TOMBSTONES vary in shape and size as the article on page 10 describes. The stone on the left is that of Rufus Isaacs, Marquis of Reading, which has been so thoroughly cleaned that the inscription is barely visible.

The pillar shown on the right is a fine example of a simple granite pillar clearly recording all the names of members of the Walford family buried beneath.

Genealogists should try to ensure that their own stone is inscribed to last for several hundred years! Granite is the most expensive and best; cheaper sandstone weathers badly.
This year’s one-day Annual Conference of the JGSGB at the end of October had a slightly military flavour. Geoffrey Green lectured on “Jewish Genealogy in the Royal Navy from the Battle of Trafalgar” and Martin Sugarman, Assistant Archivist at the AJEX Museum, covered “Genealogical research in the new AJEX Museum”. Both speakers were most enthusiastic about their subjects. Land and sea battles, which for most of us are just lists in history books, instantly sprang to life when the exploits of named Jewish individuals were highlighted.

The lecturers mentioned several useful sources which many of us had previously been unaware of. These include war diaries of regiments, newspapers of the time, especially the Jewish Chronicle and Jewish World, institutions such as the Admiralty, the Ministry of Defence, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Imperial War Museum. Some will release details of men only to close relatives. Several regular publications deal with military and naval history—the list seems endless. Military cemeteries, particularly the Ravenna War Cemetery in Italy, contain those who fell in battle, the Jewish graves easily recognizable by their Stars of David.

The Jewish communities of Portsmouth, Plymouth, Sheerness and Chatham provided sailors for the Royal Navy. Both Portsmouth and Plymouth have excellent naval and local history collections in their reference libraries and local records offices. Documents about the Chatham Jewish community are held in Rochester, in Kent. The Royal Naval Museums in Chatham and Portsmouth Dockyards also hold valuable records while Southsea houses the Royal Marines Museum, library and archives. Martin Sugarman urged members to buy up old war medals if we ever see them at car boot sales and he will reimburse us if they are suitable for the AJEX Museum. This has recently moved to larger premises in Hendon, north-west London and is now at AJEX House, Shield House, Harmony Way, off Victoria Road, London NW4 2BZ, tel. 020-8802 7610, and you should phone before setting off. The museum is not open on Saturdays. The text of Geoffrey Green’s talk on the Royal Navy will appear in the next issue of Shemot.

If your family had no fighting men in the 18th or 19th centuries, it is likely to have had some in the two world wars. One family tree in my possession, probably drawn up in the 1920s, underlines three times the names of those who fought in World War I, four times if they won a medal and five times if they died—showing how world events impact on individuals.

JUDITH SAMSON
As hostility between Britain and France escalated towards the close of 1792, the British government became increasingly fearful that French spies and saboteurs might try to enter the kingdom.

The Aliens Act was intended to prevent this and it received Royal Assent on 8 January 1793, only weeks before the actual declaration of war. The Act was later reinforced by a number of other measures but its terms were stringent. Any alien who had arrived in Britain since 1 January 1792 had to apply for a passport if he or she wished to move on to another town.

From 10 January 1793, captains of ships entering British ports had to provide lists of aliens on board their vessels, and householders could also be asked to give details of foreigners lodging with them. On arrival, foreign travellers were obliged to make a declaration to local customs officers stating their name, occupation, nationality and main place of residence during the previous six months. They must give up any arms they carried and wait at the port of entry until a document was issued to allow them to settle or proceed elsewhere. Passports were also required for any aliens or British subjects who wished to travel out of the country. The Home Secretary was granted powers to deport undesirable aliens and, if necessary, to have them imprisoned pending departure.

The Act was administered by magistrates at the various ports of entry in conjunction with the Alien Office which was set up as a subsidiary department of the Home Office. Surviving material relating to aliens in Hull from 1793-1815 includes a few certificates of entry giving personal descriptions and intended destinations. There is also a substantial group of declarations made to customs officers on arrival, and a number of letters from the Alien Office to mayors of Hull enclosing documents to be passed on or authorizing local magistrates to issue them. A few licences giving permission to reside in specific places have been preserved, and there are orders and warrants relating to the deportation of a group of Jewish men in 1798.

Some of these papers have useful additional notes on the back noting the religion and other details of the individuals concerned. There are also letters relating to several Jews waiting for a passport to travel from Hull to Hamburg for reasons which are not stated. The aliens listed in these records and shown in the table overleaf are those specifically described as Jews as well as others whose names could reasonably suggest Jewish origin.

