

# AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL



VOL. XXVI 2024



PART 4

# AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

The Australian Jewish Historical Society was founded in Sydney in August 1938. The Victorian Branch of the Society was founded in 9 August 1954, and incorporated in 1989 as AJHS-Vic. A Branch also exists in Canberra and Western Australia has its own Jewish Historical Society.

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

The Journal is edited and published by an Editorial Committee whose members are:

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**Victoria:** Dr Hilary L. Rubinstein, OAM, BA(Hons) MS, PhD, FRHistS (Editor); William D. Rubinstein, OAM, BA, MA, PhD, FAHA, FASSA, FRHistS; and Gavin Silbert, QC, BA, LLB (Hons), LLM (London), BCL (Oxon) (ex officio as Vic. Society president).

A complete list of the Society's office-bearers is printed on both sides of back cover.

The Editors welcome suggestions for articles and manuscripts dealing with any aspect of the history of the Jewish people in Australia. The Journal is national in coverage and deals with the whole sweep of Australian Jewish history from 1788 to the contemporary period.

Material submitted for publication in the Journal should be sent as a Microsoft Word attachment. References should be in the form of endnotes rather than footnotes. Illustrations should NOT be embedded in the text but each be sent as a separate PDF file. No payment can be offered for any contribution. No handwritten submissions will be accepted. Please check the website listed below for more details on the Journal Style Guide: <https://www.ajhs.com.au/ajhs-style-guide/>

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Front cover: Rabbi Apple by Robert Hannaford, 2003, painting commissioned to mark Rabbi Apple's thirty years at The Great Synagogue and exhibited in the Archibald Prize competition in that year.

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The last eight months have been the most challenging period in recent Jewish history, encompassing Israel in the war against Hamas in Gaza and the unofficial war with Hezbollah along Israel's northern border with Lebanon. At the same time, the devastating pogrom of 7 October 2023 in Israel has led to a tsunami of anti-Israel rhetoric across the globe, starting in Australia almost immediately after that attack, with the Sydney Opera House rally on 9 October – so that the victim quickly became the accused. It is against this troubling background that I have worked on this year's *Journal* – trying to focus on Australian Jewish history, while at the same time drawing on that historical knowledge to challenge the haters.

Against this tragic backdrop, the Society also lost a key stalwart and patron of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Inc in New South Wales. Rabbi Dr Rabbi Raymond Apple, z'l, has been a tower of strength to the Historical Society in New South Wales since he assumed the mantle of Senior Rabbi of the Great Synagogue in 1972. However, his connections to the Society go much further back. He was associated with the foundation of the Victorian Branch of the Society and already published articles for the *Journal* in the 1950s. Thus, his legacy with Australian Jewish history spans over 70 years. His passing leaves a hole that will be difficult to fill. This *Journal* opens with the tributes which were paid to Rabbi Apple at a special gathering held at the Great Synagogue on 22 February this year, which was packed for the memorial event. By publishing these tributes in the *Journal*, they will be available for posterity.

Since his retirement and making *Aliyah* to Israel, Rabbi Apple was a prolific contributor to the *Journal*. Every year without fail, I would receive an article from him, and on occasion two different articles. Given that I have a policy of only publishing one article per contributor each year, he sometimes also published articles in the Victorian November *Journal* as well. Following his passing, I found I still had an unpublished article from him – his piece on Rabbi Isaac (Isidor) Amber Bernstein.

Knowing that this will be the last article I shall publish from him makes me realise how much he has contributed to our Jewish history over the years, and how much I shall miss his yearly offerings. We will all be the poorer without him. May his memory be for a blessing.

Whilst Rabbi Apple concentrated on a minister who did not have a direct connection with the Great Synagogue, Dr Jana Vytrhlik has written about the background to the portrait of Esther Johnson (nee Abrahams), the provenance of which was not known. The portrait is housed in the Great Synagogue as part of its invaluable portrait collection. Dr Vytrhlik is the honorary curator of the Great Synagogue collection and was curious to see what she could find out about this iconic portrait. Her article describes that journey and her important discoveries.

From the time when, according to the biblical story, Abraham purchased the Cave of Machpelah, issues of Jewish burial have played an important part in our history. Jewish cemeteries are full of stories and reveal a lot about different burial practices over the centuries. Across Europe there are cemeteries that were decimated by the Nazis – some have been restored, but many lie in ruins. In Australia it is a different story, but cemeteries fall into disrepair as the Jewish inhabitants in a regional area move to bigger Jewish centres. To ensure that they are maintained, heritage listing is required. Both Maitland and Goulburn are the only extant Jewish cemeteries which were established on private land. While Maitland has obtained heritage listing, that was for many years not the case of Goulburn. The article by Chris Beveridge and Gary Luke is based on the report they wrote when applying for heritage status for the Goulburn Jewish Cemetery. Their submission was successful and Goulburn Jewish Cemetery is now on the State Heritage Register, and a Conservation Management Plan is in the final stage of preparation, assisted by a government grant from Heritage NSW. This is a positive story because it has enabled effective preservation of one of the still extant regional Jewish cemeteries in Australia.

Another key aspect of Australian Jewish history relates to the immigration and trading networks that led to the development of the community. Indeed, chain migration is a central part of this story. In her article 'The Lives of Simcha Stone and Samuel Krantz, their Children and Grandchildren', Marilyn Aminuddin discusses the migration and contribution of two key families, the Stone and Krantz families. Both

Simcha Stone and Samuel Krantz were born in the Russian Pale of Settlement and between them they had 20 children. Their migration stories are complex, but intersect in Broken Hill, with Krantz's contributions there being discussed in the history of the community in *Jews of the Outback*.<sup>1</sup> This article demonstrates the challenges and contributions to both Jewish and general life in Australia of Jews who sought to escape the antisemitism of Eastern Europe and to create a new life in the Antipodes, as well as the history of their extended families.

Moving to the mid-twentieth century, Dr Rodney Gouttman discusses the contributions of Dr Michael Traub, a Zionist emissary who arrived in Australia in September 1941 to fundraise for the Palestine Foundation Fund (*Keren HaYesod*). At the time, Zionism was a fringe movement, with the majority of Australian Jewry being very Anglicised and critical of Zionism because of the conflict of the *Yishuv* (the Jewish settlement in Mandatory Palestine) with the British authorities. This conflict had intensified over the period of the Arab Revolt of 1936–39. Sir Isaac Isaacs, who served as the first Australian-born governor general from 1931–36, was a leading opponent of Zionism. He expressed strong concerns about dual loyalty as well as about the local Arab population's violent resistance to Jewish settlement and during the early war years the pages of the *Hebrew Standard of Australia* were filled with his strong criticisms of Zionism, repeated by editor Alfred Harris. Despite this opposition and negative prognosis, Dr Gouttman describes how Dr Traub managed to fundraise successfully over the eighteen months that he was in Australia, travelling across Australia as well as contributing to the local Jewish communities where he visited.

Finally, I am republishing my chapter on the history of the Jewish magazine, *The Bridge*, in the Festschrift published in 2005 in honour of the late Professor Alan Crown. This was a project with which Professor Crown was deeply involved. The editor, Hyman Brezniak, was a very controversial character because of his close association with the Communist Party of Australia. He had been involved with the earlier publication, *Unity*, and the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Antisemitism. When the Council's leadership refused to acknowledge Soviet antisemitism, it was disaffiliated from the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies with a very acrimonious separation. When the first issue of *The Bridge* was published, the late Isi Leibler was extremely critical of the publication, again resulting in acrimonious correspondence.

It is interesting to note that Dr Max Kaiser, historian of *Unity*, is the co-CEO of the Jewish Council of Australia – a left-wing, anti-Israel organisation that follows a deeply dissenting line from the mainstream Australian Jewish community. It is possibly no coincidence that they took the name ‘Jewish Council’. However, when the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Antisemitism was formed in 1942, it was mainstream and Kaiser’s grandfather, Walter Lippmann, was a member. When the split happened in 1952, Lippmann left the Council, as recently discussed by Philip Mendes.<sup>2</sup>

In the book review section, two deal with Jewish women who were pathbreakers. Helena Rubinstein was in the business world in the field of cosmetics. Her Australian story is dealt with by Angus Trumble and reviewed by Ruth Lilian. Dr Fanny Reading contributed to the world of medicine as one of the early women to graduate from medicine and as a feminist creating the National Council of Jewish Women in Australia, whose biography is written by Dr Anne Sarzin and reviewed by Helen Bersten. Both Helena and Dr Fanny were born in Eastern Europe, and both sought new lives in far-off Australia, Helena arriving as a young woman and Dr Fanny as a child aged four after her father had gone ahead to establish himself in the new world before the family joined him.

Linda Margolin Royal’s book, reviewed by Helen Bersten, takes the reader into the role that Chuine Sugihara played in the rescue of Jews from Kaunas, Lithuania, through a fictional account, based on the true story of her grandparents. Her book seeks to highlight the issue of transgenerational trauma after the Holocaust. In the novel the key protagonist, Rachel, who is born after the Holocaust, is brought up as a non-Jew and only later learns of her Jewish heritage and her grandparents’ escape from Nazi Europe thanks to Sugihara’s visas. This fictional account contrasts with Freda Hodge’s book, *Survival and Sanctuary*, which is reviewed by Dr Kip Green, and gives the historical testimony of seven survivors who finally found sanctuary in Melbourne.

All four books reviewed in this issue of the *Journal* highlight how Australia has proved to be a sanctuary for so many Jews escaping European antisemitism and persecution or surviving the Holocaust – in the case of Helena Rubinstein and Dr Fanny Reading during the Tsarist period, and in Royal’s ‘factional’ account and Hodge’s true story of Jewish survivors who migrated to this lucky land after the Holocaust.



In addition to the significant loss of Rabbi Dr Apple, the Society also lost another stalwart – Dr Anthony Joseph – who for many years was our United Kingdom representative and corresponding member. His son, Harry, has written his obituary and Helen Bersten has added a note about Dr Joseph's connections to the Historical Society. As well, Peter Winterton has written a moving and comprehensive obituary of Harry Hoffman, child Holocaust survivor and key contributor with his wife Sylvia to Perth's Jewish community and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as well as many other charitable causes.

Finally, Peter Philippsohn's president's report for 2023 is included. He has outlined the extensive expansion of the Society's activities, including constant and substantial upgrading of our website and archives, the latter thanks to the professionalism of our full-time archivist, Sabrina Elias and Jeff Schneider who runs the website.

Once again, I would like to thank wholeheartedly my *Journal* subcommittee without whose assistance this issue could not have been produced. I would like to thank Helen Bersten for all her ongoing assistance both in the subediting and in supplying information and references. Sue Davis has assisted with the proof reading. I feel that it is very important that we have members of the next generation involved as we retire from the editorial committee and will keep working to bring in younger people. I would also like to thank my Melbourne colleague, Dr Hilary Rubinstein, editor of the Victorian issue, for her assistance and collegiality. I hope you enjoy reading this collection of articles and continue to support our important historical research and writing.

Suzanne D. Rutland

## Endnotes

1. Suzanne D. Rutland, Leon Mann and Margaret Price (eds), *Jews of the Outback: The Centenary of the Broken Hill Synagogue 1910–2010*, Melbourne, Hybrid Publishers, 2010, p. 26.
2. Philip Mendes, 'The Jewish Council(s) of Australia, Part 2, Times of Israel Blog, 20 May 2024, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-jewish-councils-of-australia-part-2/>. Accessed 21 May 2024.

## TRIBUTES TO RABBI DR RAYMOND APPLE AO RFD AT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE HELD AT THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE, 22 FEBRUARY 2024, Z'L

*Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton, Chief Minister of The Great Synagogue*

Rabbi Apple loved *tefilla*, Jewish liturgy. He enjoyed writing prayers, preparing guides to the service and planning special occasions such as this one. He arranged the memorial service for his predecessor, Rabbi Porush, in 1991, and now over 30 years later we have gathered to pray for the soul of Rabbi Apple and pay our tributes to him. As I selected and read through the psalms we have just recited, I thought how appropriate they are for this occasion:

The teaching of the Lord is his delight, and he studies  
that teaching day and night.

He is like a tree ... whose foliage never fades

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely  
I have a delightful inheritance

'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue  
him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.  
He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with  
him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With  
long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.'

Rabbi Apple was a constant student and teacher of Torah, from the bookshelves of Melbourne University Library religion section that he worked his way through as a student, to a pile of Jewish books that he read on the deck of the ship that carried him from Australia to his training at Jews' College in London, to the weekly instalments of *Oz Torah* that are still appearing. That passion did not fade in old age. Although he slowed down physically, he retained his intellectual vitality and continued to write on classic and contemporary issues to the end. I always knew that any email I sent him would receive a swift, precise, informative and helpful reply.

As he told his last *Neilah* service as Rabbi in 2004, he was grateful to God 'for casting my lines in pleasant places'. He was happy at The Great Synagogue, for its ethos and traditions and for the wider role it encouraged. He worked hard, very hard in fact, for his 32 years here, as he had done during his thirteen years in the Bayswater and Hampstead Synagogues, and as he continued to do after retirement.

God saw his dedication to *avodat hakodesh*, his sacred work, and rewarded him with long life, with honour, and ultimately what was most important to him, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren following in the way of Torah and *mitzvot*.

Rabbi Apple was not destined for the rabbinate. His parents were *shule-goers* at St Kilda in Melbourne, but not *Shomer Shabbat*. Under the influence of mentors, especially Dr Samuel Billigheimer and his own inclinations, he adopted full *halachic* observance. As a university student in Arts and Law he started teaching others. He left for England in 1958 and it became clear over the next two years that he was set for a career in the pulpit.

The early Rabbi Apple, Rev Apple as he was in those days, was formed by a series of rabbinic models. Rabbi Jacob Danglow of St Kilda remained an exemplar of a dignified minister who gave thoughtful sermons. In London, Chief Rabbi Brodie, Dr Isidore Epstein, Rabbi Kopul Kahana and others, represented the different elements of the ideal rabbi, both more modern and more traditional, as teachers and as preachers. In his early positions he showed his energy and imagination. He started a range of initiatives for all ages at Bayswater between 1960 and 1965 and at Hampstead between 1965 and his appointment here in 1972.

It was during this period that Rabbi Jonathan Sacks came under his mentorship. Rabbi Apple officiated at Rabbi Sacks's wedding because, as Rabbi Sacks wrote, 'Elaine and I knew that he was a very special human being. More than anyone else he cared for Jewish students. He spoke our language. He was accessible, understanding, generous and wise. We loved him then. We love him now'.

That reveals a side to Rabbi Apple which is different to the more formal and reserved image often associated with him, but which was always revealed to those he mentored throughout his time in Sydney, the youngsters he took under his wing, the people who saw him in informal moments. He certainly felt that he had left The Great warmer, friendlier and less starchy than he'd found it. Rabbi Porush believed the

same about himself too, and both can be correct, if we compare what they inherited and what they bequeathed.

When Rabbi Apple arrived in Australia, all the major rabbis of the community shared his style of dress, of speech, of attitude. They followed the ideal of the cultured western European rabbi. Some of the young rabbis present at the end of his career had rejected this model of *Torah Im Derech Eretz*, a combination of Jewish and wider culture and a religiously motivated engagement with the world. Rabbi Apple was aware of this and wryly contrasted their disapproving attitude with their continued and continual requests for his help and advice, which he gave generously, and which often solved their problems. He did share with the new generation a preference for the rabbi as scholar and teacher over the old Anglo-Jewish model of pastor and functionary.

In Sydney his courage showed itself. In his last *Neilah* sermon at Hampstead, he had been booed for calling for the end to their mixed choir. The choir here became all male at his insistence a year after he arrived. At the same time, as someone who was guided both by *halacha* and an inclusive ethos, he greatly expanded the role of women within the synagogue, most notably the Shabbat morning individual *bat mitzvah*, women on the Executive and through his support of the Sydney Women's Tefillah Group. He made other major changes at The Great Synagogue; he introduced the Priestly Blessing and Israeli pronunciation into services.

Is there a paradox here? Was Rabbi Apple a traditionalist or a progressive? In a sense he was both. He was a Jewish religious leader at a time of transformative change. Sydney and Sydney Jewry altered more between his arrival and his retirement than in any other period of a similar length. When it came to substance, Rabbi Apple did not fear change. As well as his innovations within the synagogue, he pioneered and championed Aboriginal reconciliation, interfaith dialogue with Muslims as well as Christians and he publicly favoured a Republic in the 1990s. That is because although his external forms remained traditional, and he loved and upheld the dignities, decorum and historic practices of The Great Synagogue, inside he possessed a marked progressive streak.

As someone raised in the 1940s, trained in the 1950s and who found his rabbinic style in the 1960s and 1970s, by the early twenty-first century, he was bound to reflect the world in which he was formed,

even as he helped to create the new world that we have inherited. What insights into both worlds we have lost now he is gone.

Rabbi Apple kept himself amazingly busy. I think he was addicted to work, and he, and we, have Marian Apple and their children to thank for his scope to do that work. Within The Great Synagogue he was a totally involved rabbinic leader. In any document relating to the Synagogue and its running, his handwriting is literally all over it. He was passionate about the Education Centre, the Falk Library and the AM Rosenblum Museum. There were streams of booklets, and of course all the namings, marriages, funerals, and services week in and week out. His congregational efforts were not confined to the Synagogue building, but included his home, in his family surroundings. He was steadfastly supported by loyal colleagues, especially Rev Gluck, Rabbi Belfer and Rabbi Kastel, and responsible and hard-working Boards.

Outside the Synagogue he was involved in a blizzard of organisations, the Jewish Board of Deputies and the ECAJ, the Australian Jewish Historical Society, the Sydney Beth Din, military and police chaplaincy, the universities, Mandelbaum House, the BJE, the State and national rabbinical associations, interfaith bodies, freemasons and more. In what spare time he had, he wrote. His copious writings on history and Torah will be a lasting legacy.

What did Rabbi Apple achieve? He found The Great Synagogue large and strong and he left it large and strong. He guided many individuals, from a member who needed help to heads of government and state. He made a huge contribution to very many organisations, but ultimately his contribution was less formal. He said in that *Neilah* sermon in 2004:

I have tried to build not edifices but attitudes, not buildings but bridges, not institutions but ethics. If Australians and Australian Jews are a little saner and more tolerant because I happened to be here, then I am content.

We can answer that his efforts were successful, through ceaseless restatement of the ideas he believed in most: truth, tolerance, respect, integrity, dignity, reason and faith, he made his impact. He should be content, and we should be grateful.

*Yehi zichro baruch.* May the memory of Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple, Morenu Harav Betzalel ben Chaim Yitzchak, be a blessing and more importantly may it continue to be our guide.

### **Rabbi David Rogut OAM on behalf of the Rabbinate**

The Talmud in the volume Sanhedrin makes a powerful statement, ‘*chaval al di'avdin velo mishtakchin*’ – ‘woe to a world, to a country, to a congregation which loses a great leader’ – for it is so very difficult to find a replacement.

We are gathered here tonight to pay tribute to our beloved and distinguished Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple who graced this synagogue for very many years. On my arrival in Sydney in 1975, to lead the North Shore Synagogue, I had the privilege of establishing a wonderful rapport with Rabbi Apple, both on a personal level and as a revered colleague. Rabbi Apple was a kind gentleman, ever ready to help anyone seeking his guidance. He was a loyal colleague who inspired his many co-workers and always observed strict confidentiality in all his deliberations.

Rabbi Apple and I were *dayanim* [judges] of the Beth Din for 36 years. He was a role model, always seeking to accommodate the needs of the community within the strict letter of the *halacha*. He was one of the founders of the Kashrut Authority which continues to provide outstanding services to New South Wales Jewry under the leadership of Rabbi Gutnick. Rabbi Apple served as president of the New South Wales Rabbinate followed by the Leadership of the federal Rabbinate. He was the uncrowned Chief Rabbi of Australasia.

Rabbi Apple is no more but he leaves a great vacuum in all our lives. On behalf of the Australian Rabbinate, we wish Marion and family strength in this challenging time.

May the dear soul of Rabbi Apple be bound up in the bond of eternal life.

### **Rosalind Fischl OAM on behalf of the lay leaders of The Great Synagogue**

#### ***Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple AO RFD***

The post nominals, while impressive, give little insight into the fullness of the character of Rabbi Apple, now of blessed memory. Erudite scholars have spoken about his achievements within his own congregation and his efforts for the betterment of the broader community of the Australian people. My aim is to reveal Raymond Apple, the person, with whom I had the privilege of working for eleven of my sixteen years on the Board of The Great Synagogue. In order to fulfil this role, I have enlisted the help of my colleagues, former president and a member of

the Board, who have contributed their own experiences working alongside our late esteemed Senior Rabbi.

Norton Whitmont, former president and life member of the Board, recalls the time Rabbi and Marian arrived with their young family to take the place of Rabbi Dr Israel Porush, who had dominated Australian Jewry for the previous 25 years.

By contrast here was a young local rabbi, shy and engaging, with a bunch of young children, bringing a fresh approach to this august role.

In the fullness of time Rabbi Apple became the reference point, not only for the Jewish community, but for every government in Australia.

He became the confidant of politicians of every persuasion.

He played a pivotal role in interfaith communication and cooperation.

He was the driving force behind the Australian Jewish Historical Society and was intimately involved in the organisation and preservation of the Rabbi Falk Library.

Rabbi Apple was the quiet guiding hand of many organisations. He sought no recognition for this important role.

At the conclusion of his time of service to the congregation, he had reached the status of a sage – while still being quiet, unassuming, modest, and very approachable.

Former President David Newman gave a eulogy for Rabbi Apple at Lodge Mark Owen recently. He said:

There is so much to say about the man, but in retrospect I was blessed to have worked with him, gained from his intellect, and learnt from his diplomacy.

Former President, now Synagogue Governor, Jake Selinger says:

Rabbi Apple was always impressive.

His intellect and knowledge of history, religion, contemporary politics and interfaith issues belied the fact that he was by nature quite shy.

During my presidency when the tragedy of losing our younger son David struck our family in January 2001, although he was in Israel, Rabbi Apple spent a considerable amount of his time giving support. As well, he offered himself as teacher for our son Ben's Bar Mitzvah, going way beyond what other teachers normally do.

At the time Sue's father was very ill so Rabbi suggested bringing a *Sefer Torah* to Sue's parents' home, where he organised a *minyan* and conducted a *mincha* service so that Ben's grandfather could hear his grandson *leining* from the Torah. That for me that was the mark of a real *mensch*, a truly great man, whose kindness and compassion in our time of need will never be forgotten.

Board member Avril Symon recalls from her regular meetings with Rabbi Apple his keen interest and knowledge of the synagogue's textile collection. Avril was also chair of the Education Committee and noted that Rabbi was able to communicate to all. She commented:

He could articulate ideas with fluency and humour and was pragmatic and honest in his answers to questions. He was devoted to the production of the *Oz Torah* weekly teachings which he developed in the latter part of his term with TGS, and which have continued long after.

My portfolios as a Board member covered a wide range of duties, but most rewarding were those working with Rabbi to enhance the role and participation of women. I found him to be a wise and willing mentor, always calm and approachable even when he was extremely busy.

Rabbi was not inclined to impose change to traditional roles until the need arose from within the congregation, but without his support women would not have been allowed to assume roles of leadership on the synagogue Executive.

Rabbi conducted services with dignity and formality, observing the traditions of The Great and insisting on decorum. No throwing of lollies for bridegrooms or bar



mitzvah boys was permitted during his time!

However, early in my period on the Board I approached him about the possibility of a girl having an individual bat mitzvah on Shabbat morning. He said he would give it some thought.

In due course he called me into his office with a proposal which would be acceptable under *Halacha* (Orthodox Jewish Law). In the first year we had over 30 applicants!

Thus began several initiatives to include women and girls in the services when appropriate within *Halacha*, such as carrying the Torah around the women's gallery, and the creation of an annual Women's Shabbat during which a woman of achievement would be honoured as a speaker.

These and many other changes to the role of women attracted criticism, until they were adopted by other orthodox congregations around Australia. Marian was a staunch supporter of all these initiatives for women, and her loyalty and strength helped him through this period of difficulty.

As Susan Bures has written, Rabbi Apple was 'a passionately committed religious mentor to the Women's Tefillah Group'. This group of observant women, founded by Shelley Einfeld Baram and others, learned to read from the Torah and attended our Women's Shabbat on several occasions. In time they conducted the afternoon *mincha* service in the synagogue while the men conducted their service separately in the Falk library. Revolutionary!

Through all these innovations, which were frowned upon by some in the rabbinate, Rabbi Apple believed he was helping women to fulfil their religious aspirations without breaking Jewish Law. His courage and dignity under pressure never wavered.

On a personal level I found him wise, kind, humane and compassionate, always ready with a sensible solution to a problem, putting things into perspective. His gentle sense of humour quickly dispelled any tension, as he gave respect and received it in equal parts. There was never any fuss as he went about his tasks and challenges. He was an indefatigable worker.

Rabbi Apple's leadership and commitment to many causes, especially his huge influence on interfaith relationships and multiculturalism, was admired throughout the broader community. The Board recognised the importance of this work and allowed him the space to continue his efforts in this public role, as representative of our Jewish community on religious matters.

I was honoured to host a dinner at our home in Lavender Bay marking Rabbi and Marian's twenty-fifth year of tenure at The Great, at which he insisted on arriving by boat. A water taxi duly brought them to our marina where they alighted like royalty, followed by a contingent of Board members and their wives. It was great fun and showed a lighter side of him than most would normally see.

At his farewell event at the Art Gallery of NSW, Rabbi enjoyed all the teasing and humour in good spirits, as part of the show, as much as he did the musical delights that accompanied them. He was indeed 'A Man for All Seasons', words which playwright Robert Bolt used of Sir Thomas More as 'the ultimate man of [conscience](#), remaining true to his principles and religion under all circumstances and at all times.' This description also fits Rabbi Raymond Apple, who faced many challenges in his time but who stood by his beliefs and principles despite pressure.

You may have noticed the rather 'unorthodox' portrait of Rabbi by artist Robert Hannaford, which was hung among the finalists in the Archibald Exhibition of 2003. There is a story attached to this. Rabbi was seated at a chair without arms when we realised that we had forgotten to bring a prayer book for him to hold, as was custom for this style of portrait. By the time I had returned with the prayer book, Hannaford had sketched out the pose with arms folded, and they both declared that was how he would be portrayed.

I smiled as I thought, 'Yes, that's the mark of the man. Determined, and not to be swayed once he believed something was worth fighting for.'

A legacy for all of us in these troubled times.

*Vale* Raymond Apple, of blessed memory.

### **Professor Emerita Suzanne D. Rutland OAM on Rabbi Apple as historian and communal leader**

I have been asked to say a few words about Rabbi Apple's manifold contributions outside of his ministerial duties and key role at the Great Synagogue. In the few minutes that I have been allocated, I can only

touch the tip of the iceberg. Rabbi Apple was a towering figure, not only in the Jewish community but also in the general community. In his quiet, determined but diplomatic way he became a highly respected spokesperson for our community.

Rabbi Apple's authoritative position reflected his deep knowledge and passion for Australian Jewish history, a passion which began at a young age. Over a period of 65 years, Rabbi Apple dedicated so much of his life contributing to the workings of the Australian Jewish Historical Society. As a young man of only 19, he was involved in the founding of the Victorian branch of the Australian Jewish Historical Society in 1954. In 1972, when he assumed the position of Senior Rabbi of the Great, he immediately became involved with the New South Wales Society, following in his predecessor's footsteps. He joined the committee and after the late Maurice Forbes stepped down as president, he was elected to that position. Subsequently, he became patron, continuing with his dedication to the Society.

Rabbi Apple's signature tune for Australian Jewish history were his weekly *OzTorah* articles, which later were published on the web. Here he covered so many different topics, leaving us with a rich legacy of historical materials. As well, he published several books, too numerous to enumerate here. Of the greatest importance for Australian Jewish history was his book, *Sydney's Big Shule*, dealing with the history of the Great Synagogue. The origins for this book started in the 1970s, in preparation for the Great's centenary, when Rabbi Apple started to gather material, finally resulting in a magnificently produced and beautifully illustrated book published in 2008.

Over his lifetime, Rabbi wrote 42 articles for the *AJHS Journal*. In 1955, at the age of 20, he published his first article which analysed the nature and constitution of the Victorian Jewish community during the first decade of the twentieth century. After his retirement in 2005, when he finally had more time to devote himself to scholarship, he would send me, as editor of the Sydney journal, an article to be published almost every year. I have a strict rule of only publishing one article from the same author in each year, so that in 2022 he had an article published in both the Sydney and Melbourne editions of the journal – he must have felt that his time was running out.

In his original 1955 article, he described the key Melbourne rabbi of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Rabbi Dr Joseph

Abrahams, and I quote: ‘his views were deep, but shrewd. He was never afraid to speak his mind. What is more, when he was outspoken people listened and took note.’ His penultimate article, which I published in June last year, dealt with the three Abrahams brothers. It was entitled ‘The Doctor and his Brothers: the Abrahams Family’. Just as his very first article focused on one of the foundational rabbis on Australian Jewry, so his penultimate article returned to the same theme.

His 1955 article began with the words: ‘The great Dr Arnold once said of history that there were two things we ought to learn from it – “one, that we are not in ourselves superior to our fathers; another, that we are shamefully and monstrously inferior to them, if we do not advance beyond them.”’ There is no doubt that Rabbi Apple has ensured that we have advanced well beyond our fathers in the realm of Australian Jewish history, an area to which he dedicated his life.

But this is not the only aspect of Australian life to which Rabbi Apple dedicated himself. His efforts reached into two other major areas on Australian life: as a tireless worker for Jewish-Christian relations and in his contributions to the chaplaincy.

A discussion of Rabbi Apple’s involvement with Jewish/Christian relations requires a lot more than a few minutes, so all I can only give you now is a taste. He certainly lived through a period of radical change. In his 2020 reflections article, he wrote:

The story involves two farewells. The first was in Melbourne in early 1958, when a function at the Toorak Road Synagogue Hall marked my departure for study in London. In England I gained rabbinic ordination, a wife and children, and I started my pulpit career there, before returning to Australia in late 1972. The second farewell was in 2005 in Sydney, when the Great Synagogue gave me a reception on my retirement. Both functions had Catholic symbolism. In 1958 a Catholic lady who worked in the Jewish Education Board office felt unable to enter a synagogue because she felt it would infringe Church doctrine. In 2005 the synagogue function was attended by three cardinals; no one thought it strange, not even the cardinals.

Thus, his lifetime bookended the radical changes brought about by *Nostra Aetate*, the key document of 1965 which changed the Roman

Catholic Church's relationship with the Jewish world. When Rabbi Apple came to Sydney in 1972, he sought to establish a Christian-Jewish Council, but the Anglican leadership was reluctant. Instead, he established a Jewish-Christian luncheon at the Great Synagogue. He willingly joined the Catholic-Jewish dialogue created by the late Dr Joachim Schneeweiss even though the Liberal rabbinate was also involved, a controversial issue. He was instrumental in the formation of the NSW Council of Christians and Jews in 1987 and represented the community during the papal visits. Again, he was involved with the formal Catholic-Jewish Dialogue introduced by the ECAJ in 1998.

Chaplaincy was another key involvement and interacted with his interfaith work. His association with the Defence Force goes back to his schooldays when he was a cadet-lieutenant at Melbourne High School. He became an army reserve chaplain in 1973. Succeeding Rabbi Dr Alfred Fabian in 1988 as Senior Jewish Chaplain and Jewish representative to the Religious Advisory Committee to the Armed Services, he served in this role for 18 years with two terms as its chairman. He also served as NAJEX chaplain.

In all his activities, Rabbi Apple was a bridge builder. He has contributed so much to a positive relationship between the Jewish and general communities, as well as to the historical understanding of our community. In his reflective piece writing about his lifetime of contributions, published in the *AJHS Journal* in 2020, he wrote that 'the way to be a good Australian Jew is to be good as a Jew and good as an Australian'. There is no doubt that Rabbi Apple was both. We are very much in his debt for all his important contributions. *Zichrono Livrachah* – may his memory be a blessing.

### **Marian Apple on behalf of the Apple family**

I want to say 'Hello' and 'Thank you' to all our friends and former congregants who have come tonight to honour Rabbi Apple's memory. He enjoyed our 32 years here at the Great – as did I. He was able to institute many programs, fill the gap in areas where there needed to be representation, activities, lectures or happenings.

The work stretched and engaged him, especially in helping congregants in many ways and forming lasting friendships with them. He was thankful to have such colleagues as Rev. Israel Gluck, Rabbi Edward Belfer and Rabbi Mendel Kastel to share the work with. Rev. Gluck and his wife Rochel lived in the same apartment building as we did in

Elizabeth Bay Road and were our children's de facto grandparents. They taught us how to speak colloquial Hungarian and various juicy Yiddish phrases. Their son Nathan was like a brother to our children.

The presidents – over the years – were helpful, full of advice and support for the Rabbi's effort at making the Great, greater. My husband also had a close working relationship with the office staff, including Norman Goodman, Esther Alleck, Susan Bures and Bill Wigoder, who made his work so much easier.

We were both involved with the Great, as was our family, and bringing Judaism closer to people by example was our aim. We have fond memories of all those whose lives changed because of us and of all those we entertained in our home.

There was never a Shabbat when we didn't have guests over, and the Shabbat afternoon *oneg* was a regular occurrence at our place. Rabbi Apple instituted the *oneg* as an alternative to having to walk back into town to *shule* for *mincha* and *ma'ariv* and made it a very *heimish* get-together for many Great Synagogue families. I would bake cakes and make tea and coffee for the 40-plus people who attended, and Raymond would give a *d'var Torah* in between *mincha* and *ma'ariv*. It was always a pleasant way to spend Shabbat afternoons.

We enjoyed meeting our engaged couples and others from the community at our engaged couples' courses. It was a two-way relationship as we became part of their successful and happy marriages and really got to know our younger members who felt they had met a Rabbi they could talk to should the need ever arise.

We met many famous people over the years including politicians, ambassadors, clergy and academics and famous visitors to Sydney. They included Israel's President Chaim Herzog, the Pope and even Queen Elizabeth.

Quoting from the Rabbi's memoirs about the meeting with the Queen:

I met the Queen at a reception at the Wentworth Hotel. The then Premier of NSW, Neville Wran, was walking Her Majesty through the assembly. I was standing with Cardinal Freeman and the Premier said, 'Your Majesty, may I present His Eminence the Cardinal? May I present Rabbi Apple of the Great Synagogue?' The Queen shook hands (I told people I didn't wash my

hands for weeks) and, quick off the mark because she is such a professional, she said, ‘The Great Synagogue – is that in Sydney?’ I felt like saying, ‘Yes, Your Majesty, and every week we pray that you should have *nachas* from your children’, but I behaved myself.

We were on friendly terms with our interfaith colleagues and other Sydney rabbis, both Orthodox and Reform, and when they were invited to our sons’ *bar-mitzvahs* or our children’s weddings they felt part of our family, as did our congregants and friends.

So, what did it feel like for over 30 years to be the Rabbi and his wife of this large congregation? It was not just a job. It was our life, almost our family as we celebrated with those at a *simchah* and mourned with those in trouble. They were people we cared for and whom we are still in contact with by email or whom we see when they visit Israel.

During the last 18 years here in Jerusalem the pace has been different. Raymond was involved with writing and with activities of the Israeli branches of the Jewish Historical Society of Britain and the Rabbinical Council of America – of which for a time he was president. Our children and grandchildren and even our great-grandchildren take up our time, and there are always more expected at regular intervals (*ken yirbu*).

As a fitting ending, I will quote the prophet Micah, who sums up Raymond’s life well: ‘What does the Lord require of you: to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.’

If that is Rabbi Apple’s legacy, we can only be proud!

## ‘BALLARAT BERNSTEIN’: REV. ISAAC (ISIDOR) AMBER BERNSTEIN, 1869–1955

*Raymond Apple*

### ABSTRACT

This article traces the life and times of Rev. Isaac Amber Bernstein, one of the few locally born Australian ministers. He served for short periods in several different congregations in Australia and New Zealand and became a controversial figure, particularly due to his approach to conversion but also due to his difficult personality, which often led to clashes between him and the congregational lay leadership, resulting in his often serving a community for a very short period. His actions in Melbourne, where he established the Caulfield Hebrew College and conducted courses for converts, later ministering at the convert's marriage ceremony, caused widespread communal concern and his conversions were not recognised by the mainstream religious leadership. The article also considers broader issues relating to conversion in Judaism.

**KEYWORDS:** Biography, Rev Isaac Amber Bernstein, Ballarat, religious issues, conversion

A maverick of the Australasian Jewish ministry in the first part of the twentieth century – and one of the few locally-born ministers<sup>1</sup> – was Rev. Isaac (Isidor) Amber Bernstein, who was born in goldrush Ballarat in 1869 to Jacob and Julia (nee Solomon) Bernstein. In those days, Ballarat – like an Australian *shtetl* – was widely known for its Jewish orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup> Called in Hebrew *She'arit Yisra'el* (Remnant of Israel), the Ballarat synagogue, which dates from 1861, was and is a dignified, impressive building and is still in use for services. A history of the congregation, its men, memories and melodies, was written in 1979 by Newman Rosenthal,<sup>3</sup> whose literary skills focused (amongst many other aspects) on the split between two rival factions in the congregation in



the early twentieth century, and their eventual re-unification.

