A CEMETERY AND ITS STORIES[1]

Janis Wilton*

Today as we re-consecrate the cemetery, we pray for the repose of all buried here, and make amends for the vandalism, which has been allowed to occur - the vandalism of time, of floodwaters, of neglect and of receding memories (Rabbi Raymond Apple, 1979).

R abbi Apple was speaking at the re-consecration of the Maitland Jewish Cemetery in August 1979. He went on to talk about the importance of looking after what he described as 'waste places' so that they could become 'monuments to dreams and deeds'.[2] He was reflecting on the history of the cemetery itself and expressing hope for its future. He was perhaps urging his audience to capture and preserve the stories, the messages, the memories and the sentiments that were flowing that day through the cemetery. He was also urging that the cemetery itself should be preserved and respected.

Rabbi Apple's pleas have been heard. Over the years, stories have been collected, family histories researched, gravestone inscriptions transcribed, photographs taken. This work is drawn together here and expanded. More research, images, information and stories have been added. It is still, however, only a beginning to the story of the cemetery itself, the people buried there and the ways in which the 'dreams and deeds' of the cemetery offer windows onto life in colonial Maitland and the small Jewish community that once lived there.

Neglect and care

Acquired by the Maitland Jewish community in 1846, the cemetery's last recorded burial was in 1934.[3] Families moved away, the cemetery became neglected. Weeds grew, occasional floodwaters washed across the gravestones, the building[4] on the site slowly collapsed, the fence faltered, grave markers started to tilt,

* This article was peer refereed.

Tenders.

SEALED TENDERS are required, either jointly or separately, on or before the 4th of December, for the FENCING IN of the JEWS' BURIAL GROUND, West Maitland, and for the erection of a COTTAGE thereon.

A Plan and Specification to be seen at Mr. Isaacs's Store, West Maitland.   1610

Tender advertisement, Maitland Mercury, 27 November 1847.

inscriptions faded. Neglected - but not forgotten. Local residents, visitors and Jewish community members kept an eye on the cemetery. In the mid-1920s tenders were called to make repairs.[5] The following decade Maitland-born Percy J. Marks, founding President of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, noted:

> The old burial ground... is now completely surrounded by farms and market-gardens. However, the 48[6] memorials there are in a very reasonable state of preservation, with most inscriptions, in both Hebrew and English, quite legible. This is no doubt due to the fact that for many years they were completely covered with thick undergrowth and high aniseed weed.[7]

A few years later the Sydney *Chevra Kadisha* (Jewish burial society) received a letter lamenting the state of the cemetery. The writer, M. Israel, described it as in 'most disgraceful condition. The fence is practically nil, and the cemetery has been invaded by horses and cattle. The house on the cemetery is practically in ruins.'[8] There was concern. Some action was taken. The early 1940s saw local residents Clive Reginald Alexander, Percy Brighton Cohen and Woolf Browett appointed trustees of the cemetery.[9]

Then there were floods: the big floods of 1949 and 1955. In 1956, David J. Benjamin and Ilse Robey from respectively the Australian Jewish Historical Society and the Jewish Cemetery Trust paid a visit. David Benjamin observed 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'.[10] They drew a plan, allocated numbers to the gravesites, recorded details of those buried there and noted the state

Newcastle Hebrew Congregation   AB 13.

Minister:
REV. I. MORRIS, J.P.

Hon. Secretary:
JOHN ISRAEL Myer Cohen

Phone New. 826

☐

Synagogue Chambers,
124 Tyrrell Street,
Newcastle, N.S.W.

26th Feby. 1941

TRUSTEES MAITLAND JEWISH CEMETERY

We, the undersigned, residents of Maitland, do agree to
act as Trustees of the Jewish Portion, Maitland Cemetery,
duly alloted as a Jewish Burial Ground by the Department
of lands.

Signed)" NAME IN FULL *Percy Brighton Blee*

Address *High St. East Maitland*

NAME IN FULL *Woolf Browett*

ADDRESS *High Sts. West Maitland*

NAME IN FULL *Clive Reginald Alexander*

ADDRESS *High Street West Maitland*

Appointment of Trustees for Maitland Jewish Cemetery, 1941.
(Australian Jewish Historical Society Archives)

of some of the gravestones.[11] Twenty years later revived interest
brought a working bee. The cemetery was cleaned up and re-
consecrated and, in 1982, the National Trust added the site to its
heritage list. Title and management, however, were vague. Records had
been lost or perhaps did not exist. Negotiations throughout the 1980s
between the Newcastle Hebrew Congregation and Maitland City
Council finally resulted in the Council accepting custodianship of the
cemetery.[12] Grass was kept mown, fences were mended, a sign was
erected. In the early twenty-first century members of the Maitland
Family History Circle and the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society
visited, photographed and recorded the gravestones and the cemetery
itself.[13]

*Family and community members at the re-consecration of the
cemetery in August 1979.
(Australian Jewish Historical Society Archives)*

It was at this point that Joe Eisenberg and I became aware of the
cemetery. We were new to Maitland. The cemetery was intriguing.
It resonated with our desire to immerse ourselves in the history of
the locality, understand the place of different groups of immigrants,
connect to Joe's Jewish heritage, and explore different ways to
present these stories. In 2007 on behalf of the Maitland Regional
Art Gallery, Joe commissioned artist Hanna Kay to have a
conversation with the cemetery. She visited. She reflected. She
painted: the grave markers, the grasses, water passing, time
passing, movement, memories, peaceful eternities. She explains:

> I focused on natural elements from around the Jewish
> Cemetery such as: water ways, grass, stone and trees. Water is
> prominent in the consciousness of the communities along the
> Hunter River, and would have been especially so in the psyche
> of the Jewish people who arrived by sea to Australia about 150
> years ago. I've used water as the main subject in the artworks

to express movement and rigidity, change and tradition, oppositions and contradictions all of which have accompanied Jewish people throughout history. In addition, water surfaces in which tombstones are reflected suggest a separation between past, present and future, and may imply layers of memories that are evoked by encounters with cemeteries.[14]

The place became a painter's palette. Graves and gravestones recede back into the landscape; fading Hebrew inscriptions ask to be read and understood; the cemetery is translated into evocative layered paintings inviting contemplation. Perhaps, it is a contemplation of the dreams and deeds marked by the cemetery, its monuments and their stories.

