some cases insuperable. This is regretted. The difficulty could have been avoided if records of enlistments had been officially and properly kept during 1914-1918 by all the principal Jewish communal authorities in each State of the Commonwealth. This serious omission should be definitely rectified by the authorities in respect to the present war.

The reader is referred for further information to *The British Jewry Book of Honour*, published in London, and edited by the Rev. Michael Adler, D.S.O., then Senior Jewish Chaplain. This volume comprises the official statistics of the 50,000 British Jews who served throughout the war in every field of operations. This and other records show that 316 Jewish officers and 3000 N.C.O.'s and men were killed in action, and that over 6500 Jews were wounded. When it is realised that there were 420,000 Jews in the British Empire, the sacrifice involved can be looked upon with pride. In the Australian Imperial Forces 58,132 officers and other ranks were killed or died as the result of wounds during the same period.

The Official Year Book of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia states :—

Jews in the Great War won five (5) V.C.'s, fifty (50) D.S.O.'s, two hundred and forty (240) M.C.'s, seventy (70) D.C.M.'s, and two hundred and fifty (250) M.M.'s.

The Commander of Australia's famous Army Corps, the late Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash, was among the 2304 Australian Jews who served in the Australian Imperial Force. Sir John's military honours were G.C.M.G., K.C.B., V.D.; he was mentioned eight times in despatches. He was also awarded Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour, France; Grand Officer of the Order of Belgium; the Croix de Guerre (both of France and Belgium), and the American Distinguished Service Medal. His civil honours were B.A., D.C.L., LL.D., D.Eng., M.Inst.C.E. He was Deputy Chancellor of the University of Melbourne. The honorary degrees of Doctor of Laws, both of Oxford and Cambridge, were conferred on him personally in 1919 for outstanding war services.

In his *War Memoirs*, Mr. David Lloyd George, Britain's wartime Prime Minister, described Sir John Monash as "the most resourceful General in the British Army." "The ablest brains did not climb to the top; they did not even reach the heights where politicians could see them," he said. "Seniority and societyism dominated promotion, deportment counted greatly, and brains were a bad fourth. The only exceptions were found in the Dominion Forces—Monash and the Canadian Commander, General Currie. Their brilliance took them right to the top."

Captain Liddell Hart, the *London Times* military expert, wrote of General Sir John Monash, that "if the war had lasted another year [that is, beyond 1918], he undoubtedly would have been Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces; he probably had the greatest capacity for command in modern war amongst those who held command."

The late Sir Ernest Scott, distinguished Victorian historian, also wrote of him: "His name was ploughed into our history, and the work of his latter years will never be dimmed, within any conceivable duration of time."



LT.-GEN. SIR JOHN MONASH, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., V.D.,
General Officer Commanding Australian Corps.

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, in its leader of October 9th, 1931, referred to him (he died the day before) : "We salute him, in this hour of his passing, as one of the greatest Australians of his day."

Some years before his death, Sir John was promoted to the rank of General in the Australian Army.

Allowing for names inadvertently included and for many Jews not included in the official lists, because very often men enlisted under religions other than their own, the figures in this article are underestimated. Considering the number who are known to have enlisted with the number of total enlistments in the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Forces—416,809*—the Jewish figures compare very favourably.

COMPARATIVE FIGURES.

Total number of Jews in Australia as at 1911 Census	17,287
Total general population of Australia as at that date	4,455,005
Number of Jews enlisted in Australian Imperial Force	2,304
Total number of enlistments in Australian Imperial Force	412,953
Total number of Australian Imperial Force killed, deaths as a result of war service, and missing	58,132

The number of Jewish officers and other ranks in the Australian Imperial Force who were killed or reported missing on active service, or died as a result of war service, is not less than three hundred (300). This figure, which is based on careful research, is on the conservative side.

A comparison of the figures shows that Jewish enlistment in Australia in the Great War was 13% of the then Jewish population. When other relevant comparisons are made, this is indeed a splendid achievement.

OFFICERS.

The records show that there were at least two hundred (200) commissioned Jewish officers in the Australian Imperial Force. Their ranks were :—

Lieutenant-General	1
Lieutenant-Colonels	2
Majors	23
Captains	59
Lieutenants (1st and 2nd)	115
	<hr/>
	200

*This figure includes Naval and other units of the Australian Expeditionary Forces, and is therefore larger than the number (412,953) of enlistments in the Australian Imperial Force.

A large percentage of Jews also held non-commissioned ranks in the Australian Imperial Force.

In this article, no attempt has been made to include the number of Australian-born Jews who served in the Empire Forces other than the Australian Imperial Force. Likewise no details are given of those Jews who served in the British or Australian Navy. Enquiry and search show that, although the number who fought in the silent service was not large, Jews served both on and under the sea in every important engagement in which the Navy took part :—

1. Cocos Island. (Destruction of the German raider *Emden* by H.M.A.S. *Sydney*.)
2. Falkland Islands.
3. Landing at Gallipoli.
4. The Battle of Jutland.
5. Zeebrugge.

