

# Australian Jewish Historical Society

VOL. VII

PART 6



## HISTORY OF THE WESTERN SUBURBS SYNAGOGUE

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MARCH  
5734 — 1974

**AUSTRALIAN  
JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

(Founded August 21st, 1938-5968)

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# Australian Jewish Historical Society

## JOURNAL AND PROCEEDINGS

Vol. VII

1974

Part 6

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*The Society does not hold itself responsible for statements made or opinions expressed by authors of the papers published in this Journal.*

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### PREFACE

The Australian Jewish Historical Society is pleased that the name of one of its highly esteemed members, the late Mr. Phillip Barg, is being perpetuated in this Journal in a meaningful way.

Though untrained in research, the late Mr. Phillip Barg displayed a keen curiosity in the history of Australian Jewry, and over many years he collected material for an extensive monograph on the history of the Newtown Synagogue, the second congregation of Sydney, in which he was involved for a number of years as a member of its Board of Management. In September 1965 he read a paper embracing his researches to the members of this Society, illustrating his talk with photographs and pictures. The response encouraged him to pursue his work still further.

Unfortunately, he was not privileged to complete this history in concise form. Much credit is due to Mrs. Louise Rosenberg and Mr. M.Z. Forbes for collating and editing his manuscript and presenting it in chronological order, and to Mr. M.H. Kellerman, Editor of this Journal, for the considerable work done in sifting the material, in eliminating non-essentials, and in organising the text to its present literary style.

This work shall be a worthy monument to its author, and the Barg family together with the Board of the Western Suburbs Synagogue wisely conceived it as such and in every way encouraged the publication of this interesting project.

This Society joins the family in saying : ZICHRONO LIVRACHAH - may his memory be a blessing.

ISRAEL PORUSH  
PRESIDENT

PHILLIP BARG ( 1903 - 1966 )

Without the late Phillip Barg's work and material this record could not have been written.

Phillip Barg, the son of a learned Rabbi from Lithuania, was himself steeped in Jewish culture and a life-long champion of the Hebrew language and of Jewish learning.

His interests in the local community were varied and persistent - from the Synagogue to adult education, and from Zionism to Hebrew literature.

Phillip Barg was a well-known figure within the Jewish Community of Sydney. He served on many committees, but his main interests were with Jewish Education, Israel, and the Western Suburbs Synagogue. He had been Chairman of the Education Board of the Western Suburbs Synagogue, was a Vice-President for some years and acted as President of the Synagogue Board in the 1940's.

Throughout his career he urged women to take an active part in the work of the schools and to set the example of true Jewishness in the homes. He derived inspiration from the past and saw the development of a strong Israel as the fulfilment of a wonderful traditional history, rich in promise and justly deserved by sacrifice. His educational creed was based on the belief that knowledge of Judaism would foster determination for self-respect and National Freedom allowing Jewish people to live in dignity and with usefulness to the community as a whole.

The Australian Jewish Historical Society has supported the family and the Synagogue by editing and rewriting the History and dedicating the whole issue to this project.



P. BARG

The Barg family may justly be proud of the part played by Mr. Phillip Barg, in the continuing saga of the Western Suburbs Hebrew Congregation and Synagogue.

M. H. K.

## VALE BEN BARG

Prof. Ben Barg, who died from a heart attack in New York at the age of 41, when about to board an airplane on his way to Australia to visit his Mother and Family, was the son of our esteemed member, the late Mr. Phillip Barg.

The sad news came as a shock not only to the Family but also to his many friends who remember the contribution to Jewish life in Australia, particularly to the cause of Jewish Youth, which Ben made as a young man.

As a student - he graduated in Arts and Economics at Sydney University in 1952 - he displayed his ability as a leader in organising the Jewish students at the University, culminating in the establishment of the National Union of Jewish Students for which he was largely responsible. He organised several students' Conferences. He was a talented speaker.

Ben received a scholarship at Harvard University, U.S.A., and in 1960, he obtained his Ph.D. at Columbia University in International Economics and Management. He later became a member of the Secretariat of the United Nations in New York, and worked as Chief of new technology in the office for Science and Technology, serving at times as Adviser to Governments and U.N. Agencies. He assisted in the preparation of the Report for the Economic and Social Council of the General Assembly of the U.N. He also lectured at Columbia University in Economics and Management and was Assistant Professor at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

Ben was a very good son and when last in Sydney he made arrangements for his late Father's monograph on The History of the Newtown Synagogue to be published in the Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society.

The Historical Society expresses its deep-felt sympathy with his widow and two children, and with his Mother and Family in the loss of this gifted and dedicated young man.

May his Memory Be a Blessing.

## HISTORY OF THE WESTERN SUBURBS SYNAGOGUE

INTRODUCTION

This does not pretend to be an exhaustive and complete record of the history of the first suburban congregation in New South Wales. About events in 1883 when the seed was sown which gradually led to the establishment of the Western Suburbs Synagogue in Georgina Street,<sup>1</sup> Newtown; of the early struggles, with hopes and disappointments of the work of the sincere and worthy men and women who laboured so devotedly and earnestly for the establishment of the congregation on a lasting basis, no record can be complete, and much more could be recorded than will be attempted in this history. It is a truly human story, the story of dedicated human people striving to preserve a heritage they knew and felt to be worthy of preservation. Such stories are always difficult to write. The task was made more difficult because so very few vital records have been preserved. Researchers have had to rely on minute books remaining, cards and programmes of significant and not so significant events, newspaper articles, and of great importance, on the memory of living persons. The co-operation of the persons concerned has been remarkable, and without their help this history would not have been possible. It is what it is claimed to be, an authentic record of some important events in the fluctuating fortunes of the Western Suburbs Congregation and Synagogue.

Events and personalities cannot be strictly segregated into separate compartments and overlapping is inevitable, nevertheless this history will be presented in four divisions, the main topic in each being :

- (1) The Synagogue as a place of worship - the building and its function.
- (2) The Ministers who have served the Congregation.
- (3) Jewish Education in the Western Suburb Synagogue.

- (4) The Ladies' Auxiliary - a dedicated body of workers.

Notes to explain the supplement the main text have been added for reference, and separated from the main text to preserve some measure of continuity.



WESTERN SUBURBS SYNAGOGUE

## 1. THE BUILDING AND FUNCTIONING OF THE SYNAGOGUE

## BEGINNING AND EARLY STRUGGLES

## SERVICES IN PRIVATE HOMES

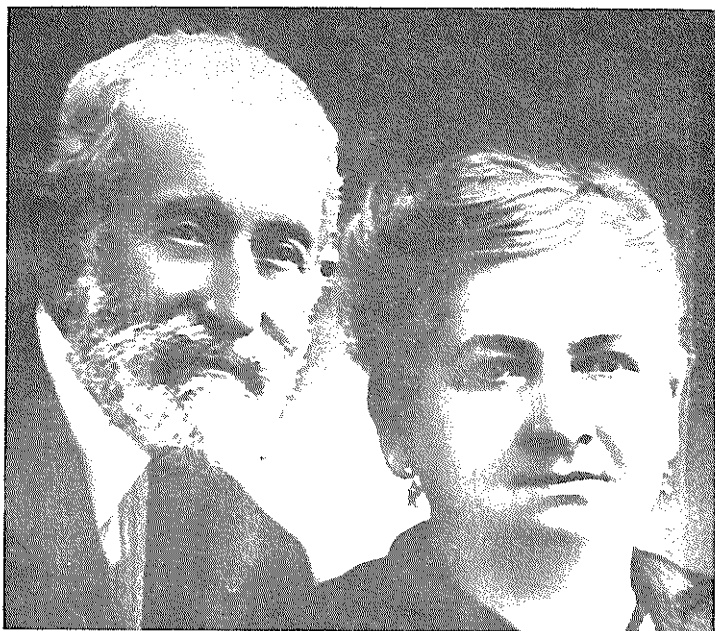
The nearest Synagogue to Sydney's Western Suburbs was situated about three miles distant, in Drutt Street, Sydney<sup>2</sup>, and necessitated, in those days, a comparatively long journey. This fact was to a great extent responsible for the decision to create a centre of worship locally<sup>3</sup>. As a result, the earliest Minyan of the Newtown Hebrew Congregation was held at the residence of Mr. Abram and Mrs. Naomi Soloman, first in 6 Georgina Street<sup>1</sup>, within 100 yards of the present Synagogue, and later, at 15 Brown Street, Newtown, which was to be the home of the Solomon family for very many years.

Mr. and Mrs. Solomon had been married at Ballarat, Victoria, in the year 1882, and shortly afterwards had left to come to Sydney, where they made their home in Newtown. Mrs. Solomon passed away on October 25th, 1946, at the age of 84. She was, at that time, the last surviving member of the original band of pioneers who had met sixty years previously, for worship at her home. When interviewed she was still possessed of her faculties and was able to supply a good deal of the information used in this history.

Among the pioneers of the Congregation were Messrs. William Berkman, Lewis Symonds and Harris Solomon, all of Newtown. Harris Wolfson and Jacob Sugerman - the grandfather of the former President of the Court of Appeal, Sir Bernard Sugermann.

As time passed, the congregation grew till the desire for a permanent place of worship became uppermost in their minds. When the Solomon's home could no longer accommodate all those who wished to attend worship,

the Minyan had to be located at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Selig, at Alice Street, Newtown. It met there over many years; and as the number of co-religionists was increasing in the area, it became necessary to secure a public, as distinct from a private place of assembly. Money was subscribed and functions arranged for the raising of the necessary funds.



MR. & MRS. J. SELIG

Experiencing all the difficulties that inescapably beset pioneers, they carried on hopefully, and with renewed determination to achieve their objective.

All of the work was carried out in a voluntary capacity and the funds began to accumulate. They gave of their time and money generously, and much effort was expended in the promotion of functions, and in the development of the social aspects of their work.

## FIRST PUBLIC MEETING PLACE

With the progress made and the passing of time, the day arrived when the securing of larger premises could no longer be delayed. Rooms at the Oddfellows Hall, Wilson Street, Newtown, were rented. This arrangement was continued for some years, until by reason of the still ever increasing numbers, the proposal to erect their own place of worship received the urgent and serious consideration of the members of the Newtown Hebrew Congregation.<sup>4</sup>



L. GOLDBERG

The first step was the securing of land on which to build a Synagogue, and for a long period, hardly an executive meeting was held without long and spirited debates taking place on ways and means of achieving that objective. These events occurred over a period of about twenty years thus bringing us to the end of 1903 by which time some considerable progress had been made in the establishment of the Newtown Hebrew

Congregation as may be seen from the proceedings at the General Meeting held on 15th May, 1904. At this meeting a drafting committee consisting of Messrs. B. Blumenthal, L. Goldberg, and D.J. Solomon, framed the revised code of laws and regulations, which were duly approved. At this time, members of the Board, and Readers, were as follows :

|                |                                                                       |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| President      | - L. Goldberg                                                         |
| Vice-President | - H.H. Solomon                                                        |
| Hon. Secretary | - B. Blumenthal                                                       |
| Hon. Treasurer | - D.J. Solomon                                                        |
| Committee      | - D. Kussman, S. Weingott, Harris<br>Cohen, S. Goldstein, S. Symonds. |
| Hon. Reader    | - M. Levy                                                             |
| Hon. Minister  | - S. Weingott                                                         |
| Trustees       | - D. Kussman, J.E. Sharpe                                             |

The name for the new Synagogue was to be the Mikveh Israel Synagogue, and the Annual General Meeting of its Board of Management was held at the Odd-fellows' Hall, Newtown, on Sunday, 4th September, 1904. L. Goldberg was in the chair, and there was a representative body of members present, including a number of new ones.

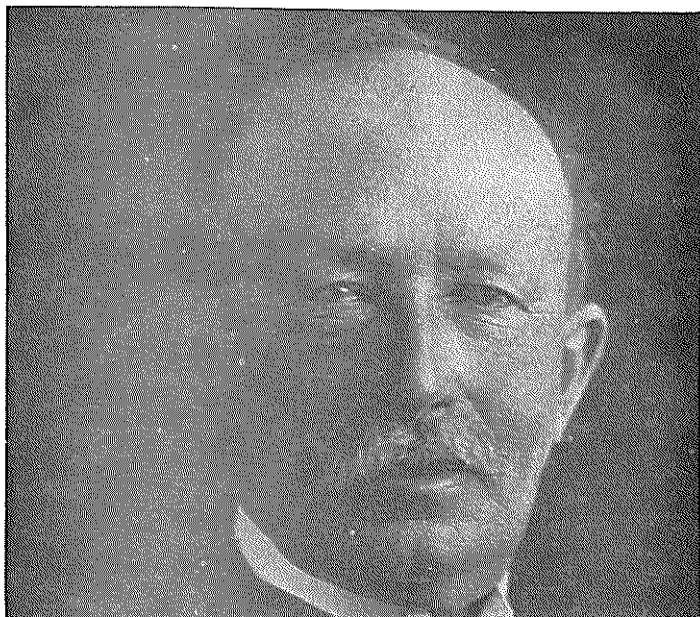
The Hon. Secretary read the report and duly audited cash statement made up to 31st August, which revealed a promising state of affairs, and showed steady rate of progress for the financial year.

The same Board of Management was elected with minor changes - H.H. Solomon became a trustee and Messrs. I. Israel and S. Kessler replaced S. Goldstein and S. Symonds on the Committee.

From this time when Newtown adopted the name of the Druitt Street Synagogue, "Mikveh Israel", there was continual controversy first with Druitt Street and later with Central Synagogue until the matter was resolved in 1921. The events leading to this are interesting.

Mr. Jacob Selig, Mr. M.B. Michaelson and Mr. Henry Zions (Norman Zions' father) were the Trustees

of the Druitt Street Synagogue, "Mikveh Israel". Mr. H. H. Solomon was also a member of the congregation. Mr. Jacob Selig, who lived in Newtown, wanted the assets of the Druitt Street Synagogue handed on to the proposed new Synagogue at Newtown. Mr. Zions was opposed to this, as he felt that their assets and appurtenances should be used for "a Sydney Synagogue," as distinct from a "suburban Synagogue".



J. GOLDBERG

When Mr. Zions died, the matter was revived, and Mr. Michaelson felt it would be wrong to ignore totally the wishes of their late colleague so a compromise was reached: the two Sefrie Torah, the Chuppa, the Reading Desk and the Ark, as well as the Building Fund of £341.0.0 in the A.B.C. Bank, might be given to the congregation at Newtown on two conditions. These were 1) that the new Synagogue be named "Mikveh Israel", and 2) that it be established upon the Druitt Street Synagogue's Book of Rules. (This was included presumably so that the Druitt Street Synagogue would

always be regarded as the forerunner of the Newtown Synagogue.)

There appears to be some justification for this desire to preserve a close relationship between the two congregations because of their relative proximity to one another and for the fact that there were already some worshippers from the Newtown district attending Druitt Street. At a Special General Meeting of the Newtown Congregants on 24th October, 1912, Mr. Zions was still reluctant to hand over the Druitt Street Synagogue's Funds, so it was suggested that the two congregations halve the money. But nothing came of this.

In August 1913, everything from the Druitt Street Synagogue was handed over to the Central Synagogue, and for the next six years despite all attempts to have the assets transferred, Central Synagogue retained possession.



I. LEVY

The Newtown Congregation instituted legal proceedings and on 20th December, 1919, gave the Central Synagogue 14 days' notice to return the money and the appurtenances, Mr. H.H. Solomon handling the matter for Newtown.

In 1921 the controversy ended when the Court decided in favour of Newtown.

To return to the early history. Following the Annual General Meeting of September, 1904, a Special Meeting in October of the same year to consider the renewal of the expiring lease of the Oddfellows Hall, decided to lease the upper lodge room as it was "well-appointed, and possessed of every convenience for Divine worship."