The leading Ballarat families were the subject of many of the colourful stories written by a stalwart of the congregation, Nathan Spielvogel, a collection of whose writings was published in a limited edition in 1956 by the Australian Jewish Historical Society.<sup>4</sup> Spielvogel, a younger contemporary of I.A. Bernstein, was a bushman, writer, traveller, teacher and headmaster who spent most of his life in Ballarat and became known as the city's chief historian and keeper of the local archives. His tales of Ballarat Jewry are full of feeling and are a major contribution to Australian literature and social history.

The longest-serving minister of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation in the Victorian age was Rev. Israel Moses Goldreich,<sup>5</sup> whose Hebrew School pupils included the eight children of the Bernstein family. Amongst the Bernsteins, Isaac was referred to as 'Amber', not merely because it was his second name but because of a semantic link between the substance called amber (a fossil resin used for jewellery and amulets) and the name Bernstein. There was a historic trade route through Europe called the Amber Road which in German was *Bernsteinstrasse*,<sup>6</sup> and this might be why Jacob and Julia Bernstein named their son Amber. However, I wonder why they did not call all their sons by this name.

It was taken for granted that the dietary laws, the set prayers, and the Sabbath and festivals (including all-night study on *Hoshana Rabbah* and *Shavu'ot*) were fully observed in Ballarat, and Isaac Amber Bernstein was brought up in that all-embracing atmosphere of tradition. It is likely that, because he had a good voice, he sang in the synagogue boys' choir and Rev. Goldreich trained him to officiate tunefully at the services. It is believed that Rabbi Dr Joseph Abrahams of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation<sup>7</sup> gave the young man additional practical and theoretical training in *shehitah* (ritual slaughter), as well as instructing him in the procedures and rules of *milah* (circumcision). Whether the rabbi and/or the Melbourne Beth Din (ecclesiastical court) gave him formal attestation as a minister with the title Reverend is not certain, but it is likely, as we see from the fact that when Bernstein conducted a wedding in Hobart in 1905 it was under the authority of Rabbi Abrahams, who had long kept a helpful eye on Hobart's small Jewish community.<sup>8</sup> However, those who knew Bernstein say his Hebrew knowledge was limited and he had little acquaintance with *halakhah* (Jewish writings) and rabbinic writings.

Bernstein had a long and sometimes controversial career in the ministry, moving from place to place in Australia and New Zealand and generally not lasting long anywhere. He practised as a *shohet* (ritual slaughterer) and *mohel* (circumciser), preached, conducted services, taught the children and involved himself in local public concerns and campaigns. He not only carried out the usual ministerial functions but, as time passed, he became involved in converting people to Judaism and, as the current article shows, this made him a controversial figure. To write about him at this stage of Australian Jewish history is difficult and invidious, not only because he lived into the present age and is widely remembered, but because material about his dealings with the Melbourne Beth Din – as well as other Melbourne Beth Din registers and records – seem to no longer exist in Australia. The reasons probably involve personalities. It is therefore necessary to make judicious use of anecdotes and to try to reconstruct events, an invidious undertaking for a serious historical journal.

Most of Bernstein's ministerial career was spent in subsidiary roles, either because senior clergy needed assistance or because small congregations (usually in country districts)<sup>9</sup> needed ministerial attention. The rural congregations – most of which have now disappeared – generally had poorly-trained ministers who performed factotum roles for very little pay. Bernstein was one of the most visible of them, at first being regarded with respect by the senior members of the ministry. Only at a later stage did the situation change with his being viewed with suspicion.

In Australia, he began with short incumbencies as an assistant minister and teacher in Ballarat and Perth.<sup>100</sup> Wherever he held office, 'strained relationships' (to quote Rabbi L.M. Goldman)<sup>11</sup> seemed to arise before long between Bernstein and the congregation.

After Ballarat and Perth, he was minister in Bendigo for a few months at the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His longest incumbency was in Christchurch, New Zealand, where he spent several years from 1906,<sup>12</sup> and whilst not serving overseas during the First World War, he provided chaplaincy support to the New Zealand forces. Christchurch had a fine synagogue in the central business district but a not very orthodox congregation, though there was unease when Bernstein allowed laxity in various religious practices including the times of Sabbath and festivals and the content and conduct of the services. He stood (unsuccessfully) for election to a municipal authority. Every now and then he lectured to Christian church groups on Biblical

and theological subjects. He was an active Freemason and after holding other Masonic offices was appointed Past Grand Chaplain.

His poor relationship with the Christchurch congregation and its leaders is graphically depicted in Rabbi Goldman's history of New Zealand Jewry. Goldman wrote:

The committee impressed upon him that he had to call twice a week upon the President, that he must not take gifts from members, and that he had to attend regularly in synagogue. The climax of strained relationships came when the committee instructed Bernstein not to preach on Rosh Hashanah and to blow the shofar on Yom Kippur at six in the evening. Bernstein preached, published his sermon in the press and received the admonition he expected. The congregation also objected when he accepted public positions without its permission. Eventually Bernstein resigned.<sup>13</sup>

Bernstein was not the only minister to encounter difficulties with his congregation. Even the rabbis of large, important capital city synagogues such as the Melbourne<sup>14</sup> and St Kilda<sup>15</sup> Hebrew Congregations and the Sydney Great Synagogue<sup>16</sup> were treated badly from time to time by trouble-making presidents, boards of management and congregants. The lay leaders were sometimes or even constantly overbearing and over-powering. Not that the ministers were always in the right in times of conflict, but major congregations often had lay leaders with high level experience in commercial or public life who were used to controlling members of staff. Many such congregations, however, had a tradition of respect towards the minister. Bernstein was an example of a minister who was belittled even though it was possible that he invited trouble because of a tendency to be difficult, which went with him wherever he found himself.

When the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue near Moore Park in Sydney<sup>17</sup> was established in 1912, Bernstein served as its first minister until 'in the middle of 1916 discussions on the future of the Minister began, and it was eventually decided that his term of office should cease'.<sup>18</sup> Bernstein then established a small breakaway congregation in Sydney with the name *Bet E-l* ("House of God") and subsequently moved to Adelaide where he served as assistant to Rabbi A.T. Boas for a few years from 1919 and briefly replaced Boas on the latter's retirement.

In Adelaide, he not only officiated at services but performed pastoral and chaplaincy duties. He represented Adelaide at the opening of the Maccabean Hall in Sydney in 1923. He visited Hobart every now and then, for example conducting a wedding in 1905 and scraping a living out of unauthorised conversions. The sum of £25 per convert is sometimes mentioned although he was not the only minister who tried to build up his congregation (and make ends meet) by means of proselytisation.

Moving to Melbourne, Bernstein lived in Caulfield (which was then a distant part of suburbia) and tried to establish a congregation,<sup>19</sup> naming it *Kehillah Kedoshah Bet E-I* (Holy Congregation of the House of God). At that stage, he was on good terms with some of the local Jewish residents – especially Simon Roth (Rothkopf), later a long-time congregational president, who had settled in the district in 1938. They organised High Holyday services in the courtroom adjacent to Caulfield Town Hall, where the witness stand was used as the reading desk. He and Roth acted as officiants and about sixty people attended the service. Bernstein advertised the services in the Jewish press and invited anyone who was interested to contact him. The synagogue president was Dr S.J. Cantor. But, by 1943, the embryonic Caulfield Hebrew Congregation had removed Bernstein from their Inkerman Road premises,<sup>20</sup> though his ‘congregation’ continued until about the early 1950s with sporadic services at his home.

Before long, considerable qualms about Bernstein and suspicions of ulterior motives began to circulate amongst the established congregations and the leading rabbis. The controversies were fuelled when, on his own initiative, Bernstein set up a so-called Caulfield Hebrew College in a large house in Hawthorn Road facing Caulfield Park, which became a centre for converting people to Judaism without the sanction or approval of the Melbourne Beth Din or any other rabbinic authority. In some cases, he converted nurses who wished to marry Jewish doctors. After performing the conversions, he generally proceeded to conduct the marriages of the ‘converts.’ The amounts he allegedly charged as tuition, conversion and marriage fees probably produced an income for Bernstein. Being a Justice of the Peace made him known to Caulfield Council, whose premises, as we have seen, he utilised from time to time. The claim that he ran a Hebrew College is likely to have secured him governmental accreditation and authority to solemnise marriages.<sup>21</sup>

The Melbourne Beth Din and Rabbi J.L. Gurewicz’s North Carlton

Beth Din made it clear to Bernstein that they repudiated his conversions, but not even Chief Rabbi J.H. Hertz in London or the London Beth Din could persuade him to desist. The London Beth Din ruled that Bernstein's conversions could not be accepted. The issue caused widespread communal controversy in Australia and beyond, though to this day there are people in Melbourne who rely on and stand by the conversion and marriage certificates issued by Bernstein and complain if the orthodox rabbis decline to approve such certificates.

To understand the establishment's opposition to Bernstein's proselytising activities, it is necessary to depict the history of Jewish proselytisation in Australia. Judaism had always accepted sincere converts, initially by ethnic and later by theological affiliation.<sup>22</sup> Abraham and Sarah 'made souls' (that is they brought outsiders into the Hebrew people); the sages say that Abraham recruited the men and Sarah the women (Genesis 12:5). At first, there were no set procedures. Ruth adopted Judaism and Jewish identity by saying, 'Your people shall be my people; your God shall be my God' (Ruth 1:16). The sailors in the Book of Jonah were awestruck at the power of Jonah's God (Jonah 1). After Haman's defeat, 'many of the people of the land became Jewish' (Esther 8:17), though the verse might mean, 'took the side of the Jews'. There is a rabbinic view that the souls of sincere converts were disposed towards the Torah from time immemorial and the Midrash reports a dialogue on conversion between Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi. Though the sincere convert is highly praised in rabbinic literature (for example Numbers Rabbah 8:2), it became the obligation of the rabbi to point out all the difficulties of being Jewish (*Talmud Yevamot* 47a).

The first convert to Judaism made in Australia appears to be Mary Connolly,<sup>23</sup> who was proselytised by Rabbi Aaron Levy of the London Beth Din on his visit to the Antipodes in 1830–31. After Levy left to return to London, Mary (now bearing the name 'Rebecca the Daughter of Our Father Abraham') was married to John Moses, most likely by Phillip Joseph Cohen. The marriage contract is still extant and bears textual evidence of the bride's conversion. Levy was the only rabbi who performed a conversion in Australia in those early days but subsequently several conversions were carried out by congregational leaders, as we see from the marriage and birth registers of the Great Synagogue, Sydney.

There was a fear of proselytisation in colonial Australasian Jewish community, mostly since it was considered likely to encourage mixed

marriage and weaken Jewish commitment, so that there were constant inter-congregational disputes about accepting *gueros and guerim* (female and male converts: there were more female than male applicants because intermarriage was prevalent). Some congregations totally opposed conversion. The British chief rabbi ruled that any application for conversion had to be approved by him though the conversion ceremony could be carried out in Australia.<sup>24</sup> Acting unilaterally, visiting Jerusalem rabbi, Jacob Levi Saphir, set up an ad-hoc Beth Din in Bendigo in the 1860s to convert the wife of a local pedlar. Rev Moses Rintel of Melbourne objected and accused Saphir of interfering with his livelihood and transgressing Jewish law. Saphir defended himself in his travelogue, *Even Sappir*.<sup>25</sup>

Usually, it was the synagogue board that, bypassing the minister if there was one, made decisions about accepting or rejecting prospective converts, and about the fees that were to be charged, though eventually the boards relinquished their capacity to make such decisions. It was not that the laymen were automatically debarred from involvement in proselytisation but that there had to be adequate religious supervision. In Melbourne, the Melbourne Beth Din headed by the chief minister of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, the Beth Din in North Carlton headed by Rabbi Gurewicz, and the Sydney Beth Din headed by the chief minister of the Great Synagogue took charge of conversion applications. By the 1980s, the Sydney Beth Din became by convention the authority for conversions all over Australia and New Zealand apart from Victoria, and Beth Din members paid regular visits to other cities for the purpose of interviewing and, where appropriate, accepting prospective converts.

When the Liberal congregations were founded in Sydney and Melbourne in the 1930s and 40s, their conversions were not recognised by either Beth Din or by any of the orthodox ministers, but Bernstein's converts were recognised by the Liberal rabbis and admitted into the Liberal congregations.

It goes without saying that in the orthodox community Bernstein's converts and those made in Sydney by a maverick cantor were repudiated (and controversial). There were other congregations such as Newcastle whose ministers attempted private conversions which the rabbinate repudiated. In some cases, a proselyte was accepted by a strictly orthodox rabbi who acted in full accord with *halakhah* against the protests of the Melbourne or Sydney Beth Din and declared, 'My

conversions are as *kosher* as yours' and in the end such conversions had to be recognised by the orthodox community and its rabbis. When Rabbi Osher Abramson was head of the Sydney Beth Din in the 1970s there was at least one case of this kind.

Statistics of how many converts were made by Bernstein are not available; presumably there was a register, the whereabouts of which are unknown. Most converts were female and were probably motivated by impending marriage. We are not certain whether any or many of the persons whom Bernstein converted came to him because they were attracted by the ideology and/or the way of life of Judaism. On occasion, members of the Jewish community (such as Samuel D. Smith and W. Visbord in 1934)<sup>26</sup> joined Bernstein in performing conversions. Smith had been chairman of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation's *Guerim* and *Gueros* Committee and possibly thought the Beth Din would approve Bernstein's actions.

In the absence of written records let us try to reconstruct the relationship (or its lack) between the rabbinic authorities and Bernstein. Obviously, the members of the current Beth Din cannot be responsible for things that were said or done by their predecessors many years ago, but it is likely that they would have dealt with the issue along the same lines as their predecessors. In the light of my long personal involvement in the Australian rabbinate, I am satisfied (as I think the current Melbourne Beth Din would be) that the questions raised with Bernstein by the then Melbourne Beth Din and his other critics would have included the following, to which are appended the likely responses:

1. With what authority did Bernstein make converts?  
Presumably his own; anecdotal evidence is that many applicants felt that the official Beth Din was too strict and that going to Bernstein would be less demanding.
2. Did Bernstein assemble a rabbinic court and if so, who were the members? The decisions were made by himself, and he possibly convened a handful of local residents to assist him (see the reference above to Samuel D. Smith and W. Visbord).
3. Were applicants' *bona fides* investigated? Maybe he screened them himself. His experience with them during their studies of Judaism would have given him an idea of their thinking.



4. Who gave the applicants lessons in Judaism? Bernstein himself?
5. What experience did the applicants have of living a Jewish way of life? Possibly some but we cannot be certain.
6. Who circumcised the male 'converts'? Presumably Bernstein himself.
7. Which *mikveh* (ritual bath) was used for the immersion of the 'converts'? It is thought that he had some kind of *mikveh* at his house.
8. Did the 'converts' realise that their status would be in doubt? We presume so. We do not know whether Bernstein explained the situation to them. Perhaps a Bernstein conversion was preferred to a Liberal one.
9. Did applicants undertake to keep the commandments? Presumably, on some level.
10. Did Bernstein himself fully observe orthodox practice? We assume he did.

Presumably not all of Bernstein's converts upheld Jewish beliefs and observed Jewish practices, but (unfortunately) neither did all of those who went through conversion with an official Beth Din.

It is likely that the above questions were constantly raised with Bernstein but never evoked a full response, and Bernstein's conversions seem to have continued for some years into the early 1950s. They still cause upset on the part of family members who always thought of themselves as *halakhically* Jewish and sometimes played a leading role in Jewish communal life.

Despite his activities elsewhere, Bernstein never forgot Ballarat. He returned to the city for funerals, and after the death in 1941 of Rev. Zallel Mandelbaum,<sup>27</sup> who had ministered to the Ballarat congregation for many years, Bernstein became Ballarat's unofficial minister and went there to conduct the High Holyday services. On Sabbaths, the Ballarat synagogue was opened for services conducted by Nathan Spielvogel and subsequently by Marcus Stone, Bernstein's nephew.

Sabbaths generally saw Bernstein at the St. Kilda Synagogue or Temple Beth Israel, sitting in a back row wearing a clerical collar, a Homburg hat and several scarves. The congregants mostly had no idea who the elderly clergyman was, and some thought he was an Englishman.



They regarded him with some amusement, whilst their ministers – who *did* know who the elderly clergyman was – had their reservations about him and his activities. It is not recorded whether and to what extent Rabbi Dr Herman Sanger of Temple Beth Israel was uneasy about Bernstein and his conversions. The orthodox rabbis on the other hand were generally of one mind in their disapproval of Bernstein's activities and his 'converts' found themselves facing on-going problems with the orthodox rabbinate. They and their children sometimes approached the Melbourne or Sydney Beth Din to regularise their *halakhic* status, but regularisation was not always religiously possible.<sup>28</sup>

Bernstein's family appreciated but did not endorse his efforts for Judaism. Possibly, there was a difficult relationship within the family. According to Rabbi John Levi of Temple Beth Israel, who had conversations with Bernstein's niece, they 'did not approve of him at all'.<sup>29</sup>

Bernstein died in Melbourne on 23 October 1955, aged 86.

### Thanks

I am grateful for the information and advice I have received from Yossi Aron, Chaim Freedman, Rabbi Mordechai Gutnick and Rabbi John Levi.

### Endnotes

- 1 Until recently most antipodean congregations preferred British-style ministers who were colloquially called 'Jews' College men'. Now there are a number of locally-born ministers including rabbis from the Chabad movement who serve various congregations, including rural and regional groups.
- 2 Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie used to say he was a fervent admirer of Ballarat by reason of its orthodoxy. The Ballarat community were upset that Chief Rabbi Hertz did not visit them on his 1921 tour: Newman Rosenthal, *Formula for Survival: The Saga of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation*, Melbourne, Hawthorn Press, 1979, p. 87.
- 3 Rosenthal was an educator, writer and administrator. He was head of the Visual Aids department at Melbourne University. He wrote a history of the St Kilda Synagogue: *Look Back with Pride*, Melbourne, Thomas Nelson, 1971. David Havin has written extensively on the St Kilda congregation and its ministers and members.
- 4 L.E. Fredman (ed.), *Selected Short Stories*, Melbourne: Hawthorn, 1956. 'Spielvogel' was a derogatory surname acquired in Europe for lack of a large enough bribe to the authorities.

- 5 Israel Morris Goldreich (1834–1905), Rabbi, People Australia, <https://peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/biography/goldreich-israel-morris-14078>. Accessed 3 June 2024.
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- 23 Raymond Apple, 'History and Politics: Mary Connolly Revisited', *AJHSJ*, vol. 10, part 2 (2011); Jeremy I. Pfeffer, *From One End of the Earth to the Other: The London Bet (sic) Din 1805-1825, and the Jewish Convicts Transported to Australia*, Sussex Academic Press, 2008.
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- 28 One of the reasons against reconversion was abandonment of Jewish practice.
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## WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PORTRAIT OF ESTHER ABRAHAMS? \*

*Jana Vytrhlik*

### ABSTRACT

To the Jewish community in Australia, Esther Abrahams (1767–1846) needs no introduction. The story of a young and apparently Jewish woman from London who was sentenced to transportation in 1786, and later became the ‘first lady’ in the early colony, has been told and scrutinised many times. The portrait that depicted her as a respectable Mrs Esther Johnston was painted much later. It has been provisionally attributed to one of the best known early colonial painters and became an iconic image of Australian Jewish history. We are familiar with Esther’s sharp eyes and slight smile under the ruffled white bonnet, yet the portrait’s provenance and whereabouts were hardly ever questioned. This article reviews the core historical details of Esther’s life and discusses the discovery of the original painting, and other family memorabilia in the least expected location.

**KEYWORDS:** Convicts and Early Settlers, Esther Abrahams, Arts Jewish Portrait, Trevor Kennedy Collection, National Museum of Australia.

### Esther Abrahams and her story

When the Old Bailey court in London sentenced masses of the city’s petty criminals to transportation in the 1780s, it brought devastation

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\* This article is an expanded version of an essay ‘Esther Abrahams, 1767–1846’ in author’s recent publication *Treasures of Old Jewish Sydney. The story of visual heritage*, Longueville Media Sydney, 2024, pp. 254–9; and the post in *The Jewish Independent*, 8 August 2023. <https://thejewishindependent.com.au/lost-portrait-of-a-lady-found-mystery-of-old-jewish-sydney-solved>

to many lives and families. But for some, being condemned 'beyond the seas' provided unexpected chances and opportunities. The young Esther Abrahams – the name under which she was recorded in the Convict Index in December 1786<sup>1</sup> – surely had some luck on her side in an otherwise dire situation. She was in her teens and a milliner apprentice when she was caught shoplifting in London. After a prolonged period in prison, during which she bore a child, Rosanna, Esther was sentenced to seven years transportation.<sup>2</sup> She departed in January 1787 and after a long journey with several stopovers, landed in Sydney on 26 January 1788 as one of the 262 convicts on the *Lady Penrhyn*, *Scarborough*, *Alexander*, and other ships, later known as the First Fleet. Listed amongst those in charge of the human cargo from London was George Johnstone [sic], 1st Lieutenant of Marines and an Aide-de-Camp to the Governor.<sup>3</sup> And this is about as far as the recorded historical facts support the romance on the ship.

Once aboard the convict transportation ship, Esther's story became the subject of fiction writing and filled many pages of Australian authors.<sup>4</sup> The legend has it that *en route* to Sydney, with a baby daughter in her arms, she caught the eye of the 23-year-old and handsome Marine Officer in charge, the very same Lieutenant George Johnston (1764–1823).

Evaluating the merit of these historical fictions, which often declare themselves to be *true* accounts, is a daunting task for historians. Life in the early colony was unimaginably harsh, lonely and dangerous. Life stories, pieced together from detailed reports in the local newspapers, letters, diaries and other records, artworks, songs and surviving traditions, often do not need embellishments 200 years later. A potential approach to comprehending these constructed modern narratives could be through a comparison with the work of those colonial artists who were depicting the city life from the 1830s. Among them Macle hose and Fowles deserve a special mention.<sup>5</sup> Presenting fictional Sydney with clean and orderly streets, immaculate and bustling with activity, they were designed to attract prospective immigrants from Britain and to install pride and enthusiasm in the local society. In similar fashion, modern writers can capitalise on the appeal of rags to riches tales to attract an audience where traditional, and often dry, historical accounts with footnotes may have not succeeded.

Besides, multiple versions of Esther's story can also be 'found in Australian historical writing despite the slight evidence on which any

version can be based', asserted historian Sybil Jack in 2011.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Jack provided a reasonable base for re-examining Abrahams' Jewishness, in support of the hesitation expressed, for example, by the late Rabbi Apple.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, whether religiously educated or not, there was no Jewish faith structure, tradition or clergy to turn to on Esther's arrival in Australia. It was not until the late 1820s, with the arrival of free Jewish settlers, that more structured Jewish religious life, which is conditional on *minyan*, could emerge in Sydney. The first communal prayer was held in Sydney in 1828<sup>8</sup> when, coincidentally, the first census in the colony, recorded 95 Jews living in New South Wales.<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly then, when over time, as Esther and Johnston welcomed more children into their de facto family, they were recorded as baptised in the Church of England, and the couple eventually married as a Christian couple in 1814, aged 50 and 47.

Historical records confirm that along the way, Esther, assisted by groups of convict servants, proved to be capable of running the day-to-day affairs of their large Annandale estate,<sup>10</sup> farmhouse and stabling; and she also did so in Johnston's absence when he was on duties in other parts of the colony, or summoned back to Britain.<sup>11</sup>

As a lady of the house, who was made briefly the Lieutenant-Governor's 'First Lady' in the early 1800s by her husband's circumstances, it is not surprising that Esther put on her best and sat down for a portrait. It would have been around the time after her wedding that the portrait in question would have been commissioned. We can only guess who came up with the idea. It is possible that both George and Esther realised that such a portrait would enhance their reputations once their relationship was legal. An earlier full length portrait of George Johnston was painted in 1810 by English artist Robert Dighton (1751–1814). It shows George standing in his military uniform, in charge of the large consignment of soldiers camping in the background.<sup>12</sup> In 1825, after George Johnston's death, Richard Read Junior replicated this portrait, and it is now part of the Trevor Kennedy Collection at the National Museum of Australia.<sup>13</sup>

As Johnston prospered and received large grants of land, Esther continued her command of the property and associated affairs. However, her husband's untimely death in 1823 seems to be a turning point in Esther's life. It brought to the tragic end a seemingly well-matched union, leading Esther to seek solace in alcohol. Adding to the dismay,

although the Annandale estate was bequeathed to her legally, a bitter family dispute with her own children followed. By now grown-up and successful, some accused Esther of being a drunk incapable of looking after herself, let alone the family property.

### **Portrait of Esther Abrahams**

The portrait, now held in one of the most prominent art collections in Australia, belongs to a special group of Jewish portraits painted for Sydney patrons around the middle of the nineteenth century. The Victorian penchant for portraiture brought to the colony around 1830 also captured the interest of the Jews of Sydney. The genre became increasingly popular with the middle class in Australia, who used the portraiture to show off their social and economic standing. In addition, Jewish portraits manifested a certain cultural sophistication, which could be seen as an important aspiration of Jewish emancipists in the colony at the time.

We find several such Jewish portraits in major Australian public collections, usually donated by the sitter's descendants. Some were painted by sought after fashionable artists, and some by unknown, yet still accomplished painters. Portraits most commonly depicted a seated full-front or slightly turned figure on a plain background. There was usually little indication pointing to the Jewishness of the sitter. Instead of the sitter's piety, his or her portrait focused on the individual's status as a private citizen, achieving wider social inclusion and conformity.<sup>14</sup> These artworks represented in public galleries have been largely attributed and provenanced. They are also included in online databases and accessible for research.

However, it became apparent during my research work that the portrait known as that of Esther Abrahams has had gaps in its provenance and the location of the original was not known. Thus, despite the iconic status of the portrait in contemporary Australia, finding the original and obtaining a high resolution with permission to publish, became a rather larger project than initially planned.

### **Search for the original portrait**

In the age of ubiquitous digital image, Esther Abrahams' portrait has been embraced and adopted beyond the boundaries of the Jewish community. Celebrated for being a woman, smart and pioneering, the framed reproduction of Esther's portrait hangs, for example, in the headquarters of Sydney's Fellowship of First Fleeters.<sup>15</sup> In 2002,

the Glebe Society Inc. constructed a Bicentennial pavilion in Esther Abrahams' name,<sup>16</sup> decorated with a large bronze plaque and historical information. Whether illustrated in print<sup>17</sup> or online<sup>18</sup> the image has been infinitely copied, cropped and even flipped from side to side, re-colourised, and copied again, the image has illustrated novels, articles, blogs and stories, and alas Esther's features became more and more washed out and fine details lost. Where was the original all this time? The answer presented itself unexpectedly, and, in the end, it was the social media that brought results. But before searching online, the pursuit started in the real world of the Archives of the Australian Jewish Historical Society in Sydney and State Library of New South Wales.

It seems that the reproduction of the portrait first appeared in public in 1966 when it accompanied the already mentioned study by George Bergman. The black-and-white reproduction is titled:

ESTHER JOHNSTON (née ABRAHAMS-JULIAN)/  
wife of Lt.-Colonel George Johnston, of Annandale./  
(from a picture in possession of Mrs. Rita Lingham,  
of Mosman, /a descendant of Commander Robert



Fig. 1. *Portrait of Esther Abrahams, gelatin silver print, slightly faded and damaged, c. 1870–1900 of a painting later [provisionally] attributed to Richard Read Senior, c. 1824. 15 x 10.5 cm. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Box 19, PBX 314/2-4018.*



Johnston, R.N., son of Esther).<sup>19</sup>

A decade or so later, it illustrated the ground-breaking Jewish history book *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers 1788–1850*, and its second edition.<sup>20</sup> As acknowledged by the authors in 1974, the black and white photo of Esther Abrahams' portrait was again made available by a descendant of the Johnston family.

An old photograph of great interest was found in the box of 'Johnston' family documents and correspondence in the State Library NSW.<sup>21</sup> (Fig. 1) It is an image which was reproduced in the catalogue of Sotheby's art auction in Sydney in October 1985. Presented within the category of 'Australian School, Early 19th Century', as Lot 7, was *A Portrait of Esther Abrahams (Mrs. George Johnston)*, 61 by 46 cm, with no further details provided. Presumably then purchased by a private collector, the original portrait disappeared from public sight for many years, and it seems that it was this auction catalogue image which served as a base for further reproductions.

A couple of handwritten pencil annotations and a stamp can be read on the verso of the original photograph. (Fig. 2)

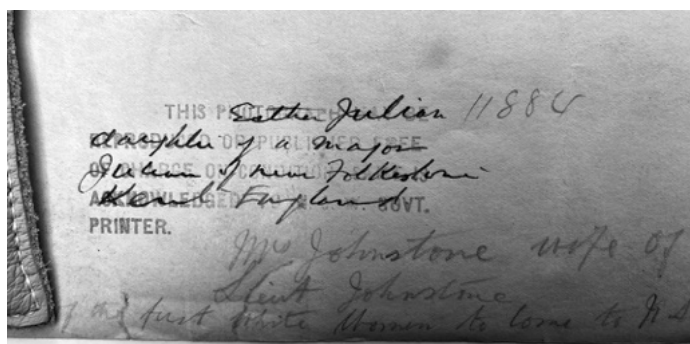


Fig. 2. Verso of the above photograph. Esther Julian, daughter of a Major Julian of New Folkstone, Kent England. Mrs Johnstone wife of Lieutenant Johnstone [sic].

Although not dated, they were possibly added at the time of the artwork's auction, or around 1985, and can provide a few interesting information. The stamp reads 'This photograph may be reproduced or published free of charge on condition credit is acknowledged to N. S. W. Govt. Printer.' This could indicate that the image was printed from a pre-existing glass plate for the purpose of the auction catalogue. In a pre-digital era, it was probably a more suitable method of quality

reproduction than engaging a studio-photography of an original painting which may have not been located in Sydney.

Further, a note scribbled at the back 'Esther Julian daughter of a Major Julian of New Folkestone Kent England', may lead to future research of Esther's origins and her faith. There are three surnames puzzled over Esther's story by historians: Julian by birth, Abrahams by assumed father of her first child born out of wedlock, and Johnston by marriage in Sydney in 1814. Regardless though, Esther remains - as pencilled in the last note at the back of the photograph, 'Mrs Johnstone [sic] wife of Lieut. Johnstone [sic] one of the first white women to come to New South Wales.'

It is therefore assumed that the portrait was auctioned, and its last open public viewing recorded in 1985. Afterwards, traces of the original painting began to dwindle, and neither enquiry placed to the auction house, nor several historians and art collectors could shine any light on the puzzle. It was time to search online and, indeed, social media brought the breakthrough.

### **Collection of Ruth Simon and Trevor Kennedy**

Before his untimely death, the late Trevor Kennedy (1942–2021), a prominent Australian media and business figure and avid collector of colonial Australiana, donated a large volume of his collection to the National Museum in Canberra. In turn, the Museum published the outstanding gift on their social media. Among the Johnston family portraits was the *long-lost* portrait of Esther Johnston, née Abrahams, listed by the Museum among the highlights.<sup>22</sup>

Soon, it was possible to suggest some of the pre-Kennedy provenance of the portrait, and the Johnston family collection. It is believed that Ruth Simon (1924–2008), a well-known benefactor of the Jewish community and an exceptional Australiana antiques collector, purchased the Esther Abrahams' portrait in 1985 at the Sotheby's auction mentioned earlier. According to Peter Fish, a Sydney-based antiques reporter, 'After her [Ruth Simon's] death, the Simon collection passed to Hawkins [antique dealer John Hawkins]', who reportedly sold it to media figure Trevor Kennedy.<sup>23</sup>

Among works by some of Australia's most significant colonial artists, the Kennedy Collection at the National Museum of Australia includes three paintings associated with the Johnston family of Annandale: the portrait of Lieutenant-Colonel George Johnston by Richard Read,

an oil portrait of his wife, Esther Abrahams by unknown artist, and a watercolour miniature portrait of Rosanna Nichols (née Abrahams) by Richard Read, discussed later in this article. However, according to John Hawkins, the latter did not come to Kennedy's holding from the Ruth Simon collection.<sup>24</sup>

Of course, being posted online, the secret was soon out, and popular genealogical websites, such as WikiTree, quickly claimed the image of the original and its whereabouts in a post, following the author's sharing the provenance information.<sup>25</sup> At last, we can hope that in future, the presence online of Esther Johnston, alias Julian and Abrahams, will feature the true colours she deserves.

### Viewing of the original portrait of Esther Abrahams

While it was exciting to progress with the provenance of the painting, it was time to book a viewing of the original in the National Museum collection. The painting is not on display, and it was a privilege to arrange a behind the scenes visit to the Museum's Mitchell Repository in Canberra last year.<sup>26</sup>

The painting in Fig. 3 presents a bust-length portrait of a well-to-do lady dressed in her best, Esther's dark curly hair covered in a fashionable

Fig. 3. *Esther Johnston, née Abrahams, about 1820s, artist unknown, oil on canvas, 61 x 46 cm. From the Collection of Trevor Kennedy, 2021. 2020.0002.1546. Photo: National Museum of Australia.*



bonnet of white lace and blue ribbons. But no frills or finery can hide the resolute and strong features. Esther's slightly turned head points her piercing gaze to the viewer and her closed lips give a subtle and confident smile. The palette is rather subdued, giving the prominence to the subtle reflection of the fabric edges and the golden brooch. The painting style can be described as linear, especially in the face features, yet becomes more bravura and expressionist in the depiction of the lace and velvety fabric. The painting is not signed, and although in the past it has been attributed to Richard Read Snr,<sup>27</sup> according to the curators at the National Museum of Australia, the artist's attribution remains inconclusive.

However, it can be suggested, that some leads can be followed in establishing the identity of the artist. In 2011, the portrait of the eldest daughter of Esther and George Johnston, Julia Johnston, resurfaced to the Sydney art market, and was subsequently purchased by the State Library of New South Wales (Fig. 4). On a close-up examination, it reveals some surprising findings.



Fig. 4. *Miss Julia Johnston* by Richard Read Senior (c.1765-c.1827), 1824. Watercolour on paper, signed and dated. 42.0 x 33.0 cm (in frame). Purchased from Day Gallery, Paddington, 2019. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, ML 1521.

According to Mitchell Library records, this full-length portrait was painted [and signed] by Richard Read Senior when Julia Johnston (1796–1879) was 28 years old. This attribution by signature and dating provided sufficient reason to consider, at least momentarily, that the same artist could have also portrayed Esther, around the same time. The well-known colonial artist Richard Read (c. 1765–c. 1829) was transported to Australia as a convict in 1813. By the 1820s, talented and prolific, Read established himself as a portraitist of the privileged and influential. Once his son Richard Read *junior*, a free settler and artist, joined him in 1819, Read the senior began referring to himself as such to prevent confusion between the two.<sup>28</sup>

While the style of the watercolour portrait of Julia Johnston displays more differences in the technique and the mood of the portrait, than similarities, a few features are of interest. Where Esther seems in command of her life, Julia appears delicate and hesitant, equipped with paraphernalia of the rich along with a shawl, parasol and poodle. Both ladies' heads are turned slightly right, highlighting their wide open eyes and prominent noses. But it is the jewellery under their chin that may speak about their close personal relationship. A sizeable round brooch, probably an opal set in gold rim with pearls, adorns both Julia's white lacy hem and Esther's ruffled neck-bow. On top of a pearl necklace, Julia wears a golden cross on a long thin chain. Seemingly oblivious, she left the chain caught by the brooch, shifting it off-centre on her chest. The meaning behind this detail may never be known.

Julia's portrait was painted in the year after her father died in January 1823. With an eye for detail, the artist captured the Johnston's grounds, hot and dry in the harsh Australian light. The sombre mood may be explained by the stone structure behind Julia. It is the family burial vault, built in a corner of the garden in summer 1820 after Julia's brother George (Esther and George Johnston's eldest son), died aged 30 following his injury in a horse accident.

### **Meeting Rosanna, the eldest daughter of Esther Abrahams**

A miniature, third-length portrait of Rosanna Abrahams, the earlier mentioned 'baby in Esther's arms' and half-sister of Julia Johnston, was also included in the viewing in the National Museum's Repository (Fig. 5). The black signature across the left top edge, obscured by the frame and glaze, apparently identifies Richard Read, the artist who painted the portrait of Julia Johnston, as we have seen, around the same time.