Among the nurses attached to the Australian Imperial Force were several Jewesses. The exact number is not known, but it is estimated to be twelve. One of them, Sister Leah Rosenthal, obtained the Royal Red Cross decoration "for conspicuous application to duty whilst in the danger zone."

HONOURS.

The following honours, British and Foreign, were awarded to Australian Jews in the Australian Imperial Force, viz. :—

BRITISH—

V.C. (Victoria Cross won by Lieutenant Leonard
Keysor, 42 Battalion A.I.F.) 1*

*No. 958, Pte. (afterwards Lieutenant 42 Battalion [N.S.W.] A.I.F.) LEONARD KEYSOR, 1st Battalion Australian Imperial Force, awarded the Victoria Cross : "For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty at Lone Pine trenches, in the Gallipoli Peninsula. On August 7th, 1915, he was in a trench which was being heavily bombed by the enemy. He picked up two live bombs and threw them back at the enemy at great risk to his own life, and continued throwing bombs, although himself wounded, thereby saving a portion of the trench which it was important to hold. On August 8th, at the same place, Pte. Keysor successfully bombed the enemy out of a position from which a temporary mastery over his own trench had been obtained, and was again wounded. Although marked for hospital, he declined to leave, and volunteered to throw bombs for another company which had lost its bomb-throwers. He continued to bomb the enemy till the situation was relieved."



LIEUT. LEONARD KEYSOR, V.C.

G.C.M.G.	1
K.C.B.	1
C.B.E.	1
C.M.G.	2
D.S.O.	4
Military O.B.E.	3
M.B.E.	2
M.C.	17
M.C. and Bar	2
D.C.M.	3
M.M.	34
M.M. and Bar	1
M.S.M.	8
Mentioned in Despatches	21
Royal Red Cross	1

FOREIGN—

Croix de Guerre (France)	5
Croix de Guerre (Belgium)	1
Grand Officer de L'Ordre de la Couronne (Belgium)	1
Legion D'Honneur Grand Officer (France)	1
American Distinguished Service Medal	1



Sergt. Issy Smith, V.C.

(Back by courtesy of
"The Australian Jewish
Herald.")

Sergeant Issy Smith, 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment (who had lived in Australia prior to the war, but joined up with the British Forces), was also awarded the Victoria Cross.*

An earnest endeavour has been made to record the separate totals of the Jewish enlistments and casualties in respect to each State of the Commonwealth. It is regretted that the information received from the States other than New South Wales and Victoria was, in some cases, incomplete, and in others unsatisfactory, and it was decided in the circumstances to omit same. Figures for New South Wales and Victoria are as follows :—

NEW SOUTH WALES.

Total number of Australian Imperial Force enlistments ..	161,821
Total number of Jewish officers and other ranks who served ..	806
Total killed .. Do. Do.	114

VICTORIA.

Total number of Australian Imperial Force enlistments ..	111,305
Total number of Jewish officers and other ranks who served ..	442
Total killed .. Do. Do.	61

*No. 168, A/Cpl. ISSY SMITH (SHMULOVITCH), 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, awarded the Victoria Cross: "For most conspicuous bravery on April 26th, 1915, near Ypres, when he left his company on his own initiative and went well forward towards the enemy's position to assist a severely wounded man, whom he carried a distance of 250 yards to safety whilst exposed the whole time to heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. Subsequently Corporal Smith displayed great gallantry when casualties were very heavy in voluntarily assisting to bring in many more wounded men throughout the whole day, and attending them with the greatest devotion to duty, regardless of personal risk."

There were also many Australian Jewish men and women doing important munition and other voluntary work in the United Kingdom during the war.

In Australia, many Jews enlisted who were not privileged, on account of various disabilities, to go on active service. The war record of the Australian Jewish doctors and dentists was specially admirable.

It can be said that Jewish men and women in every State of the Commonwealth took a leading part in all war activities, particularly the welfare of the troops who were abroad. In the Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., Comforts Fund and other organisations they played a conspicuous part, not only by giving service, but by generous donations to funds raised for these purposes. In each State, civil honours arising out of this war work were awarded to Jewish citizens.

Jews in the (N.S.W.) Census of 1828.

By HERBERT J. RUMSEY, F.S.G., F.S.A.G., Etc.,
President, Society of Australian Genealogists.

New South Wales is very fortunate in having manuscript records of its earliest occupation by British colonists. From the inception of the suggestion made by James Matra to found a colony at Botany Bay, or in fact from the time Captain Cook surveyed its eastern coastline, records are available at the Public Records Office in Chancery Lane, London.

Among these records are official copies of the Census taken at various periods during the first forty years of our history. Copies are available for 1788, 1801, 1811, 1814 and 1828, as well as of some intermediate "musters." Of these, however, the most valuable, and the one most replete with information, is that for 1828. This is the first giving full information of the ages, religions and occupations of the people. A careful scrutiny of the seven volumes of this Census has made it possible to select