Although the congregation continued to grow, progress in the acquisition of a block of land was slow and it was not until 3 November 1912, that success was reported. A report was submitted by Mr. W. Solomon, who with Mr. I. Levy and Mr. W. Berkman, had attended a sale of land in L'Avenue, and the first step was taken that eventually secured the land on which the Synagogue was built. The land had cost £12 per foot, and had a frontage of 56 feet 7 inches. These men had secured the purchase, on behalf of the Synagogue, by paying the sum of £50, and arranging to pay a further sum of £120 on 4th November, to bring the deposit to approximately 25% of the purchase price of £700.

Full of optimism, a building committee which had been in existence for some time was added to by the inclusion of Mrs. L. Josephs. Over £100 was donated towards a building fund by the executive members that night.

Other moneys were obtained throughout the following year by holding successful Socials, Dances, and Moonlight Excursions. Subsequently, an overdraft was arranged by the Bank of New South Wales at Newtown, at 6% interest. Donations of a generous nature continued to be handed in.<sup>5</sup>

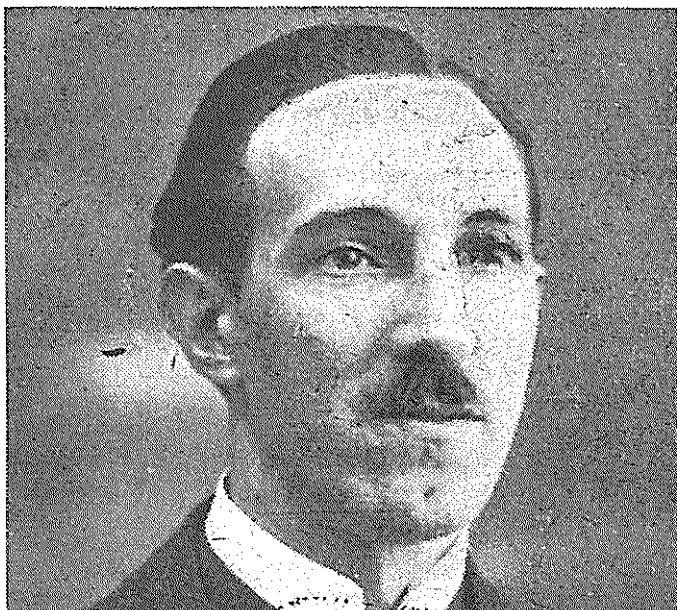


W. BERKMAN

It was suggested that a temporary place of worship might be erected; but, as there was a balance owing on the land, and the Council would not permit a wooden structure, it was decided to wait till it was possible to have a brick building. During the following year to augment the Building Fund it was decided to raise contributions from 6 pence per week to two guineas (£2-2-0) per year,<sup>6</sup> and a suggestion to erect a temporary structure to save rent was considered. This was defeated at the time but it was considered again on 24th September, 1913, when Mr. Henry Cohen moved that a start be made on a building to seat 200 persons, "as it is best to have four walls for ourselves - even if it is a temporary building - it will be our own." This was not adopted and during that year and the next other schemes considered included the fitting up of a garage, the building of a hall 60' x 40' and the drawing up of plans for a Synagogue. It was finally decided to concentrate on the raising of funds to pay off the land completely, the amount in 1914 being £315.

To do this there were many suggestions including :- that about one third of the land be sold; that the whole Jewish community be approached to subscribe one shilling each to the Building Fund; that 12 leading members of the community be asked to lend £25 each; that a Bazaar be organised; that steps be taken to get the assets owing to them from the Drutt Street Synagogue, and even to the starting of the building of a Synagogue in the expectation of at least £200 being raised at the laying of the foundation stone. Despite all efforts the debt remained unpaid and during the war years, 1914-1918, difficulties increased to such an extent that at the end of 1915 a suggestion that the Great Synagogue take over the land met with some support. Plans for a building to cost £500, possibly for use as a school were drawn up and examined and a new Building Committee was elected.

In 1916 this Committee submitted plans for a building with gallery to cost £1800 but this was not acceptable and it was decided that no action to build



P. WOLFSON

be taken until the debt was cleared, and that efforts be directed towards the raising of money and the provision of Jewish education.

In 1917, a suggestion by Rev. Chodowski, who had been appointed Honorary Minister, that debentures be issued was adopted, and achieved limited success. The idea was to ask for "loans from £1 upwards to be repayable in ten years from date without interest." Arrangements were made for a sinking fund, "as soon as a building is completed, the sum of at least £25 be set aside as a Sinking Fund. The money to be placed in the hands of the Trustees, and invested so that it will bear interest, and will form a nucleus for the redemption of the loan when it falls due."

To encourage action it was resolved that a "commission of 20% be given the Rev. Chodowski for money he collects towards paying off the balance in the bank, from outside the Jewish community." An interesting outcome of this was a promise by Mr. Ben Fuller to provide "an entertainment to raise funds for the Newtown Hebrew Congregation" in the Majestic Theatre. Committees were appointed to sell tickets, prizes were offered for the one selling the most tickets and great enthusiasm was generated. The function was held on 27th February, 1918 and proved to be a success - £36 clear profit being made available to the congregation.

In April 1918 Mr. P. Rosenblum produced plans for a synagogue building and they were submitted to Newtown Council for approval. After suggested amendments had been incorporated and many committee meetings to decide details, the finance through the bank being arranged, the laying of the Foundation Stones was set down for Sunday, 30th June, 1918, the ceremony to be performed by Rabbi Cohen and Rev. Chodowski<sup>7</sup>.

The year, 1918, was named "The Eventful Year" because the materialisation of so much that had been striven for in the early years of the congregation's activities occurred during this year<sup>8</sup>. It was during

this year, too, that the Ladies' Committee was formally instituted.

The ceremony of Laying the Foundation Stones was organised on a community-wide basis and invitations were issued to leading citizens in Sydney and the country, and notices were inserted in the "Hebrew Standard."

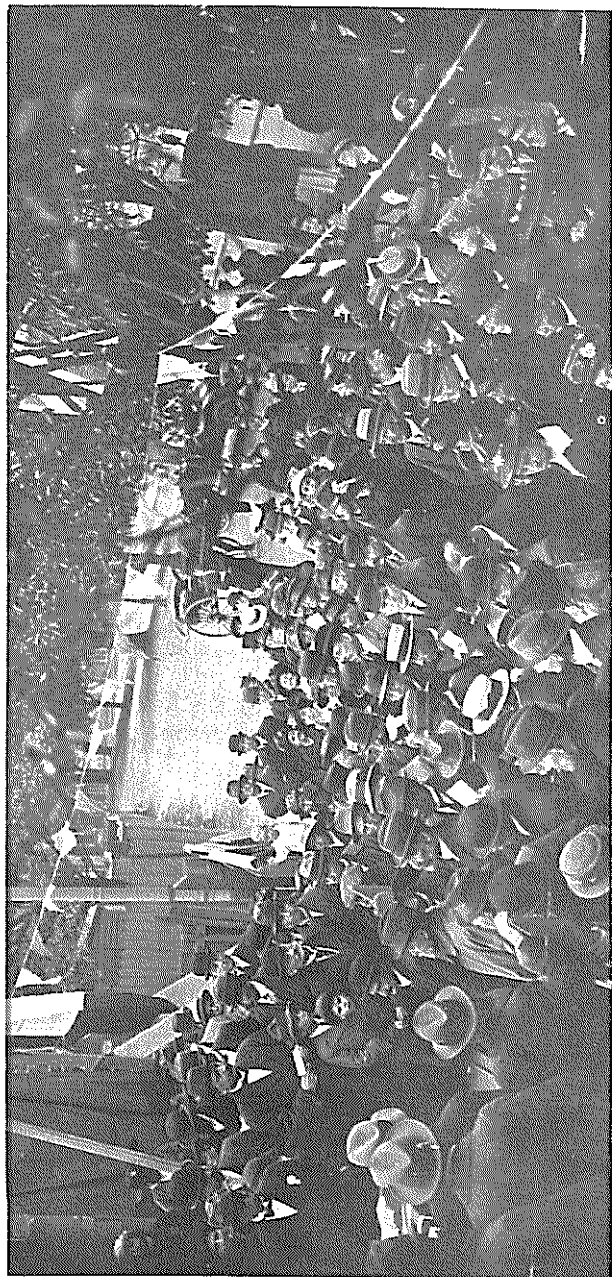
The building, as has been recorded earlier, was in L'Avenue, Newtown, a side street off the main road. The building itself was to be in the New Greek style of architecture, with two doors and four massive columns in front; the dimensions of the building were - length 77 feet, width 38 feet, height 20 feet. The Ladies' Gallery was to be above the Board and Class Rooms, and would extend 18 feet from the frontage.

There was to be floor space for 300 male and 108 female worshippers. The architect and builder was Mr. Phillip Rosenblum of Annandale, who kindly undertook to supervise the work, practically at cost - a sum estimated at between £1,500 and £1,600.

The proceedings were opened by the Reverend Chodowski, the Minister of the Congregation, reading versus 21 to 29 from Psalm 118.

Rabbi Francis Cohen offered a supplication for the Divine blessing on the progress of the building, and concluded with the words : "May this stone which we are now about to set in its place, be a stone tried and well-founded, a sure support of all that rests thereon. Grant that through the inspiration of this hour we may be enabled not only to uprear this house, but also to build within our hearts a sanctuary wherein Thy Presence may ever dwell . . . ."

The Congregation, which had been holding services at the Oddfellows' Hall for many years, had worked hard and planned robustly for this building, and now, as their efforts were about to be rewarded, there were many who wished to recall their early struggles. Mr. P. Wolfson, President of the Congregation, delivered



LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE 1918

an address in which he said : "It has been my privilege and honour to be associated with the Newtown Congregation during the past eight years, and it has always been the earnest ambition of the Congregation to have a place of worship they could call their own. About six years ago, the first practical steps were taken for the gratification of our desire, - the erection of a Synagogue in Newtown." He then delivered a historical summary of events from the 1880's to that moment. He paid tribute to Mr. Henry Cohen, Messrs. Jacob Selig and Abraham Solomon for organising the very first minyans, and to those who joined the earlier pioneers, Messrs. William Berkman, Lewis Symonds and Harris Solomon - all of whom except the late Mr. Henry Cohen were present at the ceremony.

The first stone was laid by Mr. Isaac Levy who thanked all who had helped, particularly the Bank of New South Wales for its financial accommodation.

Rabbi Cohen, having laid the Second Foundation Stone<sup>9</sup> referred to the inscriptions upon them, which, he said, would truly indicate that it had become the "Headstone of the corner" if the congregation could hereafter show that in Religious matters they had gone from strength to strength, and that all the sacred hopes they now held were on the way to realisation.

But, the prediction that "The Stone would cry out from the wall" would also be realised if when the structure was completed the congregation did not work in perfect harmony, maintain an adequate and good system of religious instructions for the young; if the Synagogue benches were empty, while the members occupied themselves within the pursuit of mammon; if the people came to worship with their lips, whilst in their homes they neglected the observances of Judaism; if their homes were not consecrated by the attention to the dietary laws which kept our people both clean and sweet, both in body and soul; in short, if the solid foundation in the knowledge of our faith, and observance of its institutions were not impressed on their hearts, then the stone would cry out from the wall and witness against them. He fervently trusted, however, that the



—MICKVA YISROILE SYNAGOGUE —  
— BUILDING COMMITTEE —

*E. Goldberg (Hon Sec) M. Abrahams. I. Levy. (Trustee) M. Emanuel  
M. Owen. P. Rosenblum.*

*J. Cohn. W. Simons. P. Wolfson (Pres) J. Goldberg (Past Pres)  
M. B. Michealson (Trustee)*

TAKEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAYING OF THE  
FOUNDATION STONE AT NEWTOWN ON SUNDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE <sup>1918</sup><sub>5678</sub>

PRESENTED BY EBER GOLDBERG JUNE <sup>5698</sup><sub>1938</sub>



*This historic photo was rediscovered, restored and donated to the  
Western Suburbs Synagogue by Mr. and Mrs Sam Pizem  
September 1973*

reverse of all this would be the case, and that the blessing of the Lord would rest on the work of their hands, which they had set about that day.

Donations to the amount of over £170 were announced and the ceremony concluded by the singing of "A don Olam," the recitation of the mourners "Kaddish," and the National Anthem.

The former Presidents of the congregation were mentioned by name, during the ceremony. They were: the late Mr. Harris Cohen, the late Leon Goldberg, Messrs. H.H. Solomon, Joel Goldberg, Isaac Levy.

While, for a considerable period, the proposed Synagogue Building had had to overcome many obstacles, there was every reason now for the acceleration of the project which had remained as a strongly kindled flame over the years.<sup>10</sup>

The words of Rabbi Cohen were to be recalled and used many times during the months ahead. Turbulent times marked by lengthy and bitter arguments ensued, during which every committee man expressed himself as an expert on every aspect of the building from the roof, the supports, the staircase, the supervision and even the possibility of its falling down.<sup>11</sup> The general dissatisfaction with the supervision resulted in the dismissal of the clerk of works and it seemed that the building on which so many hopes had been built would never eventuate. However, under the direction of Mr. Morrow, the architect, and the "Building Committee" with the whole-hearted support of interested persons and the Ladies' Committee some progress was made.<sup>12</sup> On 25th November, 1918, the stage was reached when the following resolution could be passed :

"that a letter be writtentto Mr. Morrow stating that "Mr. W. Berkman is deputed to see that the ceiling, electric lighting, painting, staircases, and gallery are all completed, and, further, that he is empowered to make all necessary contracts, that the building be entirely completed by him, Mr. Morrow."<sup>13</sup>

Mr. Berkman reported that Mr. Stubbs was willing to finish the Synagogue Building in an efficient manner according to architect's plans for £375 and this was approved. Work proceeded and it was expected that the first services in the new Synagogue would be held on Friday night 21st February, 1919, but they were postponed because the government prohibited public worship on account of the Influenza Epidemic raging at the time. However, the first Executive Committee Meeting in the now almost completed Synagogue was held on Tuesday, 11th March, and on 16th March, 1919 a General Meeting was held in what was proudly called The Synagogue Building in L'Avenue, Newtown. It was an eventful meeting at which resolutions included matters concerning the Consecration of the New Synagogue.



M. GOLDBERG

During the next fortnight, faults having been detected, steps were taken to rectify them to improve drainage, and to provide certain conveniences such as

curtains for the Ark. Much of the furniture and furnishings had been donated, and external work to improve the appearance of the Synagogue was being undertaken at the expense of Mr. Berkman. Flooring on and around the dais and a step were donated by Messrs. Simons and Rosen, and later the building of the Ark and reading desk was undertaken by Messrs. Berkman and Wolfson.



INTERIOR OF THE ARK

Before the Consecration, planned for two weeks before Rosh Hashana, a notable event in the Synagogue was the Peace and Thanksgiving Service on 6th July, 1919, compiled by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz of London and conducted by Rev. Chodowski.

At the same time unpleasantness with Mr. Stubbs resulted from non-payment of his account due to faulty workmanship and timber, particularly in the roof, parapet and guttering. Acting on the advice of the solicitor an advance of £150 was made, and the

balance withheld pending completion of the building to the satisfaction of the Committee.

Until the Consecration on Sunday, 7th September, all efforts of the Committee were devoted to organisation and preparation for the important communal event, no detail apparently being too small to warrant serious attention.

#### THE CONSECRATION OF THE NEWTOWN SYNAGOGUE

The following extracts are from reports in the Jewish press on 19th September, 1919.

"The Consecration of the New Synagogue, in L'Avenue, Newtown, Sydney, took place at 3 o'clock on the afternoon of Sunday, 7th September, 1919. The completed building, with the land, had cost about £3,000; and it had been built under the supervision of Messrs. Morrow and De Putron. It is advantageously situated in the best part of a busy suburb, built of brick, and of the following dimensions: Length, 67 feet; width, 35 feet; height, 24 feet. The beautiful and imposing Ark is surmounted by tablets of the Ten Commandments, and with the multi-coloured Memorial Windows on each side, the edifice is given an attractive appearance. The Reading Desk is placed in the Centre, and electric light is installed throughout."