We needed to piece together some of these dreams and deeds. Why is the cemetery here? What brought Jews to colonial Maitland? Where did they come from? What was life like for them in this colonial frontier town? What can the cemetery tell us about their practices and beliefs?

A centre for commerce and trade

The story of the cemetery starts with the colonization of the Hunter Valley and the emergence of West Maitland as the key staging and trading post for northern and north-western New South Wales.

Opened to European settlement in the early 1820s and located at the end of the navigable section of the Hunter River, West Maitland (initially known as Wallis Plains) became a centre for trade and commerce. It quickly grew from 'a cluster of detached cottages' to 'the principal township on the Hunter'.[15] Produce and goods were brought on drays from north of the River to be shipped to Sydney and beyond, and merchandise was carried by boat from Sydney and up the Hunter to be sold to local residents and to be sent further inland. Stores, warehouses, hotels and houses grew in number as the town grew in prosperity.[16]

Among the settlers who saw or at least were tempted by the seeming opportunities available on this edge of European settlement were a small number of Jewish immigrants. Born in England, they made their way often by steerage to Sydney in the 1830s and early 1840s, where many became storekeepers, especially in George Street, Sydney, maintaining traditional economic patterns from Europe and Britain. A number then moved to the Hunter Valley. They sought opportunities primarily in commerce and trade in West Maitland. Among them were Solomon Levien, the town's postmaster, and his son, Alfred Levien, who became licensees of the Rose Inn; Solomon Levien's son-in-law, Philip Joseph Cohen

who acquired a soap factory in 1833, in 1835 took over the Rose Inn from his wife's father and brother, became town postmaster when Solomon Levien moved to Sydney and was involved with the development of the Maitland and Newcastle Steam Navigation Company; Simeon J. Cohen, P. J. Cohen's step-brother, who went into partnership with Alfred Levien trading under the name Simeon J. Cohen and Company and describing the enterprise as commission agents and dealers and a wholesale wine and spirit business; Henry Robert Reuben who manufactured cordial; Edward Salamon who opened a branch of his Sydney wine and spirit merchant's business; and Samuel Cohen (not related to P. J. Cohen) who opened a store, Lambeth House, named after the area of London in which he was born and, a while later, with brother David and cousin, Lewis Wolfe Levy, established David Cohen and Company – a business that was to figure prominently in the commercial development of the region and beyond, and was to produce leading figures of the Sydney Jewish community in subsequent generations, including George Judah Cohen, his son Sir Samuel Cohen and grandson, Major General Paul Cullen (Cohen).[17]

This was a boom time for West Maitland and these early Jewish settlers benefited from the boom. The district had been opened up, land grants allocated, a government town surveyed at nearby East Maitland, and the trade route along the Hunter River well established. Settlers were pushing north and north-west taking goods with them and the goods and services they needed were at least partly provided by the stores, warehouses and inns in Maitland.

The 1840s, however, brought a temporary halt to this prosperity and the town's expansion. Drought and an economic depression affected Maitland as they did the rest of the colony. The falling economy meant contracting opportunities. Some enterprises closed, others faltered, some diversified. Local merchants and settlers became insolvent;[18] among them were Philip Joseph Cohen, Samuel Cohen, Simeon Joseph Cohen, Alfred Levien, Solomon Levien and Edward Salamon.[19] Their insolvency files attest to the boom-time speculation that preceded the economic slump and mark these men as people aiming to create wealth, not men born to wealth. Samuel Cohen, for example, who was declared insolvent in 1843, had carried on his pursuits in Maitland for about eight years. Starting with only £30, he had acquired land in Maitland to the value of £5,550 and had debts amounting to over £7,000.[20]

Some settlers moved on; others stayed, waiting out the downturn. As the gold discoveries of the early 1850s rebooted the colonial economy, local merchants and the trade that passed

through Maitland again built up. The population increase reflected the growth, with West Maitland expanding from 1,746 in 1841 to 3,131 in 1851, 5,694 in 1861 and stabilising at around 5,000 for the next two decades and then, in the 1880s, seeing another increase so that by 1891 West Maitland recorded a population of 7,295.[21]

Some of the key commercial and trade enterprises that sat at the core of this expansion were those established by members of the Jewish community: some by residents who withstood the 1840s slump, others by newcomers to the district attracted by the growing economy and by the presence of a small but significant Jewish community. Prominent among the Jewish businesses was David Cohen and Company. Others included Goulston and Company's clothing store; Morris Benjamin's clothing and boot store and his boot manufacturing business; photographers Jacob Audet, Elijah Hart and Morris Moss; watchmakers Brodziak and Davis; Samuel Hart's Fitzroy House with its selection of brandy, gin and rum alongside hardware, drapery, glass, boots and shoes; auctioneer Isaac Israel; and Joseph Marks' drapery business, Commerce House.[22]

The owners of these commercial and trade enterprises made up the core of the local Jewish community. Many of the men became prominent in local affairs, some eventually making their mark in the wider colonial sphere as professionals, politicians and philanthropists as well as contributing significantly to Jewish community life in Sydney and beyond. Among prominent public figures of the first generation of the early Maitland Jewish community were Philip Joseph Cohen, Samuel and David Cohen, Joseph Marks, and Lewis Wolfe Levy.[23]

The strength and prosperity of the local Jewish community were reflected in the early establishment of its own burial ground, the erection of significant commercial and residential buildings including the still extant 'Cintra' residence and bottom storey of the David Cohen and Company warehouse, and, in 1879, the building of the Maitland synagogue. Somewhat ironically, the synagogue was built as the economic fortunes of Maitland were being reshaped following the opening of the Newcastle to Maitland railway in 1858, the completion of the Sydney to Newcastle rail link in 1889, and the rise of Newcastle as the new commercial and trade hub for the lower Hunter Valley.