Rosanna, her head slightly turned, is posed against a soft, pink-brown background. She has beautiful youthful features framed with dark and fashionably styled hair ringlets. The gentle curves of her shoulders are covered in a simple faintly pink top with silk ribbon tied around her neck. Just like her mother Esther, Rosanna's gaze confidently meets the viewer's eyes. It is not difficult to see why some historians suggested that her father was a Sephardi Jew in London named Abrahams.<sup>29</sup>

Fortuitously, a hand-written letter associated with this portrait, was also presented for inspection at the National Museum. It was from Ms

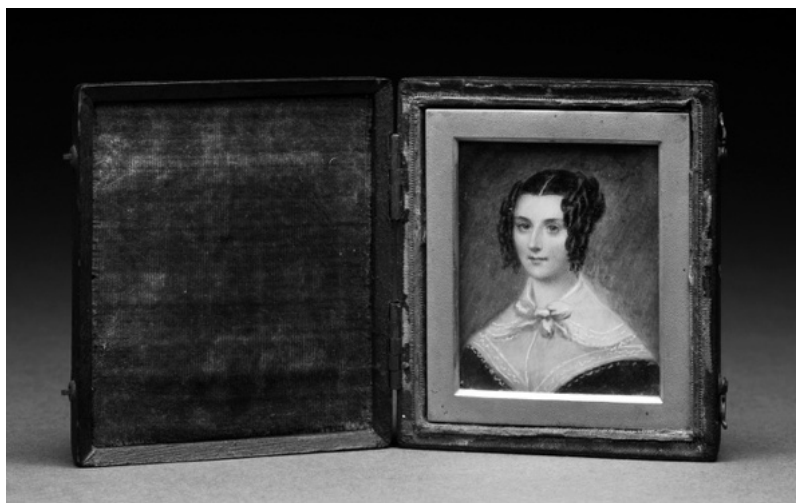


Fig. 5. *Portrait miniature in cover of Rosanna Nichols by Richard Read Senior (c.1765–c.1827), 1824. Watercolour on paper, signed, original leather and velvet cover, gold frame with glass, 7.6 x 7 cm. From the Collection of Trevor Kennedy, 2021. 2020.0002.2038. Photo National Museum of Australia.*

Margery Adams of Kent, U.K., dated 10 February 1985 and addressed 'To whom it may concern'.<sup>30</sup>

The letter identifies Rosanna Abrahams (1787–1837) as the subject of the portrait miniature. Rosanna, alias Julian by birth, Nichols and Stewart by marriages, was the baby born to Esther out of wedlock in Newgate prison. Ms Adams further confirms that the miniature portrait was in possession of Miss Clara Nichols but provides no details on how the item came to her possession. Miss Nichols is most probably the Clara Rosa Nichols (1859–1928), granddaughter of Rosanna Abrahams and Isaac Nichols (1770–1819).<sup>31</sup> In addition, Ms Adams' letter conveys



that Clara Nichols ‘quarrelled’ with her family but was, nevertheless, aware of the pioneering role her family played in the early history of Australia. In closing, Ms Adams writes that she is sending the miniature portrait to her relative in Queensland, Australia, rather than to her own children in the UK. Being written in February 1985, it can be assumed that the provenance statement was provided in advance to the intended Sotheby’s auction which took place in Sydney in October 1985, as mentioned earlier. However, it was not possible to establish with certainty that the miniature portrait of Rosanna Abrahams was auctioned in the same auction as the portraits of Esther and George Johnston.

### **Is it really Esther Abrahams in the portrait?**

This question was on the author’s mind throughout the entire research journey. Finally, the last piece of the puzzle was discovered in the National Library of Australia’s Digital Pictorial Collection.<sup>32</sup> Fig. 6 shows both Esther’s and Julia’s portraits displayed in the drawing room of one of the former Johnston residences, which remained by family successions in the property of the Johnston descendant.<sup>33</sup> It is now believed that sufficient documentation and visual records have been gathered to confirm



Fig. 6. Drawing room, Horsley NSW, detail. Part of an album of 24 photographs by Henry King, documenting the Horsley estate around 1900. 15.5 x 21 cm. National Library of Australia Bib ID 8151624. The framed portrait of Esther is visible in the centre to the left of the door, and Julia’s portrait hangs to the right of the fireplace. Photo National Library of Australia.

that Esther Johnston, alias Abrahams, sat for the examined portrait.

In the album of the old photograph from the Horsley, NSW estate images of other rooms, such as sitting room, dining room and bedroom display typical colonial furniture, artworks on wall-papered walls, clocks on mantelpiece, porcelain decorative plates, plants, rocking chair, sofa, bookcase, hunting trophies, yet seemingly not a single sign of Jewish, Christian or any other faith was present.

### **Johnston's family memorabilia in major public collections in Australia**

Considering the Johnstons' substantial wealth, position of influence and family size, it comes as no surprise to find additional significant historical items pertinent to the family in other Australian public collections. Among them, a large golden centrepiece is regarded as highly valuable for its origin, elaborate design and historical relevance.<sup>34</sup> It is a two-handled urn-shaped trophy cup with cover, elegantly fashioned by a renowned London silversmith and inscribed to George Johnston in remembrance and esteem by the Duke of Northumberland in 1815.

The next item is a beautiful full-length white 'cotton dress probably worn by Julia Johnston' from the collection of the Powerhouse Museum.<sup>35</sup> Described as 'extremely rare and significant example of provenanced early colonial Australian dress' it is, indeed, of similar fashion and pattern shown on the portrait of Julia Johnston, illustrated in Fig. 4. Dated to mid-1830s, it documents local professional skills as well as fabric, fashion trends and social life of the elite of the time.

### **Conclusion**

This article brought to light the long concealed portrait of Esther Abrahams whose life has been the subject of both research and fiction. Esther has been proudly claimed by the Jewish community as the first Jewish woman in Australia. Yet, much of her early life is still a mystery. Some historians also question her Jewish origins, and art historians re-examine the portrait artist's attribution. For now, though, Esther's face returns to the public view, framed in fine silk lace, a poignant reminder of the start of her challenging life's journey. In addition, this article has introduced some of the visual legacy left by a large and influential early colonial family in Australia, until now scattered in various public and private collections.

Esther Julian Abrahams Johnston died in 1846, aged 78/79 and was buried in the family vault at Annandale alongside other members of



the extended family. The entire Johnston Memorial was transferred to the Anglican section of Waverley Cemetery in the 1880s, ahead of the Annandale House's demolition in 1905. The cemetery structure represents a notable historical mausoleum, designed, interestingly, in a style referencing the Egyptianising architecture of the colony's first, York Street Synagogue, consecrated only two years before Esther's death (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Detail of the Lieutenant George Johnston Family vault at Waverley cemetery, after 1905, Bronte, Waverley Council, NSW. Photo with permission.

## Endnotes

- 1 Order in Council No. 4, dated 22 December 1786, Index Name Convict 1788–1801, p. 23. State Records New South Wales, INX-77-2321. Call Nos. RAV/FM6/610, MAV/FM6/527.
- 2 Convicts-Australia-Registers. [data.qld.gov.au/dataset/british-convict-registers/Abrahams, Esther](https://data.qld.gov.au/dataset/british-convict-registers/Abrahams%2C%20Esther). id 69518; and Old Bailey Proceedings Online, Punishment Summary, 30 August 1786, Ref. No. s17860830-1. <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/s17860830-1>
- 3 <https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/>, Convicts-Australia-Registers. Several variations of the surname *Johnston* exist in literature: *Johnstone* see Fig.

- 2; SLNSW, Box 19, PBX 314/2-4018; *Jonston* in H.L. Rubinstein, 'Esther Abrahams', 2021, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/abrahams-esther>.
- 4 For example, Jessica North, *Esther: The Extraordinary True Story of the First Fleet Girl Who Became First Lady of the Colony*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2019. <https://www.amazon.com/Esther-Extraordinary-Story-Became-Colony/dp/1760527378>; Paul Taylor, *The Rise of Esther from Prisoner to First Lady*, Sydney, Kindle edition, 2018; Alan Roberts, *Marine Officer, Convict Wife: The Johnstons of Annandale*, Barbara Beckett 2008; Calvin Johnston, *The Officer and His Lady: The 200 Year Old Love Story That Began Australia's History*, Oxenford, Wisemothers Publishing, 2020.
- 5 James Macle hose, *The Picture of Sydney; and Strangers' Guide in New South Wales for 1838, Embellished with Forty-three Engravings of the Public Building and Picturesque Land and Water Views in and near Sydney*, Sydney, Macle hose, Hunter Street, 1838; and Joseph Fowles, *Sydney in 1848, Illustrated by copper-plate engravings of its principal streets, public buildings, churches, chapels, etc.*, Gibbs, Shallard & Co, 1878.
- 6 Sybil Jack, 'Who did she think she was', p.17, citing Raymond Apple, *The Great Synagogue: A History of Sydney's Big Shule*, Sydney, UNSW Press 2008, p. 177.
- 7 Sybil Jack, 'Who did she think she was', p. 17, citing Apple's *History of the Great Shule*, Sydney, UNSW Press 2008, p. 177.
- 8 Reported in Editorial (no title), *The Sydney Monitor*, 16 August 1828, p. 5 that 'The Gentlemen of Jewish persuasion have finally resolved on instituting the rites of their own ...'
- 9 Hilary M. Carey, 'Religion', p. 4. In comparison, 19 people were identified as Pagans, 11,236 as Catholics, and 25,248 as Protestants. The majority from each group lived in Sydney; see also Charles Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia 1788–1961', p. 392 and Appendix I. The majority of Jews still being destitute convicts or emancipists.
- 10 Two watercolours in the collection of the State Library of NSW depict the Annandale house, farmhouse and estate nestled within a vast fenced farmland; Samuel Elyard, Annandale, 1877, watercolour, DG V\*/Sp Coll/Elyard/8; J.C. Hoyte, Annandale House, n.d., DG V1A/9.
- 11 For an extensive account of archival sources, see George F.J. Bergman, 'Esther Johnston. The Lieutenant-Governor's Wife'. *Australian Jewish historical Society Journal (AJHSJ)*, 1966, vol. 6, part 2, pp. 96–100.
- 12 Lt. Col. George Johnston, 1810, watercolour, by Robert Dighton. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, a1528248. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, ML 511, a1528248.

- 13 The watercolour portrait is now in the National Museum of Australia.  
<https://www.facebook.com/nationalmuseumofaustralia/posts/object-feature-the-trevor-kennedy-collection-highlights-the-johnston-family-port/161655646003564/>
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- 32 <https://heritagecollection.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1406>
- 33 <https://heritagecollection.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1402>
- 34 The Duke of Northumberland's Cup with Cover presented to Lieutenant-Colonel George Johnston, 1814, hallmarked for London silversmith William Elliot (1762–1854), silver-gilt, H 38.5 x W 25.5 cm, Museum of History NSW, V92/49-1:2. <https://vernon.mhnsnsw.au/objects/16758/cup>
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## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EARLY JEWISH BURIAL GROUNDS IN AUSTRALIA

*Chris Betteridge and Gary Luke*

### **ABSTRACT**

In the early years of British settlement in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland, their colonial legislative councils had allocated Crown Land for burials with designated sections for various Christian denominations. New South Wales and Tasmania, as earlier settlements, allocated burial grounds under a different style of legislation which was only revised in the mid-1840s. As discussed by Israel Getzler, the nascent Jewish communities in each of the colonies lobbied to also have a designated section of Crown Land, with various levels of success.

In the 1840s, consolidated legislation was introduced. These revisions arose from similar parliamentary discussions about cemeteries and health in England, with the ideas that diseases could be spread by “miasma” wafting from burial grounds. This triggered the closure of city cemeteries such as in Sydney’s George Street, where the current Town Hall now stands, and Devonshire Street and the opening of Haslem’s Creek/Rookwood which was further away from the city.

This article is an edited extract from the submission to the Department of Environment and Heritage for nomination for state heritage listing of the Goulburn Jewish Cemetery. It is based on combined research and writing from both Gary Luke and Chris Betteridge who prepared the submission. Such a comparison of one location with other places of similar age, use and form can assist in establishing relative heritage significance and, as such, are of important historical

significance. This analysis has been limited to other comparable burial grounds listed on heritage registers or otherwise known to the authors. Such comparison is useful in helping to assess the singularity or representativeness of a place, but it must be noted that the other sites with which Goulburn Jewish Cemetery is compared may not have been assessed according to the same criteria or studied to the same extent.

**KEYWORDS:** Jewish Cemeteries, Goulburn, Maitland, Raphael's Ground, heritage listing

Jewish burial is considered as being of the greatest importance, with those involved with the process of *tahara* (purification) considered to have carried out the greatest of the commandments (*mitzvot*). As a result, the first step to create a structure for a Jewish community was the desire to establish a Jewish cemetery. In his book, *Neither Toleration Nor Favour*, Israel Getzler discussed the Jewish struggle to achieve full equality with their fellow Anglicans in the colonies, a struggle initially shared with the other Christian denominations. In 1836, Sir Richard Bourke, governor of New South Wales, passed legislation which put all Christian denominations on an equal footing. While Jews were not specifically mentioned, subsequently all their requests for land grants for Jewish religious purposes were complied with except in Van Diemen's Land (later Tasmania) where Lieutenant-Governor, Sir John Franklin, rejected the requests of the Jewish community.<sup>1</sup>

In this article, the history of various cemeteries, mainly from nineteenth century colonial Australia, is discussed. While the focus of this article is on New South Wales, developments in Tasmania, the second area of colonial Jewish settlement, Adelaide and Melbourne are also included. The article will demonstrate that of these various cemeteries, the two cemeteries – Goulburn and Maitland – which are still extant in New South Wales, were established on private land. Yet, while Maitland has been granted heritage status, this took much longer in the case of Goulburn.<sup>2</sup>

### **Jewish cemeteries in New South Wales**

The colonial Legislative Council of New South Wales decided in the mid-1840s that all Crown land general cemeteries would be non-denominational, and burials of all religions were to be intermixed. Eighteen months of ardent objections led to retraction of the decision,

which was replaced by portions for nominated religions, areas to be based on the census. All cemeteries had 0.5% of the grounds apportioned for Jewish burials, matching the proportion of Jews in the population of New South Wales according to the census. Regardless of whether any Jews ever lived in the district, Jews were granted an allotment in over 750 regional and suburban cemeteries. Municipal councils at times requested release of an unused Jewish portion for use by an alternate religion. Approximately 55 regional cemeteries have at least one burial of a Jew. Apart from these, three cemeteries only were private burial grounds for exclusive use by their congregations: at Maitland, Goulburn, and Raphael's Ground. The cemetery at Yass is unique as the only portion allotted by the request of local Jews under the earlier system of the Church Act of 1836.<sup>3</sup> By 1850, there were exclusive Jewish cemeteries in Sydney, Launceston, Hobart Town, Maitland, and Goulburn, but apart from those at Goulburn and Maitland, these exclusively Jewish cemeteries no longer exist.

### *Sydney*

In the early days of the European colony in New South Wales there were some Jewish burials in the town's early burial grounds. The first was a convict who came on the First Fleet but died two months after its arrival and was probably buried in The Rocks area. Jewish burials from those who arrived on the Second fleet were probably buried in a burial ground in Clarence Street and there were Jewish burials in the Old Sydney Burial Ground, now the site of the Sydney Town Hall and its immediate environs.

A few Jews were buried at St John's Cemetery at Parramatta. Ann Bockarah, the free arrival wife of the Second Fleet convict Solomon Bockarah, joined the household of Richard Atkins, the judge advocate, when Solomon died in 1791. The St Phillip's Church burial register has 'Jewish' written against his name, the first official record in Australia to note that someone was Jewish. Ann died shortly after, in 1793, and was buried at St John's Cemetery. Her monument still exists, being the earliest still extant tomb in Australia for a Jew.

In February 1820, an area for Jewish burials was set aside in the Anglican section of the Devonshire Street (Sandhills) Cemetery.<sup>4</sup> An official Jewish section was allocated in 1832 and gazetted in 1835. Burials from the Old Sydney Burial Ground, which may have included Jewish burials, were exhumed to make way for the construction of

Sydney Town Hall and were transferred to a site at Rookwood and are memorialised by the Cathedral Close Monument in that cemetery.

None of these early Sydney burial grounds survives. Burials from the Devonshire Street Cemetery were later disinterred and transferred to other cemeteries – 130 to Botany Cemetery, 100 to Rookwood, and about 50 to Raphael's Ground, just west of Rookwood.

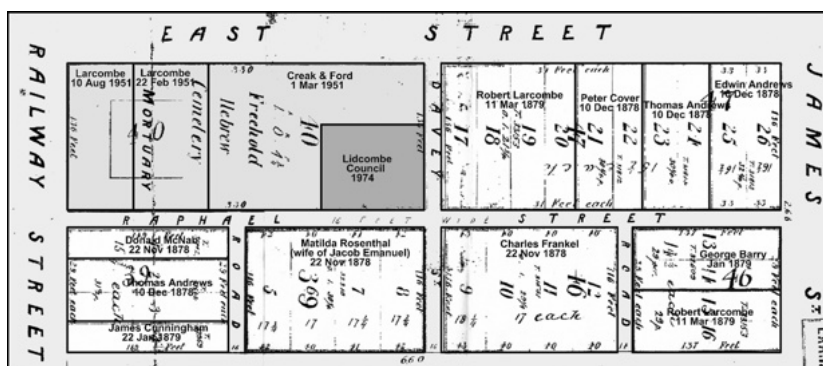
### ***Raphael's Ground Cemetery, Rookwood***

A dispute in 1859 over a circumcision caused a rift in the Jewish community of the York Street Synagogue, resulting in a break-away congregation forming in a rented building in Macquarie Street. The dispute extended into use of the cemetery at Devonshire Street where a few burials were disturbed by fist fights with one conflict being settled in a court case.<sup>5</sup> When the new cemetery for Sydney was to open at Rookwood, the Macquarie Street congregation chose to establish their own cemetery on private land. Joseph George Raphael, committee member of the Macquarie Street congregation, purchased the freehold title to 4.5 acres of land adjacent to the new Necropolis at Haslam's Creek (later Rookwood Cemetery) and donated part to the congregation as a cemetery, with himself and Lewis Wolf Levy as trustees. It was named the Raphael's Ground Cemetery and was jointly consecrated by Rev Alexander Bernard Davis and Rev S. Phillips, Ministers of the Macquarie and York Street Synagogues on 18 August 1867.<sup>6</sup> Only a small part of the 4.5 acres became a cemetery – much of it was subdivided and sold off in the late 1870s, some lots to the Larcombe and Andrews families of monumental masons. There were further sales in 1951.

In his will, Joseph Raphael, who died in 1879, left the burial ground property 'unto the Presidents of the various Jewish Synagogues and their heirs and successors for persons dying professing the Hebrew faith'. When Levy died in 1885, there was no mention of the Jewish cemetery in his will, so the property was registered in the name of the Trustees of his will.<sup>7</sup>

In 1889 the Trustees decided to transfer the cemetery to the Trustees of the Great Synagogue, Messrs George Judah Cohen, Louis M. Phillips and Moritz Gotthelf, provided Joseph Raphael's widow and members of her family had free access to the ground at all times and were exempt from burial fees and charges.<sup>8</sup> The last burial in Raphael's Ground was in 1901.<sup>9</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, two Raphael descendants realised the





*Plan showing the land between Rookwood Cemetery and Lidcombe which was purchased by Joseph G Raphael, Committee Member, and Lewis Wolf Levy, President of the Macquarie Street congregation in 1867, but only a small portion of which, marked Lidcombe Council 1974, was actually consecrated as a Jewish burial ground. Esther Matilda Rosenthal was a relative of Joseph Raphael and Charles Frankel was a fellow congregant.*

cemetery may be disbanded so they arranged approximately a dozen exhumations and re-burial in parts of Rookwood cemetery.

By 1970, Raphael's Ground had become very neglected. The Board of the Great Synagogue decided to dispose of the monuments and donate the property to Auburn Council for use as a park. Fragments of some of the monuments have been buried in the old Jewish section of Rookwood opposite the Martyr's Memorial. The caretaker's cottage from the Ground was sold and moved across Raphael Street as a residence. The former Raphael's Ground was given to Auburn Council in 1974 for use as a children's playground. A plaque on this site reads 'Presented by the Great Synagogue of Sydney'.<sup>10</sup>

### **Goulburn Jewish Cemetery**

In the 1840s, there was no Jewish burial ground in the southern region of New South Wales when two daughters of John and Rebecca Moses were drowned while crossing the flooded river at Yass in a horse and carriage accident in 1844. Samuel Benjamin and Elias Moses, business partners of Goulburn, allowed the burial of the young teenage sisters in part of the 22 acre properties they owned to the east of Goulburn township. Three months later Isaac Davis was shot during a bushranger holdup at his store in Boorowa. He died the next day and was buried in the same ground. Although not yet registered as a cemetery, this was the second instance where a news report called it the Jewish burial



*The 'Jewish Reserve', a park developed on the site of Raphael's Ground Cemetery, Rookwood (Photo: Australian Cemeteries Index)*

ground. After a third burial in early 1848 the partners formalised it as a cemetery with a registered deed of sale of half an acre of their property to the Goulburn Hebrew Association for use as the community's cemetery with three trustees. The cemetery is inactive now, closed for burials, but trusteeship has continued, making it the only Jewish burial ground in New South Wales under Jewish ownership and management. Approximately 30 burials were conducted in the cemetery, most before the 1880s when the community had dissipated, the last burials being two German refugees, Hugo Goldberger and Siegfried Vogel, who both died in 1943.

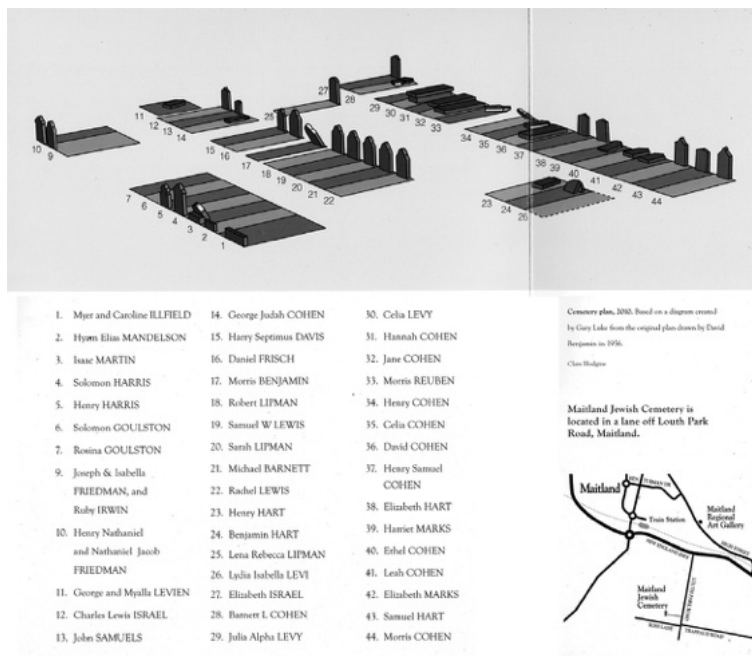
In recent research for preparation of a Conservation Management Plan, in a cash book, the only existent record of the congregation held in the AJHS Archives, two previously unknown burials have been discovered, along with events such as donation offerings by congregants for *mitzvot* (commandments) during High Holiday services. Compared to the other cemeteries where there are little or no contemporary records, this extensive correspondence and photographs have revealed how much the landscaping and even the layout of headstones as markers of burial locations have been altered.

## Maitland Jewish Cemetery

Apart from the Goulburn Jewish Cemetery, Maitland Jewish Cemetery is the only other extant exclusively Jewish cemetery in New South Wales. In a rural area in Louth Park Road, West Maitland, the cemetery is on land acquired by the Jewish Community in 1846.<sup>11</sup> This was two years later than the first mention of the Goulburn site as 'the Jewish Cemetery' in that town.

Unlike Goulburn, the Maitland Jewish Cemetery was set aside prior to the first burials in 1849 for victims of scarlet fever – two young girl cousins belonging to the Cohen family. A cottage on the cemetery site, used for a caretaker and for the *tahara* ritual prior to interments, was demolished sometime between 1928 and 1936. The cemetery site was subjected to flooding in 1930, 1934, 1949 and the unprecedented Hunter River flood of 1955. A list of the legible memorial inscriptions was sent to the Great Synagogue in 1930 and the last burial, until 2010, was that of Isaac Lipman who died on 25 March 1934 and was buried in an unmarked grave.<sup>12</sup>

In 1949, there was correspondence between the Newcastle Hebrew



*Maitland Jewish Cemetery layout and plot listing. (Source: From Maitland City Council website, reproduced as Figure 7, Maitland Jewish Cemetery CMP 2012)*

Congregation and the Great Synagogue regarding flood damage to the cemetery and, in 1954, a schedule of works and cost estimate for monument restoration were obtained from local stonemason Thomas Browne. In 1956, the year after the disastrous Maitland flood, David J. Benjamin and Ilse Robey from the Jewish Historical Society and Jewish Cemetery Trust visited the Maitland Jewish Cemetery, Benjamin observing that 'the condition of the cemetery is not good' and that it had 'suffered seriously in the disasters [referring to floods] of the last two years.' A plan was drawn, with numbers allocated to gravesites.<sup>13</sup>

In 1966, the Secretary of the Newcastle Jewish Cemetery Fund advised the Jewish Cemetery Trust that they would take care of Maitland Jewish Cemetery if authority could be obtained. Trustees were found and care was undertaken.<sup>14</sup> In 1977, the secretary of the Australian Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) initiated interest in and maintenance of the cemetery and the following year, a major clean-up of the site was undertaken, including full weed removal, leading to the reconsecration of the cemetery in August 1979.<sup>15</sup>

In 1982, Maitland Jewish Cemetery was classified by the National Trust.<sup>16</sup> On 23 August 1989, the control and management of the cemetery was transferred by deed from the Board of Management of the Newcastle Hebrew Congregation to Maitland City Council, and in 2001–02 projects documenting the cemetery were undertaken by Maitland Family History Circle and the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society.<sup>17</sup>

In 2008, unmarked burials – recorded in the Maitland Courthouse register – were discovered and the following year Maitland City Council began support of research and conservation. In 2009–10, the Maitland Jewish Cemetery Project was initiated by Maitland Regional Art Gallery, resulting in exhibitions, publications and community events. The Australian Jewish Historical Society committee and members submitted objections to Council against the use of the cemetery for modern burials<sup>18</sup> but on 8 July 2010 the remains of Leah Abadee (1910–2010) were buried in the cemetery, 76 years after the previous last burial. Interest in the cemetery was revived in 2011 through 'The Maitland Jewish Cemetery Project' which that year won the National Trust of Australia (NSW) Heritage Award for Interpretation and Presentation. In 2012, Maitland City Council commissioned a Conservation Management Plan for the cemetery.<sup>19</sup>



*The repaired memorial on the grave of George and Myalla Levien at Maitland Jewish Cemetery. This rare and unusual memorial by Maitland monumental mason Charles Cobby is similar in form to the memorial on the grave of Lydia Collins in Goulburn Jewish Cemetery although the Goulburn example has a chamfered top stone rather than a tapered half-cylinder stone between the headstone and footstone. (Photo: Sach Killem, 11 December 2013)*

### **Yass**

The Yass District Council was formed in 1842 and a formal cemetery was proposed for the town at about that time. The earliest recorded Jewish burial at Yass is that of 16-year-old Sarah Moses who died 2 February 1843.<sup>20</sup> At Yass, Jews Henry Hart, Moses Moses and his brothers Isaac and John Moses must have monopolised the early liquor trade in the district. By 1845, there were enough Jews in the district to warrant the establishment of a Jewish cemetery and John Moses initiated a successful petition for the establishment of a Jewish Burial ground in Yass.<sup>21</sup> The earliest Jewish burial recorded after the establishment of the cemetery is that of Moses Moses who died on 11 July 1858, aged 68 years<sup>22</sup> and was buried next to his daughter. Their memorials have since been set into a concrete slab. There were four Jewish burials in Yass between 1843 and 1872. As noted earlier in this article, the cemetery at Yass is unique as the only one with a Jewish section allotted by request



of local Jews under the earlier system of the Church Act of 1836, which was included as the Jewish portion when three separate denominational cemetery grants were amalgamated to form the current Yass General Cemetery.

### ***Cooma***

Ground for a cemetery in Cooma was consecrated in 1870. This was land next to the Congregational Church and burial ground on what is now Lot 30, DP 750535. The first recorded Jewish burial in Cooma was that of Reuben Lyons in 1874 but the newspaper coverage of his burial stated it was the third.<sup>23</sup> Family graves of members of the Shannon family are located on their house property, now Lot 2, DP 1139354.

Apart from the Goulburn cemetery, Raphael's Ground Cemetery and Maitland Jewish Cemetery are the two other examples of Jewish cemeteries in New South Wales which were established in private grounds. With Raphael's Ground Cemetery, the graves were moved, and the land sold; with Maitland, the cemetery has remained intact, and it has been listed as a heritage case. Hence, it is the Maitland case which is of the greatest relevance in terms of a heritage listing for the Goulburn Cemetery.

## **Other Jewish cemeteries in Australia**

### ***Cemeteries in Tasmania***

#### ***Hobart Town***

Burials from the beginning of the European settlement in Hobart Town were in St David's Burial ground, now St David's Park, at the corner of Harrington and Davey Streets, Hobart, and included all denominations. This area had been chosen by Lieutenant-Governor Collins and the Reverend Robert Knopwood on 27 April 1804.

Hobart had been formally laid out from a disorganised straggle of streets and structures to the present central grid by Governor Macquarie's surveyor, James Meehan, in a visit to the town in December 1811. This formed the streets and boundaries and gave locations for civic buildings, burial grounds, street widths and minimum setbacks for buildings.

The earliest use known by Europeans of the area now occupied by Windsor Court in West Hobart is as 'the Jews Burial ground'. On 21 May 1828, Jewish ex-convict Barnard Walford (from a family who changed their name from Moses) applied to the Lieutenant-Governor for land

to be set aside as a Jewish burial ground in Harrington Street. Walford died soon afterwards and was the first to be buried in the cemetery, but his tombstone was later removed to the Jewish cemetery at Cornelian Bay.<sup>24</sup>

Remains of early Jewish inhabitants interred from as early as 1811 were transferred from St David's to the new burial ground in 1828; however, these are not recorded in the Hobart Town Jewish Synagogue Burial Register. An undated cemetery plan *circa* 1950 has been located, showing the location of 20 headstones, of which only 12 were able to be read. The *Hobart Town Courier* recorded the deaths of Jewish citizens being interred at the Jews Burial Ground in Harrington Street as late as 1871, well after the date of the Register. However, 57 human remains were unearthed in an exhumation process in 2002. The Hobart Synagogue has identified the names of 51 people who were buried at the ground, though remains of each person were not identified in the exhumation. The final six human remains exhumed add up to the real number of burials, though their identity is at present unknown.<sup>25</sup>

### *Launceston*

There were several small Jewish burial grounds in Launceston during the nineteenth century, the earliest being situated below the Anglican burial ground near the intersection of York and High Streets. Henry Button referred to that being exchanged for a small piece of ground on the corner of High and Balfour Streets.<sup>26</sup> A Jewish hotel-keeper, Henry Davis subsequently granted some land to the local Jewish community on 24 October 1836.<sup>27</sup> An 1878 survey of Launceston lists an area off York Street and near the end of Eleanor Street as the 'Jews' burial place'.<sup>28</sup> The last exclusive Jewish burial ground to be established in Launceston was purchased by the Jewish community in the mid-1840s.<sup>29</sup>

There were never more than 150 Jews living in Launceston, their numbers peaking around 1856–57. The synagogue was closed in 1871 because there were not enough males living in the city to form a viable community although the building itself remained standing. While the Jewish population of Launceston rapidly declined during the following years, burials continued in the South Street burial ground for some time, the last known burial there being that of Maurice Nathan, who died on 16 September 1893.<sup>30</sup> Understandably, the burial ground became quite neglected in the absence of a Jewish community,<sup>31</sup> in blatant contrast to the well-maintained Jewish burial ground in central Hobart, which

had the benefit of servicing a continuous Jewish community.<sup>32</sup> By the 1920s, the land around the surviving twenty headstones was serving as a grazing ground for the horses and fowls of the neighbourhood. Following the appointment of Harry Joseph and Sim Crawcour as new trustees of the synagogue and burial ground in 1925, the ground was cleaned up and the synagogue leased to the Masonic Lodge in 1927. The new trustees received financial assistance from two women from Evandale, ensuring that the area was properly fenced, and the headstones maintained.<sup>33</sup> Over the next decade the burial ground declined further and only twelve headstones remained in 1938.<sup>34</sup>

In May that year the trustees offered the land to the Launceston Council. A plan of grave locations was prepared, the remaining headstones were removed for 'safe keeping', the dividing fence was dismantled, stone curbing was constructed along South Street and swings installed. There is no record of the bodies being relocated. In March 1942, air raid trenches were dug in Monash Reserve a distance from the cemetery site, but six months later they were levelled, and the park became a children's playground once more.<sup>35</sup>

#### *Adelaide, South Australia*

The Minute Book of the Adelaide Public Cemetery on 29 August 1843, noted the granting of a portion of the public cemetery for the exclusive use of the Hebrew Community. This application for a part of the cemetery was prompted by the death and burial of Nathaniel Philip Levi on 21 July 1843, the first member of the fledgling Adelaide Hebrew Community to die. The area of land granted was situated on the western boundary of the cemetery and measured 100 feet from the western boundary fence and 50 feet north and south. Sometime later, the Jewish portion was considerably extended to the north to border the portion of the cemetery that had been granted to the Roman Catholic Church in 1845. This increase can be seen in the 1847 map of the Cemetery (S. A. Archives GRG 35/585/42). However, this area was considerably more than the needs of the Jewish community and when a land grant was eventually issued to the Hebrew Community (Memorialised in the General Registry Office 4 Sept. 1852, Book 42, Number 443) the area was considerably smaller in size.

However, the area granted was still more than the needs of the Jewish community, whilst the neighbouring Catholic Cemetery was continually needing to expand. Therefore, portions of the Jewish



Cemetery were transferred to the Catholic Cemetery on 25 July, 1879; 6 December 1896; 10 January 1897 (30 feet on the northern boundary); and 1 May 1898 (18 feet on the northern boundary). Additional ground was sold to the Hebrew Community by the Government on 4 February 1908 for £75 making the cemetery the dimensions it is today.

The Jewish Cemetery remained under the control of the Hebrew Community who maintained their own records until the passage of the West Terrace Cemetery Act in 1976 when the Jewish Cemetery reverted to the State Government. However, special provision was made in the Act as follows:

Section 10. Nothing in this Act contained shall be construed as authorizing the Minister to disturb or otherwise interfere with any place of internment within the area delineated on the plan set out in the first schedule to this Act and marked 'Jewish Granted MEM. No.443 Bk.42' without the written consent of the Board or Trustees or the Chief Minister of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation.<sup>36</sup>

The Minute Book of the Hebrew Congregation records approval being given on 25 May 1868, for the building of a 'new' *Matare*<sup>37</sup> House. This was erected later the same year at a cost of £101/18/6. It was built of Glen Osmond stone and designed by David Garlick. This structure was demolished in the early 1970s. It was a plain rectangular building with a galvanised iron roof. No photography of the building has been located.<sup>38</sup>

### *Melbourne, Victoria*

According to Edmund Finn, author of *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne*, the first Jewish cemetery was situated on the Northcote side of Merri Creek between High Street and Heidelberg Road, although the exact location of the site is unknown. The land had been donated by an early Jewish colonist by the name of Mr Abraham. The sole burial at the site was a Miss Young, the daughter of a Melbourne publican. The ground proved so rocky that digging the grave proved difficult. Although the task was completed, the body was later exhumed and reburied in Hobart. There were no other recorded burials at the site.<sup>39</sup> Burials from the Jewish section of the early general cemetery in Melbourne were transferred to Fawkner Cemetery when the ground was cleared to establish the Queen Street Markets. In August 1855, a Jewish section

was consecrated at the Melbourne General Cemetery at North Carlton. The Jewish section includes a *Metaher* House or 'Jewish Chapel', built in 1854, and this is the oldest building surviving in the cemetery.<sup>40</sup>

There is a recently established ultra-orthodox Jewish cemetery in Melbourne, but this is not comparable with the historic nineteenth century Goulburn Jewish Cemetery or Maitland Jewish Cemetery.

### *Brisbane, Queensland*

Early Jewish settlers in Brisbane formed themselves into a congregation in 1864.<sup>41</sup> One of their first items of business was to arrange for fencing their two-rod burial ground, on land opposite the junction of Caxton and Boundary (Hale) Streets, Paddington, later part of Lang Park. The fencing was to keep cattle and horses from the area.<sup>42</sup> In the years from 1865 to 1900, the congregation had to restore the fence many times, after it had been destroyed by an unruly element in the locality. In 1902, the Department of Public Lands asked the Congregation's permission to re-inter those who had been buried there in the Toowong Cemetery, which had been established in 1876, so that the land at Paddington could be made a recreation reserve. This was agreed to in 1910, and the transfer of the remains of three persons was finally completed in 1913 under the supervision of the congregation's minister.<sup>43</sup>

### *Jewish sections in general cemeteries*

In addition to Goulburn and Maitland which were exclusively Jewish, there were Jewish burials in general cemeteries associated with other towns in New South Wales which had active Jewish congregations including Bombala (which also serviced towns such as Bega); Grafton; Tamworth; Lambing Flat (later Young) where there are Jewish burials, mostly infants, from the gold rush of the 1860s<sup>44</sup> and Hay, which has about six Jewish burials. Many general cemeteries in New South Wales and the other Australian states and territories have sections devoted to particular religious denominations including those of the Jewish faith and a Jewish section was consecrated in Goulburn General Cemetery in 2013 for future burials.

### *Conclusions from comparative analysis*

Goulburn Jewish Cemetery and Maitland Jewish Cemetery are the only two extant exclusively Jewish burial grounds in NSW, the Raphael's Ground near Rookwood no longer surviving as a cemetery. The Maitland Jewish Cemetery, like the Goulburn Jewish Cemetery, was

established in the 1840s and had a similar community. It is interesting to note that both sites appear to have had a 'cottage' structure erected on the site where prayers and cleansing rituals for the dead were held prior to interment. Devonshire Street and Raphael's Ground also had cottages, but the one at Raphael's Ground was later moved across Raphael Street.