"The Honorary Treasurer, Mr. W. Berkman, and Mrs. Berkman, had presented the Congregation with the Aron Hakodesh (Ark), in memory of their daughter, Sylvia.

The Reading Desk to be placed in the centre of the Synagogue was donated by Mr. Percy Wolfson, the President, in memory of his parents. Mr. S. Greene had presented the Synagogue with its coat of arms, in the form of a pair of lions, holding in their claws, the tablets of the Ten Commandments. These he had made, himself, with great personal dedication. Mr. Woolf Simons, Vice-President, presented a Memorial Board, to be placed in the vestibule. Mr. and Mrs. S.J.

Slutzkin of Melbourne had presented the Synagogue with a handsome Ner Tamid (Perpetual Lamp)."

"Long before the hour appointed for the ceremony, 3 o'clock, every seat was occupied, a large number of people being unable to gain admission. In response to the large number of invitations sent out, most Jewish Organisations had sent representatives and many individuals attended to make the assemblage a truly representative gathering. The Great Synagogue was represented by Revs. P. Phillipstein and A.D. Wolinski and Mr. Moritz Gotthelf in addition to Rabbi Cohen, Rev. M. Einfeld and members of the Choir who had participated in the Consecration service. Central and Bankstown Synagogues were represented also. The building had been artistically decorated with garlands of flowers and flags, by the ladies of the Congregation, under the direction of Mr. M.R. de Berg.

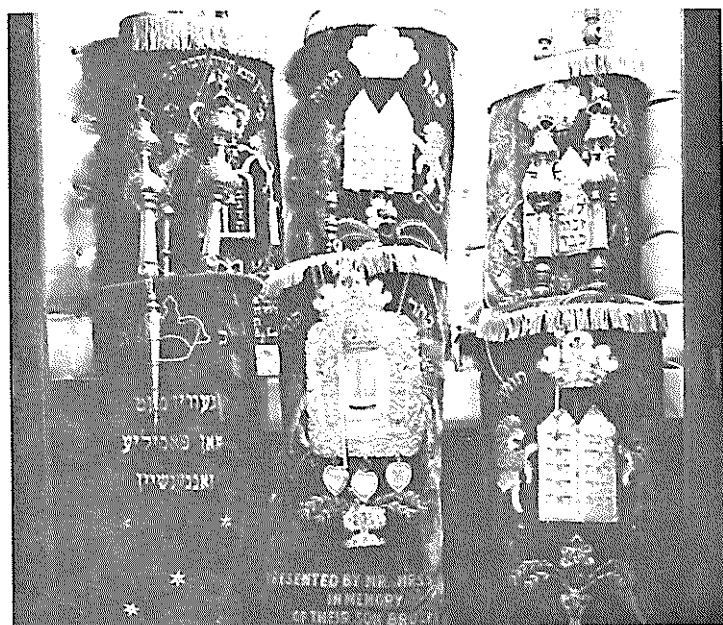
The usual form of procedure was followed. The President, Mr. P. Wolfson, having been previously presented with a Golden Key, by the Board of Management, opened the portals of the Synagogue to the entering Ministers and their followers, carrying Sephorim. They were Rabbi Cohen, the Rev. A.T. Chodowski (Newtown), Mr. M.E. Mosely (President of the Great Synagogue), Mr. Woolf Simons (Vice President of the Newtown Congregation), and Mr. Joel Goldberg (President of the local Education Board), followed by the members of the Board of Management.

After the ceremony of Consecration which followed the traditional form Rabbi Cohen addressed the congregation and visitors. He took his text Psalm 84 verse 7, which he had just read to them: "They go from strength to strength until every one of them appeareth before God in Zion." He traced the history of the present Congregation, and showed how they had been going from strength to strength - from a mere temporary Minyan, through the several stages, till at last they had attained to a permanent house of prayer; but the second part of the text was not to be over-looked. Let there be not rest until they had a Congregation all regularly assembling in their Synagogue and following

out their religion in their homes in loving fidelity.

He then alluded to the many gifts that had been brought already, but reminded his hearers that the best gift of all was the gift of themselves. Many of those in front of him had come from less enlightened lands, "where the Jew is still today suffering from the age-long persecution of a staunch religious minority." What a contrast in this land, where a Jew enjoys every civil and social equality, and where, but lately, in the Legislative Assembly of the State, a bill had been deferred for amendment simply because, as it stood, a Jewish voter might be incommoded by having to vote on the Sabbath. Let those born abroad note this consideration shown here for them, and prove their appreciation not only by good citizenship, but also by faithful adherence to their own religious obligation thus recognised.

The name of their Synagogue must be kept in mind.



INTERIOR OF THE ARK

It is usually translated "The Hope of Israel", and the hope of Israel is not its grown-up citizens, however prosperous and influential, but the children of the Congregation. Let them be properly trained and regular in their attendance at the Synagogue, being brought there, not merely sent there, by their parents.

The other translation is "The Bath of Israel", and those of them who were Talmudists would remember Rabbi Akiba's remarkable explanation, how the bath that cleanses Israel is their Father in Heaven. The coming days of Penitence would no doubt see that new Building crowded by the devout Congregation, but this would be idle and deceptive were they not to keep up their attendance and devotion during the rest of the year.

The Rabbi concluded with the prayer that this Synagogue might be true to its name, in both of these senses; that the Congregation might go on to new strength, and gain the wisdom to use that strength, always to the glory of God and for the Honour and Credit of Israel.

Then the Rev. Chodowski, the Minister of the Congregation, delivered the following Congregation Prayer :

'Almighty God! We pray that Thou Who hearest prayer and dwellest in the midst of Israel may shower Thy blessings upon the work of our hands this day, and for ever. We pray that all we do in this house may redound to Thy honour and glory, and that here may be found a Throne of righteousness. We pray that peace and unity may for ever abide in this Congregation. Endue with wisdom the hearts of those called to bear office here, and richly reward with Thy Holy Name. Grant, O Lord, that this House may be a centre of spiritual and moral effort, of piety and virtue, that the bounds of friendship and brotherhood may never break. Yea, be with us all in our entering and departing from this place; let us feel Thy presence always in our midst, and give us strength to proclaim Thy Holy Name, and let, through us, Thy Name be glorified for our happiness and the welfare of all mankind. Let the words of my mouth and

the meditations of my heart be acceptable before Thee, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." Amen.

Following the Consecration liberal donations were received for the Building Fund, and it was decided to record all gifts to the Synagogue in a Book purchased especially for that purpose and to send letters of thanks to all who had participated in the service or had accepted invitations to be present and wished the Synagogue well.

A comprehensive account of the celebrations was contained in the Annual Report submitted to the Meeting on 21st September, 1919.<sup>14</sup> At the General Meeting on 5th September, 1920, the President, Mr. P. Wolfson was able to report:

"Twelve months have elapsed since our Synagogue was consecrated, and I am pleased to state a steady increase of Membership with a considerable increase in the number of pupils attending the Hebrew classes, so ably conducted by our minister, the Rev. A. Chodowski, assisted by two teachers. Joel Goldberg, the President of the Education Board, is also due for the thanks of the Congregation, and the following members of the Board deserve warm gratitude: A. Leber, J. Rosen, M. Eizenberg, P. Cohen, W. Berkman, S. Solomon, S. Greene, Miss Hannah Goldberg, and the Hon. Secretary.

I cannot speak too highly of the President of the Ladies' Committee, Mrs. Jacob Selig and her Committee, whereby our funds were considerably augmented. The valuable work of our Minister deserves full recognition. Thanks are due also to Mr. Myer Levy, who acted as Assistant Minister; to Mr. D.J. Solomon, our Hon. Secretary, and to Mr. J. Clyne, Assistant Secretary.

No less a sum than £265.13.1 has been paid off the debt of the Synagogue during the past year. A bequest of £25 has been received from the estate of the late Mr. Lewis Symonds.

I desire to thank Mrs. Jacob Selig for the gift of a

silver pointer, Mr. H. Kleinberg for the presentation of 2 Sepher Torah Mantles, Miss Ruby Wolfson for the generous supply of candles, and Mrs. Myer Levy for the gift of wine during the past year<sup>15</sup>."

The next two years were eventful and the members of the Board were kept very busy with communal and Synagogue matters, including the visit of the Chief Rabbi, and the problem of Synagogue attendances. The Annual Report, 1922, includes :

"For the magnificent results the members of the congregation deserve every praise. They have stood by their President at all times, and with him they have all worked for the same great cause. Now we have a Synagogue, a Minister, and a Service of which we may all be proud; but, what is still lacking, is a large enough Sabbath attendance." (After this, Mr. Solomon pointed out that there had been thirteen Bar-Mitzvahs during the year, and that there would be many more in the coming year.) He continued, "Let us at least see that not only their fathers, but their mothers and sisters were attending, regularly. Surely, each one of you could sacrifice a few Saturdays in the year to attend the Synagogue. You have done so much for your children, consider what an example this would be for them."

The spirit of some supporters is shown by the following references to donations received during the year; - Mr. M. Joseph, who had painted the walls of the Synagogue; Mrs. J. Rosen, who had given a pair of silver candlesticks and a cover for a Sefer Torah; Mr. S. Berkman, who had given the sum of £10.10.0; Miss Ruby Wolfson, who had supplied candles; Mrs. M. Levy, who had supplied Wine; Mr. S. Wolfson, who had given the Synagogue a silver Besomin Box. Mr. H.H. Solomon had erected the Succah; and the Ladies' Committee had artistically decorated it and entertained the children. Mr. Solomon also mentioned that Mr. J. Shaw and Mr. M. Jacob had acted as Chosen Torah and Chosen Bereshith, respectively, and had entertained the congregation and their friends at a most enjoyable dance.

Mr. Rosen at the Annual Meeting remarked, "In Eastern Europe, so many Synagogues have been destroyed,

and, when Synagogues are so urgently needed, the Newtown Synagogue has been built. We ought to be proud of Mr. Levy, our President-to-be, for he has built the Synagogue. But, a Synagogue without a congregation is as nothing, and it is our retiring President, Mr. S. Solomon, who has built the Congregation."

During 1923 the Board of Management thought fit to call the members together to consider the advisability of providing permanent seats in the Synagogue, and at this meeting, it was resolved that the work be carried out, and each member was to be asked to donate the cost of his seat. The appeal made was very liberally responded to, but still sufficient funds were not available to pay the full amount. The hope was expressed that such members who had not contributed would "come forward and help to defray the cost of the work." The contract for these improvements was let to Mr. J. Ratner, who carried it out in a very able and workmanlike manner, so that the seats were available for the Holy Days. A Concert was organised by Mr. E. Gunster, to whom the best thanks of the congregants were extended, and the fund benefited materially as the result of these efforts.

The Board of Management also thought it advisable during the year to have the interior of the Synagogue renovated, prior to the seats being erected, and accordingly the walls were decorated in keeping with the new furniture.

For some time the Ladies' Auxiliary and the Board had been working for the addition of a gallery for the Ladies and during August, 1924, a contract was let by the architects, Messrs. Morrow and De Putron to Messrs. S.J. Stubbs & Sons for a complete gallery, with a landing and three retiring rooms at the rear of the Synagogue, for the sum of £400. This was completed to time and consideration was being given to the erection of a schoolroom and a permanent succoh.

Despite the material progress concern was expressed that the attendance at Sabbath Service, in spite of the

professed orthodoxy of the residents in the vicinity, had not been at all satisfactory, and it was deplored that the parents were not in attendance to give proper care and attention to their children while service was being held.

The Ladies' Gallery was consecrated in 1925 by Rabbi Cohen, Revs. M. Einfeld and B. Lenzer, and Mr. L. Goran in a most inspiring service at which a large representative gathering attended.

During the next four years the affairs of the Congregation flourished, and on 22nd September, 1929, at the Annual Meeting it was announced that the property adjoining the Synagogue has been acquired for £1,700 with a view to transforming the lower portion of the building into an up-to-date schoolroom, and for extensions to serve for social activities and meetings.

In due course the additions were consecrated in a happy atmosphere, but very difficult times lay ahead - the result of the depression. Finances were strained to the limit, attendances fell off sharply, and the whole congregation experienced considerable trouble to survive.

#### THE YEARS OF DEPRESSION

It was a difficult time for everyone. However, great efforts were made to improve the financial position, membership drives were instituted, with the result that many new faces began appearing at the Services. As the depression eased, the affairs of the Synagogue also improved, until a measure of stability had been reached. The financial affairs were re-constituted, and outstanding mortgages, debentures, etc., were taken over by members of the Congregation, creating a much happier atmosphere.

It is a matter of regret that full records are not available to enable due tribute to be paid to the many faithful and untiring members who carried the burden during those lean and troublesome years, almost up to



J.D. PIZEM

the year 1939. In 1941 Mr. P.J. Marks, Hon. Solicitor died, after many years of devoted service.<sup>16</sup>

Revered Lenzer's records indicate that communal affairs fell away to the barest minimum, but the chief concern of the congregation was largely of a financial nature. The building up of membership and the development of general activities continued to receive consideration.

During these depression years, of course, there were still offerings made to the Synagogue. Finances were helped somewhat by the consecrations and the Yahrtzeits, and such new members as come to the Congregation. Reverend Lenzer continued to make visitations whenever he was able. The war years were periods of great hardship and difficulty, but supreme efforts kept the work and the Synagogue alive. By 1942 the Synagogue was beginning to function normally, the worst effects of the depression having passed. Included in the President's Report for that

year was the following :

"Through the help of Mr. M. Milston, who made a magnificent gift of £2,000 to the Synagogue, and the generosity of members of the community at large, the Synagogue is now free of any mortgage on its property. I extend special thanks to Mr. M. Milston. At the wish of the Board of Management, Mr. Milston has been elected a Life Member of the Congregation. A brass plate suitably inscribed was erected in the Synagogue in recognition of his beneficence, at a later date.

During the year, the interior of the Synagogue has been renovated and painted; the electric lighting system overhauled and modernised; and, the ladies' gallery, re-arranged according to the wishes of the Ladies' Committee.

Thanks are extended to the Hon. Auditor, Mr. D. Bolot and the sincerest appreciation is expressed to Mr. D. Ratner for legal guidance during the year. Without his untiring assistance, the Board could not have launched the successful Mortgage Relief Appeal. Also to Mr. M. Simons for his gift of a new carpet and to Mr. Isman for three new chandeliers. "

On 24th February, 1943, the name of the Synagogue was changed to "The Western Suburbs Synagogue." During the year the school was taken over by the re-organised New South Wales Board of Jewish Education, and there was considerable increase in membership of the Congregation. Alterations and repairs were made to the building, and a spirit of optimism prevailed at the annual meeting when the President announced :

"The coming year will be an eventful one for the Synagogue and its Congregation as it will mark the 60th Anniversary of the Congregation, and the 25th Jubilee year of the consecration of the Synagogue. To celebrate this event, your Board will sponsor an Anniversary Lunch for the Congregation, as a goodwill memento to the Jewish Community. Your Board has

already made tentative plans for celebrating the happy occasion of the Jubilee."

In September 1944 it was suggested that the incoming year be declared a double Jubilee year with the aim to raise at least £5,000. However, disagreements occurred which threatened to frustrate the efforts on behalf of the celebrations. The situation was somewhat restored by the formation of a Jubilee Committee with Rabbi Dr. I. Porush and Sir Samuel Cohen as Patrons and Dr. A. Silvermann, Hon. Treasurer and co-author of the Jubilee Book.