A symptom of these changes was the relocation of the head office of David Cohen and Company from Maitland to Newcastle in the late 1880s, and the accompanying shift of the focus of the Jewish community to Newcastle. The Maitland synagogue ceased to function as a synagogue in 1898 and burials in the Maitland Jewish

Maitland Synagogue, built in 1879

Cemetery became fewer with the last of the burials occurring in 1934.[24] As well, many of the Maitland Jewish settlers and their descendants moved to Sydney and to other larger centres. The Marks family provides one example. Joseph Marks arrived in Maitland in the mid-1850s and stayed until the early 1880s, first working for David Cohen and Company and then establishing his own business. In the early 1880s he, along with his three surviving children,[25] relocated to Sydney where the children were educated and each became prominent in both Jewish and wider Sydney circles - Percy as a solicitor, founder and first president of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, a Shakespearean scholar, an active Zionist, and a collector of Judaica and of bookplates, paper currency, coins and medals; Ernest as a sportsman and Lord Mayor of Sydney, who shared many of his brother's interests and succeeded him as president of the Australian Jewish Historical Society; and Hilda as a scholar and benefactor.[26]

The rise and decline of the Maitland Jewish community – and of its cemetery - mirrored the rise and decline of Maitland as the key colonial centre of trade and commerce north of Sydney. The history of the Jewish community, however, also sheds light on the challenges of being Jewish in colonial Maitland.

Jewish traditions in a frontier town

The Jews who established the cemetery were practising religious Jews. They came from an Orthodox tradition shaped in England. They placed importance on observing the Sabbath and Jewish holy days, and followed religious traditions quite different from the Christian practices that dominated colonial Maitland and, indeed, colonial New South Wales. Among the Jewish traditions was a need early on to establish a burial ground consecrated specifically for Jews, and to observe specifically Jewish burial rites and customs. The location, layout and gravestones of the cemetery provide traces of these traditions.

The cemetery is located on a flood plain approximately three kilometres from the centre of Maitland. Today it rests among horse farms at the end of a narrow, unsealed dirt lane. In the mid-nineteenth century it would have been fairly isolated with few, if any neighbours: it was clearly beyond the edge of the town. Records suggest that P. J. Cohen had a lease on a portion of the land, and other records indicate that the land was acquired by members of the local Jewish community (Barnett Kasner, Henry Robert Reuben and Benjamin Nelson) 'upon trust for a Burial Place for the interment of deceased members of the Jewish Religion'.[27] It is unclear whether other sites were considered. However, the choice of the site, if choice it was, sat comfortably with the Jewish tradition that cemeteries should be located some distance from the nearest residence and distant from the centre of towns and cities.[28] The relatively early establishment of the cemetery also resonated with the tradition that the land acquired must offer a permanent resting place for the dead until the coming of the Messiah. This adherence to tradition was the first step to establishing links with a new locality and therefore possibly even more important than erecting a synagogue or other structure for religious observance.[29] Almost all the Jewish communities in Australia started with the consecration of a burial ground.[30]

The layout of the cemetery also indicates Jewish traditions. Priests (*kohanim*) are not allowed to visit burial places except in special circumstances because they may be 'defiled' by the dead. As people with the family name of Cohen are often the descendants of the Biblical priests, they are often buried in places that are easy to access so that relatives who may feel bound by tradition can still attend a funeral and not need to walk among the graves.[31] In the Maitland Cemetery, all but one of the Cohens are buried in the outside row. This may be chance, but it could also well reflect a commitment to Jewish tradition.

The form and ornamentation of the gravestones also sit comfortably with Jewish practices. Carved from local sandstone, some with marble faces, the gravestones have fairly simple shapes and limited ornamentation. This reflects the Jewish tradition of declaring in tangible form that, in death, all are equal and ostentation is out of place.[32]

Some of the ornamentation and symbols are also distinctively Jewish. On the gravestones of at least three of the Cohen males are hands held in the position used when pronouncing the priestly blessing and hence marking the grave as that of a descendant of the priests.[33] Each panel of the double gravestone of Myer and Caroline Illfield has a *Magen David* (Shield of David), the symbol most commonly associated with Judaism, developing from medieval times.[34]

The inscriptions similarly mark these as the graves of Jews. Most have Hebrew and English inscriptions. Many are now badly eroded: the lead has fallen out leaving pock marks from the holes that held the lead in place; the sandstone has been beaten and eaten by water, wind, sun, time; some gravestones are broken, some are face down, others have almost disappeared. Fortunately, photographs taken in the 1970s and later provide visual records of many of the inscriptions.[35]

The Hebrew phrases echo those in other Jewish cemeteries. At the top of gravestones are the Hebrew characters פ״נ meaning 'here lies' or 'here is buried'. The date is often written in Hebrew according to the Jewish calendar and marked by the symbol לפ״ק or ק.[36] The epitaph תנצב״ה 'May his/her soul be bound up in the bond of the living (in the bond of eternal life)' also appears. This epitaph is one of three commonly used on Jewish gravestones and conveys the view that death is a tragic but inevitable part of life and one needs to affirm and cherish life while also accepting death. It is through the living that the dead can be remembered, respected and honoured. It also affirms that, as Rabbi Joshua Segal explains, the only guarantee of a form of life after death is that 'we will be remembered by the living for those things we did in our lifetimes'.[37]

One tradition that has grown from this need to remember the dead is placing a small stone on a grave to indicate that the site has been visited and the deceased has been remembered.[38] Another tradition is the tearing of garments by close relatives before the funeral to symbolise their loss and that the deceased remains close to them.[39] And it is also partly within this tradition that the Hebrew expressions for cemetery include בית צלם 'house of eternity' and בית החיים 'house of life' and convey the message that the dead should have eternal rest and their resting place should be cared for and

respected.[40] A further tradition to affirm respect for the dead is that burial should occur as soon as possible after death and preferably within twenty-four hours. The importance of the tradition is reflected in Maitland gravestone inscriptions that record both the date of death and the date of burial. Most managed the burial within twenty-four hours, although this was clearly impossible for those who died some distance from Maitland as was the case for infant Ethel Cohen who died in Tamworth on 7 December 1872 and was buried on 9 December.

Another Jewish feature of the inscriptions is the inclusion of the given name of the father of the deceased, sometimes in the English inscription, more often in the Hebrew inscription. Hebrew names usually consist of the first name of the individual followed by the name of the father. Surnames are not part of Hebrew naming tradition. In Hebrew, the words בן and בת meaning 'son of' and 'daughter of' are used.[41] Hence, the Hebrew tells us that Michael Barnett was the son of Samuel, Daniel Frisch was the son of Jacob, Sarah Lipman was the daughter of Abraham, and Elizabeth Israel was the daughter of Eliezer. The tradition helps to navigate Jewish naming practices that see the same given name repeated across extended families: a first son is sometimes named after his paternal grandfather, a first daughter after her paternal grandmother, then maternal grandparents and other family members. And the same names are constantly used and re-used.[42] The name of the father can assist to identify where the deceased fits in the family relationships and, indeed, given that there is a limited number of family names, into which family.