In the 1840s, there was a strong possibility that there would be a statutory requirement for cemeteries to be non-denominational, with burial of all religions mixed. That could be the reason why the Jewish congregations at Maitland and Goulburn purchased their own grounds instead of using the general cemetery. The reason that other communities did not also do this is probably that, in the 1840s, no other towns had such robust Jewish communities, along with wealthy and influential persons. However, an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* published in 1847 contains a report of the Legislative Assembly decision where it retracted those parts of the General Cemetery Bill 1845 which would have created cemeteries without separated sections for the different religious denominations.<sup>45</sup>

The Maitland Jewish Cemetery continued to operate until the first years of the 1900s as the main regional burial ground for a thriving Jewish community when many Jews moved from Maitland to Newcastle. A few burials were carried out at Maitland Jewish Cemetery up to 1934. With 53 recorded burials of which all but 7 are marked graves with monuments, it is the largest, most intact exclusively Jewish burial ground in the state and has had strong connections with the local synagogue in Maitland which was constructed in 1879. The synagogue building is still standing but stopped operating as a synagogue when the Jewish population in Maitland decreased significantly, following the construction of the railway line, and the congregation in Newcastle increased in size in the late nineteenth century. Other synagogues were constructed in Broken Hill and Forbes. However, neither Broken Hill nor Forbes has a separate Jewish cemetery, and the Forbes synagogue was a small timber structure, constructed in the 1860s.

No synagogue was constructed in Goulburn, although the Goulburn Jewish community received a land grant for a school and synagogue. This land was later resumed and re-granted as part of the neighbouring public school. By the 1870s, the Goulburn Jewish population had dwindled. This exodus of Jews from the Goulburn district was possibly due to Jews of marriageable age moving to Sydney where there was a

growing Jewish community and the Great Synagogue had been established. A similar migration of Jews happened in Sydney when Jews of marriageable age later moved from outer suburbs where their parents had settled after World War Two to the growing Jewish community in the city's eastern suburbs.

There are 30 known burials in the Goulburn Jewish Cemetery but with only 11 or so headstones remaining. Many headstones have either disappeared or have been shattered. However, as an entity, Goulburn Jewish Cemetery is considered rare historically in the context of the Goulburn Mulwaree local government area, New South Wales and Australia and is the only one of the two extant Jewish cemeteries to retain physical evidence of a cottage where Jewish pre-burial rituals were conducted. As this article has demonstrated, its singularity justifies it being listed as a heritage site, as has already occurred at Maitland, and this was the thrust of the submission made to the Department of the Environment and Heritage, which has formed the basis for this article.

## Endnotes

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## THE LIVES OF SIMCHA STONE AND SAMUEL KRANTZ, THEIR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN

*Marilyn Aminuddin*

### ABSTRACT

Many Australian Jewish families are closely related, especially those who arrived prior to 1900 and who originated in the same area of the Pale of Settlement. This article is a description of two families – Simcha or Simon Stone and his children and grandchildren and Samuel Krantz and his descendants. They came to Australia to enjoy the right to freedom of association, freedom from antisemitism and the opportunity to do business and make a good living for their respective families. Between the two men, they had at least twenty children, some of whom were pillars of the community whereas others sometimes behaved without care for others or the law. Some had flamboyant careers which brought them to the attention of the media on a regular basis; others have left barely a mark, particularly the women of the families. They played a key role in developing Jewish life across eastern Australia.

**KEYWORDS:** Migration, Simcha Stone family, Samuel Krantz family, Broken Hill, Ballarat

What do sponges, stones and synagogues have in common? Answer: The Stone and Krantz family of Australia, the focus of this article. The two families intersect with the marriage of Isaac Krantz to Ester Stone and in their choice of town in which to begin their careers in Australia – Broken Hill. *Simcha* means gladness or joy. Everyone hopes that their children will be happy, healthy and prosperous. Simcha Stone's children and grandchildren and their respective husbands and wives would probably have made him a contented man with a few exceptions. The

story of Simcha Stone and his descendants, starting in Eastern Europe, and moving across eastern Australia from Melbourne to distant Broken Hill, and even South Africa, follows. They contributed significantly to the development of Jewish life in the areas where they settled.

What is known about Simcha himself? Information available about his early life is limited. He was born in Lodz, Poland in 1832. In all likelihood, his surname would have changed to Stone after he migrated. Many Jews in Poland at this time adopted German sounding names, so it is possible that Simcha had the name Stein or some name which included Stein, but he could also have taken his father's name as a surname. By 1852, he had migrated to Plymouth, Devonshire, England. As is typical of Jews leaving central and eastern Europe at this time for England or the United States, we do not know exactly their motivation for leaving although there could have been a variety of reasons behind the move. It is doubtful that he migrated for economic reasons because by the 1850s, Lodz was being transformed into an industrial hub, which one writer described as 'the Polish Manchester'.<sup>1</sup>

While most of the migrants to England chose London to start or restart their careers, Simcha, known as Samuel, as well as Simon, went to a much smaller community of Jews. Indeed, it was tiny. It was estimated that in 1898 there were about 260 Jews living in Plymouth which, if we assume an average of six per family, means only about 40 families in what was a bustling town. When Simcha arrived, there was already a synagogue which had been built in 1762. It is the oldest Ashkenazi synagogue still in use in the English-speaking world. In 1954, it was designated as a Grade II Listed Building. Rabbi Bernard Susser, in his thesis describing the history of the Jews in south-west England, makes an interesting comment about the small communities in this area throughout the nineteenth century. He says that few congregations elected a rabbi as few were:

... sufficiently well financed to be able to afford the "luxury" of a rabbi. Particularly as between them the congregants had a fair knowledge of the requirements of Jewish law in most day-to-day situations. Furthermore, it is probable that Jewish immigrants to England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as the twentieth, were not averse to relaxing strict rabbinical supervision of their lives. Indeed, it may well be that



the absence of such supervision and the general lack of social pressure to conform with Jewish religious requirements prompted some immigrants to leave their strictly ordered lives in their native town and settle in the more liberalised atmosphere of England.<sup>2</sup>

It does not seem likely that Simcha chose to migrate to England and later to Australia merely to avoid having to practise his religion considering his strong adherence to strict orthodoxy. In 1856, Simcha married Matilda (surname unknown). There is almost no information available about her early life, except that, according to the 1881 UK census, she may have been born in Suwalki, Poland in 1839 which means she would have been only seventeen or so upon marriage, but this was not uncommon at the time.

Plymouth has a history of being a port since Tudor times at least, famously used by Sir Francis Drake, a local Devonshire man himself, who left on several of his voyages from there. By the mid-nineteenth century, its dockyards were the biggest employer in the town with auxiliary services supplied by small firms and shops. By 1850, steamships sailing to and from South Africa, Australia and New Zealand were calling in at Plymouth. It was also an unhealthy town in the mid-century. This would have been a problem for Simcha, who was an asthmatic, so that while his clothes-selling business may have flourished, he could have been advised to consider moving once more, to a place with a better, drier climate.

Following a common migration pattern, Joseph Ernest Stone, Simcha's eldest son was the first in the family to leave England at the age of 18 and sailed to Australia in 1876. Simcha, his wife and the remaining children only left Plymouth in 1883. The children were Rebecca (born in 1856), Rachel (1861–1935), Ester (1866–1933), Beatrice (1870–1965), Bernard (1871–1935), William (1875–1949), and Mark (1881–1939). All the children were born in Devonshire, except possibly Rebecca as the 1861 United Kingdom census says that she was born in Birmingham.

Joseph began his career in Australia as an auctioneer, a common occupation for Jews in Australia. By the mid-1880s, he was holding regular auctions in Echuca, a small town on the Murray River in Victoria. In 1884, he was selling off stock of drapery, clothing, boots, hosiery, fancy goods and jewellery via auctions in several small towns

in the state. By 1886, he was clearly sufficiently established to marry. His union with Jane (Sheina) Davis was a great match. The *Melbourne Punch* described the nuptials as 'the largest and gaiest (sic) Jewish wedding that had taken place in the Melbourne Jewish community'.<sup>3</sup> The marriage ceremony took place at the home of the bride, after which family and friends adjourned to the Hotham Town Hall for dinner and dancing. The 18-year-old bride was the daughter of Wolf Davis, who had arrived from Poland in 1857. Joseph and Jane had nine children between 1887 and 1903.

Meanwhile, in 1898, he had imported 22 packages of sponges and presumably found that there was a ready demand for this product. Sponges today are mostly made from polyurethane and are used in the cleaning of anything from a person's body to the dishes, as well as cars. In Joseph's time, sponges were living creatures and were almost entirely an imported product in Australia. In 1902, his first advertisement appeared in a newspaper for the sale of sponges and chamois which were available for wholesale purchase only. In the very same year, it was being suggested that Australia could grow and harvest their own sponges, which, if he was aware of this idea, may have been worrying for Joseph. The newspaper report highlighted the possibility with these words: 'The ordinary sponge – face, bath, or of lower grade – is almost universal and well-nigh indispensable to the household of to-day, and in some form or another it will be found in every second house in Australia. So far, we have had to depend on the outside world for our supply, but it appears that all the time, there was at our gates a means whereby we might ignore foreign shipments, and perhaps in time enter foreign markets on equal terms with the other sponge producers.'<sup>4</sup>

Later in 1902, Joseph brought 500 cases of sponges into the country, shipped from Hamburg via Antwerp. He kept up his auctioneering business and still found time to be involved in several community activities such as the Board of United Jewish Education, established in 1895, from which he resigned in 1905. In that year he was also busy collecting funds for an orphanage in Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> At this time, Joseph was already active in the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation (known at times as the Polish *shul*), attending the many AGMs and EGMs and putting forward his views on matters under discussion. A few years after this, a comment was made on his character and highlighted in the newspaper.<sup>6</sup> Rev. A.T. Chodowski, serving a congregation in New

Zealand, was visiting Melbourne in 1909 and wrote a long description of the impressions made during his visit. Of Joseph E. Stone he said, 'I also met Mr. J. E. Stone, one of the most orthodox Jews it has been my fortune to encounter in these colonies. He would like to make Melbourne Palestine in all its ancient glory, and his own little schul the Holy of Holies in its temple. He is a most charitable man, and an earnest supporter of the community, and of every Jewish charitable institution.'<sup>7</sup> In the last decade of Joseph's life, he was spending nearly all his time organising various charity drives in aid of Russian Jews and others in need.

Joseph's eldest son, Montefiore Simon Stone (1887–1965) was a merchant and manager with vast import-export experience. In the 1920s, he was working for Sassoon & Co, Bombay Ltd. In 1924, Monty married in South Africa a Transvaal-born woman, Phyllis Frankel, who after giving him two children, sadly died at the age of 26. This must have been a difficult time for Monty as his father-in-law had just passed away the previous year. He returned to Australia and married for a second time in 1929. With this South African connection, a further similarity may be noted between the Stone and Krantz families.

Joseph's oldest daughter, Gladys Saidee (1889–1956) married the Rev. Samuel Nathan Salas (1888–1958). Joseph must have been exceedingly pleased that his daughter was marrying this Palestine-born rabbi, whose brother was also a rabbi in Jerusalem. This relationship may have partially accounted for Joseph's interest in the welfare of people living in Palestine. Rev. Salas arrived in Australia in 1914–15, after spending a few years in England studying for his rabbinical diploma. According to the 1911 UK census, Samuel Nathan (sometimes his name was inverted to Nathan Samuel) Salasnik was living in a boarding house with 18 others in central London while he studied. His nationality was described on the census document as Turkish. Upon his arrival in Australia, he was employed in Broken Hill, the flourishing town built on the mining of silver, where he was employed as a *shochet* (butcher) by the small Jewish community. After marrying Gladys in 1919, they moved to Auckland, New Zealand, where he had been offered a position as Assistant Minister and later went to Christchurch as rabbi of the small community in the South Island. He must have been comfortable working there as he stayed in New Zealand until his death in 1958, two years after his wife.

Very little is known about Maurice Lionel Stone (1889–1922), another son of Joseph, other than he worked for his father in their firm J.E. Stone and, in 1917, was in the USA for a while. In that year, he filled out a draft registration card, but it is not known whether he actually served during the war. Probably not, as he requested exemption on the grounds that he had a wife to support. He is not to be confused with a nephew, son of Montefiore Stone, with the same name. In 1919, Maurice went to England with his wife Fanny and daughter Sarah, where he died in 1922 at the young age of 33. No records of birth or re-marriage or death have been found for Fanny, very likely because the surname on her marriage record is not correct or not accurately transcribed. Her maiden name may have been Dorowich or Doctorovitch and she was from Wales.

Rachel Stone (1892–1967) married Rev. Nathan Nossell (1900–58) in 1932. Nathan had arrived in Australia in 1929 and according to his naturalisation application made in 1933, he was born in Gilkiai, Lithuania, although his obituary states that his hometown was Kaidani, now Kedainai in the province of Kovno/Kaunas, which is more likely. At the time of the application, Nathan gave his occupation as glove-maker. Before citizenship was granted, there was a flow of correspondence between officials responsible for deciding whether he should be granted Australian citizenship, as there was concern about his travels prior to his arrival. Between 1919 and 1924, he was in Berlin where his passport was issued by the Lithuanian consul in that country. He had been studying in Berlin at a *yeshiva*, after which he was employed, first by a congregation in Berlin and then in France for two years, before sailing for England and then on to Cape Town, South Africa, where his older brother, Benjamin Nossell, was living and working as a butcher.

After five months in Cape Town, Nathan finally arrived in Australia after receiving an offer of employment at the Brunswick Talmud Torah. From 1951 until his death, he was president of the Moorabbin Hebrew Congregation which he co-founded and whose prayer services were held for several years in his home, including the services held on the High Holy Days. Although involved in several squabbles and faced with a break-away group in the early years, the Congregation has survived until today. Nathan was outspoken in his views and made them known through the news media. We can only speculate whether his father-in-law was happy to read his letters to the editor in various publications

and the reports on his opinions which had been stated vociferously in meetings and which were also reported in the newspapers. He was a firm believer in Orthodoxy and permitted no practices which could be construed as in conflict with orthodoxy. He appears to fit the widely-held stereotype of the Litvak Jew – stubborn, opinionated, and with a strong preference for traditional Judaism as practised in the Pale of Settlement and earlier. In 1938, in a letter to the editor of the *Australian Jewish Herald*, he wrote in reply to a previous letter published by the newspaper which he thought was derogatory of foreign-born Jews in Australia saying:

We Australian citizens, the King's subjects, but not of Australian birth, are loyal to King and country as much as the Australian-born citizen. We are doing our duty for King and country, and are prepared to sacrifice our lives if called upon for King and country. We have no quarrels, and our endeavour is to be on the best terms with our neighbours.... I will finish with a Talmudic saying: *Hesot Azmoch Achar Kach Hesot Aeharim* 'Look to yourself before you speak of others.'<sup>8</sup>

Periodically in Australia the question of kosher slaughter of animals for food consumption has been raised. An example was in 1947 when the Victoria State Minister of Health and the Health Commissioner brought up several issues. Rev. Nossell responded in the newspaper by saying that he had discussed the matter with the Minister who had said to him, 'Tell the Jewish community they have nothing to worry about as regards the prohibition of Kosher killing. The Health Commission will have to touch me first before they attempt to touch the religious rights of your community in connection with Kosher killing.'<sup>9</sup>

Bernard Stone (1871–1935) son of Simcha and younger brother of Joseph Ernest, first began his retail business in Broken Hill in 1895. In 1898, he married Hannah, known as Nance, the youngest daughter of Jacob Bernstein.<sup>10</sup> The wedding was celebrated in the Ballarat Synagogue in Hannah's home town in the state of Victoria, and, according to a newspaper, attendance was so great that 'the building was taxed to its capacity.'<sup>11</sup>

The local newspaper, *The Ballarat Star*, not surprisingly, gave a two-column description of the marriage ceremony and the celebrations which included a dance that night. A long list of who was

present and the gifts given to the couple was provided in the report by the newspaper. They received many items of silver such as a dinner gong, candelabra, cruet, pickle jar and others. Perhaps these gifts were made from silver mined in Broken Hill. After their honeymoon in Sydney, Bernard and Hannah went back to Broken Hill. At the end of the year, services, assisted by Bernard who read the prayers, were held in Broken Hill for the High Holy Days. On this occasion he also sang in a choir consisting of his two brothers, William and Mark, together with Solomon Spielvogel, the brother of the eminent teacher and writer, Nathan Spielvogel of Ballarat. In May 1899, Hannah was back again in Ballarat helping her mother who had hosted a gathering to celebrate the festival of *Shavuot*, as she did every year.

In October 1900, a meeting was held in Broken Hill to decide whether to build a synagogue and form an official congregation. This proposal was duly accepted and both Bernard and his brother William became committee members given the authority to work on this task. The latter worked hard to achieve the objective of building a synagogue in Broken Hill and became president of the Hebrew Congregation for several years. Two of the Krantz brothers, George and Isaac (Isidore) were also members of this committee. The Broken Hill Synagogue



*Beit Yisroel Synagogue, Broken Hill: Photo Credit Broken Hill Historical Society*

building took only three months to build and was officially opened in 1911. Katherine Mannix in her Master of Arts thesis tells the tale of the inauguration by Rabbi Francis Lyon Cohen of Sydney, thus:

Cohen arrived on the Friday to celebrate a service on Friday evening. The Rabbi had an exhausting three-day journey from Sydney via Melbourne and Adelaide, by boat and train, followed by a drive of three hundred and twenty miles by motor-car to Broken Hill. The Outback welcomed the Rabbi with a violent dust storm, which blew in at the conclusion of the service.<sup>12</sup>

The synagogue is now a Heritage-listed building and a museum.

It is not clear precisely when the couple chose to stay permanently in Ballarat, a thriving gold town since the first discoveries of gold in the early 1850s. By the end of the century, it was no 'cowboy' town. At the time of the wedding of Bernard and Hannah, Jacob Bernstein was president of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation which meant a great deal of entertaining needed to be carried out by Jacob's wife, Julia. It is possible that at first Hannah travelled to Ballarat from Broken Hill as and when she was needed to help her mother, but given the long distance between the two towns, some 750 kilometres, this could not have been very often. Hence, one of the reasons Bernard agreed to the move to Ballarat was so that Hannah could assist her mother. By 1907, Bernard was the honorary secretary of the Ballarat Jewish Philanthropic Society,<sup>13</sup> which in that year celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. In 1913, Bernard's community duties expanded when he became the honorary secretary of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation. In that same year, in November, Bernard's father-in-law passed away just a few weeks after celebrating his Golden Wedding Anniversary. Jacob Bernstein had been one of the mainstays of the community who not only attended synagogue services without fail but also worked with the Board of Management and various committees over the years and his loss must have been keenly felt by Bernard and Hannah, as well as many others who had benefited from Jacob and Julia Bernstein's hospitality and assistance. During World War One and thereafter, Bernard continued his work with the congregation and various other charitable organisations, while his sons achieved creditable results at the University of Melbourne. He had the honour in 1920 of presenting an address to Sir John Monash, the Australian commander and hero of World War One, who made an



official visit to Ballarat in July.

In 1926, Bernard's eldest son Simeon Cyril, generally known as Sim, married in Ballarat with his parents and many other relatives present. Simeon's father-in-law, Eskel Kleinman, had also been in Broken Hill at the same time as Bernard and later lived in Ballarat, so perhaps the fathers of the bride and groom managed to bring about the union of their two children with a little matchmaking. Bernard was elected president of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation for the last time in May 1935, the post he had held every year for more than 15 years. The fact that he had held key positions in the Ballarat Jewish community without any controversy or major disagreements recorded between the members suggests he had strong people-skills which gave him the ability to settle any differences amongst his co-religionists before they became serious. The respect of the Ballarat people for Bernard Stone was obvious on the day of his funeral in October 1935 – the town's flags



*The Ballarat Synagogue in 2023: Photo credit Marilyn Aminuddin*

were flown at half-mast.

The fine synagogue in Ballarat opened in 1861 and in the above photo is quite overshadowed by the beautiful tree planted by Jacob Bernstein in 1867. Marcus Stone also stepped into his father's shoes by being appointed the honorary secretary of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation in 1954, and later his son, Bernard Stone, the grandson of Bernard and Nance Stone was the secretary of the Synagogue Board until very recently. At this time, just as his grandfather and father had done before him in Broken Hill as well as Ballarat, Marcus conducted the services on the High Holy Days. In the 1960s when the Ballarat Synagogue needed funds for restoration work and refurbishment, Marcus Stone was indefatigable in his efforts to raise the money so important to this project. Jessica Stone, his sister, married to Paul Simon, assisted him as much as possible. After her husband's death in 1974, Jessica was elected honorary secretary of the Congregation. When Marcus Stone died in 1983, an obituary in one of the newspapers read, 'With the death on December 27 of Marcus Stone, a significant chapter in the history of the Jewish community of Ballarat came to a close... His passing has left a void in the Jewish community at large and the Jewish community of Ballarat in particular.'<sup>14</sup>

The business which Bernard and Hannah had taken over from his father-in-law was simply known in Ballarat as 'Stone's'.<sup>15</sup> In their turn, Marcus and Jessica ran the store which, under Jessica's management, specialised in formal and bridal wear for women. She advertised widely and was able to attract well-heeled clients. The store is still considered a major landmark in Ballarat.

In many ways the Stone family, including the pioneer Simcha, his sons and grandsons, reflect the hard work put in by volunteers to lead religious services and carry out other necessary tasks for the continuity of the community that was found in the small congregations in England, including that of Plymouth and others elsewhere.

The story of another of Simcha's children brings us back to Broken Hill. Esther (1866–1933), known as Essie, married Isidore, usually called Isaac, Krantz in 1894. The Krantz family were not merely pioneers in Broken Hill; they were entrepreneurs of the first order. Samuel Krantz (1839–1912) and his older children arrived in Broken Hill about 1892. He and several of his sons would become leading commercial players there in the next few decades. The children did not all arrive

together, and it is not clear why this is so, although it has been suggested that Samuel and his oldest son, Hirsch, could only arrange their passage as and when there were sufficient funds to do so. The Krantz children were all born in Odessa, or Ekaterinoslav, now named Dnipro, the latter being a city dating back to Catherine the Great of Russia. Both towns are in the Ukraine and were part of the Pale of Settlement established by Catherine. At the end of the nineteenth century, Ekaterinoslav was a thriving industrial growth area, in which approximately one-third of the population was Jewish.<sup>16</sup> Pogroms took place in 1881 and 1882 after the assassination of the Russian Tsar, Alexander II; thus, possibly one of the reasons Samuel Krantz chose to leave for a safer home.

The Krantz family established an early presence in the Jewish community in Broken Hill when in 1892 Samuel assisted in leading the Rosh Hashanah prayers in a local hall as he did again in 1902, 1904, and 1906, given that there was still no synagogue in the town.<sup>17</sup> In 1892, three of the Krantz brothers, Hirsch, Isaac and David, had established a grocery store in Broken Hill, although they dissolved their partnership in 1893 and Hirsch took over sole ownership of the store. Possibly, Isaac and David preferred to run businesses independently of their older brother. In the same year, the brothers determined that there was gold in Jindera, some 800 kilometres away from Broken Hill. Perhaps they made some money out of this discovery, but it probably did not make them over-night millionaires as the gold in the area was no longer being profitably mined by the first decade of the twentieth century.

When Isaac Krantz and Esther Stone married in 1894, Samuel Krantz was not well, or alternatively the newspaper reporter was confused. Isaac's mother attended the wedding held at Drummond Street, Carlton, Melbourne, the home of Joseph Ernest Stone, but there is no mention of Samuel in the newspaper report on the marriage.<sup>18</sup> Samuel and his wife celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary in 1909 in Broken Hill surrounded by children and other family members. By then they had 13 children, 37 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Samuel died three years later in 1912.<sup>19</sup> He lived just long enough to see the building and opening of the synagogue, described earlier.

Isaac faced plenty of business-related problems in the first few years of his marriage. For instance, in a case which dominated the headlines in several newspapers in 1900, Isaac was driving a carriage back from his store together with one of his shop assistants and the day's takings,

described in one newspaper as 'a considerable sum'<sup>20</sup> when he was held up by robbers.<sup>21</sup> In the melee which followed, his horse reared up and was fatally shot by the robbers. Luckily for Isaac, some other wagons on the road drove up behind him at which the robbers ran off. In 1901, the store which he part-owned in Broken Hill was totally razed to the ground. At the inquest into the fire, the representative of his insurance company noted that although the building itself was insured on a fair basis, the stock was over-insured, possibly hinting at some fraud on Isaac's part, although nothing came of this allegation.<sup>22</sup>

Although the exact date cannot be pinpointed, three of Samuel Krantz's sons were in South Africa by around 1904. They would appear to have arrived there just after the ending of the Boer War but what they did there is not known. It is conceivable that they believed that supplying miners with equipment and other items as they had been doing in Broken Hill would be more lucrative given that Broken Hill was not as prosperous as it had once been. One of the three brothers, Ernest Krantz (born 1878), who was unmarried, died in South Africa in 1912 because of an accident, having been thrown from a horse. Sam Junior married Rebecca Cohen, a woman born in South Africa, and had two daughters, Doreen and Beatrice (familiarily known as Betty).

Esther, Isaac's wife, travelled with him to South Africa together with their two sons, Cyril and Leon, born in 1895 and 1899 respectively. In 1911, both the boys were boarders in London while attending school there. Thus, Isaac and his family were not in Australia when his father passed away in 1912. When World War One broke out in 1914, both of his sons signed up to fight with the Empire Forces. South Africa, like Australia, New Zealand and Canada were still part of the British Empire but unlike Australia and New Zealand, there was little appetite to fight British enemies in 1914. As a result, the Empire Force was formed, a voluntary army which mostly fought against the neighbouring German colony bordering on the north-west of South Africa which, upon independence, became Namibia. In 1919, Cyril and Leon returned to Hollydene in New South Wales, where their father was living. Their homecoming was celebrated happily by their father and his friends.<sup>23</sup> By 1928, Isaac and Esther's marriage was over. It seems that Esther had been deserted by Isaac in South Africa with their youngest son, Stanley, and left without any funds to support herself.<sup>24</sup> The divorce was undoubtedly unpleasant for her sons, particularly as court hearings

dragged on for two years. Isaac continued to live at Hollydene, on a farm of some 500 acres, a large part of which was planted in lucerne. In 1939 he sold the farm. He also had a wine licence for a hotel in the town and a store in Denman. In 1941, when Isaac died, there are odd comments included in his obituary published in a local newspaper.<sup>25</sup> For example, it says that he was a native of South Africa, which he certainly was not. Isaac, like all his brothers and sisters, was born in either Odessa or Dnipro. Further, it says that he fought in the Great War, that is like his sons. There is no evidence for this. In fact, in 1917, he was fined in Broken Hill by the authorities for selling oysters without a license; his excuse being that he thought that they were included under his fish licence.<sup>26</sup> Also, in 1917 Isaac, together with his brother Hirsch and others, registered a new entity to take over the drapery business previously owned by Hirsch Krantz.<sup>27</sup>

Another Krantz brother who had a life of ups and downs was Ralph Krantz but as his story has been told elsewhere,<sup>28</sup> it will not be repeated here other than to note that Ralph married into the family of Sir Lewis Cohen, the Lord Mayor of Adelaide when he wed Sir Lewis' daughter Gladys.

The Stones and the Krantz families, both with their origins in the Pale of Settlement, like any other large family had members who worked hard throughout their lives, all making enough money to live comfortably, who chose to assist others in need, and who remained faithful to their religion. There were also those who walked different paths, not always on the right side of the law or the faith handed down by their religious fathers and grandfathers. Their stories reveal they were intrepid travellers, traversing long distances and the key roles they played in developing Jewish life in Carlton, North Melbourne, with Stone's *shul*, as it was known colloquially, to distant Broken Hill in New South Wales, and the regional Victorian town of Ballarat. It also illustrates the connections between Australia and South Africa, particularly following the discovery of diamond and gold mines in South Africa and the harsh effects of the depression of the 1890s in Victoria, leading Victorian Jews to seek other pastures, despite the distance. In this way, Jews were a transnational people well before the concept was developed.

## Appendix: The First Three Generations of the Stone and Krantz Families in Australia

### *Simcha/Simon Stone (1832–1891) m.<sup>29</sup> Matilda<sup>30</sup> (1839–1921)<sup>31</sup>*

Joseph Ernest Stone (1858–1940) m. Jane/Shena Davis (186?–1942)

Montefiore Simeon Stone (1887–1965) m. Phyllis Frankel  
(1895–1926)

Gladys Saidee Stone (1888–1956) m. Samuel Nathan Salas  
(1887–1958)

Maurice Lionel Stone (1889–1922) m. Fanny Lillian Dorowich  
(?)<sup>32</sup>

Isadore/Isaac Stone (1890–1908)

Rachel Stone (1892–1967) m. Nathan Nossell (1900–1958)

Saul Stone (1897–?)

Else/Esther Queenie Stone (1905–1975)

Hirsch de Vahl Stone (1900–1980) m. Eva Ruth Silverman  
(1909–1974)

Wolf Davis Coleman Stone (1903–1984) m. Olga Cohen (1910–1979)

Esther Stone (1866–?) m. Isadore/Isaac Krantz (1867–1941)

Bernard Stone (1871–1949) m. Hannah Bernstein (1876–1958)

Simeon Cyril Stone (1898–1953) m. Queenie Kleinman  
(1902–81)

Victor Stone (1900–79) m. Kathleen Hardy (?–1989)

Marcus Nahum Stone (1904–1983) m. Lila Solomon  
(1914–97)

Jessica Stone (1906–82) m. Paul Simon (1918–1972)

William Stone (1875–1949) m. Deborah Blumenthal  
(1885–1952)

Zara Stone m. Boab Blumberg (1910–98)

Mark Stone (1880–1939)

Rachel Stone (1861–1935) m. Abraham Emanuel (1861–1935)

Beatrice/Betty Stone (1875–1965) m. Cyril Basil Lazer  
(1865–1909)

### *Samuel Jacob Krantz (1832–1912) m. Rosa Drosya Lakovsky (1844–1919)*

Sophia/Sarah Krantz (1861–1943) m. Solomon Dryen  
(1854–1922)

Gnessa Krantz (1863–1947) m. Lazer Lekus/Louis Gordon

(1878–1939)

Hirsch Krantz (1865–1938) m. Rosa Rosanove (1874–1948)

George Krantz (1867–1934) m. Esther? (1872–1933)

David Krantz (1869–1951) m. Isabel Boas (1874–1961)

Isaac Krantz (1870–1941) m. Esther/Essie Stone (1870–1942)

Cyril Krantz (1895–1922) m. Adele Cornfield (?–1941)

Leon Krantz (1899–1968)

Israel Krantz (1874–1946) m. Sophia Warshovky (1881–1968)

Sidney Krantz (1903–1973)

Reuben Krantz (1905–1972) m. Adele Violet Levy (1911–41)

Max Krantz (1876–1948) m. Ethel May Cock (1879–1919)

Golda Hope Krantz (1907–97)

Dora Krantz (1877–1951) m. Abraham D. Shaffer (1875–1959)

Ernest Krantz (1878–1912)

Ralph Krantz (1880–1948) m. Gladys Cohen (1888–1966)

Samuel Krantz (1881–1956) m. Rebecca Cohen (?–1962)

Annie Krantz (1882–1963) m. William Roden (1883–1943)

Henry/Harold Krantz (1887–1957) m. Florence May Nicholls (1890–1953)

May Krantz (1889–1960) m. Albert Victor Boas (1887–1967)

## Endnotes

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- 3 1886 marriage of J.E. Stone and S. Davis.
- 4 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 May 1902, p. 6.
- 5 *Jewish Herald*, 28 July 1905, p. 8.
- 6 *Jewish Herald*, 17 September 1909, p. 16.
- 7 Note: Rev. A.T. Chodowski's son, Isaac Jacob Chodowski married Miriam Maud Solomon in 1915. She was the daughter of the Rev. S.M. Solomon of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, and sister of the author's grandmother.



- 8 *Australian Jewish Herald*, 27 October 1938, p. 8.
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- 25 *Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 4 April 1941, p. 1.
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- 29 “m” married
- 30 Matilda’s maiden name is unknown.
- 31 All dates, particularly birth dates, are tentative.
- 32 Various versions of Fanny’s surname are found in the official records. No records have been found for her prior to her marriage.

## HE CAME KNOCKING: DR MICHAEL TRAUB, THE *SHALIACH* FROM PALESTINE IN WARTIME AUSTRALIA

*Rodney Gouttman*

### ABSTRACT

In September 1941, Dr Michael Traub a veteran *Shaliach* or emissary for Keren Hayesod, the financial arm of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, came to Australia on a fundraising mission. Australian troops were fighting in North Africa, and Japan was soon to join the Axis Powers to rampage in Asia/Pacific including the bombing of northern Australia. The nation feared invasion. With Australia on a war footing abroad and at home, the time did not appear promising for the Traub mission. As well, Traub's presence was bitterly resented by a cabal of prominent Australian Jews who eschewed Zionism and were led by former Governor-General, Sir Isaac Isaacs. Despite their public sniping, the emissary continued with his mission. He was a rare voice speaking about the ongoing Nazi genocide of the Jews in Europe to an uninformed Australian public, promoting Palestine as the rightful sanctuary for refugees, and explaining how the citizens of the Jewish homeland were enthusiastically participating in the war against the Nazis. Traub was in Australia for eighteen months, crisscrossing the continent and meeting with many prominent individuals and groups in the Jewish community and civil society before travelling to New Zealand. He was a consummate orator, linguist, broadcaster, writer, and Zionist lobbyist, who also involved himself in local Jewish affairs.

**KEYWORDS:** Zionism, Australian history, politics, antisemitism, Jewish-Gentile relations

## The prequel

On 19 November 1941, Dr Michael Traub, the *Shaliach* or emissary for the Palestine Foundation Fund, known as *Keren Hayesod*, the financial arm of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, arrived in Sydney to conduct its third-ever fundraising mission in Australia. Originally two men were chosen for this task, Gershon Agronsky and Michael Traub.

Agronsky was the founding editor of the English daily, the *Palestine Post*. Born in Ukraine, he migrated as a child with his family to the United States of America, where he was educated and received citizenship. From America, he joined the British Army's Jewish Legion in World War One to fight in Palestine under the command of Australian, Lt. Colonel Eliazar Margolin.<sup>1</sup>

Michael Traub, on the other hand, was a seasoned *Keren Hayesod* apparatchik and Zionist lobbyist. He was born in 1891 in the Latvian city of Libau, to which his parents had immigrated from Lithuania. There he was schooled in Hebrew and Talmud at a traditional Jewish gymnasium in Lodz, Poland, before attending universities in Germany concentrating on law, economics, and philosophy. Though a certified lawyer, much of his time was spent in Europe on Zionist work. He helped establish the Zionist organisation in Switzerland, and in 1931 migrated to Palestine, but soon returned to Europe. For six years he served in Germany, where he established *Keren Hayesod*, raising significant funds in the face of ever-rising Nazi antisemitism. Traub was appointed Vice President of his organisation in Germany and was elected to the Presidium of the German Zionist Federation. He attended the 1935 World Zionist Conference in Lucerne, Switzerland, and in 1938 returned to Palestine.<sup>2</sup> That year he was a participant in the Evian Conference in France. It was called to deal with the burgeoning European refugee crisis, mainly Jewish, where he would have heard the Australian delegate, Colonel White, utter his infamous statement '... as we (Australians) have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one by encouraging any scheme of large-scale foreign migration.'<sup>3</sup> Prior to his mission in Australia, Traub had successfully conducted similar ones in Great Britain, Switzerland, Belgium, Canada, and South Africa.<sup>4</sup>

When the Jewish Agency applied to Canberra for the required visas for the two men to enter Australia, the request was flatly rejected without explanation.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, the Executive of the Jewish Agency,

Michael Shertok, sought help from the Chief Secretary of the British Mandate Government in Palestine to intervene on its behalf, explaining why this particular mission was essential for the material progress of Palestine:

... The Fund has invested over the last twenty years more than nine million pounds in the development of Palestine. The Jewish Agency is directly dependent on the Fund to cover its current budget and meet liabilities. The spread of Nazi rule on the Continent of Europe has deprived the Fund of practically all its revenue from Jewish communities of the Continent and is now dependent exclusively on the Jewries of overseas communities. It is, therefore, a matter of most importance that the campaign to be opened in Australia should meet with success and the Palestine Fund as well as the Executive of the Jewish Agency would be deeply grateful if the Government could respond to the Commonwealth of Australia that the facilities requested be extended to the emissaries of the Fund.<sup>6</sup>

Agronsky had agreed to tour Australia on two conditions: that he would be absent from Palestine for no more than two to three weeks, and that *Keren Hayesod* would take care of his travel requirements. The latter was a routine matter, but the former was utterly impractical given the time required to travel to Australia, crisscross her vast continent, and return. Agronsky considered Canberra's rebuff both as a personal and public slight and demanded it be revoked whether or not he went to Australia. He felt the reason for the rejection was that he and Traub were considered foreigners. However, he also believed that had he applied for the visa himself there would not have been a problem because both Australia's Prime Minister, Robert Gordon Menzies, and his Minister for the Army, Percy Spender, knew him and also he had done journalist work for the *Sydney Morning Herald*.<sup>7</sup> To what degree his claims to be known by the two honourable gentlemen are correct cannot be verified. Perhaps, he met them when he covered their separate tours for his newspaper when, in early 1941 they visited their troops stationed in Palestine. Ultimately, Canberra relented and indicated that both men would be granted visas. This news was passed on to Max Freilich, the Zionist's point man in Sydney.<sup>8</sup> However, only Michael Traub was to

travel to Australia, coming by himself and even leaving behind his wife and daughter in Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Zeitgeist**

The timing of the mission did not appear promising for fundraising for a foreign cause, which was not even well appreciated in Australia's Jewish community. Envoys before him who represented various causes in Palestine, such as Israel Cohen for the Zionist Council in Jerusalem in 1923<sup>10</sup> and Solomon Yankelovich Jacobi representing Ort-Oze and Emig-Direkt in 1928<sup>11</sup> were successful fundraisers. However, they did not come in wartime when the supreme financial priority was the national war effort.