At the Special Meeting of the Board of Management held on August 19, 1945, the Secretary, Mr. Sigalla, was able to announce that "the Synagogue has a financial standing never before reached in the history of the Congregation." The general regard for the Congregation also had improved. It was now represented on the Board of Jewish Education and on the Board of Jewish Deputies. This, it was felt, necessitated a move to "establish constitutionally some procedure and custom, established already for many years, and in order to give some interpretation to some of the more obscure rules of the constitution" to specify new and altered by-laws (to be confirmed at the next Annual General Meeting). As a result of this decision, the Board Meeting of November 13 of that year officially adopted a number of changes and clarified several points which it believed were the source of dissatisfaction. Among these was the management of the property, 18A Georgina Street. When approached, Mr. A. Milston expressed the opinion that his family would have no objection to handing back control of the building to the Board. For the next few years, apart from areas of disagreement between the Minister and the Board, all went well, and several innovations were introduced. The major portion of £2,500 received from the will of the late Harris Cohen<sup>17</sup> was invested and a memorial Tablet was erected in his name; soundly motivated youth groups were formed; the Kosher Butcher at Newtown was subsidised; generous sums were donated to the Board of Deputies, the Beth Din, the Chevra Kadisha and other communal organisations;

extensive renovations were made to the Synagogue, costing over £1,200.

In 1949 owing to the formation of the Parramatta and District Congregation the Georgina Street Synagogue's Congregation became more localised with consequent increasing difficulties, but finances remained buoyant. The loss of key workers through death and resignations<sup>18</sup> placed great strains on the resources of the congregation. The Board's energies were directed to the provision of Jewish education, the maintenance of religious services, the appointment of ministers, and the care of the Synagogue.<sup>19</sup>

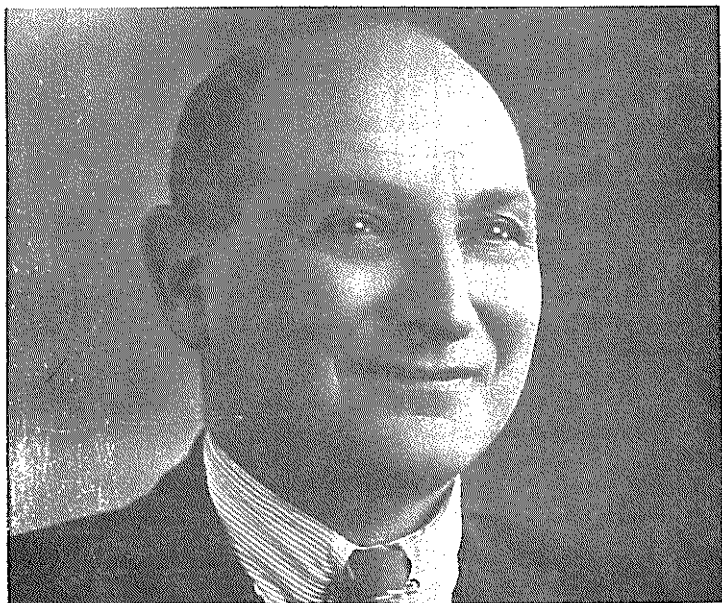
It should be mentioned here that many of the Board of Management over the years had given not only their time and services as committee-men and worshippers, but, frequently, had participated actively in the physical and material maintenance of the synagogue's buildings. Organised 'working bees' were a regular occurrence when painting and carpentering were done willingly. Examples of this may be seen when Mr. Jim Skurnik, noting the worn carpeting in the ladies' gallery, obtained new carpet and, called for volunteers to assist with the laying of it. Among those who most often responded to such calls were Mr. I. Prince, Mr. H. Knespal, Mr. E. Howard, Mr. L. Deitch and Mr. M. Abrahams. In recognition of these men's practical involvement with the Synagogue's well-being, a plaque bearing their names has been placed in the Hall adjoining the Synagogue.<sup>20</sup>

The trend first noticed in 1949 when the congregation became more restricted with the opening of the Parramatta Synagogue, came to a head in 1958 when Mr. A.A. Port, a Vice-President and Trustee spoke of a committee which had been formed to "investigate the sale of the property, and the finding of a new site." He pointed out the difficulties being experienced in obtaining a Minyan on Friday nights and Sabbath morning. He said, "Of those who do attend these services, not even 10% live in the district." Mr. H. Kresner, who had been co-opted on to what had been termed "The Investigating Committee, also spoke in support of the site of the Western Suburbs

Synagogue being moved. "It is going to be very hard for us to keep a good Minister if he sees a dwindling congregation. I have been a member of this Congregation for over 30 years; my heart and soul is here with this Synagogue, but I feel we must face the facts."

Other members spoke to the matter, and, it was eventually agreed that, with as little publicity as possible, moves would be made to obtain a buyer, and a place for a new Synagogue, early in 1959. Although this subject continued to be discussed and inquiries continued to be made, it soon became evident that the idea was gradually losing supporters. In the end, nothing came of it. The roots had gone deeply into the hearts of people who, even though living in remote areas now, retain their membership because their ancestors nearly a century ago sowed quality seed and tended the growth of the Congregation through good times and bad. Most of the members had developed deep affection for the Synagogue at Newtown.

The movement of Jewish families away from Newtown was accelerated by the growing prosperity experienced by many of them. They moved to suburbs too far away to make regular attendance at Newtown practical. That the matter of moving the site of the Synagogue is no longer being contemplated is evidenced by the old families who have moved from the area retaining their involvement by giving the Synagogue gifts. Perhaps it might be a tapestry, as the Segal family gave, in recent years; or a Sefer Torah, so that their names might be identified with the Congregation permanently.<sup>21</sup> The building next door to the Synagogue was converted into a Youth Centre and Talmud Torah, in May 1959, and it has become known as "The Western Suburbs Jewish Centre." Whenever an extra Sefer Torah is required by a newly opened congregation, or a Chuppa, or any of its other treasures, the Western Suburbs Synagogue is pleased to lend what it has, or to extend moral or material assistance where a worthy cause exists. During the late 1950's and early 1960's, the Western Suburbs Synagogue was a force in the Sydney Jewish Community. Throughout these years, with its Treasury strong and stable, with its record of visitations



M. PERKINS

to the sick the most impressive in Sydney, the Congregation commanded the respect of all. This was largely attributable to its administration and to its solid, hard-working Minister. The President, Mr. Morris Perkins, Vice-Presidents, Messrs. A.A. Port, P. Morris, and I.I. Kacen, had all been closely associated with the Board of Management and the Congregation over the years, and they knew their jobs. Mr. Shalitt and Mrs. Davis worked tirelessly and efficiently in every area, whether it was the social or the financial aspects, or the mere routine work of organising the Annual Picnic, attending to the monthly meetings or maintaining accord within the congregation.<sup>22</sup>

An interesting side effect of the visit of the Chief Rabbi in 1962 was the decision of the Board to renovate the flat, 18 Georgina Street, at a cost of £1,300 "so that it befitted the Chief Rabbi's stay." Rabbi Dr. Israel Brodie arrived in good time for the Conference of the Federation of Orthodox Synagogues on January 18. His

visit to the Western Suburban congregations, this time, was centred at the Bankstown Synagogue, with Parramatta, Strathfield, Illawarra, and the Western Suburbs Synagogue all participating. The occasion was a memorable one.

It was soon after the Conference of the Federation of Orthodox Synagogues, and, doubtless arising from it, that Rabbi Dr. I. Porush of the Great Synagogue in Sydney was officially acknowledged the Senior Rabbi of New South Wales. Out of the meetings and deliberations of the Conference, the Synagogue at Newtown was invited to approve and to subscribe, with the other Synagogues, to the resolution that "The Federation of Orthodox Synagogues of New South Wales resolves to recognise Rabbi Dr. Israel Porush as the Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogues on all Halachic pronouncements." The resolution, however, was not going to affect the authority of each of the constituents of the Federation in regard to its internal religious affairs.

In March, 1963, the Synagogue obtained its third Sefer Torah. About this time, also, it was decided to appoint, officially, a Publicity Officer. He was Mr. Harry Cohen, who had been acting in this capacity unofficially for some time. Dr. S.W. Cohen, one of the 'old identities' who had retained his membership, even after moving out of the area, made a determined effort to "set an example to others" like himself. He began taking a more active, involved interest in the Synagogue. He attended meetings, spoke on such matters as the enlarging of the Community Hall and the expansion of the congregation's Social programme. When he was invited on to the Board of Management, Dr. Cohen immediately became one of the select committee consisting of Mr. Stein, Mr. Skurnick and Mr. Perkins, which was formed to investigate the possibility of putting recommendations into effect. Mr. Harwitch and Mr. Proweller were co-opted on to the Board of Management, and the increased tempo was responsible for a favourable balance at the end of the year of over £700.

The Western Suburbs Jewish Centre Adult Group made significant progress, attracting good audiences. The standard of its functions was high. Professor Julius Stone, shortly after his return from the Eichmann Trial in Israel, addressed a capacity audience on his impressions of the event. Another time, Dr. G. McGeorge spoke on some of the social problems which caused delinquency in adolescents.

The Annual Picnic and the Ladies' Auxiliary Fete continued to justify the time, work and thought which went into their preparation. Although there were indications of progress in many areas, still the size of the Sabbath Services attendance was not encouraging. Older congregants had died, many of the younger generation were moving out of the district, and fewer Jewish families were going to live in the area. The position of Publicity Officer became vacant, and Mrs. Davis offered to hold the position temporarily, until a permanent arrangement could be made. When it became obvious that she was unable with her other commitments to continue with it, the Reverend Skolnik stepped in until Mr. Leon Rosenthal accepted the Office, permanently.

1963 saw a number of improvements. Brass plates were attached to the seats, renovations were effected upstairs and when it was suggested that still more be done, the ladies said that they were satisfied for the present as "other things were more urgent." Opportunities for special Kiddushim were coming up more frequently, and the Hall was the venue for such proud celebrations as when, in December 1963, Dr. S.W. Cohen was selected for membership on to an interim council of the new Macquarie University at Ryde, and, again, in 1965, when he became the University's first Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The Kiddushim after the Sabbath Morning Service were becoming a regular feature.

New Memorial Boards were needed, and a fine marble one was installed in time to be admired by worshippers during the High Holy Days of 1964. By now, there was also a Notice Board which gave details

of the Sedra of the day as well as other religious and social announcements. Twelve new Tallathim had been purchased; Mr. Proweller had presented an electric clock for the Community Hall, and the Kitchen had been extended. Mr. and Mrs. Cohen, on their return from abroad, presented the Synagogue with a silver filigree mazzuzah "to be placed in the precincts of the Synagogue" in honour of Mrs. Cohen's parents, Robert and Rachael Levine, who had been worshipping at Newtown for 50 years when Mrs. Levine died in 1964.

The Sunday morning work sessions continued; Board members worked each week energetically painting and cleaning up the Synagogue. It had been decided that in future the two wardens' boxes would be occupied by the President and the Honorary Treasurer, and the Deputy President and the Senior Vice-President.

Extensive renovations and additions to the Synagogue and its subsidiary buildings, at the cost of almost £3,500 in 1965 made it necessary to further increase seat rentals. The new charges were £10.10.0 a year membership fee, and seat rental for gentlemen was £5.5.0, and for youths - between 16 and 18 years of age - £3.3.0. On the Yom Tovim it was necessary to charge £6.6.0 for gentlemen and £4.4.0 for ladies<sup>6</sup>. It was noted with satisfaction that during the High Holy Days, all 400 seats of the Synagogue were occupied.

In 1966 the Congregation suffered a set-back by the deaths of three devoted workers, Mr. Phillip Barg, Mrs. Rachel Perkins, and the President, Mr. Morrie Perkins. Mr. A. Port became the new President, Mr. J. Skurnik, Deputy President, with a strong band of Vice-Presidents - Dr. S.W. Cohen and Messrs. I. Kacen, J. Stein, B. Proweller.

A continuous programme of activities was undertaken for the next three years and plans were considered for the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Synagogue's Consecration. This was fixed for 7th September, 1969, and was to be marked by the building and opening of a new hall. It was found necessary, however, to disband the Building Committee set up for the purpose

and to transfer money in its account to the Social Committee. The date was altered to 25th April, Anzac Day, and prominent Communal workers were chosen to participate in the celebration. An attempt was made during the Annual General Meeting in 1970 to separate the functions of the President of the Synagogue and the Chairman of the Board of Management. It was expected that the President would be free to develop the interests of the Congregation and attend to matters of publicity without the responsibility of details of policy and management, - "the Deputy President should be the working Chairman, and the President left to attend functions and strengthen public relations" was the argument presented in favour.

After considerable discussion the prevailing arrangement was unaltered and the same President and executive were elected, Mr. Shalitt, Treasurer for for the 28th consecutive year, and Mrs. P. Davis, Secretary for her 15th Term.

Today the oldest suburban Congregation in New South Wales continues its links with the past, remaining the focus of involvement for families for whom the Synagogue in Georgina Street, Newtown, is able to awaken historical memories which will not easily fade.

## PERSONALITIES

The following are included among the  
Office Bearers :

Presidents

Leon Goldberg  
Harris Cohen  
Henry H. Solomon  
Joel Goldberg  
Percy Wolfson  
Sam Solomon  
Isaac Levy  
L. Gordon  
William Berkman  
Morris Jacobs  
S. Green  
J.D. Pizem  
Morrie Perkins  
Abraham Port  
B. Proweller

Vice Presidents

(In addition to  
Presidents who had  
served in this office)  
M. Eizenberg  
W. Symons  
A. Brown  
H. Chapman  
W. Miller  
P. Morris  
P. Barg  
J. Skurnik

Ladies' AuxiliaryPresidents

Mrs. Sarah R. Selig  
Mrs. Ida Chapman  
Mrs. J. Harwitch  
Mrs. Minna Howard  
Mrs. Miriam Skurnik

## PERSONALITIES (Cont'd)

Secretaries

B. Blumenthal  
J. Levy  
D.J. Solomon  
E. Goldberg  
P. Bennett  
M. Owen  
S. Green  
M.C. Greene  
M. Marks  
M. Sussman  
H. Levy  
P. Cohen  
J. Clyne  
J. Kline  
M. Kline  
C. Solomon  
M. Bernard  
W. Israel  
Miss Z. Brenner  
N. Sigalla  
V. Prosser  
H. Dizick  
Mrs. Phoebe Davis

Treasurers

D.H. Solomon  
H. Cohen  
W. Berkman  
L. Josephs  
M. Goldberg  
L. Symons  
P. Wolfson  
M.C. Greene  
M. Marks  
M. Joseph  
H. Dizick  
M. Jacobs  
J. Kline  
J. Clyne  
M. Milston  
N. Gilovitz  
M. Shalitt

2.      **MINISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED THE CONGREGATION**

For the first 20 years from 1883 when proceedings were conducted in the form of minyans in private homes or in the Oddfellows Hall there was no lack of individuals capable of conducting the services and no doubt many of the pioneers did so. Among these were M. Levy, S. Weingott, J. Sugerman, Jacob Selig, Abraham Solomon, Harry Cohen, William Berkman, Lewis Symonds, Harris Solomons, and the "Presidents" of the Committees set up from time to time. In 1903 we note that the positions of Hon. Reader and Hon. Minister had been established and that they were filled by Mr. Levy and S. Weingott. During the period help had been given also by the Great Synagogue, because it was reported in 1903, "we have conveyed to the authorities of the Great Synagogue our appreciation for their having hitherto placed the services of the Rev. P. Phillipstein at our disposal in the capacity of Reader."