The cemetery also offers evidence of the adaptation to non-Jewish practices that has been noticed in other Jewish cemeteries.[43] This was a burial ground serving a Jewish community whose members lived and worked in a colonial Australian town with different dominant religious groups, beliefs and practices. Some of the ornamentation on the gravestones, while remaining simple and unobtrusive, was also common in non-Jewish cemeteries. Among this ornamentation are the broken flower symbolising a life cut short, which is on the grave of Harriet Marks who died as an infant; and a hand holding a scroll, perhaps approximating to the scroll of life, which shapes the gravestones of 36 year old Elizabeth Hart and infant Celia Cohen. Some of the gravestones also have epitaphs that indicate a move away from the modesty and simplicity promoted within Jewish tradition and towards the more fulsome epitaphs so often found on Victorian gravestones.[44] On Elizabeth Marks' gravestone, for example, the English inscription includes the epitaph:

> Mourn not husband, friends, for heaven's bloom sheds its radiance over the dear wife's tomb. The spirit has but sought from earth to rise and find its home beyond the skies.

The forms of the gravestones also indicate the influences of the increasingly ornate style of monumental masonry that became familiar in nineteenth century Australian (and English) cemeteries as those with wealth and status sought to attest these worldly attributes through the monuments erected above their graves.[45] On some of the gravestones, the simple semicircular tops have cutaway or more ornate shoulders and there are gabled tops with extra shapes and details. Most ornate is the top of Morris Cohen's gravestone: above the hands of benediction indicating that this is the grave of a Cohen, the top edge of the gravestone is decorated with carved leaves and there is a pedestal supporting a carved floral arrangement, now partly broken.

These are still discreet monuments when compared to the excesses that can be found amongst the gravestones for other religious groups at the time. They were, in all likelihood, offered as possibilities by the local stonemason. A surviving 'samples' book from Thomas Browne Pty Ltd, the supplier of a number of the gravestones in the cemetery, shows the range of styles available.[46] It is possible that, in selecting forms, families were influenced by the examples around them and offered to them, and that the tradition of simplicity was adapted to include slightly more elaborate statements as a declaration of respect for the deceased. Perhaps status too became more important.

Another reminder that this Jewish community was established in a wider community largely unfamiliar with Judaism and its practices, are the errors in the Hebrew inscriptions: words are run together, there are extra accents on particular letters, the wrong Hebrew letters are sometimes used.[47] These are reminders that this was a small and isolated Jewish community. The local stonemasons – the two whose names appear on gravestones in the cemetery are Charles Cobby and Thomas Browne – were unfamiliar with Hebrew. They most likely carved the Hebrew inscriptions from stencils. They were creating patterns in characters that had no meaning for them and were perhaps not even familiar to many of the members of the local Jewish community. Indeed, Maitland-born George Judah Cohen, who became a managing partner in David Cohen and Company and served as President of the Great Synagogue for 15 years between 1883 and 1921, appears not to have had a good knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet. The Australian Jewish Historical Society possesses a *Haggadah* he owned, with English

transliteration for the Hebrew.[48] It is not surprising that mistakes crept in. They occurred in inscriptions made in a language familiar to the stonemasons, so how much more likely when the language was unknown.

The errors – along with the hints of adapting Jewish to local customs – are reminders that the cemetery and the community it served were in a relatively isolated frontier town. The numbers in the Jewish community remained small; until the building of the synagogue and the appointment of a minister, religious services and guidance were provided among the community members themselves or made available from Sydney – a day or more travel away; upholding *kosher*[49] dietary requirements was difficult; and observing the Sabbath and holy days by keeping business premises closed meant closing on days central to the commercial and trade life of the locality. The Jewish community had to adapt while also maintaining, as much as possible, those beliefs and practices that defined its members as belonging to the Jewish faith.

Families

> You shall not intermarry with them: do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. For you will turn your children away from Me to worship other gods... (Deuteronomy 7:1-3)

One key Jewish belief and practice is that a Jew should marry a Jew: intermarriage risks losing people from the Jewish faith – especially worrying in the case of females as Jewish descent is recognised only in the matrilineal line. Sustaining the religion is challenging when numbers are small and when members of the community work and live among people who practise different beliefs. Cousins marry cousins, business partners marry into each other's families, a close network of inter-related families emerges; some marry non-Jews. It was a pattern that was evident among middle class Jewish families in England at the time,[50] and became more evident in the even smaller and more isolated Jewish communities in colonial New South Wales. For Maitland's Jewish community, the pattern can be tracked through connecting families represented among those buried in the cemetery.

The earliest two gravestones in the cemetery are those marking the graves of infant cousins, Jane and Hannah Cohen. Their fathers were two of eight brothers who migrated to Australia, and belonged to the family connected to David Cohen and Company. Three of those brothers and a total of six of their children and one grandchild were buried in the cemetery. Marriages and family networks linked them

to others buried in the cemetery and to other family groups within the small local Jewish community.

Morris Cohen (who was buried in the cemetery and was one of the eight Cohen brothers) married Deborah Reuben, the daughter of early Maitland settler Henry Robert Reuben. Infant Julia Alpha Levy's grandfathers were one of the Cohen brothers (David) and his cousin, Lewis Wolfe Levy. George Judah Cohen (another Cohen brother who was buried in the cemetery and uncle of his better known namesake and doyen of Sydney Jewry) married Rose Solomon. Two of her sisters married men with connections to Maitland – Emma to Henry Robert Reuben, and Julia to Lewis Wolfe Levy.[51]

Marriage among second cousins happened in the next generation of Cohen and Levy descendants. Two sons and two daughters of Lewis Wolfe Levy married sons and daughters of David Cohen, and another three daughters married sons of Samuel Cohen.[52] In these marriages the context may have been cousins growing up in friendly intimacy, and an added incentive may have been the consolidation of family business interests in the expanding and thriving David Cohen and Company and its various offshoots.