When Great Britain declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, Australia immediately followed suit. Even prior to Traub's arrival, her troops had been fighting for almost six months against Fascist Italy and then Nazi Germany in Greece, Crete, North Africa, and Syria, defending British interests. There was a distinct probability that if Rommel had not been stopped at El Alamein in Egypt on 11 November 1941, he would have crossed the Suez Canal on his way to Palestine.<sup>12</sup>

On 27 September 1941, Japan joined the Axis Powers to rampage in Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. Sequentially, the slumbering American fleet at Pearl Harbor was shattered, the previously considered invincible British Naval Base of Singapore surrendered and northern Australia was heavily bombed. Australians feared they might be invaded.<sup>13</sup> As Manning Clark described it, the attitude of the Australian populace to the war switched ever so quickly from complacency to anxiety.<sup>14</sup> The home front was transformed by government decree industrially, economically, socially, and culturally to meet the exigencies of the national war effort. Labour and capital were nationalised, food and materials were rationed, and social life was restricted. Importantly for the Traub mission, public and private fundraising was almost monopolised by the war effort.<sup>15</sup> The Jewish community was fully supportive of its government fundraising while still having to maintain its institutions and philanthropy as best it could.

Though wartime provided obstacles to Traub's 'Victory Appeal', as the name of his mission was called, its greatest threat came from within the Jewish community from a cabal of influential members who abhorred political or practical Zionism. They saw it, particularly in wartime, as unconscionable, disrespectful, disloyal, and socially

dangerous. Unconscionable, because they felt it espoused a challenge to their version of what it was to be an Australian Jew, which was the same as their fellow non-Jews only differing in religion. Disrespectful to Australia, because she had provided her Jewish citizens with all possible human rights and freedoms. They were horrified by the Zionist notion which implied a full Jewish life could only be experienced in a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

The charge of disloyalty comprised two components. The first concerned the Zionist objective of dismantling the 1939 British McDonald White Paper on Palestine which was preventing thousands of Nazi-maligned Jews in Europe from securing refuge in the Holy Land. Australian foreign policy had historically followed that of Great Britain. To disavow the White Paper was to be anti-British and hence anti-Australian. To open the gates of Palestine to refugees would anger the Arab/Muslim hemisphere, undermining British war strategy in the Middle East. Anti-Zionists further feared the hoary-old antisemitic libel of Jews having dual loyalties that would place the Jewish future in Australia in jeopardy.

Leading this animosity and attack on political Zionism was Sir Isaac Isaacs, a former Australian Governor-General, who peppered the press and civic officials with his views. His clashes over Zionism with Julius Stone, Professor of Jurisprudence at Sydney University have been discussed by several authors,<sup>16</sup> and Stone's position in this debate is found in his long polemic 'Stand up and be Counted!'.<sup>17</sup>

Less known, however, is that these contretemps were preceded by an equally feisty disagreement in the *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* between Isaacs and Rabbi Lieb Aisack Falk of the Great Synagogue in Sydney. In World War One, he was the Hebrew Chaplain to the Jewish Legion in Palestine and during World War Two a Hebrew Chaplain to the Australian Military Forces in New South Wales.<sup>18</sup> The catalyst for this affray was the presence of the Traub mission in Sydney. Falk entered it to rebuke the 'Zionist Organisation of Sydney' for its failure to appropriately respond to Isaacs's constant anti-Zionist carping and to advertise himself as the 'Honorary President of the New Zionist Organisation of Australia'.<sup>19</sup>

Isaacs labelled all who favoured a Jewish state in Palestine, as 'Herzlian Zionists'.<sup>20</sup> They were evil because they challenged the authority of Great Britain and her Mandate in Palestine. Not once in the exchanges did he mention the plight of the Jews in Europe. What

was important to him was the defence of Great Britain as the custodian of the League of Nations Mandate of Palestine granted to her in 1922, with the power to decide what was in her best interests there. Falk, on the other hand, believed the legitimacy for a Jewish homeland/state in Palestine was to be found in the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917. Curiously, Isaacs claimed that he was a victim of 'Falk's zealotness' and declared that on the forehead of all Zionists was the mark of 'Masada' that signified 'desperation, defeat, and death.' He described himself to be a 'spiritual Zionist' adding:

... My Zionism I am proud to share with the vast majority of British and Australian Jews who find that their spiritual devotion to the faith (Judaism) is not only consistent with but DEMANDS our marching in this crucial hour in step with the British Government, Parliament and People, and so towards Victory that alone can secure our Empire, regenerate the attainment of sane Jews, and beneficent consummation of the Mandate ...

No one, he said, could have two fatherlands. Justice in Palestine he insisted had to apply equally to Jews, Muslims, and Christians, and the 'extreme Zionism' currently heard in Sydney was a danger to Australia and Great Britain.<sup>21</sup> These 'extreme Zionists', implying that they were evangelical culprits, were Traub and his band of supporters. Two of them from Melbourne, Dr Aaron Patkin<sup>22</sup> and Dr Leon Jona,<sup>23</sup> were fearful that Isaacs's war against Zionism might derail the Traub campaign.

In Isaacs, Zionists had no mere adversary, because of the high esteem in which he was held in the general and Jewish communities. In April 1941, he was chosen to be the honorary president of the Melbourne branch of the World Jewish Congress.<sup>24</sup> His issues with Zionism of course were longstanding. Israel Cohen recounts that during his Melbourne visit in 1923, Isaacs queried him about Zionism's stress on Jewish nationality, when nationality was tethered to a country or to a territory, of which Jews had neither. Cohen replied that his interlocutor was confusing nationality with citizenship.<sup>25</sup> Isaacs also confided a wish to visit Palestine to see how Hebrew was being used as a modern language. That stopover on his way to London lasted a mere day.<sup>26</sup>

When Traub arrived in Sydney, he found Zionism was organisationally weak throughout the country. Zionist societies existed in



state capitals but were internally independent of each other with quite small memberships, despite the formation of the Zionist Federation of Australia in 1927.<sup>27</sup> He relied heavily on a few dedicated local Zionists, who were socially and politically connected, to help plan the campaign itinerary and be the conduits to his meeting with prominent non-Jews in religion and politics.

At the time, the majority of Australia's dominant Anglo-Jewish community viewed the Holy Land only in spiritual or philanthropic terms. They saw their country, Australia, as a place to immigrate to and not emigrate from. Their major concern was for 'foreign' or non-Anglo Jews permitted to live among them to assimilate quickly the folkways and mores of their new abode in order to avoid arousing antisemitism.<sup>28</sup> Hilary Rubinstein writes that attitudes to Zionism were influenced by congregational rabbis, but this was far from absolute. Jewish religious leaders were at the forefront of both the pro and anti-Zionist camps, while others remained ambivalent.<sup>29</sup>

The Australian Jewish press covered developments in the *Yishuv* (the Jewish Community in Palestine) and the evolving Jewish tragedy in Europe, unlike its mainstream counterpart whose accounts were few, far between, and disconnected.<sup>30</sup> However, it was steadfastly loyal to the national war effort while generally supportive of the Traub mission. The exceptions in the latter matter were the Isaacs-influenced *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* and Perth-based *The Australian Jewish Outlook*.<sup>31</sup>

### **Characterisation of Michael Traub**

The *Australian Jewish News* characterised Dr Michael Traub as 'one of the best-known figures in World Zionism' who planned to stay in Australia for several weeks.<sup>32</sup> That said, his presence in Sydney had been preceded several months earlier by David Ben-Gurion, chairman of the Jewish Agency, for a stay that barely lasted twenty-four hours<sup>33</sup> which serendipity paralleled one by the Australian Prime Minister, Robert Gordon Menzies, to Palestine to survey his troops stationed there and to evaluate the military situation in the Middle East before flying to London for a meeting of the British War Cabinet.<sup>34</sup>

David Ben-Gurion's trip to Sydney was not one of choice. The war in Europe had forced him to take a more circuitous route to Palestine from America where he was involved in Zionist work. On 12 January 1941, he flew from San Francisco to Honolulu by clipper, and then on

to the Philippines, Noumea, and Auckland, before setting down on Rushcutters Bay in Sydney on 3 February 1941. In Auckland, he held a chance meeting with New Zealand's prime minister, Peter Fraser, in which they discussed a Jewish army for Palestine, the lessening of tension between the *Yishuv* and the British Mandate Authority and Palestine Jewry's role in the fight against Hitler. Reaching Sydney, he held a session in his hotel room with Max Freilich of the State Zionist Council of New South Wales. They also talked about a Jewish army for Palestine. Ben-Gurion advised that Australian Zionists should follow their own path and not necessarily replicate practices from elsewhere. Soon after this meeting, he attended a hastily arranged gathering at the Maccabean Hall before leaving Sydney at 7 a.m. on 4 February 1942, by tiny seaplane to Townsville, Darwin, Singapore, Calcutta, Karachi, and Basra, eventually setting down on the Sea of Galilee on 18 January 1942.<sup>35</sup> On his return to Jerusalem, he reported to the Jewish Agency that Australia was fertile soil for the spread of Zionism, fundraising, and political lobbying for the Jewish homeland in Palestine.<sup>36</sup> These observations were to be tested by Michael Traub and his mission.

Traub's arrival was journalistically escorted by articles over successive weeks in *PIX Magazine*, arguably the country's leading popular lifestyle and cultural publication. The first titled 'Wartime in Palestine', featured a headshot of Traub and introduced him as a member of the 'Administrative Committee of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, who was in Australia on a lecture tour to tell an impressive story of the development of Palestine since it was proclaimed a Jewish national home'. The core messages were that the fraternally strong bond developed between the *Yishuv* and Australian troops in Palestine during World War One remained in the current conflict in the Middle East and that the Jews of Palestine were fully committed to the Allied war effort in the Middle East. With an eye to the magazine's major readership, it pictured Jewish women in Palestine fully involved in food production and heavy industry freeing their men to fight.<sup>37</sup> The second article, 'Diggers in Palestine-AIF: visits to Jewish Settlements', provided *in situ* evidence of the aforementioned friendship.<sup>38</sup> While no authorship was attributed to these two articles, they were either written by Traub or heavily influenced by him.<sup>39</sup> Who placed them in the magazine remains unknown, but they were a reader-friendly introduction to Traub and his mission to a national audience.

Indeed, Traub was able to market his messages to the interests of the people and groups he addressed. His narrative was usually a fabric of connecting threads – why the Jewish homeland was Palestine, the burgeoning tragedy of European Jewry inflicted by the Nazis, Palestine as the moral place for Jewish refugees, the contribution of the Jews of Palestine to the Allied war effort and Palestine as a Jewish polity post-war.

### **An important meeting**

Having been in the country only a very short time, Traub was escorted by Alec Masel of the Melbourne-based Zionist Federation of Australia, to meet with the newly minted Australian Prime Minister, John Joseph Curtin, in Canberra.<sup>40</sup> Curtin had interrupted a session of his war cabinet for the interview. It was Traub's impression that Curtin listened carefully to what he had to say,<sup>41</sup> but they were only ever likely to agree on one thing: the speedy defeat of Hitler. Their mindsets and interests were so different.

Traub informed the prime minister of the *Yishuv's* contribution to the British war effort, provided reasons for the removal of the 1939 White Paper on Palestine and addressed the reasons for a Jewish army in Palestine. He felt that Curtin's interest was aroused only by thoughts that a Jewish army might replace his own troops in the Near East. He said he would take the idea to cabinet for consideration.<sup>42</sup> There is no evidence that happened.

The truth was that while Curtin might defy British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to recall his 7th Division back from North Africa to defend his country against possible Japanese invasion,<sup>43</sup> he, as had prime ministers before him, would never question Great Britain's right to make policy in the Middle East generally, and regarding Palestine in particular. Further, he may have been miffed by Churchill's failure to consult him over the selection of Australia's Richard Gavin Casey as 'Minister of State in Residence in the Middle East' in the British War Cabinet, but never would he raise any objection to the way Casey resolutely defended the 1939 White Paper, which severely restricted Jewish migration to Palestine, in the war cabinet.<sup>44</sup> Curtin, an ex-Catholic and former socialist,<sup>45</sup> cared not a jot about the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Europe, viewing it as none of Australia's business.<sup>46</sup> Regarding the 1939 White Paper, it should be noted that much of Casey's tenure in the British War Cabinet from March 1942 to November 1943, coincided

with much of the time Traub was in Australia lobbying for its abolition.

### **A Jewish Army in Palestine**

The Zionist hope for a Jewish regiment in Palestine within the British army was an idea promoted by Zionists. Suzanne Rutland records that Dr Leon Jona passed on to the then-acting prime minister, Arthur Fadden, David Ben-Gurion's proposal for such a militia when he was in Sydney.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, he had discussed it with New Zealand's Prime Minister on his way there.<sup>48</sup> Fears that Rommel's forces might breach the Allies' lines at El Alamein, cross the Suez Canal into Palestine, then go beyond,<sup>49</sup> helped make the Zionist case for a Jewish regiment.

However, while World War One had its Jewish Legion in Palestine as part of the British Army with one of its commanders being an Australian veteran of Gallipoli and the Western Front, Lt. Colonel Eliazar Margolin,<sup>50</sup> the mere suggestion that a similar battalion be formed in World War Two was as controversial as it was in the Great War.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, on the heels of the announcement on 3 September 1939 that Australia was at war with Germany again, a prominent Australian Jewish veteran of World War One, Colonel Harold Cohen, dispatched a letter to the *Australian Jewish News* headed, 'A Jew in War'. He insisted that 'a Jew must express loyalty in his own sphere and locality' and not be distracted from the 'fullness of common service'.<sup>52</sup> Anglo-Australian Jewry had always eschewed any hint of separatism in public and military service, fearing antisemitism. The prevailing norm Jew *qua* Jew was invisibility.

K. Kahn, a pre-war newcomer to the country from Europe, wrote in a letter to the *Australian Jewish News* that foreign Jews like him were unlikely to enlist in a Jewish militia since their situation in Australia was so different from refugees in Palestine. They had come to Australia to settle down and to be the best citizen they could possibly be in their new home. Their hope was to be allowed to join the nation's military forces to fight Nazi Germany in defence of the British Empire.<sup>53</sup> At the time, Jews like Kahn were labelled 'aliens' or 'enemy Aliens' and barred from Australian citizenship, a prerequisite for recruitment in the Australian military forces.

Not all Anglo-Australian Jews were fearful of separatism. Julia Rapke, a stalwart of Melbourne's Jewish community, argued for a Jewish branch of the Australian Red Cross Society saying there was no objection to other faiths establishing their groups to perform public service without fear of recrimination.<sup>54</sup> In fact, Jewish organisations

like the Judean Red Cross and General War Auxiliary<sup>55</sup> were formed with especially strong membership from the 'foreign' sector of the community. On the other hand, nobody was as prominent in war work and fundraising for the national war effort as the National Council of Jewish Women led by Dr Fanny Reading which comprised mainly 'Anglos'.<sup>56</sup>

Nonetheless, initially, the British were adamantly opposed to the idea of a Jewish army for Palestine.<sup>57</sup> Yet, this reality failed to stop Isaac Isaacs from becoming apoplectic with rage over an advertisement in the *New York Times* calling for the 'establishment of a Jewish Anti-Axis Army of 260,000 based in Palestine'. The force was to be operational around Suez to release some portion of the Australian and New Zealand forces in the Middle East to return to the Pacific theatre to 'strengthen the American Hemisphere'. To Isaacs, this advertisement was the work of 'ultra-Zionist critics of the British Government' wanting an army under their own flag. He felt the Australian government and Jewish community had to be made aware of the dangers of such a proposal.<sup>58</sup>

This hyperbole came just after 2 January 1942, when Nazi generals met in Wannsee, Germany, to plan the complete destruction of European Jewry, known as 'The Final Solution'. Despite the Nazi bestial *practicum* against the Jews of Europe being well-known and condemned by the likes of Winston Churchill,<sup>59</sup> such ultra-inhumane behaviour was not raised in the British House of Commons until 17 December 1942, where it was at least excoriated.<sup>60</sup> As a consequence, the Curtin Labor Government felt obliged to follow with its own denunciation. For this paltry act, Alec Masel, representing the Victorian Advisory Board, sent the prime minister a note of appreciation with the rider that Australian Jews would remain fully committed to their country's 'struggle for freedom and decency against the forces of darkness'.<sup>61</sup> Why he felt the need to add this when the Jewish community fully supported the national war effort is curious. Perhaps Masel felt the need to reassure the prime minister of this because of something he sensed when he and Traub met with him, or maybe it was designed to counter a wrong impression of the support the Jewish community had given him by Isaacs's comments regarding Zionism. For no sooner was the conversation between Traub and the prime minister over, Isaacs fired off a missive to Curtin seeking to dissuade him from accepting any proposal that the emissary might have put to him on behalf of the Jewish Agency because *ipso facto* it would harm Allied strategy in the Middle East. He then proceeded to send similar messages to the press and notable people in the general

community.<sup>62</sup> Not everyone was willing to bend to his wishes. When the League of Nations Union of which Isaacs was a member, provided Traub with a platform to publicly speak about ‘The Jewish Home in Palestine,’ Isaacs immediately renounced his membership.<sup>63</sup>

### **On the stump: Sydney**

Upon his arrival in Sydney, Freilich introduced Traub to fellow Zionists at the Maccabean Hall detailing the *shaliach’s* aforementioned biography. Despite the opposition from local Anglo-Jews to this campaign as discussed earlier, together they set up a committee led by Freilich to plan the campaign agenda for the Sydney Victory Appeal.<sup>64</sup> A State Zionist Council reception for Traub was held on the 4 December 1941 at the Maccabean Hall which was addressed by several speakers, both rabbinical and lay.<sup>65</sup> The Jewish High Holidays had descended, and on *Yom Kippur* the emissary attended religious services at three different synagogues where on each occasion his presence was acknowledged – *Kol Nidre* by Rabbi E.A. Levi of the Eastern Suburbs Central Synagogue, *Musaf* by Rabbi Schenk of the Temple Emanuel, and *Neilah* by Rabbi Dr Israel Porush at the Great Synagogue.<sup>66</sup> All three rabbis were Zionists.

There was further media coverage of Traub’s visit. Following the two articles in *PIX Magazine*, a third appeared in the *Sydney Jewish News* under Traub’s name called ‘The A.I.F., The Birth of a Tradition: Australian Soldiers Look at Palestine.’<sup>67</sup>

The 24th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration was eagerly grasped by the *shaliach* as an opportunity to tell the National Council of Jewish Women of its significance in the history of Zionism. He argued its emergence was the product of the British Government’s recognition of the Jewish people’s 2,000-year religious connection to the Holy Land despite their exile, their yearning to return and their belief that Jews could resurrect their ancient homeland in *Eretz Israel* (Land of Israel) which they were currently doing.<sup>68</sup> At the Temple Emanuel, he traced the history of Zionism from ‘Herzl to the Present’ and emphasised how quickly refugees finding sanctuary in Palestine adapted to their new home. Blame for the pre-war hardening of Arab non-co-operation over the Peel Report that led to the 1939 MacDonald White Paper was because of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s appeasement of Nazism. However, Traub also castigated the parsimony of free Jewries towards the *Yishuv*, saying that if by the end of 1941, the Jewish population in Palestine had failed to reach a million and only 250 instead

of 500 Jewish settlements were established, the fault lay both with the restrictions of the White Paper and the financial close-fistedness of free Jewries. What was demanded 'were deeds and not pledges of sympathy', a sentiment embodied in the Victory Appeal slogan, 'The Key is in Your Pocket'.<sup>69</sup>

*Keren Hayesod's* Sydney Victory Appeal was opened at the Australia Hotel in the presence of leaders of the Jewish community and eminent non-Jews such as the premier of New South Wales, William McKell, and his attorney general, C.E. Martin. Proceeds of the Appeal on the night netted the princely sum of £9,000.<sup>70</sup> With the Appeal now launched, Traub embarked on many speaking engagements. At one of these, he outlined to a cohort of Zionist women the methods by which the Nazis were punishing the Jews in Europe, pointing out that:

... Eight million Jews had been 'enslaved' in order to wipe them out ... thousands were tortured to death in concentration camps, hundreds of thousands were crushed by starvation and disease or fell under the yoke of slave labour.

This, he lamented, was happening when the British government, in cahoots with her Mandatory Authority in Palestine, was stopping Jews from reaching the Jewish homeland and soldiers from the *Yishuv* were fighting 'shoulder to shoulder with Australian and other British forces to defend Palestine and universal justice and freedom'.<sup>71</sup>

Traub was welcomed by a huge event at the Chatswood Town Hall organised by the North Shore Christadelphian Church. His mantra to them was that Zionism had been the faith of diaspora Jewry for 2,000 years and during that time they had prayed to return to Palestine. Now it was a sanctuary of freedom for thousands of European Jews traumatised by 'Nazi-medieval brutality'.<sup>72</sup>

Returning to an overflow audience at the Temple Emanuel, Traub directly addressed the topic, 'Assimilation or Failure' in which he argued that the promise of cultural assimilation as a way of thwarting antisemitism had failed, with the proof of this currently demonstrated in Europe. He said racial antisemitism did not begin with Hitler, and it would not end with his death. The only true antidote to this scourge was a Jewish homeland in Palestine.<sup>73</sup>

His lectures to the Zionist Youth Council and the Executive of the Zionist Youth Organisation, *Shomrim*, were 'The Jewish War Effort in



Palestine' and the 'History of Jewish Migration'.<sup>74</sup> He then took a short break but not before he had addressed 43 groups with a combined attendance of 3,500 and 14 drawing room meetings for 500.<sup>75</sup> The Victory Appeal cash register had rung up £15,300, far more than the whole *Keren Hayesod* fundraiser in 1938/9. This was attributed to the power of Traub's oratory which had attracted many newcomers from Europe to the cause. Many of them knew of *Keren Hayesod* in their previous communities. The Appeal's coffers were expected to rise still further because not all donors to the previous one in 1939 had yet been approached.<sup>76</sup>

During the temporary break, Traub undertook two quick trips to Melbourne to discuss matters with the leaders of the Australian Zionist Federation residing there. On the first one, he was accompanied by Freilich and Norman Schureck, and on the second, with Freilich and Silva Steigrad, when Isaac's smear of the New South Wales Zionist Council was discussed.<sup>77</sup>

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 27 March 1942 published another piece by Traub called 'Jewry After the War – National Home in Palestine'. To the paper's unaware readers, he revealed the obscenity of what 'eight million Jews' in Europe were facing under Hitler, though with prescience, that could not be properly ascertained until after an Allied victory. However, when that day came, he hoped survivors would receive all human rights, though he was doubtful because antisemitism would not have been eradicated in Europe as it had become ingrained there in the people's mentality. Also, European states involved in post-war reconstruction would have little interest in accommodating displaced Jewish refugees. The only rightful place for these tormented souls was in Palestine where they would be accommodated and welcomed to help develop the Jewish homeland within the framework of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Traub thought that with the defeat of Nazism, Jews and Muslims could live amicably in Palestine, though she needed a Jewish army for security. He explained that already 20,000 Palestinian Jews had enlisted in the British forces and had been fighting in Abyssinia, Eritrea, the Libyan Desert, Greece, Crete, and Syria. Others served in the Palestine police force. The prospective Jewish regiment would be under British command and draw recruits from Palestine and from North and South America. He stressed that the Jews were the first people singled out in 1933, not 1939, by the Nazis for punishment and therefore the Jews of

Palestine regarded it a matter of right and honour to meet the enemy on the battlefield as Jews. He assured all that, come the end of the war, the genuine amity forged between the *Yishuv* and Australian soldiers would be converted into close ties between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Jewish homeland.<sup>78</sup>

The Jewish press's positive reportage about Palestine, on the role of *Keren Hayesod* in wartime and for a Jewish regiment in the British Army,<sup>79</sup> were all grist to the mill for the campaign which, after six exhaustive months, ended in Sydney raising £20,000. Traub's pivotal role in this venture was celebrated at a farewell dinner given to him by the State Zionist Council of NSW where he was the recipient of praise from all present. Abram Landa, MLA, lauded his ease of communication with both Jews and non-Jews, particularly with parliamentary colleagues and trade union officials. Yehuda Feher of the *Shomrim* Zionist Youth spoke of Traub's work with his young members, always encouraging their Zionism to greater heights. Others eulogised the emissary's inspiration, dedication, and knowledge. Rabbi Dr Israel Porush of the Great Synagogue told of how in an age of great disillusionment, Traub was able to transmit the true spirit of Zionism. Silva Steigrad acclaimed him for bringing the dry bones of Zionism in Sydney to life while, with tongue firmly in cheek, Rabbi Max Schenk of the Temple Emanuel was delighted Traub was leaving them because his dynamic energy and non-stop work ethic made him feel tired. On a serious note, the Rabbi commended the *shaliach* for his courage and integrity, especially in addressing his congregation which had enlightened both friends and adversaries alike. Freilich, speaking as a friend and someone who had been with Traub throughout the campaign, endorsed all the sentiments, adding that Traub's tenacity, sincerity, and workload were truly infectious even when the road ahead appeared difficult. Especially gratifying was his work with the youth.<sup>80</sup>

Traub's moving response lasted for nearly an hour keeping everyone riveted.<sup>81</sup> In thanking them, he said he was reminded of his farewells from Jewish communities and Zionist organisations in Europe that had now been crushed by the Nazis and whose spokespeople had been murdered outright or died in concentration camps. The few who managed to survive were continuing as best they could with Zionist work. He saw his role not just to convey a contemporary picture of Palestine, but also to explain how the *Yishuv* was successfully prepared to absorb refugees. What sustained many of them, despite inhuman treatment, was their

hope of reaching Palestine. He revealed the three things unhelpful to the campaign were Japan's entry into the war, the lack of a Zionist movement which forced him to spend valuable time on communal matters and poor Zionist education in the Jewish community. What gave him the moral fortitude to carry on with his work was that his brothers in Palestine were actively involved in the fight against Nazism.

Traub felt the lack of interest in Zionism in Sydney when he arrived there was due to assimilation and ignorance bred of isolation from Jewish life inside and outside Palestine. The aim of his 60 presentations was to awaken Jewish consciousness, strengthen Zionist ideology, and kindle partisan support for Palestinian Jewry. He greatly appreciated Freilich's help and his publicity team of Gerald de Vahl Davis and Michael Horowitz. However, the success of his mission in Sydney was not due to him as many had suggested, but to the great cause he represented which had even awakened 'comfortable Jews out of their dreams of assimilation'. As for those who opposed his mission within the Jewish community, the rhetoric used was like that heard around the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and the 1939 MacDonald White Paper. Such negativism, he felt, was currently being answered by *Yishuv* soldiers fighting alongside the Allies in the war against Nazism. Monies raised by the campaign were fully directed to secure the long-held dream of creating *Eretz Israel*. Some 460 individuals contributed to the Victory Appeal, but as important as the amount of money raised, so too was the increased Zionist awareness aroused. The challenge was to educate the rising generations about the need for the Jewish homeland because from their ranks would come the future teachers and leaders of Zionism. An Allied victory might dampen down antisemitism in Europe, but history had taught it would not disappear because it stemmed from the 'abnormal position of the Jews being a nation without a state'. Normalisation for the Jew could only be in a Jewish homeland.

Traub received a standing ovation and the proceedings ended with singing the *Hatikvah* and the Australian National Anthem.<sup>82</sup> With that, the mission travelled south to Melbourne.

### **Melbourne**

As mentioned, Traub had been to Melbourne to meet with members of the Zionist Federation of Australia which, with the Victorian Zionist State Council, formed a committee to conduct the Victory

Appeal in the city.<sup>83</sup> Rabbi Dr Harry Freedman of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation introduced Traub to the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Daniel Mannix, who was extremely interested in what was happening in the Holy Land,<sup>84</sup> and to the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, Rev. Joseph Booth, at St. Paul's Cathedral.<sup>85</sup> Alec Masel and Sam Wynn accompanied him to meet the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Frank Beaurepaire, at the Town Hall<sup>86</sup> and Masel was with Traub in a parley with former Australian Prime Minister, Robert Gordon Menzies, who said he had been impressed with the *Yishuv's* economic development when he visited Palestine in early 1941.<sup>87</sup>

Traub made two radio broadcasts on the ABC. The first, 'Palestine in War' on 17 May 1942 related how the pre-war Nazi victimisation of Jews in Germany had morphed into the mass murder of Jews in Europe. Some 250,000 refugees had reached Palestine where they were pitching in to develop the Jewish homeland. He touted Palestine as an Allied strategic asset and explained why the Jews of Palestine regarded the fight against Hitler as personal. Many of them had enlisted in the British Army to fight in Eritrea, Abyssinia, Bardia, Tobruk, Greece and Crete.<sup>88</sup>

'Post-War Problems of Jewry' on 17 July 1942 was the subject of the second broadcast in which he repeated details about the transformative change of the *Yishuv* since the Balfour Declaration of 1917, explained that pre-war Arab anti-Jewish disturbances in Palestine were stirred by Nazi and Fascist propaganda and why Jews regarded the war against Nazism as a fight against annihilation.<sup>89</sup>

It was inevitable that the Traub mission in Melbourne would be criticised by anti-Zionists as the city was, after all, Sir Isaac Isaacs's home turf. The negativism came in a letter to the *Australian Jewish Herald*, which was co-signed by several opponents of Zionism, all pillars of Victoria's Anglo-Jewish community. Their carapace was the call by Prime Minister Curtin to Australian citizens to fully concentrate their time, energy, and money on the national war effort. They believed the Victory Appeal detracted from this and argued as it was wartime, the timing was totally inappropriate. Disingenuously, the signatories suggested they might remove their objections to it when the national crisis passed.<sup>90</sup>

These sentiments disturbed Masel, who said that the Victory Appeal had received the stamp of approval from the Victorian Advisory Board on whose executive sat some of the co-signatories. He was irked by the

implication that the organisers of the Victory Appeal were disloyal and cited the fact that a similar appeal in England during the Blitz had as its patrons the Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, Dr Hertz, the Marchioness of Reading, and non-Jewish notables, Lords Snell and Leopold Amery.<sup>91</sup> All of these gentlemen's patriotic credentials were beyond reproach. Also, the prime minister of South Africa, Field Marshall Jan Smut, was a supporter.

Masel contended that monies raised by the Victory Appeal helped in the defence of Palestine against Nazi expansionism while simultaneously creating a safe haven for thousands of traumatised Jewish refugees. In Palestine the war effort was being shouldered by the Jewish Agency in recruiting for the British Army, the provision of air raid shelters for civilians, and caring for war victims and their families. Having said this, the organisers would yield to no one in their determination to assist the Australian war effort. However, they were obliged to help the Jewish Agency create a new home in *Eretz Israel* for the victims of Hitler's evil, and this endeavour would be made easier if the Jewish community ensured the success of the Victory Appeal.<sup>92</sup> Masel denied the claim of a signatory, Harold Boas, that he did not know that it was planned to be publicly launched on 8 June 1942, since it was agreed to by the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board of which Boas was vice president. The only limitation was that the ceremony would not be as large as the Sydney one. Further, Masel argued that any accusation that the Traub mission was creating disunity in the Jewish community was nonsense.<sup>93</sup>

The Appeal's joint patronage of the Australian Zionist Federation Executive, the State Zionist Council of Victoria, and the State Executive of *Keren Hayesod* provided a strong community framework.<sup>94</sup> The Appeal opening dinner was at the Samuel Myers Hall in St. Kilda in honour of Traub with a plethora of speakers - Alec Masel, Colonel Harold Cohen, Lord Mayor of Melbourne Cr. Beaurepaire, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly W. Slater, Dr Leon Jona, Rabbi Dr Freedman, and of course Traub himself. Immediately following this, he addressed a women's morning tea at the Wentworth Café in Collins Street on the key role of women in the *Keren Hayesod* Appeal in London during the Blitz<sup>95</sup> and then to many Jewish women's organisations at the Samuel Myers Hall on the afternoon of 14 June 1942.<sup>96</sup>

Anti-Zionist views in the Jewish community were ever on the boil.<sup>97</sup> A letter from Abram Landa, MLA, from Sydney to the *Australian Jewish Herald* brought this animosity again to the surface with Landa

saying that on his recent trip to Melbourne, he was perplexed by Isaacs's continual smearing of Zionism. He added that when the gentleman had adorned the high office, he never used the position once to silence anti-Zionist sentiment. Rather, Isaacs was dividing the Jewish community at the very moment it needed to be united to fight for the patriotic cause.<sup>98</sup> Another correspondent also censured the former Governor General for his abuse of Zionists by questioning their loyalty.<sup>99</sup>

All this was far too much for Rabbi Jacob Danglow of the St. Kilda Synagogue and Senior Hebrew Chaplain to the Australian Armed Forces,<sup>100</sup> who viewed such disparagement of Isaacs as rude, repugnant and utterly unjustified.<sup>101</sup> The Office of Commonwealth Intelligence noted that many prominent Australian Jews were opposed to the Victory Appeal for diverting money, time and energy from the war effort and that Isaacs was trying to have it stopped.<sup>102</sup>

Despite this opposition, Traub continued his scheduled meetings with a broad spectrum of people both Jewish and non-Jewish, such as members of the Victorian Trades Hall where he expounded on the activities of the *Histadrut* (Palestine Federation of Labor) and Jewish homelessness in Europe.<sup>103</sup> He certainly seemed a popular figure at the Kadimah Hall of the Jewish Cultural Centre in Carlton, in the heartland of the 'foreign' or non-Anglo section of the Jewish community with whom he seemed most relaxed. There he addressed young people on what life was like in Palestine<sup>104</sup> and was welcomed by the Carlton Jewish community at a function with Sam Wynn in the chair when he spoke on the dire situation in Europe for Jews. Traub was said to have broken through the apathy towards Zionism that prevailed in Melbourne Jewry. Rabbi G.L. Gurewicz of the Carlton United Hebrew Congregation expressed full support for the Traub mission and what *Keren Hayesod* was doing for refugees.<sup>105</sup>

Contributing to the Herzl-Bialik Memorial celebration with a speech in Yiddish on 'The Jewish Problem,' Traub dismissed a popular notion that antisemitism was not possible in Australia. However, it was the job of Jews to convey the message to non-Jews that antisemitism was the handmaiden of fascism and Nazism, the very evils that their troops were fighting, and if such tendencies in Australia continued unchallenged it would shatter their society.<sup>106</sup> Already, the level of antisemitism was worrying members of the immigrant Jewish community.<sup>107</sup> Reports were that Judeophobic propaganda was circulating among the Australian armed forces.<sup>108</sup> At the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation,

his talk to another all-female audience was also on 'Zionism from Herzl to the Present', but this time with a stress on the part women had played in the journey.<sup>109</sup>

A cable from the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem kept him abreast of its thoughts on a Jewish regiment in Palestine. Traub was advised that for the moment there were not enough trained and equipped recruits to fill its rank, and though Jews were increasingly joining the Palestine Police Force, their training and equipment were inadequate for an effective home guard. What was required were 20,000 recruits for the regiment and 40,000 for different roles in the Palestine Police Force.<sup>110</sup>

Despite Traub's time having been monopolised by the campaign, he felt it necessary to involve himself in local Jewish politics, particularly with the movement to have a more representative leadership of the Victorian Jewish community, one which would include Zionists and voices of newcomers to the country.<sup>111</sup>

After six months' toil, the end of the Traub mission in Melbourne was celebrated by the Zionist faithful. They voiced their awe at the emissary's non-stop work ethic, depth of knowledge about the extant state of European Jewry and Palestine and the ease by which he connected with every individual and so many diverse groups. His response was to again reflect on the Jewish tragedy unfolding in Europe and related to fears held for his mission when Japan entered the war.<sup>112</sup> For the first time, he openly unleashed on his tormentor, Isaac Isaacs, without mentioning his name:

... it was a Jew who found it necessary to prove we Jews (viz. Zionists) were not right. He was not the first, nor will he be the last of those isolationist Jews who made themselves indifferent to the sufferings of the Jewish people. I have not answered him, and I shall not answer him. History will give the answer as it gave the answer to our assimilationists of 1897 and 1917. And history will show who were the better patriots, who served better the cause of democracy, of freedom, of Great Britain, of the Allied Powers, and of the Jewish People. Our task must be the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine as part of the British Commonwealth of Nations: and a Jewish army to fight for freedom and justice, and for the defence of our Homeland and the Allied cause. Our final answer will be given by those



millions of Jews who will go to Eretz Israel and turn the age-old dream of the Return to Zion into a living reality. This will be the ultimate answer of the Jewish People which is determined to live and not to die ...<sup>113</sup>

He listed the many individuals and organisations he met from Jewish and civil society such as the Trades and Labor Council, the League of Nations, the Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University, and the Legacy Club. Altogether, in Melbourne, he delivered 80 talks, and the campaign grossed £25,000 from 700 donors which was much more than the 1939 appeal that secured £10,422 from 292 subscribers. Again, he mentioned the Zionist educational aspect of the fundraising and said his purpose was always to unite all groups dedicated to '*Biyun Ha-Aretz*' (Building of the Nation). Special mentions were Dr David Tabor and his publicity team, together with the indomitable Ida Wynne and her Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) ladies. To Zionist supporters, his message was to work diligently for a post-war future that was good for mankind and the Jewish people.<sup>114</sup> The mission was then off to Adelaide for two weeks.