The first step in the appointment of a regular minister was taken in 1904 when it was announced at the Annual Meeting that "the Newtown Hebrew Congregation has appointed Mr. Isaac Morris, a recent arrival from Cardiff, as Reader and Shochet. Mr. Morris possesses the highest of credentials, and he has been examined by the Melbourne Beth Din. We are proud and honoured to have him appointed Shochet Bedek and Reader to our Congregation." Under his leadership membership more than doubled during the next year, and a Sefer Torah Ark with paraphernalia had been obtained. Facilities for the supply of Kosher meat were satisfactory and it was decided to renew Rev. Morris's appointment for another year. However, within two months, 5th November, 1905, he answered a call to the Newcastle Hebrew Congregation. The following letter dated 26th November, was sent to him -

"Reverend and Dear Sir,

We the Executive and Members of the NEWTOWN HEBREW CONGREGATION on this the occasion of severing your connection with us, to take up the

position of Minister and Shochet to the Newcastle Congregation, desire hereby, to show our appreciation of your services, and express our high appreciation of your many good qualities as a Minister and a man.



REV. I. MORRIS

We have pleasure in certifying that your duties were carried out in a highly satisfactory manner, and that your unfailing courtesy has endeared you to the individual members of the Congregation.

While we regret that you are leaving us, we recognise that it is for your betterment and hope that your association with Newtown Hebrew Congregation will ever evoke the pleasantest memories."

It is recorded that at the Annual Meeting, September 1913, a Reader for the High Holy Days services had been engaged at a salary of £10. Some doubt was expressed about the advisability of committing the

Congregation to such a sum, at the present time, and "care should be taken in future before spending so much money." However, Mr. Levy was appointed and he apparently stayed on during the following year, because in August it was proposed to appoint three more to assist him, Messrs. J. Rosen, S. Weingott and Joseph Goldberg having volunteered to read during the ensuing High Holy Days. In 1916 Mr. M. Snyder was engaged to officiate during the High Holy Days for a fee of £8.8.0, but the matter of the provision of Jewish education for Jewish children in Newtown schools becoming more pressing it was decided to appoint Rev. A.T. Chodowski to officiate during the Passover and to undertake other duties. He was subsequently engaged as Honorary Minister and he identified himself actively in the affairs of the Congregation. At the end of the year he was able to report constructively on the attendance of members of the Synagogue since he had been officiating, and about the proficiency of the 30 children attending the Hebrew School he had formed. He referred also to the collection of dues and offered to collect them within three months.

As a result of his good work he was re-appointed for a further nine months from 20th October, 1917, but he offered to remain until 31st October, 1918 as Honorary Minister.<sup>23</sup> He was very active during the year, co-operating with Rabbi Cohen and others in preparing for the ceremony of Laying the Foundation Stone of the New Synagogue, a ceremony in which he participated prominently and with credit. He was busy, too, with his duties as Headmaster of the Hebrew School. For his services he was voted £5, and his term was extended.

Everything seemed to be proceeding smoothly when on 16th July, 1918, a letter was received from Rev. Chodowski tendering his resignation. A special meeting was called to consider this, and all present spoke in eulogistic terms of him and his work. Mr. P. Wolfson said that "since the Rev. Chodowski has been with us, we have always had a good minyan, and it is much to be regretted that he considers resigning. I hope that the Congregation can see its way clear to keep Rev. Chodowski with us."

The main problem was one of finance, the difficulty of raising the £4.10.0<sup>2</sup> per week necessary to keep a minister. After much discussion and many motions and amendments, Rev. Chodowski agreed to remain provided he received a contract for 4 or 5 years. Accordingly a contract for 4 years was duly drawn up and signed on 24th July, thus ensuring Newtown of the services of a Minister, Teacher and Mohel for a definite period. Before the end of the year the Committee was pleased to learn that the Friday night and Sabbath Services, and the Religion classes were well attended, as were also the High Holy Days' Services.

Rev. Chodowski reported that the demand for Kosher meat had increased to such a marked degree that he felt inclined to suggest that an arrangement be made with a Newtown Butcher to supply same. The Butcher would then pay to the congregation 15/- per week, or even more. He went on to suggest that if such an arrangement could be made, he would act as Shomer free of charge. Rev. Chodowski was then invited to interview any butcher "he may think fit for the purpose." He was able to arrange with Mr. Condon to supply Kosher meat, for which he paid the Congregation £1 per week for its "patronage and sanction", but later "the Schecita Board required 10/- per week to supply the meat to Condon Brothers." This letter was the basis of many meetings and many replies to and from the Board.

Rev. Chodowski worked very hard to raise funds by interesting Theatrical companies, clubs and groups to put on entertainments and dances, and by direct appeals to individuals. He made no charge for "killing kosher," and asked when fees were payable they be devoted to the congregation. His advice on the building of the Synagogue, memorials, furniture and other aspects was eagerly sought, and his services freely given on committees and delegations.

Highlights of his work during 1919 were the Peace and Thanksgiving services he conducted on 6th July and the Consecration Service he conducted with Rabbi Cohen and other Ministers from Sydney Synagogues. His organisation of the function generally received

high praise.

At the Committee Meeting held on 2nd December, it was reported that there had been some correspondence of importance between Rabbi Cohen and Rev. A.T. Chodowski. These letters and copies were before the Meeting, and it was apparent that the letters written by Rev. A.T. Chodowski to Rabbi Cohen had been sent without the knowledge or consent of the Board. It was proposed that a letter be sent to Rabbi Cohen informing him of this and that at the next meeting Rev. Chodowski be asked for an explanation regarding his writing to Rabbi Cohen and to the Chief Rabbi without the consent of the Board. This did not impair the relationship between the Board and the Minister as far as work was concerned as it was evident from reports that normal functions were proceeding without interruption.<sup>25</sup> In fact Rev. Chodowski was granted 14 days' leave full pay on 17th February, 1920, and this was later extended till after Pesach. In the meantime a letter had been received from the Chief Rabbi which called for an answer informing him that when Rev. Chodowski was engaged the Synagogue was not aware of any undertaking he had signed with Rabbi Cohen.

At the November meeting Rev. Chodowski's salary was increased by £5 a month by way of an "honorarium," thus indicating satisfaction of the way he was performing his duties. Much of the first half of 1921 was taken up with preparations for the visit of the Chief Rabbi and Rev. Chodowski was vitally involved in all details. On 19th April, the following letter was sent to him -

"Rev. A.T. Chodowski,  
20 Lindthorpe Street,  
Newtown

Rev. and Dear Sir:

I have been instructed by the Board of Manage-

ment of the above Synagogue to inform you at a Meeting held on Tuesday, 19th inst., it was decided to give you three months' notice in accordance with your agreement, made and confirmed on August, 1st, 1918, between the Trustees, Board of Management and yourself, and same expires on August 1st, 1921.

You are invited to send in your application for a further period.

Yours faithfully  
(Signed) M. Cohen Greene. Secretary"

The following report of the Chief Rabbi's visit to Newtown shows the important part played by Rev. Chodowski at this function;<sup>26</sup>

" On Sunday, 1st May, 1921, the Chief Rabbi, Dr. J.H. Hertz, M.A., Ph.D., D.H.L., visited Newtown and spent a day with the Newtown Congregation.

At the Synagogue, the Minister, the Rev. A.T. Chodowski, read the Mincha Service, and the Chief Rabbi delivered a sermon to a crowded congregation.

In the evening, Dr. Hertz, Mr. A.M. Woolf, O.B.E., a Vice-President of the United Synagogues, London, and Mr. A.H. Valentine, the Rabbi's official Secretary, were entertained by the Newtown Hebrew Congregation at a Conversazione. Mr. S. Solomon, President of the Newtown Congregation, in a few well chosen words, welcomed the Chief Rabbi and the distinguished visitors accompanying him, on behalf of his congregation.

The Rev. A.T. Chodowski then presented the Chief Rabbi with an Illuminated Scroll Address embellished with Australian native flowers, welcoming him to the Newtown Community.

The address was signed by the Rev. A.T. Chodowski;

S. Solomon, President; P. Wolfson, Hon. Treasurer; Trustees and Members of the Executive.

Among the invited guests were Rabbi and Mrs. Cohen, the Revs. M. Einfeld, P. Phillipstein and A.D. Wolinski.

The Chief Rabbi replied to his welcome in a pastoral address. The musical programme for the function was arranged by Professor Sauer. "

It seems that all communications between the Board and its minister were in writing, including instructions, inquiries and information. As an example -

At a meeting held on 10th May, 1921, it was decided to write to Rev. Chodowski notifying him that Rev. J. Morris had been invited to daven Musaph and to lecture at the Synagogue, on Saturday, 21st May, on the subject "The Comforting Quality of Religion."

Opportunity had been taken of the Chief Rabbi's visit to submit various matters to him for decision, and a delegation of four had been elected to present them - Mr. Isaac Levy, Mr. M. Owen, Mr. A. Goldberg and Mr. J. Rosen. The matters concerned Rev. Chodowski and his views and practices connected with proselytising, the calling up of more than the allotted number on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, Shachtim and the local Beth Din. In every instance the Chief Rabbi ruled against Rev. Chodowski and upheld the legal, traditional views held by Rabbi Cohen and those who supported him in the Newtown Congregation.

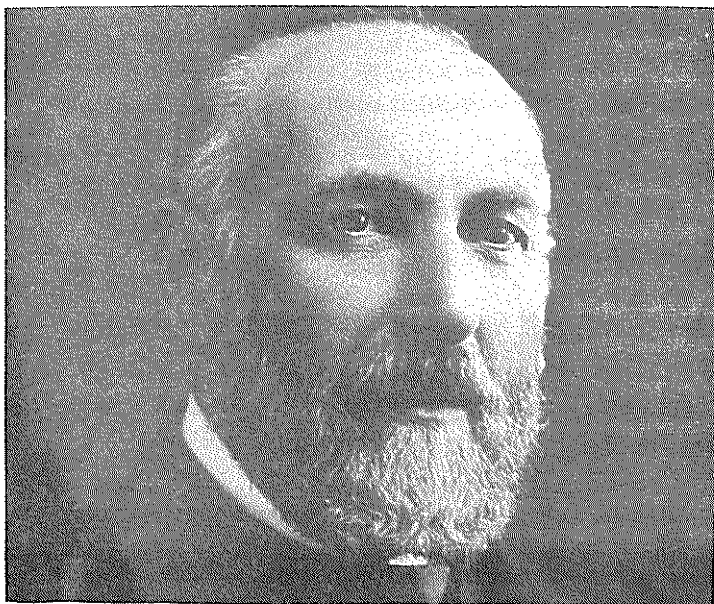
At the special meeting called for 3rd July, to

consider the appointment of a Minister it was resolved to re-appoint Rev. Chodowski for a further three years. His son said that Rev. Chodowski was willing to accept a salary of £5.5.0 a week for 3 years, but as there was no application in writing the Chairman, Mr. S. Solomon, refused to accept the proposal. After long and heated discussion during which an application from Rev. B. Lenzer of Ballarat was read, and a personal appearance of Rev. Chodowski, the Chairman still refused to accept the proposal until he had an application in writing. It was finally decided on the motion of Messrs. M. Owen and P. Wolfson that -

" as the existing agreement signed by Rev. Chodowski terminated on 31st July, Rev. Chodowski is to be retained from week to week at the present salary, until the Board of Management makes a further written agreement with Rev. Chodowski, and decided what to do, before bringing the decision before a General Meeting."

Following this at a subsequent meeting, Mr. Goldberg reported that he had made inquiries regarding the Contract the Board of Management had made with Rev. Chodowski, and he was of the opinion that "same is not in accordance with the Minute Book; and as this had been registered by Rev. Chodowski, a copy of the Contract should be obtained from the Registrar General."

The Secretary was instructed to obtain a copy of the Agreement from the Registrar General, for the next meeting. The Secretary was also instructed to interview the representative of the "Jewish Herald," to "find out who was the author of the advertisement in their paper which stated that the Rev. Chodowski had been unanimously re-elected for a period of three years." Inquiries proved that Rev. Chodowski had informed the "Jewish Herald" of his re-appointment, and that he had never registered the contract with the Registrar General.



REV. A. CHODOWSKI

As the financial position was not good, it was agreed that it would be unwise to enter into a long-term agreement and so it was proposed that Rev. Chodowski be engaged at a weekly salary of £4.13.0 a week to include all his previous duties, commencing on the expiration of the present agreement on 31st July, 1921, and that Rev. Chodowski be notified of this. This was not unanimous and one of the opposers was asked to interview Rev. Chodowski and if possible to get him to attend a meeting on 4th August. He did not attend and the following letter was sent to him on 5th August -

" Rev. Sir; Enclosed please find cheque for £8.00 which, at an adjourned Committee Meeting held last evening, it was decided to send you, in accordance with the request contained in your letter of 3rd inst.

We desire to impress upon you, and to point out, that you have not replied to any of our previous correspondence, therefore, as far as the Board of Management is concerned, your Agreement having

terminated, any services you may render to the Congregation, will be merely in an honorary capacity until a General Meeting be called on about 21st August when it will be decided what is to be done.

Meanwhile, kindly be good enough to return all Books, Vouchers, and monies belonging to the Congregation you may have in your possession to the Trustees.

Yours faithfully

S. Solomon, President "

The nature of the request can be deduced from the reply. No reply was received in time for the General Meeting, but he spoke there, and reported all complaints made against him. The meeting ended in uproar when the ballot for his re-appointment went against him 29 to 21. As a result he was asked to return all Marriage Certificates and other papers belonging to the Synagogue. Arrangements were made for the High Holy Days Services to be conducted by Messrs. M. Schwipp, Commissioner for Palestine Colonies, J. Abeshouse and M. Levy. The normal services when there was no minister were conducted at this time and later by Mr. H. Himmelferb in a most efficient manner.

An interesting item in the President's Report on 14th October, 1921, was :

" Rev. Chodowski and the Assisting Minister, Mr. Myer Levy, deserve highest appreciation for the way in which they have conducted their duties. It is needless for me to mention that we have lost the services of Rev. Chodowski."

It was announced also that Rev. B. Lenzer had been appointed as the new minister. His background was most impressive. The Rev. B. Lenzer, was born in Russia and had obtained most of his early education there. Some twenty-seven years earlier, at the age of 22, he had arrived in Melbourne on a visit to his brother, the well-known and well-respected the late Rev. Jacob Lenzer, Minister of East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation. Bearing as he did credentials from the then Chief Rabbi, the late Dr. Adler, from Rabbi Yitzhak Elchornon, Spector of

Kovno, and from other well-known rabbis in Russia, it was not long before Mr. Lenzer had received a call from Perth Congregation, and he was then appointed Assistant Minister and Teacher. He served with Rev. D.I. Freedman for five years, and during that time had gained the respect of that Congregation.

Mr. Lenzer had then received a call from Ballarat Congregation, and was appointed Assistant Minister and Teacher acting under Rev. I.M. Goldreich. On the death of Rev. Goldreich, three years later, Rev. Lenzer had been appointed to the position of Minister of the Congregation, and had continued to serve there. During all this time, he had earned the esteem of all classes of the community, both Jew and Gentile, and had associated himself with every movement that was for the good of Jewry, and the uplift of the people generally. During the last three years, he had been visiting Geelong, weekly, after having established there Hebrew and Religion classes. He had also officiated at the Geelong Synagogue on a number of special occasions.