Other inter-related family groups represented in the cemetery include the Benjamin and Israel families. Morris Benjamin, who was buried in the cemetery, was born in Tasmania. By the time of his marriage to Mary Ann Israel in the York Street Synagogue in Sydney in 1866, both he and his wife were described as coming from West Maitland. Mary Ann Israel's father, Isaac Israel, advertised as an auctioneer in Maitland in the 1850s and 1860s. Her mother, Elizabeth Israel, and brother, Charles Lewis Israel, were buried in the cemetery.[53]

The Friedman family offers another pattern. Joseph and Isabella Friedman were buried in the cemetery. Their eldest daughter, Abigail, married Rev. Solomon Levi who served as minister to the Maitland Jewish community from 1880 to 1898. Their infant daughter, Lydia, was buried in the cemetery as were two of Abigail's brothers – Henry Nathaniel and Nathaniel Jacob. Two other siblings – a sister (Hester/Esther) and a brother, Albert, married non-Jews. Albert converted to his wife's religion, Catholicism.[54] Whether he wanted to or not, this made Albert ineligible to receive synagogue honours, and it meant that, as the Jewish status of children depended on the religious status of their mother, his children were not considered Jewish.

Countries of birth

The most prominent members of the early Jewish community in Maitland were born in England and, in the tradition of Anglo-

Jewry, their Englishness – or their emerging Australianness – was as important as their Jewish heritage. A number of first, second and third generation settlers became active in local and colonial affairs and in public life generally. Their contributions are recorded in numerous histories and other testimonials, and connections to Maitland are marked by the burial of family members in the cemetery: the Cohens, Harts, Levis, Leviens, Marks, Reubens.[55]

However, this emphasis on an Anglo-Jewish heritage – and it is one made by many of the histories of the Jews in Australia – makes less visible the presence of immigrants born in places other than England and, indeed, shields the often non-British origins of the families of some of those members of the community who were born in England.

A focus on the countries of birth of those buried in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery offers a balance. Joseph Friedman was born in Poland, moved to England and then in about 1859 migrated to Australia. Daniel Frisch came from 'Szanto, Austrian Hungary', the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Joseph Goulston, whose two infant children Solomon and Rosina were buried in the cemetery, was born in Poland. Myer Illfield was born in Battenburg, Germany and Samuel Lewis in 'Russian Poland'. Like Joseph Friedman, both Myer Illfield and Samuel Lewis migrated to Australia after spending some time in England. Robert Lipman, naturalised in 1874, was born in Russia.[56]

Significantly, it also seems that the father of the English-born Cohen brothers, Barnett Cohen, was born in Germany and at some stage migrated to England, settling in Lambeth in London where the children who came to Australia were born.[57]

There were others among the local Jewish community whose birthplaces were in Eastern Europe and whose movements reflected the nineteenth century flight and migration patterns of Jews seeking to escape the increasing anti-Semitism that marked life in that area of eastern Europe described as the 'Pale of Settlement'.[58] Jacob Audet, for example, who worked as a photographer in Maitland in the mid-nineteenth century was born in 'Plock, Poland'; and Lewis Brodziak, who advertised as a jeweller in Maitland in the 1840s, was born in 'Prussia'.[59]

The presence of people from non-English-speaking backgrounds and, in particular, from the more passionate varieties of Judaism that were practised in Eastern Europe, adds complexity to the image of the lives led by members of the Maitland Jewish community. It is perhaps significant that it is those from clearly English backgrounds who were the ones to succeed professionally and in public life in the colony: the main barrier to their success was

their religion. By contrast, those community members from Eastern Europe presumably came with the baggage of at least accented English and more overtly 'foreign' appearances and habits. These would have been further barriers in the emerging colonial society that was fashioning itself on a British heritage. A hint of this can be seen in attempts by families to hide the other-than-English origins of parents. Hence, on Samuel Lewis' death, the local newspaper noted that he was 'a native of London' while the court house records and his naturalisation certificate state that he was born in Russia.[60]

Convict connections

Another layer of complexity is added by the convict origins and connections of some of those buried in the cemetery. These act as reminders that among the Jews who settled in the district were some who were forcibly brought to the colony and that Jewish community circles included people with convict pasts.

Henry Harris and Moses Levi who were buried in the cemetery were possibly ex-convicts. Henry Harris could be the convict of that name who was transported to New South Wales in 1838 for being 'a member of a group of pickpockets who surrounded and jostled a clergyman ... and stole a watch worth £30', and Moses Levi could be possibly the convict who was transported in 1817 and, at one stage, was described as 'one of the most notorious old rogues and fences in the colony'.[61]

More definite are the convict origins for relatives of people buried in the cemetery. John James Levien, the uncle of infants George and Myalla Levien who were buried in the cemetery, was transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1833. His parents, Solomon and Harriet Levien, and siblings followed him to Australia in the same year, settling initially in Maitland where his brother Alfred – the father of George and Myalla – remained for some time.[62] Solomon Reuben, the uncle of Morris Reuben who was buried in the cemetery, was transported in 1831 for his part in a gang 'who attempted to rob a drunken man'. He gained a conditional pardon in 1841 and in the mid-1840s appeared in an assault case in Maitland at the same time as his brother, Henry Robert – the father of Morris – was advertising as a manufacturer of 'ginger beer, lemonade and soda water'.[63] John and Joseph Jones, the brothers of Elizabeth Israel who was buried in the cemetery, arrived as convicts – John in 1836 and Joseph in 1839.[64]

There is also Samuel Solomon, the grandfather of infants Morris Reuben, Celia Levy and Leah Cohen who were buried in the cemetery. Samuel Solomon was transported in 1833 at the age of

fifty. He was described in the court records as 'dark, sallow complexion, black hair, dark chestnut eyes. A Jew. Whiskers joining under chin and turning grey. Lost one front tooth in upper jaw.' He could read and write.[65] His wife and children followed him to Australia. Once Solomon had received his conditional pardon in 1843, he became a successful publican and storekeeper in southern New South Wales and an active member of the Sydney Jewish community.[66] Through Jewish community networks, three of his daughters married men from Maitland and settled there for a while – it was their children who were buried in the cemetery.[67] The 'convict stain' was clearly less significant than the attractiveness of finding Jewish marriage partners in a numerically small community. As well, the links between Maitland and Sydney were strong. There were business and community connections. The men who married Samuel Solomon's daughters – Henry Robert Reuben, Lewis Wolfe Levy and George Judah Cohen - all spent time in Sydney, were active in the Sydney Jewish community, had businesses there and, while in Maitland, continued to use Sydney as a base for business and community life.