The travellers had come to Hull from countries right across Europe—Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Prussia, Poland and provinces which are now part of Latvia. As far as is known, few of them settled in Hull and those whose destinations are recorded moved on to other large towns in the north of England or to London.

The author is a retired librarian who has written a thesis on Hull goldsmiths and has recently completed a book on shops and shopkeeping in Georgian Hull.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Religion if given</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Main residence within past six months</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Aliens presumed to be Jewish on the evidence of their names. † now Liepaja in Latvia †† now part of Latvia

**TYPE OF DOCUMENT**

1. Order to leave the country, reason not stated.
2. Warrant to have him imprisoned pending departure.
3. Declaration on arrival at Hull.
4. Letter authorising the issue of a licence to proceed to the Alien Office in London.
5. Letter enclosing licence to reside in Manchester on condition he did not travel elsewhere in the country.
6. Licence without time limit to proceed from Hull to London and reside there.
7. Licence without time limit to reside in Hull and its neighbourhood.
8. Declaration on arrival at Hull with added notes on back: from Stettin in ship Ceres, height 5 ft 6 in, hair: dark, eyes: dark, age: 45, going to London, known to Mr Ribbets, Gun Street, London.
10. Letter enclosing licence for this man and his family to reside at Hull.
11. Letter authorising issue of a passport for this man and family (lately arrived) to proceed from Hull to the Alien Office in London.
12. Letter enclosing anonymous statement sent to the Alien Office about this man, otherwise unknown to them.
13. Certificate of entry noting that he came on the ship Helena, height 5 ft 6 in, hair: dark, complexion: dark, eyes: blue, age: 28, going to Sheffield, known to Mr Lyon of Hull.

**REFERENCES**

1. Ref. BRE/7. Hull City Archives, 79 Lowgate, Kingston upon Hull, HU1 1HN. Tel: 01482 615102. Website: www.hullcc.gov.uk/archives/index.php. E-mail: city.archives@hullcc.gov.uk.
2. 33 Geo. III, c.4. I Finestein, *The Jews in Hull between 1766 and 1880*, Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England, 35 (1996-1998), pp 33-34. See also p 41; A man known as Sampson Alexander (Shimshon Ben Zender) was living in Hull by 1791 when recorded as a sealing-wax and penmaker in Dagger Lane, and he died at Hull in 1824 aged 79. It is not known if he was the man of this name threatened with deportation from Hull in 1798.

All names in the table are as in the original documents. I am grateful to my uncle, H H Israel Finestein, Q.C., for his advice on compiling this material. Thanks are also due to Martin Taylor, City Archivist at the Hull City Archives, for his help in identifying various towns and countries.

Credits: Hull Market Place, from Hull Local Studies Library. Documents from Hull City Archives.
**TRANSCRIPTION OF LETTER**

Alien Office, 21 May 1800

Sir

Proper application having been made to the Duke of Portland in favor of the undernamed persons lately arrived at your Port I am directed by His Grace to desire that they may be furnished with the necessary permission to proceed from Hull to this Office.

Moses Levy, Pencutter
Betsey Levy, his wife
Rachel Levy
Phoebe Levy, their children

Subjects of H Prussian Majesty

I have the honor to be Sir
your most obedient
humble servant

C W Flint

The Worshipful
The Mayor
Hull

Note the original spelling!

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Sarah Lyon—the Leeds connection

by Murray Freedman

UDY Wolkovitch’s splendid article in the last issue of *Shemot*, which dealt with centenarian Sarah Lyon and her far-flung Ansell descendants, encouraged me to write about the Leeds connection. I also have a personal interest in an Australian branch of the Ansell family in that the wife of Clive Budlender, Ann, is a good friend to my elderly sister in Melbourne. Clive is a descendant of the marriage in Leeds of Elizabeth Ansell to Solomon Bodlander in 1874.

The first Leeds synagogue was opened in 1846. It was originally a house in Back Rockingham Street, now the site of the Merrion Centre, and had the Hebrew name of Adass Yeshurun. In 1996 a Leeds Civic Trust plaque was placed there to celebrate its 150th anniversary. That synagogue was replaced in 1860 by a purpose-built synagogue in nearby Belgrave Street on a site (also marked by a Leeds Civic Trust plaque) that was to be used for Jewish worship for the following 123 years.

The 1837 Registration Act required the appointment of a marriage secretary for each synagogue wishing to perform marriage ceremonies. From 1851 to 1862, the marriage secretary, and later president of the congregation, was Myer Ansell (1809-1875), born in London, who had come to Leeds in the late 1840s. His name appears as marriage secretary on the register for 20 marriages over that period, though he is first mentioned as a witness in an 1850 marriage.