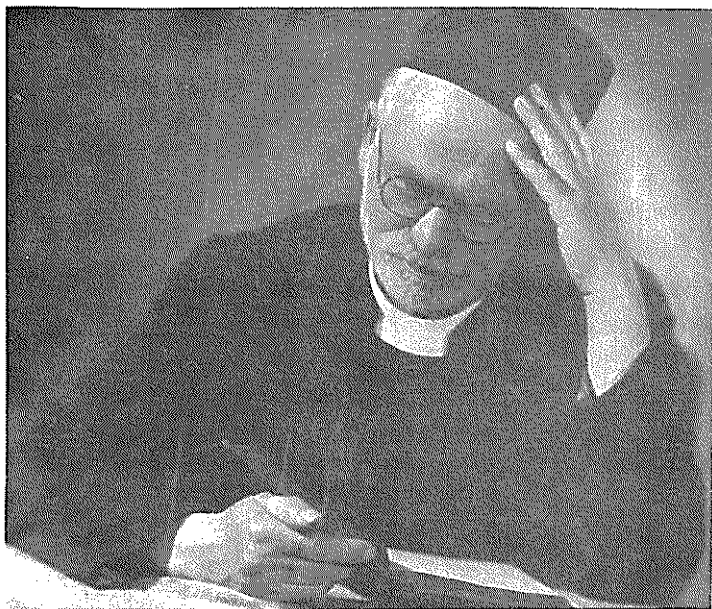
On 22nd January, 1922, a special service was held at the Newtown Synagogue for the purpose of inducting Rev. B. Lenzer as Minister of the Congregation. There was a numerous attendance, which included Mr. S.S. Cohen, President of the Great Synagogue, and its four Ministers. Mincha having been intoned by the Rev. B. Lenzer and Rev. M. Einfeld, an address was delivered by Rabbi Cohen.

At the Annual Meeting, September 1922, the President spoke of the progress made during the year in terms reminiscent of those following the appointment of Rev. Chodowski :

" Your Board has much pleasure in informing you that the membership has doubled itself during the past year. This gratifying result is due largely to the popularity of our Minister, Rev. Benzion Lenzer, whose services are so valued. We were fortunate enough to secure these early in the year, and although

he has only been amongst us such a short time, he has earned the approval and regard of all the congregants and of the Jewish Community in general.

The progress made by the pupils of the Hebrew School, under the supervision of Rev. Lenzer, who has been ably assisted by Miss Emanuel and Mr. Hyman Lenzer, is very gratifying, and I am pleased to state that there are now over 80 children enrolled."



REV. B. LENZER

During 1922 it was announced that "Rev. Lenzer has taken over the visitation of the various hospitals in this district, and he also visits the Kosher Butcher Shop daily." Consideration was given to the appointment of an assistant for communal work but this was deferred to the following year.

About this time Editorials from the Jewish Press, in Sydney, reflected the flourishing congregation at

Newtown. One such read: "The wonderful progress made by this congregation during the last two years speaks well for the liveness of Judaism in this city, when, as in this case, it finds leaders who, with an enthusiasm for the cause of Israel, are willing and ready to give their time and their energy to this task of organising their brethren into a united community. It is just about two years since the Trustees of this Congregation warned the congregants that the financial position was so bad that they must seriously consider curtailing their expenditure, and that they were not in a position to pay a Minister's salary. What a wondrous change has been worked in such a short time. Now they have added to their expenditure by the engagement of a permanent Minister, who is receiving a salary commensurate with his high office. Moreover, they now feel themselves in a position to engage an assistant Minister, and their financial position is so strong that they can look forward to the future without fear. During the time under review, the number of members has more than doubled itself. The attendances at the services have greatly increased while the coming Holy Days bid fair to tax the accommodation to the uttermost.

Two persons are to be especially thanked by the congregation for this highly satisfactory state of affairs. First of all, and most of all, the retiring President, Mr. Sam Solomon, who for the two years in which he held that office has spared neither time nor energy in the affairs of the congregation.

But, a congregation however built up, or however organised, could not stand for long without a suitable spiritual head, and this congregation was fortunate in securing for this position the Rev. B. Lenzer, who although he has only been here some six months, has made his influence felt not only in Newtown, but in a far wider sphere. And we are confident that he will hold his congregation together and be a rallying point for all that is good in Jewry."

This was confirmed at the Annual General Meeting on 2nd September 1923.

The Rev. B. Lenzer had continued to carry out his duties in a most satisfactory way, having devoted the whole of his time to the affairs of the congregation, both in ministerial and educational capacities. Special references were made to the entirely satisfactory manner in which the Rev. B. Lenzer, with the assistance of Mr. Myer Levy and Mr. M. Wittenberg had carried out the services during the High Festivals. An innovation added to the high standard of the celebrations.

On the second day, the Rev. M. Einfeld officiated, at the invitation of the President, and his tuneful rendering of the Service was highly appreciated by a large attendance of members. A letter of thanks had been sent to him for his kindness in attending.

The matter of engaging an assistant had been left in the hands of the incoming Board. As a result of their deliberations Mr. L. Goran,<sup>27</sup> formerly of Hobart, had been engaged as Second Reader, Assistant Teacher and Collector as from 22nd December, 1922. Services and congregational matters functioned satisfactorily during the next two years. Rev. Lenzer had been available as Mohel to the whole Jewish Community during the absence of Rev. Einfeld, and his efficiency was greatly appreciated.

Mr. L. Goran had attended to the duties of his office, it was stated, in an entirely satisfactory manner. Particularly so during the latter portion of the year, when he had been given the opportunity of attending the Abattoirs to train as a Schochet. According to reports received from the Rabbi, there was every prospect of his attaining the necessary proficiency.

Rev. Lenzer was re-appointed for a further term in December, 1924 and he continued to give energetic direction to the affairs of the Synagogue. He and his daughter, Eva, had formed a Boys' Choir, and he had made a feature of a boys' Friday night service, innovations enriching the services generally.

On 6th August, 1926, a farewell was given to Mr. & Mrs. Goran on the eve of their departure for Ballarat.<sup>28</sup>



REV. L. GORAN

Rabbi Cohen and Mr. H.I. Wolff spoke in high praise of Rev. Goran's work to the large assemblage of congregants and friends.

When Rev. Lenzer's term was extended in 1927 for a further three years, it was stated that "it is through his zealous efforts that the membership has shown such a marked increase, but thanks are due, also, to Mr. Snyder who has officiated." Mrs. Lenzer was a busy helpmeet to her husband as instanced by the function arranged in June, 1930 for the farewell to Rabbi and Mrs. Cohen prior to their departure abroad, when she acted as official hostess.<sup>29</sup>

The years 1927 to 1933 were busy years for Rev. Lenzer owing to record numbers of barmitzvahs<sup>30</sup> and deaths, there being as many as 30 funerals in 1932, and 37 in 1933. He was busy, too, with weddings and other happy functions such as birthday parties and other

anniversaries. On all occasions Rev. Lenzer played his part with courtesy and distinction. His diary showed that there were also many difficulties involving congregants with personal problems, and communal matters involving the Board and the Minister. Among these were salaries, poultry killing, recruitment of new members, and the kosher butcher shop. There were deaths, too of prominent Board members and congregants.

In March, 1934, Mr. I. Levy died. He had been one of the founders of the Newtown Congregation, and it was recalled that it was mainly through Mr. Levy's efforts that the new Synagogue had been built. As a tribute to his services, he had been given the honour of laying the foundation stone; and, in addition to this, he was allotted a seat for life next to the President. When the Annual General Meeting was held, on 7th September, Mr. W. Berkman announced that the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. M. Jacobs was donating to the Synagogue, a safe for storing valuables, in memory of the late Mr. I. Levy.

During the same year Rev. Lenzer went on leave and travelled to Shanghai where he was invested as a Rabbi by the Chief Rabbi, Meyer Ashkenazi of that city. In 1936 Rabbi Lenzer resigned and the services were carried out during 1937 and 1938 by Mr. S.M. Kault who had previously assisted Rabbi Lenzer.

In 1939 Rev. I. Rabinovitch was appointed Minister and he came to a congregation that had increased membership, where attendance at services was satisfactory, activities had been revitalised and income generally was satisfactory, although commitments were increasing expenditure and liabilities. The Synagogue had a strong Board under the Chairmanship of Mr. W. Berkman, and there was every justification for optimism. However, hopes were not realised, the War causing a serious decline in income and membership.

Rev. Rabinovitch who had been an Oberkantor in Vienna fled from Nazi persecution and came to Australia. He was installed at Newtown Synagogue by Rabbi Falk assisted by Ministers of the other Synagogues in 1940, and it was expected that his appointment would attract

numbers of Central European migrants who had settled in Sydney during 1938-9. Unfortunately hardly any benefit resulted from this source, in fact the membership which had dropped to 101 in 1940, dropped still further to 78 in 1941, the lowest level ever experienced.



REV. RABINOVITCH

In these circumstances, despite every effort, Rev. Rabinovitch's work became more and more difficult, and progress was impossible. Some services were well attended, and Jewish education with the help of Mr. P. Barg were maintained. A special contribution made by Rev. Rabinovitch was in the musical parts of the ceremonies, an area in which he was well qualified. At the Annual Meeting in 1942 the President reported "I extend thanks to Rev. I. Rabinovitch, who has continued to devote himself unstintingly to the affairs and the well-being of the Congregation, and who has assisted the Board in its efforts to redeem the Synagogue, and who has also carried on successfully the Head-

mastership of the Hebrew School. In this connection, my thanks also go to Miss Rabinovitch, the able and competent teacher of the Talmud Torah." At all services, Rev. Rabinovitch tried to inspire his congregants to live up to the ideals of Judaism. His influence may be gauged from the fact that the Synagogue was crowded for the High Holy Days in 1942.

The congregants were encouraged by Rev. Rabinovitch's most inspiring address to confirm their confidence in the Lord, as the prophet had said, "Yeshuoth Hashem Keheref Ayin" - The Salvation of the Lord may come at any moment. "Our Duty", Rev. Rabinovitch told them, "is to do our utmost, and to support every effort which helps to prostrate our enemies, and to pray to the Lord for salvation."

The Kol Nidrei Sermon that year, in particular, expressed the spiritual Ideal of Judaism, and the importance of the Jewish Spirit for Humanity in general.

The Succoth Services were well attended and the congregants appreciated the services which were conducted by Rev. Rabinovitch. After the Service, a Children's and Congregants' Succah Party was given by the Board of Management assisted by the Ladies' Committee. Rev. Rabinovitch addressed all those present on "Jewish Life in the Diaspora."

The President, Mr. Pizem, speaking about the improvements and the successes of the Congregation during the previous year attributed much to the devotion of Rev. Rabinovitch. One of his saddest duties was when he was called upon to officiate at the funeral of the Synagogue's benefactor, Mr. Mayor Milston, in October 1942. He was assisted by Revs. Kezelman and Krass and Rabbi Kirsner. Addresses were given by Rabbis Dr. I. Porush and L.A. Falk.

Relationships between the Board and the Minister had been good, but a rift occurred in the middle of 1944 when Rev. Rabinovitch applied for an increase in salary. This was not granted but he was given an honorarium in addition to his salary and his fare allowance was

doubled, in consideration of his "special effort" to increase Synagogue income by an equal amount. He continued to complain, however, and following a thorough investigation into all areas of dissatisfaction it was agreed to increase his salary to £338 and his allowances to £26 for fares and £10 towards accommodation, per year. In return he was asked to accept responsibility for his own living expenses and telephone account.

The matter came to a head again in 1947. It was proposed that Rev. Rabinovitch should keep the first year's membership fee of every new member he was able to introduce from the Western Suburbs area.

Early in 1949 he ceased teaching in the Synagogue's Hebrew School, and his proposal to bring a number of from Newington College to attend the Sabbath Services and to enrol in the Sunday classes met with some opposition.

Early in 1950 progress was retarded by illnesses of key figures in the congregation.<sup>31</sup> The health of Reverend Rabinovitch had been causing grave concern. A medical report from Dr. Feher confirmed that he was suffering from a heart ailment, and it would be necessary for him to take extended leave. The Board eventually decided that the Minister's salary would be paid for at least the next six months, and that all hospital expenses and doctor's fees would be met during his stay at the Sydney Sanitarium at Wahroonga.

The Reader, Mr. Friedman, conducted the services' until the minister returned to duty in June. Rev. Rabinovitch maintained reasonably good health and in 1952 was able to perform the duties allotted to him as a hospitals' visitor at a Conference of Orthodox Synagogues in July 1952, and to entertain Rabbi Brodie for two days during his visit to Newtown on 21st and 22nd March of that year. The Combined Services<sup>32</sup> arranged by Rev. Rabinovitch were highly successful, but generally there was a marked slowing down of activities. During the next 3 years, there was an improvement due to the almost non-stop activities of

a band of dedicated workers. Synagogue attendances increased, and on special occasions<sup>33</sup> and the High Holy Days, upwards of 300 worshippers were in the Synagogue necessitating the engagement of a commissionaire "to keep order in the vestibule."

Just before the High Holy Days in 1955, Rev. Rabinovitch died and a new Minister had to be found without delay. A special service was held in memory of their late Minister, and a fund was set up to have a stone dedicated in the Synagogue to his memory. Advice and assistance was sought regarding these matters from Rabbi Porush. At a Meeting held on Sunday, September 4, the President, Mr. Perkins, referring to this assistance and counsel, said, "I would like to place on record my appreciation of the wonderful assistance given by Dr. Porush during the recent weeks after the death of Rev. Rabinovitch." It did not take the Congregation long to bring itself back to a normal steady routine. Mr. L. Aisenstadt was appointed full time Minister and Teacher. His induction took place on Sunday, April 29, 1956, and it was a happy occasion, except for the cloud of sadness which settled over the congregation during the preparations when their first Patron, Mr. J.D. Pizem died, just two years after his retirement from the Presidency. Later, a memorial tablet to honour his memory was erected.

The affairs of the Synagogue did not proceed harmoniously, and the advice of Rabbi Porush was sought on an increasing scale. An offer from him to address the congregation was eagerly accepted. By mid-1957 the Congregation was again looking for a Minister, as the Rev. Aisenstadt had left suddenly to go to Canada.

The Congregation would have been faced with a serious emergency had not Mr. A. Rothfield offered to fill the breach from June 22, if accommodation handy to the Synagogue could be arranged for him. Mr. Rothfield and Mr. J. Stein officiated at services until a permanent Minister could be obtained.

During the next three months, extensive enquiries were made, advertisements placed in local and overseas

newspapers, special meetings held, and all avenues explored. As a result, Rev. Benjamin Skolnik from Wellington, New Zealand was appointed and he took up his duties before the High Holy Days, 1957. The Rev. Skolnik's wife worked willingly and well with the Ladies' Auxiliary, and, at the end of the year, it was possible to announce that a sum of £500 was to be handed over to help with the £1,200 that had been spent during the year on repairs and re-decorating the buildings. For the twelve months from mid-1957 to mid-1958, the social activities of the Congregation greatly increased; and a new dimension was added when the Annual Picnic, held at Neilson Park, attracted more than 400 people many from other Congregations. The fame of the Congregation was spreading for the well organised and happy events it invariably presented.

The Rev. Skolnik organised a successful Purim play, which was much appreciated by the performers as well as by their audience. It was decided that their First Annual Ball, to be held on July 29, would take place at the Hotel Australia. The occasion was both a social success and a financial achievement netting more than £300. The Chanukah Party, the Purim Party, the Succoth Party, and the children's demonstration Seder, were all examples of what could be done with the spirit of goodwill and wise planning which characterised all of the Congregation's activities that year. Nor was this spontaneous co-operation confined to themselves; on many occasions, members of the Newtown Congregation attended functions at Parramatta, Strathfield and the Eastern Suburbs congregations, as return visits.

The Synagogue functioned satisfactorily with good times and bad during the next 7 or 8 years under the guidance of its Minister, and Rev. and Mrs. Skolnik and their family became an integral part of the congregation.

In January 1965, Miss Phillipa Skolnik married Mr. Victor Benjamin, and in recognition of the splendid work she was doing with the Jewish Studies classes, together with Mrs. F. Siderovitz and Mr. Lionel Nadel, she was presented with a pair of engraved silver candlesticks for their new home.

On March 12, 1967, Vivienne Skolnik married Amos Mekler, the ceremony being named as "a socially important wedding."

The Purim Party held on March 25 was yet another in the round of social and communal events at which the Western Suburbs Synagogue was conspicuously represented. By far the greatest financial success of the year was the Ball, held at the Central Synagogue's Goodman Hall, a function which netted several thousand pounds.