Colonial networks

The connections that saw members of the Maitland Jewish community marrying members of the Sydney Jewish community speak of the small and tightly knit network that stretched across the colony and, in some instances, back to England and Europe. Business, marriage, religion kept bringing people together and keeping them in contact.

The cemetery records this network. Until the early twentieth century, the Maitland Jewish Cemetery was the only consecrated Jewish cemetery to the north of Sydney.[68] As a result, those buried in the cemetery came not only from Maitland but also from Mudgee, Murrurundi, Scone, Tamworth and Wingen, and had connections to other places.

The Cohen family story indicates one pattern. In the 1830s two of the brothers established a wholesale business in Maitland. Other brothers, other family members and other members of the Jewish community at different times were attracted to Maitland, some working for the family business and some setting up their own enterprises. Some stayed in Maitland, others moved on and opened businesses elsewhere.

The story of the oldest of the brothers, Lewis Cohen, captures these movements and networks. Arriving in Sydney in the early 1830s, he advertised as a 'tailor and draper' and remained in that business until the 1840s depression forced him into insolvency. By

the time of his son Morris's death in 1859, the family had relocated to Mudgee.[79]

Infant Ethel Cohen was buried in the cemetery. Her father, Nathan Cohen (not a relative of the Cohens of the David Cohen and Company network, although his wife's sisters married into that family), was born in Port Macquarie in 1842 to Abraham and Sophia Cohen and was the grandson of convict-made-good Henry Cohen. Nathan Cohen first arrived in Tamworth at the age of sixteen to work for an uncle, William Cohen (whose son, Henry Samuel, was buried in the cemetery). Following his uncle's death, he managed the business for a while and then, in the early 1870s, established himself as an auctioneer and stock and station agent. He is recognised as playing an important role in building up business in Tamworth and for his contributions to a variety of public and community causes.[80]

Nathan Cohen's brother was Henry Emanuel Cohen who had started his working life as a clerk at David Cohen and Company in Maitland. After an unsuccessful venture in opening a store in Bathurst, he went to England where he studied law. He returned to Australia to practise as a barrister. From 1874 to 1880 and again from 1883 to 1885 he was the elected representative for West Maitland, serving as Minister for Justice from 1883 to 1885. Following his political career he returned to the judicial bench, becoming in 1895 a judge of the Supreme Court and in 1902 the first president of the Arbitration Commission.[81]

Henry Emanuel Cohen's visit to England in order to study, reflects another pattern, at least among the English-born Jews who created the core of the Maitland Jewish community. They kept alive their ties to England. They corresponded, they visited, they established trade and business networks, they returned permanently, they sent their children 'back home' for education. The networks that stretched across the colony and encompassed business, community and family links also stretched across the oceans.

Among the extended Cohen family, David Cohen, namesake of the family business, returned and settled permanently in England where he died. So too did Samuel Cohen's widow, Rachel Cohen (their infant daughter, Hannah, was buried in the cemetery). Samuel and Rachel Cohen's son, George Judah, was at school in England when his father died. He was called back to Australia to play his part in the family business. His second cousin, Rebecca Levy, who later became his wife, spent time at school in England in the early 1860s.[82] Descendants retain copies of her schoolbooks.

A number of David and Samuel Cohen's children also settled

permanently in England, some working for their second cousin, the successful department store entrepreneur David Lewis.[83] Their reclaiming England as home along with the relocation of the core of the Maitland Jewish cemetery to Newcastle and/or Sydney and along with the general trend in late nineteenth and early twentieth century settlement patterns for younger generations to seek education and employment in the metropolitan centres, saw the narrowing of the community networks and the decline of a community that had need for an active synagogue and an active cemetery.

Descendants and heritage

The cemetery speaks of past lives, and yet it also connects to the present. Its stories, its survival, its significance emerge at least in part from the people who visit, remember and are connected to it. There are descendants of those buried in the cemetery, local residents, members of the Jewish community in the locality and beyond, heritage professionals, local government officers: all these people work for the care and conservation of the cemetery and its stories. There are artists, photographers, writers, historians, visitors who seek to share these stories and their responses to the cemetery. We are hampered primarily by limited resources, time and the wearing away of the cemetery itself. Our task, however, should be – as Rabbi Apple so aptly observed – to explore and present this cemetery as 'a monument to dreams and deeds'. There are the dreams and deeds of those buried in the cemetery and the ways in which their stories provide starting points for the rich and complex history of the Jewish community of colonial Maitland and how, in turn, the dreams and deeds of that community reflect aspects of the history of Maitland. There are also the dreams and deeds of those who see the cemetery as a place of significance whose survival and documentation adds to the texture and tone of present day Maitland, reminding us of the layered nature of the locality's history and of a cemetery as one way to respect and explore that past.

ENDNOTES

The endnotes provide the sources of specific quotes; explanatory details for particular words and pieces of information; and references to comparative examples and explanations. For sources and details on individuals, businesses and sites mentioned in the text, consult the *Views of Maitland* online database at http://hfrc.une.edu.au/heritagefutures/maitland/

1.   This paper is based on the first section of Janis Wilton, *Maitland Jewish Cemetery: A Monument to Dreams and Deeds*, (Maitland, 2010). The author gratefully acknowledges the generous sharing of research and ideas by descendants of those buried in the cemetery, the many community and local historians who contributed, and the public and private collections that were made available.

2.   Quoted in Miriam Solomon, Maitland Cemetery Re-Consecrated, unpublished paper, undated, p.4. Australian Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) Archives Box 13.

3.   This was for Isaac Lipman. There is no gravestone. The burial, however, is noted in the Maitland Court House Records and transcribed by Maitland Family History Circle. The last recorded burial that has an extant gravestone is that for Henry Hart who died in 1931. For a list of those buried in the cemetery, the English and Hebrew inscriptions on their gravestones, and profiles on each of the people buried in the cemetery, see Wilton, *Maitland Jewish Cemetery.*

4.   In the *Maitland Mercury*, 27 November 1847 tenders were called for the building of a fence and 'a cottage' on the 'Jews' Burial Ground'.