### **Adelaide**

Traub's schedule in the 'City of Churches' began with a meeting with the State Premier, John Playford, then the Lord Mayor of Adelaide, Colonel A.S. Hooker, and the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Sir Robert Nicholls. Lunch at the Adelaide Town Hall, arranged by the Commonwealth Club, was attended by many parliamentarians and prominent members of the Jewish community. He spoke at the Rotary Club, three drawing-room meetings in Jewish homes, and to a gathering of WIZO that drew 120 ladies.<sup>115</sup> Sam Wynn came from Melbourne specifically to conduct the Victory Appeal under the auspices of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation and the local Zionist Society, notching up £1,500, a large sum for such a small community of barely 500<sup>116</sup> that doubled the 1939 appeal.<sup>117</sup>

At the request of the Secretary of the Commonwealth Club, Traub was the guest of the Woodlands Church of England Grammar School, and later his talk at the Maughan Church was broadcast throughout the State of South Australia.<sup>118</sup> He then briefly returned to Melbourne to speak with others at the Kadimah Hall in Carlton celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration,<sup>119</sup> before traveling north to Brisbane.

## Brisbane

In Brisbane, Traub followed his familiar beat of lectures and met prominent people. The president of the State Zionist Council in Queensland, I. Freedman, introduced him to the Brisbane Lord Mayor. There were the drawing-room gatherings in private homes, conversing with WIZO groups from north and south of the city, a lunch talkfest at the Rotary Club in the presence of the Lord Mayor, and mustering with Christadelphians and the Young Zionist League. All were said to have been well attended.<sup>120</sup>

In a rare act of unity, Zionist societies from the north and south of the city formed a joint campaign committee. Freilich came from Sydney to launch the Victory Appeal on 10 December 1942 at the Brisbane Synagogue with 150 people present. Traub's oration was about life in Palestine and the Yishuv's support for the Allied war effort. The evening was described as a 'moral and financial success', with another £1,800 for the campaign coffers exceeding the £1,000 of the 1939 appeal.<sup>121</sup>

The campaign launch details were recorded by the Australian Intelligence Service in Queensland, whose covert operation included reading a cable from Traub to Johannesburg describing it. The curious rationale given for the surveillance was that the information gleaned might interest British authorities should friction arise between Jews and Arabs in Palestine after the war.<sup>122</sup>

Though warmly farewelled at a private home, Traub's final obligation was to attend, along with Freilich, a function organised by the South Brisbane Young Zionist League. Both men urged the need for unity of Zionists across Brisbane to give their cause a single strong voice.<sup>123</sup> The final part of Traub's mission in Australia was on the other side of Australia's vast continent.

## Perth

The details of Traub's exceedingly long and arduous train ride from Brisbane via Adelaide, and across the Nullarbor Plain to Perth, are not recorded, but he reached his destination twelve hours late. Despite this extremely long delay, a welcoming party stayed at the Perth railway station all that time. It was composed of representatives of all sections of the small Jewish community of a little over 2,000<sup>124</sup> led by Reverend Rubin Zacks of the Perth Hebrew Congregation and his president, Mayer Breckler. The exhausted *shaliach* told them he had never before visited a Jewish community so distant from any other, but he felt their warmth.<sup>125</sup>

*The West Australian* reproduced a talk given by Traub to the community under the headline 'The Jewish Home's Remarkable Expansion and Palestine's Part in the War'. He again spoke of the great strides, economic, social, and cultural made by the Jewish homeland since World War One that could be attested to by Australian diggers who were in Palestine in 1917 and had returned there in the current conflict. In 1917, the Jewish population was 5,500 and now, 550,000, with 140,000 in rural pursuits. There were modern factories, the Hebrew University, schools, research institutes, a National Library, and great cultural assets. Geographically, Palestine was the gateway to the Suez Canal and on the highway to oil-rich Iraq. Traub emphasised again that for Jews the war with Hitler began in 1933 not 1939 and that already two million of them had been slaughtered. Around 20,000 men from the *Yishuv* had joined the British Army and served alongside Australians in Eritrea, Abyssinia, Egypt, Libya, Greece, and Crete, while 23,000 enlisted in the Palestine Police Force. The *Yishuv's* strong economy also served as an 'industrial workshop' for Allied armies further contributing to the defeat of the Axis powers<sup>126</sup>.

Traub visited the governor and premier of the State, the lord mayor of Perth, the Legacy Club, gave a talk on commercial radio 3KZ about 'The Jewish War Effort', and held drawing room discussions.<sup>127</sup> The Victory Appeal was launched by the Perth Hebrew Congregation and netted almost £5,000. Traub's dissertation there was the same as his radio broadcast. One of those on the podium with him was Lt. Colonel Eleazar Margolin in probably his last public appearance.<sup>128</sup>

Traub's long return journey back to the eastern states was not without incident though he was unaware of the circumstances. When returning by train to Adelaide, two service members observed him typing, and this information was passed on to army intelligence. All Australian Jewish communities were being watched for Zionists, principally Revisionists and Communists. Wrongly, a member of the Adelaide Jewish community with the same surname as Traub, Dr Edmund Traub, was hauled in for questioning about the matter on the train. He was an immigrant chemist from Germany who migrated to Adelaide just prior to the war.<sup>129</sup>

Another person of interest in Adelaide who was associated with the Traub mission was Dianne Kolker, a member of the Australian Women's Army Service. She had come to Adelaide from Melbourne

in 1941 where she was said to be on the Executive of the Eureka Youth League and a member of the Australia Soviet Friendship League.<sup>130</sup>

What the soldiers had observed Michael Traub doing was updating his diary, something he often did to fill in time on long boring train trips. He had to cancel a speaking engagement in Adelaide because his train arrived there thirty hours behind schedule.<sup>131</sup>

Returning to Melbourne from Adelaide, Traub addressed members of the Labor movement on the work of the *Histadrut* telling them that after the war Palestine would accept all refugees who wanted to come, and that under the auspices of the Jewish Agency, the *Yishuv* would seek to become a Jewish Commonwealth within the British Commonwealth of Nations.<sup>132</sup> Then it was back to Sydney to attend the 11th Australian Zionist Conference and give his last newspaper interview in the country. He told readers that if Hitler was not quickly defeated up to five million Jews in Europe could die. Palestine was the place of Jewish sanctuary for all Jews determined by 'international sanction as of right and not of sufferance'.<sup>133</sup>

A second matter of which the emissary was unaware concerned his application for a visa to New Zealand. He possessed a Polish passport and allegedly claimed to be employed by the local Polish Consulate. Also, he had secured an Argentinian passport at the end of 1942 for a twelve-month period. Thus, the Commonwealth Intelligence Services felt his true destination was the South American country. However, after internal discussion, the view of the intelligence authority was that Traub was anti-Nazi and should be allowed to leave Australia for New Zealand.<sup>134</sup> where he arrived in late June 1943.

### **Postscript: New Zealand and beyond**

Traub found there that knowledge of Zionism was even poorer than when he first arrived in Sydney. He met the country's prime minister, Peter Fraser, twice: on the first occasion with some cabinet members who queried him about plans in Palestine post-war to absorb refugees. At the second, Fraser agreed to address the inaugural New Zealand Zionist Conference telling the emissary of his hopes for the defeat of Fascism and Nazism and for New Zealand to be at the table after the war when decisions would be made concerning Jewish aspirations for Palestine.<sup>135</sup>

The New Zealand *Keren Hayesod* Victory Appeal on 26 August 1943 was a resounding success raising £1900.<sup>136</sup> At the event, New Zealand's

Minister of Rehabilitation, Major Skinner, said that if Palestine was handed over to the Arabs, the great work of the *Yishuv* would be quickly destroyed and he wanted no part in that.<sup>137</sup>

Walter Nash, the Minister of Finance, became the prime minister temporarily when Peter Fraser took ill. He bitterly criticised the MacDonald White Paper for preventing refugees from reaching Palestine and spoke of a possible move to abolish it at a forthcoming Empire Conference in London. Traub canvassed this notion with members of the Government and the Leader of the Opposition. His instincts were that it could happen if there was a popular groundswell of support for it, and he encouraged Pro-Palestine Committees in New Zealand and Australia to lobby their respective national government on the matter.<sup>138</sup> Just prior to Traub leaving New Zealand for the United States of America, he received a cable from Dr J.M. Machover of the Zionist Federation of Australia, dated 10 January 1944 which stated in part:

I hasten to inform you that on Wednesday a deputation waited upon Dr. Evatt: the members of the delegation were: Mr. Saul Symons, Dr. J. M. Machover, Mr. S. Steigrad, Mr. H.B. Newman, and Mr. M. Freilich. The deputation was introduced by Mr. A. Landa. It is a purely informative affair and we promised that no publication of the talk will take place. The reception was a friendly one. All of us have the impression that our fear that the Australian Government is against our movement seems to be unfounded. On the contrary, Dr. Evatt gave us the impression that Australia would support any steps taken by other dominions and democracies on behalf of the Jewish Home. He referred to the necessity in time of war for diplomatic silence but said that when the time is appropriate, they will not be satisfied with words but will take vigorous action. He of course emphasized he would not commit the government and promised to discuss the matter with the Prime Minister. Dr. Evatt was particularly interested in our report on New Zealand's attitude and read with attention the cutting reporting Mr. Fraser's speech on the occasion of your address. We understand that Mr. Fraser is coming to Australia shortly and Dr. Evatt will talk over the matter with him.

That is why I am particularly anxious to let you know of our interview without delay, in the hope that you will be able to prepare the ground. It will interest you to know that Dr. Evatt has not been influenced by Sir Isaac Isaacs's published views on Zionism. On the contrary, he showed good understanding of the position of the real situation of affairs in Jewish life...<sup>139</sup>

Machover felt the initiative for the removal of the White Paper had to come from New Zealand or South Africa.<sup>140</sup> The Conference Heads of Government of the British Commonwealth was held in London in May 1944 and the attendees included Winston Churchill, John Curtin, Peter Fraser, and Jan Smuts. However, there is no record of a move that concerned the cancellation of the White Paper.<sup>141</sup>

Traub told Freilich that if it were technically possible, he would like to return to Palestine from New Zealand before taking up his next post as special delegate for *Keren Hayesod* in America. That did not happen, and after only several months in his new post, Dr Michael Traub died at the early age of 55 years in New York's Mt. Sinai Hospital after an eight-week illness.<sup>142</sup>

There can be no doubt his *schlihut* (mission) was crowned with financial success despite it being wartime and objections to it from within the Australian Jewish community. He was a rare public voice telling of the plight of European Jewry to often uninformed audiences. What remains problematic is whether his Zionist work in Australasia laid any foundation for Australia's and New Zealand's support of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 of 29 November 1947 that provided international legitimacy for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>143</sup> On 14 May 1948, David Ben-Gurion called the Jewish State of Israel into being at the Tel Aviv Town Hall. Given that Michael Traub had worked long and hard for this day, one can only wonder what role he might have played in the new polity.

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## CREATING INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES: *THE BRIDGE*\*

*Suzanne D. Rutland*

### ABSTRACT

In the history of Australian Jewry only a few literary and intellectual journals have been published. Those that have aimed to meet this challenge, on the whole, have been short lived. One key journal in this category was *The Bridge*, an innovative publication that sought to achieve a high literary standard in the early 1960s. It was published by an editorial team led by Hyam Brezniak, whose known left-wing sympathies and connections led to controversial accusations and dissention from some community leaders, especially in relation to the cause of Soviet Jewry. Other key members of *The Bridge*'s editorial team, such as Professor Alan Crown and Dr Joachim Schneeweiss, held different political views from Brezniak. Despite the importance of *The Bridge* in Australian Jewish intellectual history, its history has not yet been studied seriously. This chapter, as part of a Festschrift marking Professor Alan Crown's seventieth birthday, seeks to fill this gap.

**KEYWORDS:** Media, Australian publications, Hyam Brezniak, Unity, Alan Crown

The issue of what has often been described as 'the cultural cringe' is a central one in relation to the development of Australia's cultural and intellectual life. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, cultural endeavours in Australia were often dwarfed by Great Britain. As Jewish writer, David Martin, described it:

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When the people of this continent begin to look to their own rocks rather than the cliffs of Dover, and will beat on them to make water gush forth, only then will The Australian be born. Then Australia will no longer lie at the distant end of a ship's voyage but at its beginning.<sup>1</sup>

Within the Jewish community, which was small, assimilated and very Anglo-Jewish in its composition, this was even more the case. The emergence of ethnic literature is largely a post-World War Two story, and this is particularly the case with Australian Jewish literature. The period of the 1940s and 1950s saw the flourishing of Jewish writing, often in Yiddish, by authors such as Pinchas Goldhar, Herz Bergner, Judah Waten and David Martin. In the early 1960s a new publication, *The Bridge*, was established to showcase and encourage Australian Jewish writing and intellectual thought relating to all areas of human endeavour.

The genesis of *The Bridge* came with the arrival in Melbourne in December 1959 of a young scholar, Alan Crown. Crown had completed his Bachelor's degree in Leeds in 1954, his Postgraduate Certificate in Education in Birmingham in 1955, spent two years as a Sergeant Instructor with the Royal Army Educational Corps and then two years teaching at the Bramley County Secondary School in Leeds. During this period, he completed his Master's degree with distinction at Leeds University. In 1958, he accepted a position as a Jewish Studies teacher at Mount Scopus College where he taught for three years. In 1962, he accepted a position as lecturer in Classical Hebrew in the Department of Semitic Studies at the University of Sydney where he was to remain for the remainder of his working career.<sup>2</sup>

When he arrived in Melbourne, Alan Crown was struck by the absence of any Jewish literary journals in Australia. When he discussed this lack with educators at Mount Scopus, they recommended that he speak with Jewish communal leaders Isi Leibler and Arnold Bloch. Crown organised a meeting at his home which was followed by several more meetings in which other key community figures including Professor Zelman Cowen, participated. However, nothing eventuated from these discussions, although, after his departure, a publication called *Contact* emerged about the same time as *The Bridge* which Crown felt was the product of these discussions.<sup>3</sup>

On taking up his position at the University of Sydney in 1962, Crown met with the consul for Israel, Shamar Z. Laor through the Friends of



Hebrew University and they became friends. Crown spoke about his idea of establishing an intellectual journal, and Dr Joachim Schneeweiss' name was raised. Dr Schneeweiss had arrived in Sydney with his parents as a refugee from Germany at the age of nine, had graduated from Sydney Boy's High and completed a medical degree at the University of Sydney, training as a physician with a special interest in thoracic medicine. From his youth, he was deeply involved in community life, at this time was honorary secretary of the Zionist Federation of Australia and was later to serve two terms as President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ). Crown organised a meeting with Schneeweiss who was enthusiastic about the idea and suggested that Hyam Brezniak would be the most suitable person to serve as editor. Following this, Dr Schneeweiss convened a meeting at his home<sup>4</sup> when they decided that a larger meeting should be convened. On 11 November 1963, a meeting was held at the home of Alan and Sadie Crown with the aim of establishing the Australian Jewish Quarterly Foundation.<sup>5</sup> A constitution was drawn up at this meeting and officers appointed. It was decided to approach various community organisations for support and to seek sponsors to cover the cost of publication of the first issue. Among the founders of *The Bridge* were several other pre-war European Jewish refugees, such as furrier Bernard Hammerman and Margaret Gutman (nee Nebenzahl).

At subsequent meetings there was much discussion about the title of the publication with 'New Life' being the initial suggestion;<sup>6</sup> the final decision being 'The Bridge' as 'the most suitable'.<sup>7</sup> Brezniak proposed that while this was to be a Jewish publication, it should also include material of a more general nature. This proposal was endorsed by the committee.<sup>8</sup> There was also much discussion about advertising, suitable contributors, and promotion of the new journal, with discussions of holding a cocktail party to mark its launch. It was decided to use Wentworth Press run by Walter Stone as printers, even though they were not the cheapest quotation.<sup>9</sup> Efforts were made to increase the membership, with Walter Lippmann of Melbourne, Steve Gerstl and Professor Julius Stone also joining as foundation members. By April 1964, they had attracted 72 subscribers for the initial issue.

The first issue of *The Bridge* appeared in Autumn 1964 with Brezniak as editor, Hammerman as business manager, Lou Rose as art director, and an editorial committee consisting of Crown, Schneeweiss and Maurice Isaacs. The publication set out the ten main aims of the publication

(see Appendix). It was endorsed by a number of leading communal figures, including Justice Bernard Sugerman of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Judge Trevor Rapke, QC, Maurice Ashkanasy, QC, Horace Bonham Newman, president of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies and Senator Sam Cohen, Labor Senator for Victoria. All stressed that the new publication would fill a long-felt need. The wide range of contributors included well-known Jewish writer David Martin, who became a regular contributor, Walter Lippmann, Maurice Isaacs, well-known Australian scholar C. P. Fitzgerald, A.W. Sheppard and Rabbi Dr Israel Porush, as well as Crown and Brezniak. In his editorial, Brezniak stressed the aim of the journal was 'to make its contribution to the encouragement of the questioning mind and to arousing of the social consciousness'.<sup>10</sup> He stressed that with the changing nature of society there was a need for 'the interchange of views, opinions and creative thought'.<sup>11</sup> Brezniak also emphasised that it was an independent publication that would concentrate on issues relating to 'peace, racialism, anti-Semitism and the great issues which concerned the well being and progress of humanity'.<sup>12</sup> He explained that, as the name indicated, the journal would be 'a meeting place of ideas',<sup>13</sup> opposing complacency and being prepared to criticise and challenge the established leadership when necessary.

After its publication, there was much discussion among the committee as to ways of improving the publication. Steve Gerstl commented that 'there was a lack of uniformity and a restlessness in the current journal's layout'<sup>14</sup> while Rabbi Lionel Singer endorsed this criticism, noting the unevenness in the length of the articles and that 'there was no pattern in the type of article'. However, most of the committee members felt that these problems were because it was the first issue and that, as such, the editorial committee experienced several difficulties.

The choice of Hyam Brezniak as editor was not due to his political affiliation but his previous experience as an editor, especially in the publication of the earlier attempt at producing an intellectual journal with *Unity* in the late 1940s as part of the Jewish Unity Association (previously Committee). In November 1945, the Jewish Unity Committee, was established in Sydney with the following aims:

1. To bring about greater unity in the Jewish community.
2. To create a better understanding of Jewish problems, Jewish thought and qualities among Jews themselves.

3. To bring about a greater understanding of Jewish problems among the community at large.
4. To mobilise the Jewish people and the Australian democracy in a campaign to outlaw antisemitism in Australia.
5. To support progressive policies and liberal movements.
6. To bring about still closer relations between the Jewish people in Australia with those of other parts of the British Empire and with the main Jewish centres in America.<sup>15</sup>

Unity was established as a parallel organisation to the Melbourne Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism (JCCF&AS) which had been formed in 1942 as a more pro-active organisation than the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board (VJAB, later Board of Deputies)<sup>15</sup> to combat anti-Jewish activities in Australia.

The Melbourne Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism advocated a new, more open, high profile approach to public relations and it continued its activities from its inception in 1942 until 1948 in close co-operation with the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies.<sup>16</sup> Initially, it was composed of a cross-section of the community, including established East European and Anglo-Australian Jews, members of all political parties, rabbis and conservatives, united in the fight against antisemitism and in general public relations, including support for the creation of the State of Israel.<sup>17</sup> Support for the JCCF&A was expressed by as eminent a figure as Sir Isaac Isaacs who in 1946 broadcast for the Council on the Four Freedoms radio program. Isaacs also wrote in the *Jewish Herald* that:

I have no hesitation in stating my opinion of the Jewish Council. It deserves the full support of the whole Jewish community in whose defence it primarily exists. But it also renders a service to the general body of citizens whose honour and good will it incidentally guards.<sup>18</sup>

The initial wide support of the Jewish Council's endeavours was evidenced further in 1947 when the ACTU conference passed a resolution stressing that 'it is the duty of all trade unionists to expose and oppose anti-Semitism'.<sup>19</sup> In November 1948, a conference in Melbourne on antisemitism was organised jointly by the ECAJ and the JCCF&A indicating the continuing positive working relations between the two organisations at this stage.

The success of the Jewish Council in the early post-war years was due to the fact that it provided 'a political and cultural home for the older generation and an arena in which the younger, Australian-raised Jews could forge a Jewish-Australian identity'.<sup>20</sup> Through the activities associated with the Communist milieu, second generation Melbourne Jews largely of East European parentage, could maintain their Jewish identity whilst at the same time move into the broader Australian social and political scene, especially through the Communist Party. The links between the Jewish youth of Melbourne and left-wing politics started with the *Kadimah* Younger Set which in 1946 changed its name to the *Kadimah* Youth Organisation. Then, in August 1947 the Jewish Youth League to Promote Racial Tolerance was formed by Lou Jedwab and Arnold Milgrom, as a focus for left-wing activities. In December 1947, this organisation was reformed as the Youth Section of the Jewish Council under the chairmanship of Sam Goldbloom. The Youth Section was much more overtly political than its adult counterpart, with many of its more active members recruited directly from the Communist Party.<sup>21</sup> By the end of the 1940s the close relationship between the Jewish Council and the general Jewish community began to disintegrate, due to growing cold war tensions. During the early 1950s this resulted in a bitter split with the Melbourne Jewish Council eventually being barred from membership of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies.

Much has been written about the controversies surrounding the Jewish Council by key Australian Jewish scholars, including Dr David Rechter's detailed Master's thesis and the series of articles published by Philip Mendes in the *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*. These debates related to the extent which the JCCF&A was a Communist front organisation and the role played by Australian Jewish writer, Judah Waten, who was appointed as executive secretary of the JCCF&AS in 1947.<sup>22</sup> German-born Ernest Platz, the Council's research officer, who succeeded Waten as executive secretary, was also seen as having strong left-wing leanings.

The Sydney story of Jewish Unity was different to that of the Melbourne story.<sup>23</sup> Close relations were established with the Melbourne Council and, as in Melbourne, the Sydney Committee became involved in public relations work. Dr George Berger spent two months in Melbourne in 1946 where he worked as Director of the JCCF&A and, on his return, to Sydney was welcomed by the Unity Committee.<sup>24</sup> As a

result of these activities a number of members of the Unity Committee were invited to join the Public Relations Committee of the New South Wales Board of Deputies, chaired by Gerald de Vahl Davis.<sup>25</sup> Shortly afterwards, in September 1947, the organisation changed its name to Jewish Unity Association to reflect the broadening of its base and its attempts to attract a more general membership.

In early 1948, the Association sought affiliation with the NSW Board of Deputies. The Board's executive decided to oppose the admission of the Association because of the known left-wing tendencies of several of its members. At the March meeting of the Board this Executive recommendation was defeated by 23 votes to 19 votes but the Association could not be admitted since a two-third majority was required. The Unity Association's request for admission was supported by two key rabbinical leaders — Rabbi Max Schenk, rabbi of the Temple Emanuel, Woollahra and Rabbi Dr Eliezer Berkovits of the Central Synagogue, Bondi Junction. Unity supporters described these two rabbis as being 'dynamic, and even "revolutionary", in relation to the "keep quiet policy" of our communal leaders.'<sup>26</sup> Berkovits often conflicted with Board of Deputies president, Saul Symonds, because of his strong criticism of British mandatory policies. Symonds stated that the Executive was opposed to Unity because it engaged in 'party politics'.<sup>27</sup> Needless to say, the leadership of Unity was highly critical of the failure of the community to support Unity's affiliation with the Board. This was described as 'a direct outcome of the [Board's] negative leadership which is more imbued with a fear of being seen or heard than with any conviction for positive action'.<sup>28</sup> A further attempt in June 1948 to have Unity accepted was again defeated by 28 votes to 30.

At the same time Norman Ellison became Public Relations Committee (PRC) chairman and he did not invite all the Unity members back onto the public relations sub-committee because 'he would not work with an avowed Communist in public relations', an obvious reference to Hyam Brezniak, editor of *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs*.<sup>29</sup> Eventually, Ellison invited Allen and Zusman to join the PRC but they declined because of Ellison's failure to re-invite the other four Unity members. This rift continued after the Association changed its name to the Sydney Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism in August 1948, a move bitterly criticised by Saul Symonds. The editorial in the *Unity* magazine described the Sydney Board's actions in the following manner:

Quite in keeping with this Board's general attitude, is the manner in which the leadership has discriminated against a group in its own community. Following methods frequently employed by the enemies of the Jewish people, it has, without foundation, branded a section of the community with a political label... These leaders continue to pursue their short-sighted, out-dated and un-Jewish policy, exposing the community itself to witch hunts, discrimination and intolerance.<sup>30</sup>

In November 1948, however, Hyman (Bill) Wolfensohn became PRC chair, and he re-established a harmonious working relationship with the Sydney Council,<sup>31</sup> which was finally accepted as a Board member in August 1949 with some of its members being readmitted to the Board's Public Relations sub-committee.

In March 1948, the Unity Association began publication of its controversial monthly magazine, *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs*, with Hyam Brezniak the prime mover behind the venture,<sup>32</sup> supported by Joe Rose as co-editor, Nate Zusman as the editorial committee secretary, Maurice Allen and Dr Joachim Schneeweiss amongst others. A few already had experience with the *Australian Jewish Forum*, which had started publication in 1941, in the midst of the tragedy of the *Shoah*, and continued until 1949.<sup>33</sup> Brezniak was born in Poland in 1914 and arrived in Australia in 1939, shortly before the outbreak of World War Two. He established himself successfully in business, having a watch franchise in the city, although he would have preferred to have been a writer. Alan Crown described him as the 'reluctant millionaire'.<sup>34</sup> He became an active member of Unity, later the JCCF&A. He married Paula Taft, sister of Bernie Taft, who served as the Victorian executive director of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) until his disillusionment and subsequent split with the party in 1984.<sup>35</sup> While Brezniak himself was more left-leaning than a CPA member, he did support the Soviet Union and in an analysis of events in 1948 noted that the two opposing camps in the world were 'not East and West, rather, two camps of war and peace, progress and destruction, culture and slavery'.<sup>36</sup>

After the *Shoah*, Brezniak became active in Holocaust commemoration as a regular speaker at the commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and in 1964 he published a book entitled *The Song of the Warsaw Ghetto*.<sup>37</sup> He was also a strong Zionist advocate and wrote a

number of pieces in support of Israel including his article in the second issue of *Unity* entitled 'In Defence of the Yishuv'.<sup>38</sup> He also played an active role in the Yiddish section of Jewish radio hour,<sup>39</sup> and was highly critical of Rabbi Dr Rudolf Brasch when he criticised those members of the Jewish community who advocated Jewish ethnicity as 'giving Hitler a posthumous victory' as 'offensive and demeaning to Jewish culture' and also opposed to the Jewish sense of 'national solidarity'.<sup>40</sup> Brezniak died while travelling in Spain in July 1978, and after his death a memorial was established in his name at the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz in Northern Israel due to his close association and friendship with Yitzhak Zuckerman and his wife Zivia (nee Lubetkin), founders of the kibbutz.<sup>41</sup> Over his lifetime, he made a significant contribution to the literary development of the community, in both English and Yiddish, writing articles about politics, Israel, the *Shoah* and the local community.<sup>42</sup>

*Unity* was published with the aim of combatting antisemitism in Australia. It was printed by Shepson Printers which was run by Herbert Charles Isert who was born in Vienna and arrived in Australia in 1946. In its first issue, comments from the key members of the editorial committee were published.<sup>43</sup> Brezniak explained why it was not possible to 'keep aloof from politics' and stressed that the journal had to 'express views'.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, Joe Rose stressed that the people involved in the publication were 'Jewish men and women who, although of differing political opinions, have banded together to work for the common good of their people'.<sup>45</sup> There was definitely a spread of political opinions amongst the editorial committee of *Unity*, just as there was to be later with *The Bridge*, but the publication was seen as being closely associated with the CPA and pro-Soviet.

By 1948, the Department of Internal Security (CIS, later renamed ASIO) was keeping a close watch on the activities of the Jewish Unity Association. In a report labelled 'Secret' and entitled 'Communism: Jewish Community: Jewish Unity Association', the claim was made that although the organisation was formed primarily to combat antisemitism, it also acted 'as a cover to disseminate Communist propaganda'.<sup>46</sup> This report provided a brief summary of each of the people involved with the organisation and publication. In relation to Brezniak, himself, the CIS was clearly very confused as they entered two pieces of information on him as follows:



H.BREZNIAK. This person is publicised as the Editor of the magazine "Unity". He is believed to be a member of the Polish Unity League. Brezniak has not been fully identified at this stage.

Chaim BREZNIAK. A report has been received that this person is a member of the Editorial Committee. He is believed to be identical with a person of the same name, born in Poland on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1911 and resident at 110 Victoria Street, Darlinghurst. Brezniak carries on a business at Bathurst Street, Sydney, where he deals in electrical appliances. He is not adversely recorded at this office; however it is noted that referees named by him on an application for naturalisation, include Maurice Allen who is referred to in this report.<sup>47</sup>

In the section on Maurice Allen, the report states that 'censorship during the war revealed that Allen was a member of the Australian Community Party'.<sup>48</sup> Allen later served as president of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, but the stigma of his association with the CPA meant that he was refused on a number of occasions a visa to travel to the United States.<sup>49</sup> The report also noted the left-wing sympathies of George Berger and commented that another participant, Alfred White, 'is recorded at this office as a shareholder in the Communist owned and controlled People's Printing and Publishing Society'.<sup>50</sup> Connections were also drawn between the address of the Jewish Unity Association at 2A Bond Street, Sydney, with the 'People's Council for Culture' which was claimed to have Communist links, and its telephone service with the 'Civil Rights Defence League', described as 'a Communist subsidiary'.<sup>51</sup>

From correspondence garnered by the Department of Internal Security between CPA member, Harry Gould, in Sydney, and Ralph Gibson of the Victorian State Committee of the CPA, it would appear that there were links between the publication of *Unity* and the CPA. Gould stressed the key role played by 'Comrade' Alf White whom he describes as a 'tower of strength' and constantly asked for further assistance from the Melbourne branch for the paper. In one of his letters, Gould wrote:

The good results achieved in Sydney over the past year have already led to some direct advantages for our Party, hence the concern felt here over the possible loss

of *Unity* which would undo much of the good work already done.<sup>52</sup>

Gibson did not always reply to these letters and there clearly were tensions between the Sydney editorial committee and some of their Melbourne 'comrades' as can be seen in a critical letter by Sol Factor published in the September – October 1948 edition. Factor complained about the 'attitude of neutrality on major issues'<sup>53</sup> evidenced in the first four issues and the magazine's failure to include more about issues relating to the Soviet Union which, he claimed, played such a central role in the creation of the State of Israel. Efforts were made to redress these differences and eventually Gibson did undertake to try and raise funds for the publication of *Unity*.<sup>54</sup>

*Unity* continued to be published for three years until late 1951. As the above correspondence makes clear, it struggled to attract sufficient financial support. As with *The Bridge* which Brezniaak was to edit later, it attracted an interesting range of material, including work from writers such as Judah Waten, Pinchas Goldhar, Dr George Berger and David Martin who joined the editorial committee in 1949.<sup>55</sup> Dr Schneeweiss was also actively involved, publishing articles,<sup>56</sup> and later joining the editorial committee. Contributions from across the Jewish world were also published. These included several articles by Dr Moshe Sneh, one of the leaders of the Israeli Communist Party.<sup>57</sup>

The publication of a literary and cultural magazine was definitely needed in Australia. In 1949, after a year's publication of *Unity*, the editor of the *Sydney Jewish News* wrote:

The Jewish cultural scene in Australia has for long been suffering from a deplorable lack of original material. The remedy to this defect lies partially in the kind of material published by this magazine. In reflecting the opinion of the large masses of Jews, in its progressive outlook on general affairs, in its wealth of educational and informative material "Unity" is serving the community at large.<sup>58</sup>

*The Bridge* sought to maintain this legacy and did so successfully for close to a decade, drawing on many of the same people for inspiration, with the important addition of academic Dr Alan Crown, who dedicated himself to its publication. Social worker and community figure, Dr Wolf Matsdorf, was also associated with the journal until his

departure for Israel when Hammerman expressed the hope that 'we are not losing a local critic, but gaining an overseas contributor'.<sup>59</sup> By 1967, it had attracted a readership of 800 with many overseas subscribers.

Over the years, *The Bridge* published material relating to all the major issues of both Jewish and general interest, including articles from leading intellectuals such as Professor Julius Stone, Challis Professor for International Law at the University of Sydney, scholar and expert on Communist China, C.P. Fitzgerald, and aboriginal activist, Faith Bandler as well as music critic Fred Blank. Overseas contributors included British writer, Viscount Edwin Samuels, and Abba Eban, Israel foreign minister for many years and commentator on Jewish affairs. Later, intellectuals such as Sol Encel and Colin Tatz also made contributions, as did younger scholars such as Warren Osmond and Jim Spiegelman. In 1971, Sol Encel, Peter Morrison and Walter Stone joined the editorial community. As its publicity material noted, it included original short stories and poetry from 'the pens of Australia's leading authors and articles of interest by and about leading artists, historians, economists, sociologists and politicians'.<sup>60</sup> Most of these contributions were on a voluntary basis, although a few leading authors such as David Martin did receive some payment. Material which was written in Yiddish was translated into English by Brezniak and Crown and published under the penname of R.Z. Schreiber, the initials standing for Crown's teacher, R.Z. Verblowski, and the *schreiber* being the Yiddish word for writer.<sup>61</sup> There were also many articles on the visual arts contributed by well-known Jewish artist Maximillian Feuerring, Dr George Berger and Brezniak himself, who was an art connoisseur. *The Bridge* sought to cover what was described as 'a remarkable potpourri of subjects',<sup>62</sup> with some issues devoting a significant amount of space to a central theme such as Soviet Jewry,<sup>63</sup> Israel and Black Antisemitism in the United States.<sup>64</sup> A letter by a reader published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1970 described it as an 'erudite periodical' which was 'packed with stimulating matter... A rich gathering'.<sup>65</sup>

Throughout the history of *The Bridge*, Alan Crown was closely involved with the publication, meeting regularly with Hyam Brezniak. In the mid-1960s, Crown had a regular Sunday recording session at the television studios in Epping for the University on the Air. When he finished recording, he would visit Brezniak who lived in Northbridge, to discuss the publication, sometimes joined by Schneeweiss and

Sam Mane. Crown remembered that in one case they made editorial changes to a poem and published it without showing the changes to the author who then proceeded to sue them. In the end, the matter was settled out of court.<sup>66</sup> Alan Crown had never had any connection with Communism, and even though Brezniak was sympathetic to left-wing ideas, he did not try to influence Crown. Brezniak was also antagonistic to events in the USSR because of the discrimination against Jews and the suppression of Jewish cultural life there. In 1970, Crown agreed to review Judah Waten's *From Odessa to Odessa*. He produced a very critical review which Brezniak initially rejected because he thought it was too anti-Communist. Crown then revised his review. He added an introductory sentence stating that the book was 'one of his [Waten's] best fictional writings', and then proceeded to write a highly critical review, describing Waten's writing as 'lacklustre prose' and his descriptions of Poland of 1968 as 'monochromatic'.<sup>67</sup> Crown was always forthright in his articles, and did not hesitate to mince his words. In an article on assimilation, published in 1966, he was very critical of the focus of community leadership on Zionist fundraising. He ended with the dire warning that: 'Those leaders who paddle now, gently, in the wake of a well launched ship must pause to consider whether they are to be doomed to wander, the spiritually under-privileged... until Australian Jewry disappears without a trace, in an assimilatory final solution.'<sup>68</sup>

To promote the aims of the Australian Jewish Quarterly Foundation and stimulate further interest in *The Bridge* a Ladies Auxiliary was formed in 1965 chaired by Sadie Crown and Paula Brezniak.<sup>69</sup> Gatherings with prominent local and overseas speakers were organised and efforts were made to increase the number of subscribers and fundraise for the publication. In addition, they published several pamphlets promoting Israel's cause, especially after the 1967 Six Day War. Professor Stone wrote a number of these defending Israel's decision not to return the conquered territories immediately, while Brezniak also authored some, including one entitled 'The Israeli-Arab Conflict and the Left', published in 1972.<sup>70</sup>

In late 1968, businessman and clothing manufacturer Louis Klein purchased the *Australian Jewish Times*.<sup>71</sup> An avid reader and supporter of intellectual enterprises, Klein also became involved with *The Bridge* and in August 1969 agreed to become its publisher. In a statement entitled 'Better and wider', Klein stated that the *Jewish Times*

had associated itself with the journal because he considered it 'of considerable importance, not only to the Jewish community throughout Australia, but in the broader field of free thought, social comment and literary expression'. Klein stressed its aims were to 'provide a reflection of Jewish Thought and activities, at the same time dealing with general contemporary issues'.<sup>72</sup> While the *Jewish Times* agreed to assist in the production and promotion of *The Bridge*, the Australian Jewish Quarterly Foundation was to remain editorially independent.<sup>73</sup> With this assistance, *The Bridge* continued to be published, with three more volumes being produced between 1969 and its last issue of its seventh volume in January 1973. Towards the end of this period, there was an attempt to establish an Australian Jewish Cultural Foundation to support *The Bridge* as well as promoting other cultural endeavours, including inviting overseas speakers, but nothing eventuated from this proposal.<sup>74</sup>

Maintaining a Jewish cultural journal proved to be a very difficult enterprise. In its second issue, the editors of *Unity* wrote:

Many letters of appreciation for our effort in producing "Unity" have reached us, but some express doubts about our ability to continue to bring out such a magazine. They ask if we are able to rally sufficient intellectual forces and financial backing to carry on.<sup>75</sup>

Despite the optimism expressed by Brezniak and Rose predicting a rosy future for the publication, it only lasted three years. Brezniak's second enterprise with *The Bridge* lasted nine years, but it again succumbed to the same factors. Above all it was finding the energy to 'rally sufficient intellectual forces' which led to the demise of *The Bridge*.