Rev. Skolnik participated in the consecration of new Synagogues, induction of new Ministers and other communal functions and in every way ensured that the Western Suburbs Synagogue played its part as a responsible orthodox Synagogue. Following a request by Rev. Skolnik for an increase in salary after the High Holy Days in 1967 a select committee was formed to consider the matter, and a "rumour that their minister had been invited to occupy the pulpit at South Head Synagogue", and to report to the Board.

It was decided as a result that "no permission be given Rev. Skolnik to take services at another Synagogue," and that his salary be increased by \$10 a week for 12 months, and that an extra \$10 be paid for every new member he was able to introduce to the Synagogue.

Rev. Skolnik participated in the plans for the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Synagogue.

In 1969 Rev. Skolnik accepted a call to Cremorne Synagogue, and Mr. Dobelsky conducted services at Newtown during the next 4 years, when he, too, left, having accepted a call to Western Australia in 1973.

### 3. JEWISH EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN SUBURBS SYNAGOGUE

It was not until 1914 that any reference was made to organised Jewish education as a function of the Congregation, when it was suggested that the land purchased for a Synagogue be taken over by the Great Synagogue for the purpose of building a school for the Jewish residents of Newtown. Other suggestions included the building of a school by the Building Committee and the gathering of information regarding the number of Jewish children in Newtown Schools.

Rev. Chodowski who had been appointed Hon. Minister during 1915 formed a school from the 30 children the survey had revealed, as a nucleus. This made good progress, and in 1918 a separate Board of Hebrew Education was set up to work in conjunction with the Board of the Congregation. Mr. J. Goldberg was its first President and Mr. M. Emanuel its first Treasurer. Mr. P. Rosenblum was appointed Inspector. Fees were fixed at 6d for one child and 1/- for two or more, the fees to be paid to the teacher at the end of each month. A fund had been started for Honorary Members at 2/6 a year for the purchase of books, and from time to time small donations were made to this Fund by members. For years progress was good, and annual reports reveal satisfaction and constructive comments. It is interesting to note that early in its history efforts were made to change the day for lessons from Sunday to another one, but the Minister supporting Sunday classes, the matter was stood over.

On Sunday, 14th September, 1919, the first distribution of prizes of the Newtown Hebrew School took place. There was a large attendance of ladies and gentlemen. Mr. Joel Goldberg, Chairmain of the Newtown Jewish Education Board said that it gave him very great pleasure to address the parents and children of Newtown on this auspicious occasion - namely, the first Annual Meeting of the Education Board of the Newtown Hebrew School. Some 18 months previously, under the tutorship of Rev. Chodowski about half a dozen pupils commenced their studies, and it was gratifying to know that this number had increased to 42. The majority of these children

had had no previous knowledge of Hebrew. Taking into consideration the short period that had elapsed since the commencement of the School, he considered that the children had made splendid progress, both in Biblical and Hebraic subjects.

He took the opportunity, on behalf of the Board, to express its thanks to the Rev. Chodowski for the keen interest he had taken in this connection; also to the Misses Brann and Z. Solomon, who had in an honorary capacity, assisted the Minister towards the progress of the children. He also thanked the Secretary, and the Treasurer, and the members of the Board for their services rendered during the past year. Prizes were awarded for Hebrew, Reading and Translation, Religion, Scripture, and Good Conduct. Alen Winston, Dux, received the Gold Medal presented by Mr. A. Leber.

The first attempt to teach seniors was made when it was reported that Mr. T. Simons was willing to teach a class of senior Boys and Girls, on Saturday afternoons, and on two evenings a week. The Hon. Secretary asked if the use of the Synagogue could be granted for this purpose; although, Mr. Simons was quite willing to teach the children at his Brother's place, at 166 King Street, Newtown. However, the offer was gratefully accepted, and Mr. Simons was granted the free use of the Synagogue for the class.

The collection of fees was regularised in 1920 when it was decided that the President of the School Board collect the fees and forward them once a month to the Hon. Secretary after entry on cards recommended for the purpose. Later in the year, however, the President raised the matter with the Board again. Mr. Joel Goldberg suggested that money collected as school fees be left in the hands of the School Board, to enable them to have sufficient funds to augment their staff, as at present the staff was inadequate. By consent, the following notice of motion by Mr. A. Leber was taken first, "That the Board of Education of the Newtown Hebrew School shall be an entirely independent body from that of the Board of Management and not a sub-committee." However, this was lost by majority, so the previous proposal was

allowed to lapse. To indicate how seriously the Board took education, Mr. M. Emanuel was appointed on 24th August, 1920, to represent the Synagogue at the forthcoming examinations of the Education Board, and was given written authority to present as credentials.

At the second Annual Meeting and Prize Day in October, 1920 the President again expressed satisfaction at the progress of the Sunday School, but criticised the poor attendances at Sabbath classes. The assistant teachers were Miss Emanuel and Mr. M. Levy, and they were thanked for their assistance.

The Education Board elected that year were Messrs. J. Goldberg President; J. Rosen, Treasurer; P. Wolfson, Inspector; Miss H. Goldberg, Secretary. The Committee men were Messrs. H. Lewis, S. Greene and P. Cohen, and they were to develop and maintain the high standards aimed for, and keep education a vital issue for the next 2 years. In 1922 Mr. M. Marks was the President, and Mr. P. Wolfson, Secretary, and it was found necessary to appoint an assistant teacher, Rev. L. Goran.

Under Rev. B. Lenzer the school continued to progress, but the Board was very dissatisfied with the apathy of parents towards education; but by 1925 the situation had improved.

At a meeting of the Education Board, the President, Mr. L. Gordon, was able to report a very decided improvement in the progress of the children who attended regularly during the past three years. The classes, he told the meeting, had been conducted by Rev. Lenzer, assisted by Mr. L. Goran and Miss E. Lenzer. Examinations had been held on 14th June, when the pupils had been commended by the examiners. The Board desired to place on record its appreciation of the keen interest that had been displayed by Mr. H. Himmelferb, the Inspector of the School, in the educational welfare of the children. Mr. Himmelferb had been in constant attendance at the classes, and had taken infinite care in the training of the young minds. It was also noted that during the year, two

delegates had attended conferences with the New South Wales Board of Jewish Education.

The Chairman went on to say, "We are deeply sensible of the action of the New South Wales Board of Education's action in placing at our disposal the services of their new Headmaster, Mr. Rothfield, and his advice concerning educational welfare."

A total of approximately 60 pupils were attending the various classes; and, on 14th December, because of the necessity of obtaining further accommodation for classes, a new building scheme had been adopted. This year had indeed shown marked improvement in Jewish Education for the children of the Congregation. The election of Officers of the Board of Education, on 13th September of that year 1922 had resulted as follows: President, M. Kline; Vice-President, W. Berkman; Hon. Treasurer, M. Joseph; Hon. Secretary, M. Kossman. Committee: Marcus Marks; S. Greene; H. Klineberg; J. Samuels; L. Corn; A. Lipman and J. Proosav.

From the children attending the school a Boys' choir had been formed and they were encouraged to intone haftorahs. During the year, 15 had done so. The Education Board functioned steadily during the next 15 years with the encouragement of the Synagogue, and progress fluctuated with the fortunes of the Congregation. A dedicated worker for education during this period was Mr. P. Barg an energetic member of the Board and who later became President of the Education Board and a member of the N.S.W. Board of Jewish Education. He made spirited appeals for finance and support, and lost no opportunity to point out the vital importance of Jewish Education for the whole Jewish Community, and of women's influence in home and school. A highlight of his term was the children's Seder Service for the second night Pesach, 1941. It was reported: Those who were there will always remember the occasion. The vestibule of the Synagogue was crowded with congregants and parents of the pupils of the Talmud Torah, and there were also guest children. It was delightful to look at the many happy faces of the children sitting around the well-prepared table of Matzas, eggs, wine, fruit, etc.,

on that night. Officiating leaders were Alex Isman, Norman Stein, A. Hyman and S. Pizem, assisted by pupils of the various classes, and carrying out their duties to perfection. Appropriate addresses were delivered by Rev. Rabinovitch and Mr. P. Barg, President of the Board of Education.

In 1943 the Western Suburbs Board of Education was taken over as a constituent body by the re-organised N.S.W. Board of Jewish Education, but Ministers and other Synagogue personnel were permitted to teach under its supervision, and so Rev. Rabinovitch continued as Headmaster until 1949, when a new teacher was appointed in his place. A drive for more enrolments proved unsuccessful and a serious view was taken of the situation.

Early in 1950, the Western Suburbs Board was disturbed by the fact that the New South Wales Board of Jewish Education, "without advising or consulting" it, had advised all parents of school children that in future the children would attend the Great Synagogue Classes. This meant that the Western Suburbs classes were to be closed down. A meeting of protest, held on February 17, resolved that Mr. Sigalla and Mr. Pizem should approach Mr. Sperling of the Jewish Education Board to ask for an explanation, and to "find out under what conditions the Newtown classes might be re-opened." Strong representations, during the next three months, both personally and by correspondence, were unsuccessful, and the decision was taken to "disaffiliate from the Education Board and to begin independent classes, with the assistance of all the Members of the Board."

In 1952 a new Education Committee was set up. It called a meeting for November 24, when it set out plans for conducting classes. The Committee was to be known as "The Western Suburbs Synagogue Board of Education"; they intended re-affiliating with the New South Wales Jewish Board of Education; their fees would be £25, and they would make themselves responsible for the payment of teachers' salaries and all other expenses. The New South Wales Board of Jewish Education was to supply

them with all books, syllabuses, etc., and to assist the Committee with its work. They hoped, they said, their Board of Management would subsidise any expenses incurred in the carrying out of extra curricula functions concerned with education; also, that it would grant them the sum of £100 to enable classes to be inaugurated immediately. They had decided to discontinue holding their own Communal Seder at Pesach, as it would be "in opposition to that of the Jewish Board of Deputies' Seder." However, when Pesach 1953 came around, a highly successful Children's Seder was organised by the Congregation's Board of Education.

After only six months the Western Suburbs Board of Education was able to report a bank balance of £132 and that Rabbi Swift, the Examiner for the N.S.W. Board of Education, had expressed satisfaction with the progress of the pupils. Steady progress was made. By 1955 the bank balance was £300, and by 1959 the Board was catering for children from Newtown, Marrickville, Croydon, Redfern and Balmain. Parents co-operated well with transport facilities. In 1961 at the instigation of the Western Suburbs Synagogue Board of Education, the question of eight Jewish children attending the Spastic Centre at Mosman was placed before the Federation of Orthodox Synagogues. This brought about a change, in that, first, Rev. Skolnik went out to the Centre at Mosman, then, a lady teacher from the North Shore Synagogue went, to give the children regular lessons.

The school at Newtown continued to function under Rev. Skolnik until he left in 1969 and later under Mr. Dobelsky despite falling attendances and decreases in the number of Jewish families in the area. The Western Suburbs supports the Kol Nidre appeal for Right of Entry Classes to the extent of 25% of the proceeds, and in return the N.S.W. Board of Jewish Education is prepared to assist with syllabuses, material, and staff whenever requested. In order to encourage enrolments and attendances at the school all tuition is given free, fees having been abolished as a special incentive. In 1973 this is the only Hebrew School offering free Jewish Education and free transport.

## 4. THE LADIES' AUXILIARY - A DEDICATED BODY OF WORKERS

From the earliest days of the congregation of the Western Suburbs Synagogue, the ladies played an important part in the development and maintenance of the Synagogue, at first in the homes where the minyanim were held, later in the Oddfellow's Hall, and finally in the Synagogue.

But it was not until 6th June, 1918, the "Eventful Year" that steps were taken to organise the Ladies as an official body, when on the motion of Mr. W. Simons and Mr. M. Emanuel it was resolved to institute a Ladies' Committee. As a result of this a meeting of Ladies was called on 16th July with the object of forming a Ladies' Committee to collect funds for the building of the Synagogue. It may seem surprising today but it was also resolved by the Synagogue Committee that that Committee attend the Ladies' meeting and to give formal permission to them to collect funds.<sup>34</sup>

On 30th July, 1918, the Committee formally came into existence with the immediate objective to raise funds to purchase vestments for the Synagogue. The first office bearers were :-

|           |                                                                                               |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| President | Mrs. J. Selig                                                                                 |
| Treasurer | Miss R. Solomon                                                                               |
| Secretary | Miss M. Sharpe (later Mrs.<br>W. Samuels)                                                     |
| Committee | Mesdames Leber, Chodowski,<br>Davies, Lazaroff, Lewis, Stone,<br>D.J. Solomon and A. Solomon. |

(Miss Solomon served as Treasurer for the next 30 years)

The first Meeting was held at the home of Mrs. A. Selig, Alice Street, Newtown, and subsequent ones at the homes of the various committee members. Records disclose that the Committee was very active in the promotion of functions at which considerable funds were raised, and many gifts were donated. In addition, the Ladies decorated halls, and supplied refreshments at their own various functions and those of the congregation.<sup>35</sup>

At one of the functions £36 was raised and the executive of the Ladies' Committee requested permission to attend the Board Meeting on 30th October, 1918, "as a deputation" to hand over the money for the purpose of plastering the Synagogue, but as a loan - to be refunded to head the proposed "Vestment Fund" at a later date. The money was accepted on those terms, the Ladies receiving a unanimous vote of thanks for their kind efforts.

For the next few months the Ladies Committee was busy with the curtains of the Ark, choosing the colours, obtaining sizes from the Great Synagogue, and with all other decorations of the synagogue in readiness for its consecration, all arrangements having been left in their hands. At the same time they were requested to hold a Ball, which they did with great success - the Library Ball, on 29th July.

Throughout the whole of their existence the Ladies Committee, later called the Ladies' Auxiliary, displayed dedication and an abiding interest in the welfare of the Synagogue. It provided furnishings, carpets, linoleum and other materials, and never failed throughout its whole life to provide the necessary decorations and refreshments for succoth, as Annual Reports year after year eloquently testify. By the end of the year 1919 they were in the position to request the erection of a partition. For their efforts over a period of their first two years, the Board decided to give each Lady on the Committee a complimentary ticket to the function organised to welcome Rabbi Dr. Hertz - a function for which the Ladies did most of the work. At the Annual Meeting they were thanked for raising £77.5.7 by their efforts during the year.

For some time there had been a need for a Ladies' Gallery, - this was the next target of the auxiliary. They organised numerous functions to raise the necessary funds and during 1924 this was built, dedicated and consecrated by Rabbi Cohen with the assistance of Revs. M. Einfeld, B. Lenzer and L. Goran, the Ladies

again distinguishing themselves by their outstanding Synagogue decorations.

During the next five years the same pattern of unselfish devotion was followed under the inspiring leadership of Mrs. Selig, Miss Solomon and Miss Sharpe who spared no effort on behalf of the congregation.<sup>36</sup>

In 1931 the Ladies' Committee suffered a severe loss by the death of Mrs. Sarah Rebecca Selig, relict of the late Mr. Jacob Selig. She had been President of the Committee since its foundation, and had thrown herself without stint into every effort undertaken. Her energy, her enthusiasm and her love of the congregation achieved results and inspired others. Her spirit lived on and the work continued. At the end of the next ten years, in 1941 the Ladies Auxiliary was paid this tribute in the Annual Report - "The Ladies' Auxiliary has organised a number of functions, and the best thanks are due to these ladies under their able Executive, Mrs. H. Chapman, President; Mrs. Rothman and Mrs. D. Pizem, Vice-Presidents; Miss Solomon, Hon. Treasurer; Mrs. Goldman, Hon. Secretary. They continue to carry out the good work done for so many years and it is hoped that all the Ladies of this auxiliary will be long spared to interest themselves in the affairs of the Synagogue."

Later the committee was enlarged to consist of five Vice-Presidents, by the addition of Mesdames I. Rabinovitch, M. Draker and M. Shalitt, and a total of 16 committee women.