5.   Unsigned carbon copy of a letter to SS Cohen, c/- David Cohen Ltd, Sydney, 13 April 1926, Gary Luke Collection.

6.   There are 42 separate gravestones, and 52 documented burials.

7.   Quoted in Details of the historic old Jewish burial ground at Ross Lane, Louth Park/Maitland, March 1979, typescript, AJHS Archives Box 13.

8.   M. Israel to the President, Sydney *Chevra Kadisha*, 2 February 1938, Gary Luke Collection.

9.   Letter from I. Morris, 1941. AJHS Archives Box 13.

10. D. J. Benjamin, 'Three country cemeteries of New South Wales', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal (AJHSJ)*, IV/IV, (1956), p. 186.

11. Benjamin, p. 187. This plan has become the plan of the cemetery.

12. Cemeteries Policy and Procedure, Maitland City Council Archives: File DA-4.12.1, SA10 , DR 1984-1998.

13. *Australian Jewish Times*, 2 February and 7 September 1978, and 26 July and 30 August 1979 for accounts of the working bee and the re-consecration; Maitland Family History Circle, *Maitland Jewish Cemetery* (CD-Rom), Maitland, 2001;and Australian Jewish Genealogical Society, Maitland Jewish Cemetery (digital database), Sydney, 2002.

14. Hanna Kay, *Undertow*, (Maitland, 2009), p.17.

15. *The Monitor*, 23 June 1826; and William Henry Breton, *Excursions in New South Wales, Western Australia and Van Diemen's Land, during the years 1830, 1831, 1832, and 1833*, London, 1833, p. 120. For other early descriptions of Maitland visit *Virtual Coquun-Hunter River Project*, University of Newcastle,
     http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/archives/chrp/index.html

16. For accounts of the early European history of the locality see Brian Walsh and Cameron Archer, *Maitland on the Hunter*, Second Edition, (Tocal, 2007). pp.4-5 and 16-31; Cynthia Hunter, *Out of the Closet*, (Maitland, 2006), pp.11-15; and Cynthia Hunter, *Horseshoe Bend*, (Maitland, 2001), especially p.6. For a contemporary account of the travel between Morpeth and Maitland see Peter Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales*, (London, 1827), Letter VII, pp. 142-146.

17. *Views of Maitland* database entries.
18. Being declared insolvent meant an inability to pay debts or cover expenses. This was different to bankruptcy. The latter 'involved an insolvent's assets being administered and distributed to creditors.' See Index to Bankruptcy and Insolvency Records, NSW State Records, http://www.records.nsw.gov.au
19. Walsh and Archer, pp. 34-35 provide a list of Maitland residents declared insolvent in 1843. See also reports in the *Maitland Mercury* (for example, 14 January 1843, 4 and 11 May 1844), and the insolvency files available from State Records NSW (SRNSW).
20 Insolvency file of Samuel Cohen, 1843-1844. SRNSW: NRS 13656, Item 00842.
21 Walsh and Archer p. 125. Walsh and Archer also provide the figures for East Maitland and Morpeth.
22 *Views of Maitland* database entries.
23 *Views of Maitland* database entries.
24. 41 of the 52 recorded burials in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery occurred between 1849 and 1900. The cemetery's function was increasingly replaced by the opening of the Jewish section of Newcastle's Sandgate Cemetery in July 1908.
25. His wife, Elizabeth, an infant daughter, Harriet, and possibly an unnamed infant are buried in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery.
26. Rabbi A Falk, 'Percy Joseph Marks', *AJHSJ*, I/6, (1941), pp.203-204; Yehuda Feher with Marianne Dacy, 'Percy Marks, a Jewish Renaissance man', *AJHSJ*, XVI/2, (2002), pp.191-226; Suzanne D. Rutland, 'Marks, Percy Joseph (1867-1941) and Ernest Samuel (1871 - 1947)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 10*, (Melbourne, 1986), pp 413-414; and Dinah Harvey, Family Group Sheet for Joseph Marks, June 2009.
27. M.Z. Forbes. 'A short history of the Jews of Maitland', *AJHSJ*, VII/7, (1979), p.430 and Maitland City Council Archives: DA – 4.12.1, SA10, Folio 66.
28. 'Cemetery' *JewishEncyclopedia*, http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com; and Nolan Menachemson, *Practical Guide to Jewish Cemeteries*, (New Jersey, 2007), p.2.
29. Joachim Jacobs, *Houses of Life*, (London, 2008), pp.11-12; and Suzanne Rutland, *The Jews in Australia*, (Cambridge, 2005), pp.14-15.
30. Suzanne Rutland, *The Jews in Australia*, pp.14-15.
31. Joshua Segal, *A Field Guide to Visiting a Jewish Cemetery*, (Nashua USA, 2005), p. 20; Leviticus 21: 1-4; Jacobs, *Houses of Life*, pp. 39, 69, 100, 120, 173 and 196-197 provide examples of different ways in which Jewish cemeteries in Europe accommodated the requirement that *kohanim* should not enter the cemetery. As Helen Bersten notes (pers.comm.), at Rookwood in Sydney, *kohanim* are often buried beside a concrete path so the relatives can visit by walking along the path and not standing on the earth of the cemetery.
32. Louis Jacobs, 'Death and burial' in *A Concise Companion to the Jewish Religion*, (Oxford Reference Online, 1999); B.B. Kadden and B. Kadden, 'The tombstone, the unveiling and visiting the grave', *MyJewishLearning.com*, (1997); Menachemson, *Practical Guide* p.2 also notes that the simple tombstones may have emerged in those eras when Jews attracted hostility and so they avoided any displays of

wealth, even on tombstones. He also cites Proverbs 22:2 – '[in death] the rich and the poor meet'. Segal, *A Field Guide*, p.8 cites Psalm 49 *et. al.* as the source of the belief.