The issue of Australian Jewry's capacity to produce a quality literary journal was raised in a highly critical, lengthy review of the first issue of *The Bridge* by Melbourne community leader and businessman, Isi Leibler. He described the first issue as 'disappointing and mediocre' and stressed that 'the intellectual sterility of Australian Jewry is reflected in its failure over the last few decades to maintain a serious cultural journal based on local contributions'.<sup>76</sup> At the time Leibler was ECAJ honorary secretary and chairperson of the PRC of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies. This review was first published in the *Australian Jewish Herald*, and later in the *Australian Jewish Times*<sup>77</sup> and was a stinging attack on most of the local contributions, including Alan Crown's

interview with Laor on 'Hebrew Literature'. Leibler was also concerned with the choice of Hyam Breznia as editor, quoting his previous record with *Unity* and complaining of a 'subtle political bias in the selection of material — a bias accentuated by other aspects of the journal'.<sup>78</sup> Leibler was always concerned about the impact of what he called 'fellow travellers' of the CPA and he considered Breznia, and therefore *The Bridge*, to be an extension of the JCCF&A, which he considered to be a 'fellow travelling group'.<sup>79</sup> He later wrote that it was Breznia's failure to deal with the plight of Soviet Jewry that led him to write such a critical assessment.<sup>80</sup> It is interesting to note that in his September 1965 review of the CPA response to Isi Leibler's book on Soviet Jewry, Breznia was openly critical of the Stalinist persecutions of Jews in the USSR. He referred to the 'dark years of 1948–1952' which saw the closing down of the few remaining Soviet Jewish institutions and the execution of Jewish writers and cultural leaders. Breznia also noted that in 1959 there were still half a million Soviet citizens who said Yiddish was their mother tongue, yet nothing was being done for them. He stressed that 'ideologies and theories must be tested against realities'.<sup>81</sup>

Leibler's review led to an acrimonious and ongoing debate in the Jewish press in both Melbourne and Sydney, starting with Dr Schneeweiss writing a lengthy rejoinder where he described Leibler as 'that knight errant of the Australian Jewish community, that stormy petrel of many a battle, both real and imagined'. He also accused Leibler of 'character assassination' and described the review as 'a tendentious and incompetent piece of bigotry, irrelevance [sic] and downright rudeness'.<sup>82</sup> Other contributors to the debate included A.W. Sheppard, whose article on Dr Evatt and Israel, Leibler had criticised, Dr Frank Knopfelmacher, M. Burstin and Sam Lipski.<sup>83</sup> A critical response was also published in Jack Lang's publication, *Century*.<sup>84</sup> In addition, the matter was raised by Gordon Hertzberg at the September 1964 plenum meeting of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies with Maurice Isaacs, Maurice Allen, Dr Schneeweiss and Dr Hans Wachtell taking part in the debate. The Sydney Board referred the matter to the PRC, chaired at the time by Victor Smith.<sup>85</sup> The bitterness of this debate reflected the ongoing Melbourne/Sydney divide, with Sam Lipski being extremely critical of the 'Sydney Blimps',<sup>86</sup> as he described the Sydney Board's leadership.

Alan Crown also wrote a more reasoned rejoinder where he sought to respond logically to all Leibler's criticisms which, he stressed, were

largely based on a lack of understanding of the situation. Crown claimed that efforts had been made to include more Melbourne intellectuals, one of Leibler's complaints, but those approached had declined to contribute due to time pressures. He stressed that given the hands-on nature of editing the magazine, it was not possible to include more members from Melbourne on the editorial committee and invited as many contributions as possible. He noted the diversity of the positions of the editorial committee and, while strongly defending Brezniak as an active and able leader, stressed that all editorial decisions were made on a team basis.<sup>87</sup> Leibler decided not to publish another public reply to Crown's letter, but wrote to him personally, stressing that Crown's response was the most reasonable to date, dealing with the key issues. Leibler then dealt with all the issues point by point, including the issue of pressure placed by a prominent leader associated with *The Bridge* for the *Australian Jewish Herald* not to publish his review, which was seen as a form of attempted censorship. He also stressed that *Quadrant* had approached him to publish the review, not vice versa as claimed by Dr Schneeweiss.<sup>88</sup>

Leibler was not the only reviewer to criticise the standard of the local contributions to *The Bridge*. In his 1965 review of the fourth issue, James Altman noted the small amount of material from local sources.<sup>89</sup> Again, in 1966 in an article written under the penname of 'Avi Ezer' entitled '*The Bridge* — Again', the claim was made that the issue of July 1966 still had done little to respond to previous criticisms. This reviewer complained about the use of old material which had already appeared elsewhere, such as Professor Gershom Scholem's speech on the 'Golem of Prague and the Golem of Rehovot'. He also commented on the lack of local content, noting that 'Rabbi Sanger's contribution on ecumenism, although not saying much that is new, is the only article in the magazine which even touches on a local issue — that of Liberal Orthodox relations.'<sup>90</sup> The continuing criticism, which sought to be constructive, showed just how difficult it was to publish a high standard Jewish magazine in Australia.

By the early 1970s, the editors were finding it even more difficult to find appropriate material especially since there were no funds to attract good contributors on a paid basis. Insufficient subscriptions were also a factor. Already in 1967 in an article marking its tenth issue, the writer commented that 'it requires at least 3000 regular subscribers to ensure a successful continuity'.<sup>91</sup> Neither *The Bridge* nor its predecessors were



able to attract such a high level of subscriptions.

In 1973, the Jewish Quarterly Foundation ceased publishing *The Bridge* but was never formally wound up and published some material in support of Israel for the Israeli consulate. In the early 1980s, the Foundation published some of the poetry of the Israeli poet, Yossi Gamzu, who was then the Malka Einhorn lecturer in Modern Hebrew in the Department of Semitic Studies, with a translation into Yiddish by Eliza Siderowitz and into English by Professor Crown.<sup>92</sup> With the formation of the Mandelbaum Trust, largely due to the efforts of Professor Crown, the Mandelbaum series has taken over the role of producing academic publications in Jewish Studies in Australia.

The inability to maintain a high-quality literary publication has been an ongoing story for Australian Jewry. In 1989, a new literary journal, *Generation: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life in Australia*, was established, with writer and academic, the late Dr Mark Baker, being among the founders and later taking over its editorship. Its entry into the literary field was welcomed by the *Australian Jewish Times* as a 'sign that the post-war Australian-born generation of Jewish writers and intellectuals is beginning a more active search for its own distinctive voice',<sup>93</sup> but it also ceased publication after several years of great effort on the part of Baker and the publishers.

There are several reasons for what has been described as the 'intellectual sterility' of Australian Jewry. Until the 1940s, the community was too small and isolated, too much 'on the edge', to produce work of intellectual and cultural worth. After 1945, Australian Jewry was very much a refugee and survivor community, but most of these newcomers were too involved in recreating families and establishing themselves at the material level to have time to foster spiritual and intellectual endeavours. Where the newcomers made good, they were much more prepared to invest in buildings than intellectual activities, reflecting the materialistic attitudes of the local community. These problems were further exacerbated by what Ruth Wajnryb has called 'The Silence', the decision of many Holocaust survivors not to speak about their horrific past, but to concentrate on the present and future.<sup>94</sup> Thus, it was no accident that most of the people involved with *The Bridge* were from the pre-war refugee migration, rather than survivors who were concentrating on rebuilding their lives. While the Jewish community invested in Jewish day school education, until the 1990s there was a



failure to recognise the importance of university Jewish Studies, so that the milieu which could have cultivated Jewish intellectualism and culture stagnated. This was the case, despite the important and valiant efforts of Professor Alan Crown who managed to build Hebrew and Jewish Studies in the Department of Semitic Studies at the University of Sydney. Some of the locally produced scholars, such as Professors Peter Medding and Israel Getzler, of Melbourne, and Ronald Zweig of Sydney, settled in Israel, a reflection of the Zionist orientation of the community, but a loss to Australian Jewry.

From the late 1980s on, there has been a growth of university Jewish Studies in Melbourne and Sydney and a flourishing of Holocaust literature in the forms of memoirs, novels and poetry, with Holocaust descendent, Baker, playing a central part in all this, including his editing and publishing *Generation*, as discussed above. Yet, he too was burnt out; *Generation* folded, and it is not yet clear whether, in the face of all the positive developments over the last two decades or so, Australian Jewry is able to produce an ongoing literary and cultural Jewish journal, other than the *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Mandelbaum Trust for giving permission to republish this chapter in the journal.

### **Appendix**

#### ***Editorial Policy as set out in the first edition of The Bridge, Autumn 1964:***

- To provide a medium for an informed and comprehensive analysis of Jewish affairs and thought.
- To be a dynamic link between Jewish centres of the world and the growing Jewish community in Australia.
- To review new ideas and trends in important aspects of the life of Jewish communities all over the world.
- To review and report on developments concerning Israel.
- To arouse among all Jews in Australia a greater consciousness and a deeper sense of urgency with respect to their responsibilities and duties as individuals and members of the community.

- To publish and review publications of general Jewish interest including material not usually available in Australia.
- To become an educational force and to stimulate ideas amongst the younger generation by arousing their interest in the vital problems of today.
- To encourage participation by all who are willing to contribute and comment in the field of politics, arts, religion, culture or social life in the community generally.
- To promote mutual understanding of and co-operation with the wider Australian community.
- To enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern.

## Endnotes

- 1 David Martin, 'I look at Australia', *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 11 (March–April 1950), p. 4.
- 2 Curriculum vitae supplied by Professor Alan Crown. Professor Crown retired in December 1996, after working in the Department of Semitic Studies for 34 years and serving as chair of the department for 14 years.
- 3 Interview with Professor Alan Crown, Mandelbaum House, Sydney, 24 June 2003.
- 4 Present at this meeting were Dr Joachim and Sybil Schneeweiss, Shamar Laor, Yehuda Feher, Bernhard Hammerman, Alan David Crown and Rabbi Lionel Singer. 'Statement of history, administrative and editorial resolutions', *Minute Book of the Australian Jewish Quarterly Foundation*, Toby Hammerman File, Archive of Australian Judaica, located at the Australian Jewish Historical Society Archive (AJHSA), Sydney Jewish Museum.
- 5 Additional members at this meeting included Hyam Brezniak, Z. Bryl, Margaret Gutman, Bernard Levy and C.C. Tadmor.
- 6 This was made at a meeting held at Brezniak's home attended only by Brezniak, Crown, Hammerman and Levy on 24 November 1963. As the minutes note because of this small attendance 'many of its decisions were subsequently amended or discarded'.
- 7 This decision was made at the meeting held in December 1963 at the home of Bernhard Hammerman.

- 8 Minutes of meeting held at the home of Bernhard Hammerman, 15 March 1964.
- 9 The cheapest quotation came from Bridge Printing, but it was felt that 'they might not be the best firm to print the first issues as the whole format had to be worked out from scratch', *Minutes*, 20 February 1964, meeting held at B'nai B'rith Lodge. Walter Stone's Wentworth Press was a small publishing house which did mainly commissioned printing, including the Australian bibliography series and pamphlets and work by budding writers. He became a staunch supporter of the Friends of Fisher Library, University of Sydney, which housed the Archive of Australian Judaica (AAJ) for over thirty years. He was a friend of Hyam Brezniak. Interview with Alan Crown, 23 June 2003.
- 10 'Hyam Brezniak 'From the Editor', *The Bridge*, vol. 1, no. 1, Autumn (1964), p. 13.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Minutes, meeting held at home of Dr J. Schneeweiss, 21 June 1964.
- 15 Nate Zusman, "'Unity", A Magazine of Jewish Affairs', *AJHS Journal*, vol. 9, part 5 (1983), p. 341.
- 16 For a detailed history of the Melbourne Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism see David Rechter, 'Beyond the Pale: Jewish Communism in Melbourne', MA (Hons) thesis, University of Melbourne, 1987, and also theses by Allan Leibler 'The Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism', BA (Hons) thesis, University of Melbourne, 1967 and Sara McNaughton, 'Liberalism and Anti-Communism in the Melbourne Jewish Community in the 1940s and 1950s', BA (Hons) Thesis, University of Sydney 1984, and the following articles by Philip Mendes: 'The Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism: An Historical Re-Appraisal' (Part One), *AJHS Journal*, vol. 10, part 6 (1989), pp. 524–51; and (Part Two), vol. 10, part 7, pp. 598–615; 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under: The Story of the Jewish Council's Controversial Campaign against German Immigration' in *Historical Studies*, no. 119 (April 2002), pp. 73–92; 'The Cold War, McCarthyism, the Melbourne Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, and Australian Jewry 1948–1953' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 64 (2000), pp. 196–206; 'The Senator Sam Cohen Affair: Soviet Anti-Semitism, the ALP and the 1961 Federal Election' in *Labour History*, no. 78 (May 2000), pp. 179–197; and 'The Melbourne Jewish Left, Communism and the Cold War: a comparison of responses to Stalinist

- Anti-Semitism and the Rosenberg Spy Trial' in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 49, issue 4 (2003), pp. 501–16. More recently, Mendes has published two chapters: Philip Mendes, 'Jewish Communism in Australia' in Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry Srebrnik (eds.), *A vanished ideology: Essays on the Jewish Communist movement in the English-speaking world in the twentieth century*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2016, pp. 195–221; Philip Mendes, 'ASIO and the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism', in Phillip Deery and Sheila Fitzpatrick (eds.) *Russians in Cold War Australia*, Lanham: USA, Lexington Books, 2024, pp. 107–32.
- 17 McNaughton, 'Liberalism and Anti-Communism', p. 40.
  - 18 Quoted in 'Melbourne Jewish Council: Ten Years', in the Lou Jedwab collection, originally donated to the AAJ, and now in the AJHS Archives.
  - 19 *Annual Report*, Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, 1947–48.
  - 20 Rechter, 'Beyond the Pale', p. 87.
  - 21 Ibid., p. 96.
  - 22 Waten's role in the Communist Party is subject to much controversy. He was expelled from the Communist Party in 1945 but was considered to have remained a Communist at heart.
  - 23 See also Max Kaiser, "'A new and modern golden age of Jewish culture': shaping the cultural politics of transnational Jewish antifascism", *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725886.2017.1401788>
  - 24 *Sydney Jewish News (SJN)*, 26 July 1946.
  - 25 They included Maurice Allen, Dr George Berger, Jules Cohen, George Singer, Nate Zusman and Hyam Brezniak, Ibid., 15 July 1947.
  - 26 *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs*, May–June 1948, Vol. 1, no. 2, p. 19.
  - 27 *SJN*, 2 April 1948.
  - 28 'Editorial: Unity says – With realism and determination', *Unity*, vol. 1, no. 2 (May–June 1948), p. 5.
  - 29 *SJN*, 30 April 1948.
  - 30 'Editorial: Unity Says — Marked Difference in Outlook', *Unity*, vol. 1, no. 3 (July–August 1948). In this editorial, Brezniak compared the position of the Sydney Board which he saw as narrow-minded with that of the Melbourne Board which he felt demonstrated a broader and more realistic attitude. In the same issue, p. 7, a very complimentary article is published about Maurice Ashkanasy after he was elected for his first term as president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ).

It is ironic that while the Sydney Board accepted the Sydney JCCF&A as a member organisation, in 1949, Ashkanasy later turned against the Melbourne Council which was eventually expelled from the Melbourne Board in 1952.

- 31 This development was welcomed in an editorial in *Unity* entitled 'For Unity and Activity', with parallels being drawn to the Melbourne Council, vol. 1, no. 6 (January–February 1949), p. 2. The editorial stressed that 'the opportunity exists, as never before, for positive and effective measures against the scourges of Fascism and Anti-Semitism not only in N.S.W. but in the whole of Australia'.
- 32 NAA: CRS A6119/XR1, Items, [98] and [248], 'Hyam Brezniak', vols 1 and 2, Commonwealth Investigation Service, Attorney-General's Department.
- 33 See editorial 'Our way' which stressed the need for Australian Jewry to rise to the challenge of the destruction of European Jewry, *The Australian Jewish Forum*, vol. 1, no. 1.
- 34 Interview with Professor Alan Crown, 23 June 2003.
- 35 See Bernard Taft, *Crossing Party Lines*, Melbourne, Scribe Publications, 1994.
- 36 H. Brezniak, 'Some reflections on a Year Past', *Unity*, vol. 1, no. 6 (January–February 1949), p. 3.
- 37 *Australian Jewish Times (AJT)*, 27 July 1978.
- 38 *Unity: A Magazine of Jewish Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 2 (May–June 1948), p. 6.
- 39 Suzanne D. Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia*, Holmes & Meier, 2001, p. 374.
- 40 *AJT*, 4 November 1976, Brezniak File, VF3233, Australian Jewish Historical Society Archives (AJHSA), Sydney Jewish Museum.
- 41 *AJT*, 6 August 1981, p. 20, Chaim Brezniak File, VF3233, AJHSA.
- 42 See 'Tribute to Hyam Brezniak', *AJT*, 24 August 1978, Brezniak File, VF3233, AJHSA, Sydney Jewish Museum. Dr Joachim Schneeweiss was the main speaker at this tribute.
- 43 Included were comments from Hyam Brezniak, Maurice Allen, Dr George Berger and Joe Rose.
- 44 *Unity*, vol. 1, no. 1 (March–April 1948), p. 8.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 46 NAA: A6122 XRI, item [155], Report, original from CIS, Sydney, 14 May 1948.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 2 of report.
- 48 *Ibid.*

- 49 Suzanne D. Rutland and Sophie S. Caplan, *With one Voice: the history of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies*, Sydney, AJHS, 1998, p. 132.
- 50 NAA: A6122 XRI, item [155], Report, original from CIS, Sydney, 14 May 1948.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Harry Gould to Ralph Gibson, 1 December 1948, Ibid.
- 53 *Unity*, vol. 1, no. 4, September–October 1948, p. 26.
- 54 NAA: CRS 6122 XRI, item [155], Gibson to Gould, 4 February 1949.
- 55 *Unity*, vol. 2, no. 2 (8) (May–June 1949), p. 7. An outline of Martin’s life and a photo are included in this issue.
- 56 See for example his article ‘We aim at a National Theatre in Australia’, *Unity*, vol. 1, no. 4, September–October 1948.
- 57 See for example his article ‘Israel: Free or subservient?’, *Unity*, vol. 2, no. 1 (March–April 1949), p. 3.
- 58 ‘One Year of “Unity”: An Appreciation’, *Sydney Jewish News (SJN)*, 18 February 1949.
- 59 ‘Farewell to Bill Matsdorf, no date, Newspaper clipping, Toby Hammerman Folder 2, AAJ, in AJHSA.
- 60 ‘For the Attention of the Librarian’, publicity material in the Toby Hammerman Folder 2, AAJ, in AJHSA.
- 61 Interview with Alan Crown, 23 June 2003.
- 62 J.J. Altman, “‘The Bridge’: potpuorri of subjects’, article published in the Jewish press, May 1965, among newspaper clippings, Hammerman Folder, AAJ in AJHSA.
- 63 These included pieces by Professor Julius Stone on Soviet Jewry; B.Z. Goldberg on the Jewish problem in the USSR; Dr A.I. Katsh entitled ‘The Right to be Different’; and one by Dr Nahum Goldman, chairman of the World Jewish Congress (WJC). They appeared in *The Bridge*, vol. 1, no. 3 (January 1965) and were later reprinted as a separate booklet.
- 64 They included articles by Dr H.A. Strauss, professor, City College, New York; Trude Weiss-Rosemarin, writer and editor of *Jewish Spectator*; B.Z. Goldberg, son-in-law of Sholom Aleichem; and Robert B. Hill, research associate at Columbia University. A complimentary article in the Jewish press about this issue was headed “‘Bridge” covers subject soundly’, Newspaper clipping, AAJ in AJHSA. They appeared in *The Bridge*, vol. 4, no. 3 (August 1969).
- 65 *SMH*, 12 September 1970, Newspaper clipping, AAJ, in AJHSA.
- 66 Interview with Alan Crown, Sydney, 23 June 2003.

- 67 *The Bridge*, vol. 5, no. 1 (January 1970), p. 59.
- 68 Alan Crown, 'Assimilation', *The Bridge*, vol. 2, no. 2, February 1966, p. 53.
- 69 Members of the committee included S. Bund, Belle Eaton, Gloria Eisman, Rita Gerate, Eve Hyman, Roma Kogos (Blair), J. Solomon and Judy Symonds.
- 70 H. Brezniak, *The Israeli-Arab Conflict and the Left*, February 1972, in the AJHS Archives, VF3233, Sydney Jewish Museum.
- 71 Suzanne D. Rutland *Pages of History: a century of the Australian Jewish press*, Sydney, Australian Jewish Press Pty Ltd, 1995, pp. 152–6.
- 72 Louise Klein, 'Better and Wider', *The Bridge*, vol. 4, no. 3 (August 1969).
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 'Thoughts concerning the structure, aims and objectives of the Foundation and prospectus', including a handwritten list of aims by Anne Plotke, Toby Hammerman, Folder 2, AAJ in AJHSA.
- 75 *Unity*, vol. 1, no. 2 (May-June 194), p. 19.
- 76 Isi Leibler, review of the first issue of *The Bridge*, *Australian Jewish Herald (AJH)*, 21 August 1964, in 'Soviet Jewry, 1963–1964', 7941/250, IJ Leibler Archive, Jerusalem (IJLA-Jer).
- 77 See *AJT*, 11 September 1964, Ibid.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Interview with Isi Leibler, Jerusalem, 21 July 2003.
- 80 Leibler reply to Schneeweiss, *AJH*, 18 (September 1964), Ibid.
- 81 H. Brezniak Book Review, *The Bridge*, vol. 2, no. 1 (September 1965), p. 35.
- 82 *AJH*, 4 September 1964, in 'Soviet Jewry, 1963–64', 7941/250, IJLA-Jer.
- 83 See *AJH*, 18 September 1964 for letters by Dr Frank Knopfelmacher, A.W. Sheppard, Isi Leibler, and Erwin Frankel; 'Mr Leibler replies, *AJN* clipping, [nd]; 'Pungent Points, *SJN*, and reply from Isi Leibler; *AJH*, 25 September 1964, reply by M. Burstin; *AJT*, 25 September 1964 with a further letter by Dr J. Schneeweiss entitled 'Destructive outpourings from a jaundiced mind'; *AJT*, 2 October 1964, article entitled 'Bridge fuss' regarding pressures on *AJH* editor not to publish review; *SJN* 'In the News', 2 October 1964 about Isi Leibler's approach to 'getting things moving' by 'arousing the ire of individuals and organisations'; *AJT*, 16 October 1964 letter by Sam Lipski; *SJN*, 30 October 1964, letters by Lipski and Lawrence Offner; and *AJH*, 30 October 1964, reply by A.W. Sheppard to Burstin defending his record. After this all the Jewish papers noted that they had closed their correspondence columns to further letters on the issue. IJLA-Jer.

- 84 *Century*, 4 September 1964, IJLA-Jer.
- 85 *AJT*, 25 September 1964 and *SJN*, 2 October 1964. The Sydney Board does not appear to have taken further action on this matter. Isi Leibler wrote three letters to Victor Smith on 30 September, 5 October and 8 October for information on the Board's debate, but did not receive a reply. IJLA-Jer.
- 86 *AJT*, 16 October 1964.
- 87 *AJH*, 2 October 1964, newspaper clipping, Toby Hammerman Folder 2, AAJ in AJHSA.
- 88 Isi Leibler to Alan Crown, 8 October 1964, private letter, in 'Soviet Jewry, 1963–1964', 7941/250, IJLA-Jer.
- 89 James Altman, "'The Bridge': potpourri of subjects', Newspaper clipping, Toby Hammerman Folder, AAJ in AJHSA.
- 90 'Marginal Comment', [nd], in relation to *The Bridge*, vol. 2, nos. 3–4, July 1966, newspaper clippings, Toby Hammerman Folder 2, AAJ in AJHSA.
- 91 'Tenth Issue for "Bridge"', 1967, Newspaper clipping, Toby Hammerman Folder, AAJ in AJHSA.
- 92 Information provided by Professor Alan Crown, email, 23 July 03.
- 93 *AJT*, 20 October 1989.
- 94 Ruth Wajnryb, *The Silence: How tragedy shapes talk*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2001.



## BOOK REVIEWS

### HELENA RUBINSTEIN: THE AUSTRALIAN YEARS

*By Angus Trumble*

*Melbourne, La Trobe University Press, 2023*

Several books and articles have been written about this vivacious individual who smashed through the glass ceiling and attained great heights as a businesswoman. One biography describes Rubinstein as a makeup mogul ‘with flair’ who attained amazing achievements and left her mark in many ways, mostly attributable to her larger-than-life personality.<sup>1</sup>

Rubinstein left Krakow, Poland in the late nineteenth century and settled in Australia where the young entrepreneur first found success. Her revolutionising of women’s beauty routines soon took off globally. By the time she died in 1965, Rubinstein had created a global beauty empire and unsurprisingly several biographies ensued, most of these laudatory.<sup>2</sup>

Art historian Angus Trumble’s *Helena Rubinstein: The Australian Years*, by contrast, makes for tougher, more concentrated reading, so much so that I found myself highlighting parts of his work like a student with a textbook, especially with quite a significant lead-in via a Forward, Author’s Note, Introduction, and at the end Acknowledgements, Afterword, Endnotes, Chronology, List of Figures, Bibliography, and Index. Trumble explains how he was inspired to pen this latest work by distinguished British artist Graham Sutherland’s portrait of Rubinstein. In one of Graham’s portraits of his friend, Rubinstein wears a Cristobel Balenciaga brocade gown as vivid as Rubinstein’s life. This painting now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra.

During her lifespan, many artists wished to paint Rubinstein, including Australian luminary William Dobell, who was well-known for his disregard for hierarchy, power, or fame. However, Dobell soon became obsessed with Rubinstein, and she sat for him for several days. He created eight full-sized portraits, of which the best known

was acquired in 1964 by the National Gallery of Victoria. You can see Rubinstein there today in all her splendour.

Writing through the prism of three distinct book sections – *I came, I saw, I conquered* – Trumble's account of Rubinstein's life jumps back and forth in time, sometimes dizzyingly, to piece together the mogul's business, fashion, family, and social life. As the focus expands to describe what ultimately became Rubinstein's unique life aesthetic, we discover how she also found time to relish the pleasures of art, jewellery, fashion, architecture, furniture, and interior design.

Rubinstein's trajectory is also recounted, with many signposts to her style and vision. Her beginnings in Australia in 1896 from her birth city, with little English and on her own, are fascinating. She joined her uncle in the rural outpost of Coleraine, Victoria, and began her working life as a salesgirl. Initially, there was little to indicate that a cosmetic and beauty empire was about to be born.

Within six years of arriving in Australia, Rubinstein introduced her first product, *Crème Valaze*, which quickly became a hit with Melbourne society. Rubinstein subsequently opened her first salon in fashionable Collins Street, bringing her sister Ceska and cousin Lola Beckmann from Poland to assist her before she moved to Sydney in 1904 to open a salon on Pitt Street and another further north in Brisbane.

The dynamo also consulted in several different rural and city locations across the east coast of Australia and later established her brand in New Zealand, with a salon opening in Wellington in 1907. A gossip piece at the time spread the word of Rubinstein's signature product which read:

Several of our mutual friends have been appearing lately with new faces. Mary, who is developing into a golf maniac, came to see me yesterday, with her complexion so presentable that her manners were thrown to the wind. I demanded the reason for her facial rescue from a weather-beaten appearance that was nothing short of lamentable.

Naturally, the reason for the friend's transformation was, you guessed it, *Valaze*.

Soon, London and New York beckoned. In London in 1908, she met and married Polish-born American journalist Edward William Titus

and two sons followed, Roy born in 1909, and Horace in 1912. Family life aside, Rubinstein soon discovered that English and Australian complexions differed markedly. The result? In 1912, the innovative businesswoman established the first system for classifying skin by type and providing skincare tailored for each – it is *de rigueur* today of course but was revolutionary more than 100 years ago.

As a result, her name and products were soon on women's lips across the globe. Her family moved to Paris in 1909 and there Rubinstein opened another salon. In 1914, the family moved to New York, and many salons were opened in US cities. By 1926, the company was registered in Australia and the U.S.

Husband Edward was indefatigable in his support of his wife in terms of publicity, marketing and media material, but his unfaithfulness ultimately led to the dissolution of their marriage in 1937. A year later, Helena married an impoverished Russian prince 23 years her junior. Helena was eager for a title and pursued Prince Artchil Gourielli-Tchkonia, her handsome aristocrat, even naming a male cosmetics line after her catch.

Helena lived and worked through the torrid times of World Wars One and Two, the Wall Street Crash, and the Great Depression. Throughout these difficult periods, her product range continued its success, and business flourished. She also took the opportunity to pioneer many ideas that linked nutrition and beauty.

In 1928, Rubinstein sold her controlling interest to the Lehman Brothers for US\$7.3 million and in 1931 following the Wall Street Crash, reacquired full control of the company. In 1973, after her death, the Helena Rubinstein Corporation was purchased by Colgate-Palmolive for US\$142.3 million. L'Oréal acquired the Helena Rubinstein brand in stages during the 1980s 'for several hundred million francs.'<sup>3</sup> By 2011, the Foundation had wound up its operations in New York and disposed of its remaining assets, including the portrait by Graham Sutherland.

Trumble writes that Rubinstein was a sad woman despite her stratospheric success. Personal problems aside, Rubinstein was hugely philanthropic, and many foundations, organisations, galleries, and scholarships today bear her name. With more than a nod to her Jewish roots, she established the Helena Rubinstein Pavilion of Contemporary Art in Tel Aviv and the America-Israel Cultural Foundation which provides scholarships to Israelis. She also established the Helena Rubinstein

Travelling Art Scholarship and Portrait Prize and the Helena Rubinstein Women in Science Award.

Whilst Trumble's version of Rubinstein's life highlights occasional nuggets, it is unfortunately one of my least favourite readings of a truly remarkable woman. This is because of its complicated structure and failure to ensure that this story flows so that it is easily readable.

Ruth Lilian

## Endnotes

- 1 'Helena Rubinstein was a makeup mogul with a flair for the dramatic', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Svke4gmAAA>. Accessed 5 June 2024.
- 2 See for example: Patrick O'Higgins, *Madame: An Intimate Biography of Helena Rubinstein*, London, Vintage Books, 1971.
- 3 *Financial Times*, May 1988.

## THE ANGEL OF KING'S CROSS: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FANNY READING

*By Anne Sarzin*

*North Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd,*

*2023, viii + 357pp.*

*notes, bibliography, index, illus.*

*ISBN: 9781922952509 (paperback)*

Anne Sarzin has produced a wonderfully detailed and illustrated book about Fanny Reading, a woman of worth whose name is synonymous with the National Council of Jewish Women in Australia (NCJW). An indefatigable worker for women both as a doctor and community leader, 'Dr Fanny', as she was known, was a force to be reckoned with.

Sarzin has done extensive research for this history using a large number of primary and secondary publications, as evidenced by her notes and bibliography, and has also interviewed family members and acquaintances to provide an intimate portrait of this amazing woman. A striking cover illustration of Fanny, from the collection of Leigh and Lynne Reading, gazes confidently at the reader.

For long-time members of NCJW who know of Dr Fanny, this is a lovely tribute with personal reminiscences from family members. As well, for members of the Australian Jewish Historical Society who regularly read our *Journal* and know of Anne Andgel's and the late Morris Ochert's articles about Fanny, this will remind them of her wonderful work. For readers unfamiliar with her story, who will be transported back in time to Sydney in the 1920s and 1930s, especially to King's Cross, and to the antisemitism of *Smith's Weekly*, these will be new experiences.

One weakness of the book is that there is a lot of repetition about Dr. Fanny's personal life, as if it were expected that a reader would choose to read only certain parts of the book and not the whole. However, there are many new details provided by family members which embellish this intimate portrait of a woman whose untiring advocacy set an example which has encouraged others to give selflessly to the causes of women and Judaism, including members of her own family, such as Fanny's brother Hyman whose contributions are discussed in an appendix.

The book follows Fanny's long life from her childhood to her career, to her volunteer work both before and after World War Two. Sarzin also delves into the 1947 trial of *Smith's Weekly* vs Youth Aliyah, where Fanny agreed to be the plaintiff in a case against National Press Pty. Ltd. which had maligned Youth Aliyah (a cause dear to Fanny's heart) by suggesting that funds collected on its behalf in Sydney were used for terrorism against the British in Palestine. Dr Fanny lost the case because the law did not allow for group libel and she personally had not been a victim, but the judge deferred payment of costs, a most unusual move, indicating his sympathy with the position of the Youth Aliyah libel claim. This was a moral victory for Dr Fanny, with the trial being a *cause célèbre* for her stand against entrenched antisemitism. In current times, with the rise in antisemitism worldwide, it is a reminder of how the courage of one person can inspire others.

Sydney in the 1920s and 1930s was a world apart from today, but the lovingkindness which Fanny showed to others has stood the test of time and the memory of her self-sacrifice and good deeds shines as a beacon still. Anne Sarzin is to be commended for undertaking this research and for the engaging biography which has resulted from it.

Helen Bersten

## THE STAR ON THE GRAVE

*By Linda Margolin Royal*

*South Melbourne, Affirm Press, 2024*

*The Star on the Grave* is an historical novel which, while a work of fiction, is based on Australian writer Linda Royal's real life and that of her father and grandmother and specifically on the wonderful rescues of 'Japanese Schindler' Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese vice-consul in Kaunas, Lithuania from 1934 to 1940. Her work bears a quote of praise from Tom Keneally, author of *Schindler's Ark* ('an extraordinary tale, elegantly told') and an aphorism from survivor Olga Horak ('... I don't live in the past, the past lives in me').

While most of the story is told from the point-of-view of Rachel, the novel's protagonist in 1968 (a thinly disguised Linda), certain sections are imagined reminiscences of Sugihara who was living in Moscow at that time. We learn about Rachel's working life and her dalliance with Greek doctor Yanni, her estrangement from her father Michael and her love for and devotion to her grandmother Felka. When she and Yanni contemplate marriage, Felka is impelled to tell Rachel that she is Jewish and Rachel learns for the first time that her Catholic upbringing has been to shelter her from the wartime experiences of her father, mother and grandparents. Her grandmother wants to go to Japan for a reunion of those rescued by Sugihara and persuades Rachel to accompany her. The meeting with Sugihara is fictional, but his heroic, illegal deed in signing thousands of visas for Lithuanian Jews to enter Japan on the way to Curaçao is a fact which earned him retribution from his own nation but a Righteous Among the Nations citation from Israel. Also given such a citation was honorary Dutch Consul Jan Zwartendijk who collaborated with Sugihara by issuing entry permits to Curaçao. The Author's Note on pages 272 to 276 details the history of these events.

Royal did, however, meet Sugihara's youngest son, Nobuki, born in 1949. He was able to give her details of his father's character, despite having been born after these life-saving events. Through his father's recognition by Israel as a Righteous Among the Nations, Nobuki was able to continue his education at tertiary level in Israel.

The characters in the novel are described in a way that brings them to life and the contrast of their lives between 1930-40 and 1968 is stark. Rachel's shock understanding of the Jewish background she knew

nothing about provides the author with the opportunity to educate her readers about the Holocaust and this particularly miraculous rescue of some Lithuanian Jews. She writes that Sugihara was the medicine which sustained life, not the cure. She has her grandmother say that she could survive anything as long as she let life in. Her father, in contrast, as a child at the time, suffered trauma from which he could not escape.

Royal has researched and written this novel to highlight the lifelong trauma carried by survivors which impacts their family relationships. Her research gives her an opportunity to highlight some Jewish customs such as *tahara* (Jewish ritual cleansing of the body before burial). The book is a tribute to the strength of survivors and to the strong moral code which marked the life and behaviour of Chiune Sugihara, Righteous Among the Nations.

Helen Bersten

## SURVIVAL AND SANCTUARY: TESTIMONIES OF THE HOLOCAUST AND LIFE BEYOND

*Translated and edited by Freda Hodge*

*Clayton, Vic., Monash University Publishing, 2023, xvii + 167pp., notes.*

*Foreword by Professor Paul R. Bartrop.*

*ISBN: 9781922979115 (paperback) 9781922979179 (epub)*

This is Hodge's second book, after *Tragedy and Triumph: Early Testimonies of Jewish Survivors of World War II* (2018). Here, just as in that earlier work, Hodge has translated a number of Holocaust survivors' testimonies. The unifying factor in this case is that six of the seven featured survivors relocated to Australia after the war. (The seventh, David Tuszynski, lived in France, but frequently visited Melbourne.) The testimonies were originally collected in Yiddish by the Melbourne YIVO Committee in 1947–48 and were published in a booklet called *Pages of Pain and Suffering*.