The auxiliary arranged regular social functions in the nature of high tea and card parties for some years netting as much as £400 at a time. By 1949 their efforts enabled extensive renovations to the Synagogue to be carried out at a cost of £1,200. When it was not raising money, the auxiliary took charge of the social aspects of synagogue activities such as Kiddushim, visits of celebrities such as the Consul General of Israel, the Israeli Ambassador and the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Israel Brodie, children's parties and so on, and

they were very active until 1952, when activities slowed down to only 4 meetings in the year.<sup>37</sup> In 1955, there was an upward trend, social evenings in homes and other functions yielding much needed funds, never less than £200 for each event.

The Auxiliary always ready to assist in any worthy cause, on occasions combined with other auxiliaries and committees and so helped to uphold the prestige of the Western Suburbs Synagogue. This went on for years. Mrs. Minna Howard succeeded Mrs. Chapman as President and she has carried on the tradition for service with zeal and efficiency. Through her generosity the Youth Centre was equipped in 1961 with its own piano and an amplifying system with record player and microphone. The kitchen was completely furnished with refrigerator, gas stove, cupboards and sink, and the whole project was flourishing.

With the appointment of each new Minister, the activities of the auxiliary increased, each one receiving unselfish loyalty.

The Auxiliary has worked well throughout the 55 years of its existence, and merits the high praise given to it by successive presidents and grateful congregants at large.

## NOTES

1. Originally called L'Avenue.
2. Further information on the site of the Synagogue, "Mikva Yisrael," at No. 60 Druitt Street, Sydney on the North Side:
 

In 1880, 60 Druitt Street was a Grocery Shop, owned by Adolphus G. Heighway.

In 1882, 60 Druitt Street was a Jewish Synagogue.

In 1883-4 60 Druitt Street was entered in Sand's Directory as 'Synagogue.'

In 1885-6 60 Druitt Street was Open-All-Night Refuge, Thomas De Gray, Caretaker.

In 1887 there was no entry concerning 60 Druitt Street.

In 1888 60 Druitt Street was occupied by Weekes and Backhouse, Saddlers.

When the Congregation eventually disbanded, presumably during the 1890's, its Minute Books, Correspondence, etc., disappeared, together with the Chuppa, Reading Desk, the Book Case which was used as the Ark, as well as the two Brass Candlesticks, the Yod and the Besummin Box. The two Sefri Torah are now at the Newtown Synagogue. There could be people in the Community, today, who had parents who were married there, or were members. This Congregation, "Mikweh Israel," was a fore-runner of the Newtown Congregation. It is known that leading members of the Congregation Trustees were Mr. Jacob Selig, Mr. Zion, who was the Treasurer, and held something over £300 in a bank account since 1892, and Mr. H.H. Solomon; as well as a number of other Newtown residents.

It is understood that the Rev. A.D. Wolinski was brought from Victoria to be the Minister of the Congregation. (By 1890, he with his family, was living in the residence above the Great Synagogue). Before that, he lived in Park Road, opposite Moore Park.

## 3. SOME NOTES ON THE BARON DE HIRSCH MINYAN

The Baron De Hirsch Minyan, which used to meet in a room at the back of Quinn's Boot Shop, in a lane behind the Chrystal Palace, had been formed by 'foreign' Jews who preferred their own way of praying to that of the local style of Services. Later, the Minyan met at a home in Surry Hills. Dr. D. Cohen of Macquarie University would remember something of the Minyan, as his mother was a member of the congregation, and took an active part in its promotion. Mr. Norman Esserman, now of Kew in Victoria, recalls that upon the death of his father in 1925, the books, ledgers, etc., were destroyed. The three Scrolls were given on 'permanent loan' to the Central Synagogue, upon its inauguration. Mr. Esserman does not remember that any Minutes were kept of the Baron de Hirsch Minyan. He recalls that this Minyan continued for something over 20 years from the early years of this century.

## NOTES (CONT.)

4. Mr. Wolfson recalls with indignation the Sabbath 'Tshuva', in the year 1903, when he, together with other worshippers such as Messrs. Jacob Selig, Jacob Sugerman, Henry Cohen, Harris Cohen, Shaya Weingott, Leon and Joel Goldberg, arrived at the Oddfellows' Hall for the Service to find that the floor had been cleared, with all the chairs pushed back against walls, the Sifrei Torah rudely removed from the book-case which served as the Ark, and the Reading Desk removed to another room. On the floor was strewn saw-dust. They were informed that a Dog Show was to be held in the room. Mr. Jacob Selig was so angry, he vowed that they would immediately plan to obtain their own building. He said, "The time has come for us to stop being dependent on premises which were never intended for a Synagogue, anyway."
5. A deputation of three gentlemen called on Rabbi Cohen of the Great Synagogue to request his support for the project in Newtown. Rabbi Cohen expressed grave doubts regarding the wisdom of their embarking on such an ambitious project at this stage, but when he heard how much money was already in hand, he admitted that they would probably be able to manage it.
6. 10th August, 1918, Notice of Motion by J. Goldberg fixing fees. "That on and after 1st September, 1918, the subscription for membership be as follows: Gents, £3.3.0; £2.12.0., £2.2.0. Ladies, £1.1.0. And that seat holders applying for seats now will not be called upon to pay higher rates at any future date."  
One amendment was; sixpence per week up to £3.3.0, and Honorary members £1.1.0 (W. Simons) and another, Gents from 30/-, Honorary members £1.1.0 (M. Owen). After much discussion the further amendments by M. Owen were carried. The Newtown Congregation became known as "the Synagogue with the lowest subscription rates." However, with the pressures of changing times, and the incurring of heavy financial commitments, in later years, it became necessary to revise the policy of "no higher rates at any future date."
7. Inscribed silver trowels were presented to Rabbi Cohen and Mr. Isaac Levy (Trustee).
8. 3rd March, 1918. Mrs. Grossman and M. Jorden applied to enter the Jewish faith. It was decided that they be interviewed by the President and Rev. Chodowski, and if "in order," to comply. But at the meeting on 17th March, despite a favourable report the President stated that "nothing can be done as there is no BethDin, here." They were advised to apply to the Great Synagogue.
9. Rev. Chodowski's name was to be placed on one Foundation Stone, the President's on the other.

## NOTES (CONT.)

10. The late Mr. Henry Cohen with Mr. Jacob Selig and Mr. Abraham Solomon convened the first minyan in Newtown. He helped to raise funds for the building and left a bequest of £300 to complete it.
11. As a result of an interview with the architect, Mr. Levy announced to the meeting "The Building wants pulling down." Mr. W. Simons commented "The rottenest job I ever saw. The walls will not hold without buttresses, which have so far been omitted." Mr. W. Berkman spoke on similar lines. The meeting was further informed that "the Clerk of Works has been dismissed, and with the aid of Messrs. I. Levy and W. Berkman, a P.N. for £25 has been obtained on demand from the aforementioned gentleman." After this, Mr. Kleinberg proposed that Messrs. I. Levy, W. Simons and H.H. Solomons be empowered to interview Mr. Morrow, Architect, with the idea of obtaining from him an estimate for finishing the building.
12. Mr. L.R. Wilson made a journey to London, and offered to bring back with him, as a gift for the new Synagogue, a Sepher Torah and Paraphernalia.
13. It was suggested at the December meeting, 1918, that the Bank be asked to advance £300 on the building as a second mortgage. Mr. W. Berkman then offered to advance the Building Fund the £300, free of interest for the first year, and at 5% for the next two years, as a second mortgage on the Synagogue Building. This matter was duly considered, and a lively discussion ensued, but no agreement was reached. Six months later when it was proposed to call a General Meeting to consider a second Mortgage, it was stated that £615 was needed. Mr. Wolfson agreed to guarantee £50, Mr. D.J. Solomon, £100 and Mr. W. Berkman the difference.
14. On 31st October, 1919, Mr. W. Berkman was presented with an Illuminated Address by the President, Mr. Wolfson, on behalf of the members and Board of Management. It bore testimony of the valuable services Mr. Berkman had rendered in forwarding the completion of the Synagogue Building, and for his presentation of the Ark, on behalf of his wife and himself.
15. On Sunday, 18th June, 1922 the death of Mr. Jacob Selig occurred at his residence, 100 Alice Street, Newtown, removing from their midst one of the oldest and best known of the communal workers. The old Druitt Street Synagogue, had previously had Mr. Selig as a member and a worker, and he was a Trustee until its effects were finally handed over to Newtown Congregation. For the past thirty years, both Mr. and Mrs. Selig had been indefatigable workers for a Synagogue in Newtown, and it was his greatest joy that he had lived to see it an

## NOTES (CONT.)

accomplished fact. He was survived by a widow and a large family of sons and daughters.

16. Mr. P.J. Marks accepted the position of Honorary Solicitor to the Congregation in November, 1912, to start a long and valued association with the Western Suburbs Synagogue, for 29 years. At the Annual General Meeting for 1941, to mark his recent death a silence of one minute was observed in his memory, and as a mark of appreciation for the help he had given over the years.
17. Mr. Harris Cohen a member of the original Board prior to 1903, died in 1913. On the death of his widow, Mrs. Reike Cohen, the legacy of £2,500 was received.
18. Mr. H.H. Solomon, the Matzo Baker, an office bearer for many years, Mr. J. Selig, son of the President of the Ladies' Auxiliary, Mr. J.J. Leonard, Bombala, and Mrs. L. Kensell, Liverpool had all passed away.
19. In 1950 finances improved from legacies : £1,000 from Mr. Percy Marks, £500 Miss Hilda Marks, Queen Competition £1000.
20. Mr. M. Sigalla resigned after two years as Secretary of the Synagogue, end of 1952.
21. 1953. Mr. J.D. Pizem, President for 15 years, was nominated the Synagogue's first Patron.
22. Mr. & Mrs. Stein, Mr. & Mrs. M. Wassner, Mr. & Mrs. I. Kacen, Mr. & Mrs. J. Harwitch were particularly active in making their homes available. There were many others, too, who gave homes and hospitality, particularly for education.
23. November, 1917. Letter from Mr. G. Cohen applying to be married. Mr. W. Simons moved that whenever an application for marriage is received, it would be advisable to enquire from the Great Synagogue if "same is in order," and to find out if a previous application had not been made to them, and rejected. It was decided that all applications for marriage be considered by the Board of Management.
24. It was thought that Rev. Chodowski would stay on for £4.10.0 a week, but the opinion was expressed that "we cannot afford to keep a minister."
25. On 16th December, 1919, permission was sought from the Board of Management of the Great Synagogue for "Newtown's Minister to officiate at funerals of members of the Congregation, when the relatives so desired.

## NOTES (CONT.)

26. For the Chief Rabbi's visit it was decided that a conversazione be held at Sargents, Market Street, provided the price did not exceed that quoted, 2/- per head. Professor C. Sauer was in charge of the arrangements for music and entertainment. 350 complimentary tickets were printed. Among the recipients were all the clergy and the Ladies' Committee. Total expenses for catering, illuminated address, printing expenses, cartage, etc. amounted to £43.0.2 leaving a balance in hand of £7.16.10.
27. The Rev. Leopold Goran was born in Lithuania in 1893, and, died at Strathfield, N.S.W. in August, 1960, at the age of 67 years. He grew up and studied in Lithuania, and when at the age of 18 years, he went with his parents to England, he was a proficient scholar in religion and, was able to converse fluently in 7 languages, including, Russian, English and Hebrew.
- At the age of 19 years, Leopold Goran married, and when war broke out in 1914, he enlisted, and became one of the 'Old Contemptibles'. He was gassed, and, because of his health, was advised to leave England and go to Australia. Early in 1920, with his wife and the four of their children who had been born in England, the Rev. Goran left to take up the position of Minister of the Hobart Hebrew Congregation, in Tasmania. Here, another child was born, and in 1922, he was called to the Newtown Synagogue in New South Wales.
- The Goran family lived in Sydney, then, until 1928, by which time there were 4 girls and 3 boys. Then, the Rev. Goran was appointed Minister of the Ballarat Congregation, until a Synagogue was built at Carlton, in Melbourne, and he became its first Minister.
- After he left the Carlton Congregation, he became a Teacher at the Talmud Torah in Rathdown Street, North Carlton, until he retired, temporarily - for 10 years. During these 10 years, he wrote, successfully, short stories and plays, and an unpublished manuscript of a full length book on life in Russia and Lithuania. A series of 13 or 14 plays, under the title of "The Old Curiosity Shop by the Grand Canal," was broadcast over radio.
- In 1940, he tried to join the Army, but, if was found that his health would not permit his going into active service, so he became an interpreter. Later, he was employed by the "Sydney Morning Herald" to listen-in on his short-wave radio to news from Russia, then, translate this for their news department.
- After the war, he became the Minister at the old Florence Street, Strathfield, Synagogue, where he remained until his death in August, 1960. There is a permanent exhibition of his Military Awards and other materials relating to his life and work, in a room at the old Synagogue at Strathfield.
- Today, his widow is living at the Montefiore Home at Hunter's Hill, two of his sons, Toby and Phillip, live in Sydney - the latter at 44 Old South Head Road, Vaucluse, from whom more information is available, and two daughters, Mrs. Dan Bloom

## NOTES (CONT.)

from whom the above was obtained, lives in Bellevue Hill.

28. Rabbi Cohen addressing the gathering, handed Mr. Goran a wallet of notes on behalf of the Newtown Congregation. The Great Synagogue sent a cheque, too, in appreciation of his services.
29. On 20th June, 1930, the Committee of the Board of Management and also the Education Board gave a farewell evening to Rev. Rabbi Cohen and Mrs. Cohen at the Shakespeare Hotel, prior to their departure abroad. Rabbi Cohen was presented with an Illuminated Address and a travelling case, and Mrs. Cohen with a diamond and platinum wristlet watch.
30. The first barmitzvah boy was Leon Rosenthal (1920) present Publicity Officer and member of the Board of Management. Among others of "fifty years ago" were the late Judge Aaron Levine (1923), Phillip Klineberg, Edgar Newman, Sir Asher Joel and the late Judge Sam Ross all of whom later made a contribution to the contemporary life of their day. A later one (1930) was Sam Cohen, now Dep. Vice Chancellor of Macquarie University and a member of the Newtown Board of Management.
31. Mrs. Chapman, President of the Ladies' Auxiliary, became very ill and tendered her resignation which was not accepted. She was given unlimited leave of absence.
32. With Strathfield, Parramatta and Illawarra congregations.
33. 1953. Mr. M. Nurack, Minister for Israel welcomed to the Synagogue.
34. At the Meeting held on 25th November, 1918, a discussion arose regarding the legality of tickets being sold without the authority of the Committee. The Secretary refused permission to sell tickets unless the Committee was represented at the financial discussions regarding the forthcoming Concert. It was agreed to appoint Mr. Berkman to sit in on such meetings. But, Mr. Berkman stated that the Ladies had promised to notify him when they would be holding their next meeting, and they would request his attendance. However, he had not yet heard from them, so he "would not move further in the matter, at this stage." Mr. H.H. Solomon said that he understood that the Ladies "are not prepared to go on with the affair unless they are permitted to do what they like."
35. 31st October, 1919, it was decided by the Board that in future the cleaning of the Synagogue would be under the supervision of the Ladies' Committee.
36. Rabbi I. Freedman of Western Australia occupied the pulpit on 29th November, 1926, and delivered an address to a large

NOTES (CONT)

congregation. The President of the Great Synagogue, Mr. Orwell Phillips, and Colonel. A.W. Hyman accompanied him to Newtown.

37. In September, 1949, Mr. & Mrs. Yehuda Harry Levine, Consul General of Israel for Australia and New Zealand, and Mr. Gabriel Doran, Ambassador for Israel, and Mrs. Doran attended a Communal Kiddush.

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