33. Segal, *A Field Guide*, p. 51 refers to Numbers 6:24-26 for the priestly blessing. The graves of George Judah Cohen, Henry Samuel Cohen and Morris Cohen have the symbol.
34. 'Star of David', *Jewish Virtual Library*, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/star.html; Louis Jacobs 'Magen David' in *A Concise Companion to the Jewish Religion*, Oxford, 1999.
35. Terry Newman took many of these photographs. Some are available in Australian Jewish Historical Society Archives Box 13.
36. For more details on the Jewish calendar see Warren Blatt, *Reading Jewish Tombstones*, JewishGen, 2001, http://www.jewishgen.org/InforFiles/tombstones.html, and Segal, *Field Guide*, Chapter 7.
37. Segal, *A Field Guide*, p. 45
38. Jacobs, 'Death and burial' in *A Concise Companion to the Jewish Religion*.
39. Barry D Cytron, 'To honor the dead and comfort the mourners: traditions in Judaism' in Donald P Irish et. al., (eds) *Ethnic Variations in Dying, Death and Grief*, (Washington, 1993), p. 119.
40. 'Jewish Cemeteries', *Study Sphere*, http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/rz3a035/jew_cem.html; Forbes, 'A short history of the Jews of Maitland', p.432.
41. On common phrases in Hebrew inscriptions see Blatt, *Reading Jewish Tombstones*; and Segal, *A Field Guide*, Chapters 2 and 3.
42. Dan Rottenberg, *Finding Our Fathers*, (Baltimore, 1986), pp.48-49. In Ashkenazi tradition, children are named after deceased relatives only. In Sephardi tradition this is not so, therefore a Sephardi child may be given the same name as a living parent or grandparent.
43. See, for example, Roberta Halporn, 'American Jewish cemeteries: a mirror of history' in Richard E. Meyer (ed.), *Ethnicity and the American Cemetery*, (Bowling Green, 1993), pp.131-155.
44. Lionel Gilbert, *The Last Word*, Armidale, 2005 provides many examples. 'Tombstones', *Jewish Encyclopedia* provides examples of Jewish tombstones with fairly elaborate epitaphs.
45. For examples of Victorian tombstones see Lionel Gilbert, *A Grave Look at History*, Sydney, 1980. On Jewish tombstone design absorbing the practices evident in their host communities see Halporn, 'American Jewish cemeteries', p. 141 and Joseph Jacobs and Isaac Broyde, 'Tombstones', *JewishEncyclopedia.com*.
46. Gravestone Sample Book, Records of Thomas Browne, Box 8. Mitchell Library: MLMSS 4284.
47. Similar mistakes in Hebrew inscriptions are noted by Halporn, 'American Jewish cemeteries', p.136 and Segal, *A Field Guide*, pp.151-161.
48. Suzanne Rutland, personal communication, March 2010. The *Haggadah* is stored in AJHS Archives Box 197.
49. *kosher* : food that fulfils Orthodox Jewish dietary laws. The laws, for example, forbid the eating of pigs and shellfish, have special rules for the slaughter of meat, and require the separation of meat and milk.

50. See Adam Kuper, *Incest & Influence: The Private Life of Bourgeois England,* (Cambridge Mass.), 2009.
51. Dinah Harvey, Levy Family created in Family Tree Maker Reports, June 2009; Dinah Harvey, Family Group Sheet for Rosetta Solomon, June 2009; and Lionel Fredman, 'David Cohen & Co – the family and the firm', *AJHSJ,* IX/8, 1985, p. 597.
52. Harvey, Levy Family, pp.21-33.
53. *Views of Maitland* database entries.
54. Helen Bersten, 'Jews in rural New South Wales', *AJHSJ,* XIII/4, 1997, p. 622; and Sharon Burke, Friedman's store, Wingen, undated, AJHS Archives, VF 1270.
55. *Views of Maitland* database entries.
56. *Views of Maitland* database entries.
57. Dinah Harvey, Cohen family history research.
58. The 'Pale of Settlement' refers to that part of the Russian Empire in which Jewish residence was allowed. Poverty and anti-Semitism were constant features. For a map and brief explanation see Alden Oreck, 'The pale of settlement', *Jewish Virtual Library,* http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/pale.html
59. Maurice Lewis, Family history research; and Certificate of naturalization of Lewis Brodziak , 31 January 1853, SRNSW: NRS 1039
60. *Maitland Mercury,* 29 May 1903; Maitland Family History Circle, Court House Records transcripts; and Certificate of naturalization of Samuel Lewis, 10 October 1902, SRNSW: NRS 1039.
61. *Views of Maitland* database entries.
62. *Views of Maitland* database entries.
63. *Views of Maitland* database entries.
64. Terry Newman, email, 13 March 2010.
65. Quoted in Levi, *These are The Names,* (Melbourne, 2006), p.764.
66. Levi, *These are The Names,* pp.764-765.
67. Dinah Harvey, Family group sheets for Rosetta Solomon *et.al.*
68. There were only two consecrated Jewish cemeteries in regional NSW in the nineteenth century: the one in Maitland and one in Goulburn.
69. 'Lewis Cohen', *Views of Maitland – People.*
70. 'George Judah Cohen', *Views of Maitland – People.*
71. 'Abraham Cohen', *Views of Maitland - People.*
72. A.M. Cohen, 'The Jews of Tamworth - supplemental notes', *AJHSJ,* III/VII, (1952), pp.350-360; Harvey, Levy Family; *Maitland Mercury,* 16 June 1849, 20 June 1849, 6 November 1850, 26 November 1850, 26 November 1851, 4 February 1852, 13 March 1852, 26 May 1852, 11 September 1852, 8 March 1853, 15 March 1854.
73. 'Lewis Wolfe Levy', *Views of Maitland – People.*
74. *Stock and Station Journal,* 13 June 1919. AJHS Archives, Box AB182.
75. *Maitland Mercury,* 7 July 1881.
76. Vegetable Creek was the first name given to Emmaville, north-west of Glen Innes. It was a centre of the tin mining boom of the late nineteenth century.
77. *Maitland Mercury,* 31 July 1883.
78. *Sydney Gazette,* 19 July 1834; NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages: Marriage certificate V183822 135/1838
79. *Maitland Mercury,* 9 December 1846, 24 November 1847, 28 March

1857; Maitland City Council records.
80   Rabbi Dr I. Porush, 'The Jews of Tamworth', *AJHSJ*, III/4, (1950), pp. 197-200.
81. George F. J. Bergman, 'Cohen, Henry Emanuel (1840 - 1912)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, *Volume 3*, Melbourne, 1969, pp 437-438.
82. *Views of Maitland* database entries
83. Dinah Harvey, Family history research.