*Survival and Sanctuary* begins with an excellent foreword by the Australian Professor Paul R. Bartrop, Professor Emeritus of History at Florida Gulf Coast University. Bartrop is an esteemed scholar whose many books focus extensively on the Holocaust and genocide. His foreword offers some meaningful reflections on the value of survivor testimonies as historical sources. While noting that such testimonies

are sometimes lacking in historical specificity, Bartrop points out their value in highlighting the lived experience of the survivors, including 'textures, smells, sights and contours of a person's experience' (p. xii). Thus, he claims, such testimonial evidence 'is often more valuable than other forms of evidence when trying to recreate the past beyond the dry data of what, when and how' (p. xii).

Bartrop stresses that such accounts must be taken seriously, pointing out that in the case of some smaller ghettos, or forest partisan groups, there is no other evidence for historians to consult. In such cases, survivor testimony can 'rescue that history from oblivion' (p. xiv). He recommends that a wide range of testimonies should be consulted so that the cumulative evidence is as representative as possible. With the 37 accounts Hodge has translated across her two books, she is contributing significantly to the range of available evidence.

The testimonies in this book were taken very soon after the end of the Holocaust, and as such, remarks Bartrop, 'they carry very fresh scars untainted by post-Holocaust reflection or the tricks that age can play on memory' (p. xvii). The seven testimonies in *Survival and Sanctuary* were originally given and recorded in Yiddish, and published in a small, relatively humble journal. Hodge's translation has freed them from obscurity and made them available to a new audience of English speaking scholars.

Hodge begins her introduction with a brief history of the Jewish presence in Australia, noting that at least eight Jewish convicts arrived with the First Fleet in 1788. She outlines Jewish life in Australia prior to World War Two, as well as the experience and impact of the roughly 35,000 Jewish people who immigrated here as refugees before the Holocaust, or after it was over.

The core element of the book is the translation of testimonies from seven Holocaust survivors: Leon Holzer, Tobcia Blicblau, Maria Roza Kamsler, Rivka Fogel, Shlomo Lipman, David Tuszynski and Mark Fromer. Hodge follows each translated testimony with a summary of the survivor's life, including their relationship with Australia, thereby ensuring that this country, and its offer of sanctuary, runs as a theme throughout the work. Hodge's summary reveals that Holzer moved to Melbourne with the help of Richard Pratt. The two men knew each other from Danzig, and when Pratt established his company, Visy, in 1948, he gave Holzer employment there. They remained friends until



Holzer's death. Blicblau also moved to Melbourne, where she worked first in a factory, and later with the Australian Jewish Welfare and Relief Society. Later, Blicblau spent 40 years in Israel working with the Australian Embassy, before eventually returning to Australia. Kamsler developed a full social life, and enjoyed sports such as horse riding and skiing. Maria rarely discussed the Holocaust. Fogel lived in Melbourne until she was ninety years old, and is buried there beside her second husband. When Lipman settled in Melbourne with his wife, they established a successful clothing business, always determined to share their success with other survivors. They subsequently moved to Sydney, raising their children in a traditional Jewish home. Fromer, an Orthodox Jew since his childhood in Galicia, settled in Melbourne and married another Holocaust survivor. Together, they became an integral part of the Elwood Talmud Torah Hebrew Congregation. Tuszynski is the only featured survivor who did not make a permanent home in Australia. He lived in Paris, but often visited his two brothers and extended family in Australia. Tuszynski became an acclaimed artist, and one of his works hangs in the National Gallery of Victoria.

The testimonies provided by each of these survivors vary in length and fluency, although all have a similar tone: a stark recounting of horrific events. Each of the featured survivors has a different experience of the Holocaust to relate, reminding us that the history of the Holocaust is not one complete episode, but a kaleidoscope of over six million individual experiences. Taken together, this selection covers elements including pogroms, massacres, forced labour, living in hiding, conditions in ghettos, resistance, and several different concentration and death camps such as Bergen-Belsen, Ravensbrück and Auschwitz-Birkenau. This makes the collection valuable, as the sum of its parts adds up to a comprehensive representation of the range of Jewish Holocaust experiences.

The recollections of Maria Roza Kamsler include her memories of the days after liberation. Kamsler describes how she and other survivors wreaked violence on a neighbouring town:

A wild feeling of hate, a desire for revenge, wanting to destroy and rob overcame everyone. Each of us was armed with an axe, a hammer or a bayonet which we found in the camp and even more were scattered all over the town in many streets. People destroyed the

windows of the deserted houses, broke down doors, entered and searched every corner, hacked and broke furniture and glassware. Food and other things which were necessary or valuable were looted. The same thing occurred even in inhabited houses. There was no feeling of shared suffering, no response to entreaty and tears, no excuses or sympathy. We treated the Germans as they had treated us – brutally, crudely and heartlessly. Our wrath was not lessened by the sight of German tears while we were breaking and destroying, beating and robbing (p. 91).

This section of testimony is confronting and unadorned. Kamsler is honest about her own violent acts. Such stark candour is rarely found in later testimonies, when survivors were more likely to polish out the elements of the story which cast them in a poor light, or which they preferred to forget. It is an important aspect of the value of these early interviews.

With *Survival and Sanctuary*, Hodge has done more than simply translate seven testimonies. She has taken some early, valuable oral sources, placed them in an Australian context, and made them accessible to an English-speaking audience. The foreword of the original YIVO publication recounts the words of Professor Shimon Dubnov, ‘who, while being taken to his death, told the surrounding Jews: “Write and record”’ (quoted on p. 18). Hodge has responded meaningfully to that exhortation.

Kip Green

## OBITUARY

### DR ANTHONY PETER JOSEPH, 1937–24

Anthony Peter Joseph was born in Birmingham shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, and he recalled watching anti-aircraft fire during the Blitz as perhaps his earliest memory; in his infant eyes the nights provided firework displays like no other, though he later acknowledged that his parents probably felt very differently!

Educated as a boarder at Abbotsholme school, Anthony evidently demonstrated intellectual aptitude, coupled with an industrious streak for pursuing the unusual. A classmate recalls him convincing the teachers to retrieve a drowned sheep from a nearby river and allow its dissection in the biology labs, while his brother remembers he established a workforce to improve the quality of the school's toilets.

With such an interest in anatomy and public health, it was surely no surprise that he went on to read Medicine at Trinity College, Cambridge, graduating in 1961, then subsequently entering General Practice. A short period of work in London followed, before a foray to Australia where he continued his medical training for several years, specialising in both obstetrics and paediatrics. On his return to Birmingham in 1968, he joined a practice in Smethwick where he remained for over thirty years. At the turn of the century, Anthony took 'semi-retirement' which resulted in his actually working more hours than before, to the surprise of very few. On top of general locum work, he branched into helping the homeless population of central London, continuing in this fashion until his formal retirement at the age of 84.

It would be impossible to write about Anthony Joseph without mentioning family trees, the research of which captivated him from a very young age, and for which he developed something of a passion, dare we say obsession. Indeed, a close friend reports he once observed that, 'Medicine is my hobby, and Genealogy is my profession'. It is probably for the best that he did not share this information with his patients, lest they worry his loyalty to the record books took priority! A microfiche reader was a household fixture in much the same way

others might have had a microwave, and doubtless Dad got more use and enjoyment from it too. No familial connection was too obscure, no relationship or history too challenging to uncover, and it is not hyperbole to say his international reputation in the field was legendary, with memberships of, or presidential appointments to, groups as far afield as the United States and Australia. When not stalking graveyards for their hidden secrets, Anthony was an ardent supporter and former president of the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society, further testament to his mental fortitude and tenacity for analysing data, though it should be noted even he had his limits, being incapable of understanding any problem concerning a computer.

It would be remiss not to mention him in his capacity as a father (or grandfather!), given the size of the extended family for which he is responsible, and the care he showed for all of his descendants. He took an interest in everyone's pursuits, and shared their achievements with anyone who would listen. Patients frequently remarked that he gave his time freely, and actively listened to their concerns, something which those close to him already knew as fact. An incredibly generous man to all around him, his capacity for helping others was equally true at home as at work.

To condense such a lifetime of achievements and capability into a few short words is naturally to omit much of the man he was. Suffice to say, Anthony was irreplaceable and unique, and the positive touch he left on those he met will long be remembered.

Anthony is survived by his five children, and ten grandchildren, all of whom will miss him deeply.

Harry Joseph

### **Note from Helen Bersten**

As the AJHS Corresponding Member for Great Britain from 1967 to the present time, Anthony was a prodigious correspondent, writing regularly to long-time secretary Louise Rosenberg until her death in 2018. Many of these letters are preserved in the AJHS archives. In recent years he was described as the 'United Kingdom Representative'. He had followed in the footsteps of the great Cecil Roth. Anthony contributed to our *Newsletter* in 1968–69, 1986–88 and 1995–96 as well as having articles published in our *Journal* in 1964, 1969, 1974 and 1997. Whenever he visited these shores, he always gave a fascinating lecture

on some genealogical puzzle, and he became a personal friend of many in the Society.

He will be missed by both the Australian Jewish Historical Society and The Australian Jewish Genealogical Society (which recently combined) for his scholarship and his friendship.

May his memory be a blessing.

## OBITUARY

### HARRY HOFFMAN AM, ADVERSITY TO PHILANTHROPY

*The Jerusalem Post*, 9 December 2022, published a death notice for the late Harry Hoffman, who had died in Perth on the 5 December 2022. It read:

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem mourns the passing of Doctor Philosophiae Honoris Causa Harry Hoffman of Australia. Generous benefactor, devoted friend and a champion of education who worked tirelessly to develop the next generation of social and community leadership.

There are few people, who when they pass can have done all this in their life, but Harry, with the support of his devoted wife of nearly seventy years, Sylvia, and his family had achieved all of this and more.

Harry was born on the 11 December 1929 in Dubove in what then was eastern Czechoslovakia, the region of the beautiful Carpathian Mountains, formed after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Great War. His parents, Jakob and Sarah Leah, had married around 1927 and had three children, Harry the eldest, followed by two sisters, Rachel and Brana. The family ran a general store in Dubove.

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities in the Second World War, eastern Slovakia had been ceded to Hungary, thus somewhat delaying the full tragedy of the Holocaust befalling Harry and his family. This region of Europe had always been multilingual, which no doubt put Harry in good stead, because he became fluent in Czech, Hungarian, Ukrainian and later German and English. By late 1943, the Nazi oppression had come to Dubove, and the family sheltered in a bunker supported by some local community. It was only when Harry was seized in the forest that their location was finally revealed. The family were deported in June 1944 to Auschwitz. It was here that Harry was separated from his mother and sisters who perished in the death camp. His father had put his great coat around Harry, which made Harry appear bigger and older and thus in Dr Mengele's eyes, better for hard labour, and thus

they were transferred to Birkenau to work.

Harry, aged 14 years, spent his days filling bags with sand and by good fortune avoiding the roll calls of death which were a part of the Jewish experience in Auschwitz. As the Soviet army advanced west, they were transported west to Allach, in the vicinity of Dachau as part of Organisation Todt.<sup>1</sup> Harry's job was unloading blue metal; his father, Jakob, was tasked with repairing boots in Dachau. After some six months Harry was shifted to Dachau, which he described as being 'more orderly' as it was run by the Wehrmacht, the regular army units, which showed more humanity towards Harry and helped him survive with extra rations. The proximity of Dachau to the BMW works and other heavy industry ensured that it came under regular attack from American bombers. As the war moved into its final stages, they were once again transported, by train, to Chiemsee in Bavaria. From here they were forced to march for over three weeks to Neuhaus and Mittelwald. The Dachau death march was to be their last and after hiding in a pumping station, Jakob and Harry were rescued by a US Army patrol on 5 May 1945. They were at last free in war-torn Europe. Harry attributed his survival to his father's care, compassion and cunning.

Harry and Jakob returned to Dubove, only to find that their former life had vanished as had most of their family members. Harry travelled to Budapest to learn a trade but his time there was short-lived, and he returned to Dubove at his father's request. It was then they made the decision to go west to Kosice carrying their US issued passports and arrived in the town of Kadan, in western Czechoslovakia. Harry was apprenticed to a Christian watchmaker for 18 months; the watchmaker's wife took Harry under her wing, and he attended the local technical school. His father decided to remarry and move to Israel, and this forced Harry to make decisions for himself. At the end of 1946, he and a group of Jewish refugees crossed the border into Germany where Harry remained in a displaced persons camp near Hanau for some three years until 1949 when he decided to emigrate to Australia.

Harry used this time to learn German and English, driving vehicles for the US army and earning US dollars and thus became equipped for the ordeals of living independently in a post-war world. On the 4 March 1949, Harry received his Certificate of Discharge from the US Army having 'served honestly and faithfully'. Like many would-be 'new Australians' Harry departed Naples on the SS *Amarapoora* arriving in Fremantle on Saturday 23 April 1949. He was nineteen years old.

Sunday afternoon in Perth was an occasion for some Jewish community members to go to Fremantle and see who was coming down the gangplank of the migrant ships. Of those who went down to Fremantle that Sunday afternoon was fourteen-year-old Sylvia Frochter and her friend Dinah Gorenstein. Sylvia was born in Perth; her parents having arrived from Palestine in the 1920s. She was a student at Perth Girls' School. In 1949, Perth's Jewish community was made up mainly of early Jewish settlers and later settlers from the Ottoman Empire and more specifically Palestine, such as the Frochters, in addition to the European Jewish refugees who arrived and kept arriving after 1938.

Harry, as a sponsored migrant, had to work where he was assigned. His first month in Perth was spent at the Grayland's migrant hostel, where the cook, an Australian ex-serviceman who had served at Beersheba during the Great War, encouraged Harry to attend the Brisbane St Synagogue. It was here that Harry re-established his Jewish connection and met Godel Korsunski, later one of the founders of Carmel school.<sup>2</sup> Harry soon learned that to prosper in this new land he would need to do it himself. He was given a pound by Rabbi Rubin-Zacks and was on his way to his newly found employment in Manjimup in the timber industry.

Applying himself with diligence, he avoided the temptations of alcohol and gambling as was so common in county towns like Manjimup. The timber yard foreman and local policeman, who introduced him to roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, encouraged Harry to return to Perth. In Perth, he worked at a sack factory earning four pounds ten shillings per week and attended night school. He next worked at a quarry in Gosnells and boarded with the Morris family in Glendower St, in what is now trendy Northbridge.

Harry started to mix and mingle in the local Jewish community. He had a number of jobs at this period of his life including working for Leon Zeitlin in his slipper factory and later for the Gunzburg family, the owners of 'Comfortwear' footwear. It was at the engagement party of Max Baranski, a Polish Holocaust survivor, that Harry was re-introduced to Sylvia Frochter in 1951. Two years later on 22 December 1953 Harry and Sylvia married. Team Hoffman was established. Sylvia had left school and had attended City Commercial College learning shorthand, typing and bookkeeping. The newly married couple, after honeymooning at a hotel in Albany, decided to go north to Geraldton.



Sylvia worked as a legal secretary for E.M. Franklin, solicitors, and Harry worked initially as a barman at the Freemason's Hotel and later as a wood machinist at the Geraldton Building Company. In 1955, they moved back to Perth and, after a number of short-lived positions, Harry found employment with Hungarian real estate agent E.M. Kovacs.

Harry was dispatched to the Kalamunda<sup>3</sup> office and made many sales in six months, becoming their best performing salesman. After about a year Harry joined Sheffield Real Estate and came under the influence of its principal Frank Conti who was supportive of Harry. The Hoffmans welcomed the birth of their first born, Susan, contemporaneously with establishing their own real estate business, Ardross Estate Agency, in 1957 along the Canning Highway in Applecross. Sylvia had been working at a number of positions throughout this period which gave her corporate and managerial skills and experience in the emerging post-war corporate life of Perth.<sup>4</sup> Harry had the 'gift of the gab' the only uncertainty being, in which language. Sylvia kept the home and office fires burning with tenacity and flourish and thus they prospered. They realised the importance of having a solid Jewish home life and were able to employ a dedicated Hungarian housekeeper, Mrs Fekete, whose culinary skills were legendary within Perth's small Jewish community.

With true foresight, Harry and Sylvia used their real estate business to acquire land for themselves and thus when they established Ardross Estates, they were ready for the expansion of the so called 'outer suburbs' to house Perth's growing population, brought about by post-war migration. Harry's business acumen became legendary. I will not delve into the business success of Ardross Estates, other than to acknowledge that it opened the opportunity for Harry and Sylvia to support those less able than themselves. This they did this in a manner that should be inspirational to future generations.<sup>5</sup>

Carmel School, Perth's only Jewish school, became a major beneficiary as did the Maurice Zeffert Home, Perth's only Jewish aged care facility, the Perth Hebrew Congregation, and many other charities in both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. In 2009, in recognition of Harry and Sylvia's unwavering contribution as well as that of the original benefactor, Carmel School became known as the H&S Hoffman and G Korsunski School Incorporated.

Harry and Sylvia have been great supporters of the Holocaust Institute of Western Australia, which will feature prominently in the

opening of the new Jewish Hub in April 2024. This will be a lasting legacy to Harry and all the other Perth Holocaust survivors, who contributed so much to Perth's Jewish life.

The crowning philanthropic achievement has been their contribution to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUI). The Hoffman Leadership and Responsibility Program<sup>6</sup> ran for 13 successive years and allowed 140 scholars at the HUI to develop knowledge and skills for 'The Benefit of Humanity'. Prof Amalya Oliver, one of the original Hoffman fellowship coordinators, wrote in 2020:

You, my dear fellows, are part of an incredible chain that brings to the world important and valuable qualities that the world needs badly. At times of illness and wrongdoing, careless in power and merciless in actions, it is good to know that you, Hoffman fellows, are all a light of optimism, inspiration and hope.

Prof Hannek Gutfreund, former president of the HUI and one of the world's leading Einstein scholars, who was instrumental in assisting Harry and Sylvia to establish the Hoffman fellowships, wrote in 2020 in the middle of the Covid pandemic:

The events of the present days with the Corona pandemic, the social injustices and economic crisis affecting millions around the world provide compelling arguments why programs like this one are so appropriate. The graduates of your programme sooner or later will find plenty of opportunities to apply the lessons they have learned here. Harry and Sylvia, your visits to the programme have always been a source of inspiration for all of us.

It is fitting to end this obituary with the words of Prof Gutfreund, 'Harry, your life is a tale of resilience, optimism and great success, despite the diverse and serious challenges you have faced in your life.' Harry has left his mark on many as an inspiration to others, by recognising and sponsoring education, the commodity which he was denied by totalitarianism and political and ideological evil. Harry was well aware of the fact that education, once you have it, cannot be stolen from its owner.

Peter M. Winterton

## AJHS PRESIDENT’S REPORT – NOV. 2023

During Covid, I wrote that we all hoped next year’s report would not need to refer to the pandemic. Sadly, this year we communicate in the shadow of the Israel-Hamas War and hope that by next year this will be another painful but healing scar in our Jewish history.

### **Australian Jewish Genealogical Society (AJGS)**

During the year, we welcomed the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society as our partner. Two of the former AJGS committee joined the executive of Australian Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) and their presence has been a boost to our energy. With the addition of a quarterly *Kosher Koala* to our publications, we now have an arm dedicated to the research of family history.

### **Premises**

Sydney Jewish Museum’s redesign of the Darlinghurst Jewish community complex including the AJHS offices have been further developed. Plans have been submitted to City of Sydney for Development Approval and it is hoped that works can commence mid-2025 and be completed mid-2027. These plans provide for a greater focus on Australia’s Jewish heritage. AJHS’s expertise and experience in genealogy and archives will be a major part of this initiative.

During the anticipated two years of works, AJHS will be seeking alternative housing for our offices and for those archives which are most accessed.

### **Digitisation**

We now have digitised 14,000 of the 40,000 photos from the pre-digital era held by the *Australian Jewish News* in Melbourne. By using facial recognition software to help identify people, 28,000 faces have been processed and tagged. To date, 10,300 individuals have been identified. We plan to make these photos from events between 1970 and 2000 available online during 2024.

We continue to digitise audio and video cassettes using software that automatically transcribes voice to text. Current work in progress

is 250 audio cassettes from lectures and guest speakers at the Sydney Jewish Museum between 1977 and 2004 as well as AUJS audio reels from the radio show 'You Don't Have to be Jewish.'

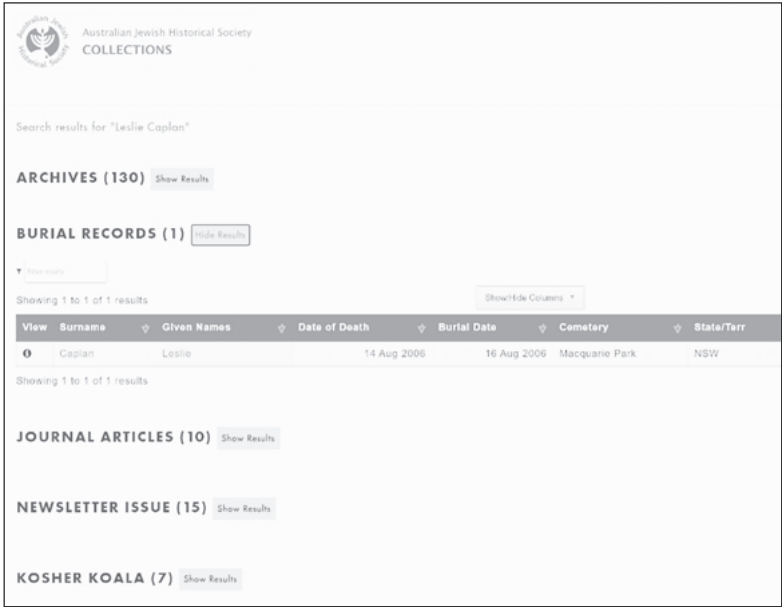
**Oral history**

While the community has long focused on interviewing Holocaust survivors, AJHS is now gathering interviews from members of the community who were born and raised in Australia particularly those pre-World War Two.

**Website and databases**

On 1 July 2023, we launched a completely redesigned website. A major feature is that researchers can interrogate our vast repository of communal archives online. As well as searching in Archives, Burials or other of our many databases, you can now search for anyone or anything across all archives, databases and publications.

There has been a significant increase in the number of people



accessing ajhs.com.au. In the four months from 1 July to 31 October there have already been 4,300 visits compared to 8,500 for the previous full year. On average, visitors are spending much longer at 9:00 minutes compared with 6:40 minutes in the previous year. Searches of the Archive are at 2,002 – slightly ahead of Burials at 1,750.

With our associates at AJGS Vic, we now hold digital copies of marriage registry entries for over 68,000 people from 70 different congregations around Australia. The marriages span from 1832 up to early 2023. Details of 'Marriages pre-1942' are available online. For privacy reasons, more recent marriages are only available on request by interested parties. We have expanded the 'Jewish Members of Parliament' database by adding bios for many of the MPs. Back issues of *Kosher Koala* since 1993 have joined the Journal which dates back to 1939. All are full-text searchable.

In a joint initiative with JewishGen, AJHS will now provide burial data to the JewishGen Online World Burial Registry (JOWBR). JOWBR data for Australia and New Zealand will replicate AJHS Burials currently held.

### **Marketing & Events**

*From Australia's Jewish Past* prepared by Ruth Lillian continues to appear on J-Wire every Tuesday. These interesting histories drawn from AJHS publications and archives as well as other authoritative sources have become a popular Tuesday feature on J-Wire.

Since joining with AJGS, we have returned to regular monthly events, many on Zoom with participants from across the country. Most of these are recorded and available online. We also hold workshops to help those searching their family tree.

A rare event was the gathering in September at the former synagogue in Broken Hill. 60 people from all parts of Australia gathered to unveil two benches in honour of those who worked tirelessly to convert the closed synagogue into a museum and the home of the Broken Hill Historical Society.

### **Cemeteries**

Following extensive research into old trust deeds and other documents, we can confirm the appointment of three new trustees for the Goulburn Jewish cemetery. This now secures the management of this historic site in Jewish communal hands. We have also received a significant grant from Heritage NSW to conduct a Conservation Management Plan which will document the rehabilitation works required for the site and set a plan for the next decades, as discussed in the article in this issue of the Journal by Chris Betteridge and Gary Luke.

Journal and newsletter

65% of our members have chosen to receive the *Journal* electronically, saving AJHS printing and delivery costs. *Kosher Koala*, which is distributed electronically, has a strong following both locally and internationally. 60% of recipients of *Kosher Koala* open and read it online every quarter.

Archives

Our core purpose and justification for our communal funding is the archiving of communal records. Our archives team have increased our holding from last year’s 10,000 files to over 12,000.

| Collections   | Subcollection |     | Boxes/Containers |     | Files/Items |                      |
|---|---------------|-----|------------------|-----|-------------|----------------------|
|   |               |     | completed        |     | completed   |                      |
|   | 2             | 2   | 2                | 2   | 20          | 2                    |
|   | 023           | 022 | 023              | 022 | 23          | 022                  |
| Audio (mixed digitised and physical)                                    | 3             |     | 10               | 4   | 650         | 4                    |
| Australian Jewish Historical Society                                    |               |     | 350              | 3   | 4,246       | 4,246                |
| Communal Organisations  | 6             | 59  | 500              | 459 | 12,511      | 1                    |
| Communal Organisations (AAJ Static)                                     | 4             |     | 681              |     |             | 0,654                |
| Personal Papers   | 30            |     |                  |     |             | To be completed 2024 |
| Photographs dispersed within personal papers and Communal Organisations | 71            | 66  | 438              | 10  | 2,000       | 1,133                |
| Photographs electronic – digitised AJN                                  | 3             | 1   | N/A              | 6   | 846         | 8                    |
| Small Individual Donations (mixed electronic and physical records)      | 1             |     | N/A              |     | 14,000      | 46                   |
|   | 10            | 5   | 30               | 3   | 100         | 3                    |
|   |               |     |                  |     |             | 5                    |

Sixty-four communal institutions now have their archives held by AJHS including The Great and Sephardi synagogues, ECAJ, JCA, NAJEX, NCJWA and more. We also have ingested various contributions of value and relevance to our holdings relating to organisations as diverse as Habonim and the Maccabean Literary & Dramatic Society.

AJHS holds 71 sets of personal papers of communal leaders. Newly added are collections from Marcelle Marks, Earle Hoffman and Isador Magid among others. All of which add to the rich fabric of our community.

In conjunction with The Great Synagogue and subject to funding, we have begun an exercise to digitise key documents from the Synagogue held in the State Library of New South Wales. Our intent

is to make available online almost 10,000 pages from 1832 to 1976 including minutes of meetings from the earliest years.

While we are predominantly focussed on New South Wales, we cannot allow Australian history to disappear. AJHS has been approached for assistance with archives held in Victoria for B'nai B'rith and Maccabi as there is no local communal home. In some cases, such as Bet Olam burial records, we have transported Melbourne archives to Sydney for documentation and long-term storage.

### **Research**

Our doors are always open to researchers, be they academics or those looking for some obscure aspect of their family's Jewish history. Researchers have asked for access to a cross-section of archives: whether for information on Isaac Steinberg who tried to create an autonomous Jewish region in the Kimberley of Western Australia, on the legacies of European-trained lawyers who migrated to Australia between 1930-1960, for an upcoming documentary, *Revenge: Our Dad the Nazi Killer* or on Chelsea Farm, which was a training farm for Jewish refugees.

### **Staffing**

As with all cultural institutions, staffing is our largest expense being almost 60%. Head archivist Sabrina Elias is expanding our sources of interns beyond Sydney, Charles Sturt and Australian Catholic universities. Harnessing the skills and energy of interns, including three based in Melbourne, who currently are describing eight sub-collections, continues to be invaluable to AJHS.

### **Financials**

While we charge for archival services, we are a communal resource and endeavour to ensure that fees are never a barrier to an organisation's records being captured for posterity. We continue to apply for grants for specific projects and have been successful twice in the last year.

AJHS continues to operate at a significant deficit and relies on generous donors and JCA for funding. We would encourage all members to donate to the JCA's annual campaign as without our annual allocation and additional support, AJHS and the community will disappear.

AJHS policy is to grant free and unlimited access to all our records other than those with restrictions placed by the depositor. Consequently, we are phasing out the \$30 annual subscriber option.

The benefits of paid membership are the right to vote at meetings,

serve on AJHS committees and opt to receive a print copy of the biannual *AJHS Journal*. The above policy has lowered the attraction of financial membership. However, since AJGS has joined AJHS, we have seen an increase in membership numbers, many from former AJGS members who were not already AJHS members.

We have also introduced a \$30 concessional membership for students and holders of a Commonwealth government benefit card. Our new online membership system allows members to join, renew and update their personal details at their convenience.

### **Membership (as at 6-Nov-2023)**

|                          | <b>2020</b> | <b>2021</b> | <b>2022</b> | <b>2023</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Benefactor Members       | 3           | 3           | 3           | 0           |
| Members                  | 154         | 152         | 140         | 170         |
| Life Members             |             |             | 4           | 9           |
| Subscribers / Concession | 24          | 57          | 17          | 5           |
| Local Institutions       | 2           | 2           | 4           | 3           |
| Overseas Institutions    | 4           | 6           | 5           | 3           |

### **People and thanks**

Every year, the number of staff, interns, committee and volunteers grows, and I would like to recognise all for their continued support. Two people merit special mention. Head Archivist Sabrina Elias who is our ringmaster and retiring treasurer Ralph Hirst who for over ten years has kept AJHS on a steady financial footing. We thank them and everybody else who keeps AJHS functioning so well.

### **Closing remarks**

My closing comment in my 2021 report was 'We look forward to 2022 and personally, I hope that I don't need to refer to COVID other than saying "the story of COVID has been consigned to the archives."' For 2022, I wrote 'we look forward to being able to deliver more of the Australian Jewish story not just to Jews but to the whole Australian community.' In the light of the increase in antisemitism sparked by the Israel-Hamas war, it is more important than ever to chronicle the presence and contribution of Jews to Australia since 1788.

Peter Philippsohn OAM  
President



## ERRATUM

Deborah Green, 'Survivors, Trauma and Mental Illness: A Challenge for Australian Jewish Welfare,' *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, Deborah Green, 'Survivors, Trauma and Mental Illness: A Challenge for Australian Jewish Welfare':

The final reference, 64, p. 229, is missing from the endnotes. It should be:

R.H. Fishman, 'Compensation for Mental Illness Resulting from Holocaust Trauma,' *Lancet*, vol. 352, issue 9129 (29 August 1998), p. 718. Doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(05)60844-6.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Marilyn Aminuddin**, BA, MA, Dip. Industrial Admin., was born in Melbourne, Australia, raised in New Zealand, and has lived in Malaysia for 50 years. For 35 of those years, she taught in a local university which led to publishing more than ten books in her field of industrial relations and human resource management – all under the professional name of Maimunah Aminuddin. After retirement, she started researching her family, about which initially she knew almost nothing. As a result of this research, in the third quarter of 2023 she wrote a book about her ancestors entitled *Fears, Tears, Secrets & Successes* published by i2i Publishing, UK.

**Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple**, z'l, AO, RFD, BA LLB (Melbourne), MLitt (UNE), Hon. LLD (UNSW), DUniv (ACU), was emeritus rabbi of the Great Synagogue, Sydney, and patron and past president of the Australian Jewish Historical Society Inc.. He was formerly senior rabbi to the Australian Defence Force and *dayan*/registrar of the Sydney *Beth Din*. Since his retirement he had been living in Israel, largely devoting his time to research and writing. Sadly, he died in January 2024.

**Helen Bersten**, OAM, BA, Dip. Lib., gained her Graduate Diploma in Librarianship at the University of New South Wales in 1964. She was a research librarian in Fisher Library at Sydney University from then until 1970. During that time she spent two years in the University's Rare Book Library. She worked very briefly in the Zionist Federation Library in 1972 and from 1979 was Honorary Archivist of the Australian Jewish Historical Society for thirty-two years, retiring at the end of May 2011. During that period, she spent six weeks cataloguing books in the Falk Library in the 1980s. She received her OAM in 2005 for volunteer services as Archivist. Helen is a member of the AJHS Inc. editorial committee and reviews books for the *Journal*. Pre-digitisation, she compiled indexes for the *Journal* and *Newsletter*.

**Christopher Betteridge**, BSc, MSc, AMA (Lond), M.ICOMO, was born in 1947 and grew up in Parramatta. Qualified in Botany and Museum Studies, Chris was the original landscape and environmental specialist in the Heritage and Conservation Branch of the NSW Department of

Planning from 1978. For over 30 years, Chris worked as a consultant on cultural landscape and heritage investigation, assessment and management. A founding member of the Australian Garden History Society, he served in specialist heritage roles on several committees, including some years as the Cemeteries Adviser to the NSW National Trust. Chris died in May 2023, survived by his wife Margaret and children Simon and Lucy. In May 2024, he was honoured posthumously with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the NSW National Trust Heritage Awards.

**Rodney Gouttman**, BA, MEd, PhD, Teach Cert, is a former senior academic of the University of South Australia who has written many articles on Australian Jewish history and the Australia-Israel relationship. He is a former editor of the *AJHSJ* (Melbourne Edition) and the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*. His most recent book was *In Their Merit: Australian Jewry in WW1* (1915). He now resides in Jerusalem.

**Kip Green**, BA/LLB, Dip Ed, MHist, PhD, is a historian and educator working at the Sydney Jewish Museum. They began their educational career as a teacher in secondary and tertiary institutions, before moving into the field of Holocaust studies. Their role involves working closely with Holocaust survivors, as well as delivering student seminars on topics relating to the history of the Holocaust. Dr Green's current research focuses on theatre productions in DP camps, and the people who created them.

**Ruth Lilian**, OAM, has a professional background in the management of meetings and events specifically in the medical, education, and scientific sectors over a period of fifty years as at August 2024. She pioneered the world of meetings and events for Australia and has been recognised with an Order of Australia for this. Her other love is researching history and the biographies of people who have left their mark through their specific workforce and life areas. This includes her having prepared podcasts during 2020 for the AJHS in the first year of COVID and she has continued writing for J-Wire since 2021 on behalf of AJHS with biographies each week on Jewish members of the community who have contributed to Australia through business, medicine, art and culture, building, architecture and more.

**Gary Luke**, DipFHS, was a trustee of the Jewish cemetery sections of Rookwood Necropolis in its final years ending in 2012, overseeing data management and conservation, and is a member of the cemeteries

advisory committee of the National Trust of NSW. He instigated the establishment of the Friends of Maitland Historical Jewish Cemetery and is the primary trustee of the historical Jewish cemetery at Goulburn, both now acknowledged as significant sites on the State Heritage Inventory. He oversees the AJHS burials database, and was nominated in 2022 by AJHS for a RAHS Certificate of Achievement.

**Suzanne D. Rutland**, OAM, MA (Hons), PhD, DipEd, Professor Emerita, the Department of Hebrew, Biblical & Jewish Studies, University of Sydney, is past president of the Australian Association for Jewish Studies and the Australian Jewish Historical Society and has been editing the *AJHS Journal* since 1991. *Let My People Go: The Untold Story of Australia and Soviet Jews, 1959-1989*, co-authored with Sam Lipski, was the joint recipient of the 2016 Australian Prime Minister's Literary Award (Australian History). Her latest books are *Lone Voice: The Wars of Isi Leibler* (Hybrid 2021) and *Special Religious Education and its Value in Australia to Contemporary Society* (Springer 2021), co-authored with Professor Zehavit Gross. A member of the Australian Delegation to IHRA she serves on the Education Working Group and the Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial. In 2008, she received the Medal of the Order of Australia for services to Higher Jewish Education and interfaith dialogue.

**Jana Vytrhlik**, MPHA, MA (Hons), PhD (Palacky University, 1976), PhD (University of Sydney, 2020), is an independent Jewish art and architecture historian and curator of Judaica. She started her museum career in the world renowned Jewish Museum in Prague and later joined the Sydney Jewish Museum. In 1997, while working at the Powerhouse Museum, Jana curated the *Precious Legacy* exhibition, the first international Judaica presentation touring Australia from Prague. She is presently leading the curatorial review of the A.M. Rosenblum Jewish Museum collection at The Great Synagogue in Sydney. Jana's monograph *Treasures of Old Jewish Sydney* is based on her recent PhD research and was published in May 2024. She regularly publishes research articles and presents conference papers in the broad areas of Jewish visual culture.

**Peter Winterton**, AM, BA, MBBS, FRACGP, DRACOG, Grad Dip Forensic Med(Monash), FFCFM(RACP), Clinical A/Professor, lives in Perth. His heritage and roots lie in central and eastern Europe, with his parents fleeing Nazi Austria in 1938. He is a family physician, child protection physician, and medical historian, remaining in active

clinical practice. He has been involved in medical history all his professional life and is a foundation life member of the Australian and New Zealand Society of the History of Medicine. He has published historical articles relating to Australian, Austrian, and Nazi medicine. Outside of medicine he is the president of the Friends of Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Western Australia and is both a keen bibliophile and numismatist.



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# **JEWISH HISTORICAL & GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

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