One of those 20 marriages was that of his own daughter, Rachel, to Leon Gross in 1855. Myer, a son of Asher, whose Ansell family I have traced back to Holland in the 17th century, practised as a chiropodist in partnership with Solomon Sloman (previous surname Israel) in Belgrave Street.

Performing the function of marriage secretary in Myer’s family was not restricted to him as his eldest brother Moses may also have acted in this role when he was secretary of London’s Great Synagogue.

Myer Ansell and his wife Jessie had a son, David, named after his maternal grandfather, who became a watchmaker. He was their eldest son, the other children being Rachel, Lewis, Elizabeth and Hannah. David worked in a shop in New Market Street and it was there that he met his future wife Amelia. She had come to live in Leeds with her family fairly recently and had taken a watch into David’s shop for repair. He was obviously immediately smitten by her and her golden curls—love at first sight—for every time she came to collect her watch it was, strangely, not yet ready. Amelia Booth, for that was her full name, came from a family of printers in Selby.

The 1871 census the couple had three children and the family lived in Philip Street, off Wellington Street, where David had a shop. Unfortunately, they lost two of those three children, and possibly another two, a not unusual occurrence in those days.

Further tragedy was to strike the family when David himself died in 1878, aged just 36, leaving Amelia a young widow aged 32, with three surviving children, Asher, Benjamin and Rachel. After her husband’s death Amelia decided to give up Judaism and revert to Christianity.

Unsurprisingly, there were bitter and passionate arguments with her in-laws about her decision, particularly about the upbringing of the children. It appears that, somehow, the eldest child, Asher, was sent to London,
possibly to Ansell relatives (although in the 1881 census he is listed aged 13 in an orphan school) and apparently remained Jewish, eventually emigrating to America. However, Amelia took the two younger children with her, though she remained in Leeds rather than going back to Selby and they were brought up as Christians. Amelia Ansell never remarried; she died in 1914 and is buried in what is known as a “guinea” grave in Beckett Street Municipal Cemetery.

A few years ago I was contacted by Judy Wolkovitch in California, who was compiling a family tree for her prospective mechutan (in-law) to present to him at his retirement party. It turned out, by a strange coincidence, that his name was George Ansell, a grandson of Asher who had emigrated to America. Asher had also assumed the name of George in America where he became a painter by trade. I was told he had some connection to the American labour movement and he and his wife had eight children.

Eleven generations

Incidentally, the Ansell family tree, which I was kindly sent by Judy, by that time comprised some 1,270 people with at least 486 marriages, covering 11 generations! As Judy describes in her article, the matriarch founder of the family was a lady called Sarah Lyon who was born in 1703 in Amsterdam and died at the remarkable age of 105 in 1808 at Ipswich. Myer Ansell of Leeds was a great-grandson.

Another coincidence occurred when I was asked by a lady living in Whitkirk, Leeds, if I could investigate the history of her Jewish forebears in the city. I discovered that Rachel Ansell, the daughter of David and Amelia, was her grandmother in the female line—Rachel’s daughter, Ethel, being her late mother.

Margaret Ward, for that is her name, is descended from generations of Christians. I see Margaret, who is a widow with two children, occasionally in Leeds Reference Library, for she is always doing research on her antecedents.

Unlike some other members of her family, she is extremely interested in her Jewish forebears, and I was able to get her invited to the ceremony in the Merrion Centre in December 1996 when the plaque was unveiled, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the synagogue in which her great-great-grandfather Myer Ansell served as president and marriage secretary. She was thrilled by the occasion.

Mystery solved?

Margaret is a committed and practising Christian. Yet, paradoxically, because she is descended in the female line from Amelia, who was Jewish by conversion even if she remained so for only a few years, on the principle that once a Jew always a Jew she, and her children, are Jewish according to halacha (Jewish law).

Judy, in her article, mentions a mystery in the background of the original George Ansell, involving a scandal that occurred in the 1880s, the details of which had never been ascertained. Perhaps here we have an explanation.

Interestingly, there is no gravestone for David Ansell, although there are details of his burial in the register of Gildersome Cemetery, Leeds. In that same cemetery are the graves and stones of his father, Myer, who died some three years before him, and his mother, Jessie, who lived for another nine years until 1887.

REFERENCE

1. There are at least two known descendants of the latter living in Leeds today.
Jewish friendly societies

by Raymond Kalman

In the March 2005 issue of Shemot, George Rigal wrote an article referring to friendly societies, institutions which are rarely mentioned in any detail and usually confined to a footnote. When anyone bothers to mention them they are usually incorrect.

Unfortunately Mr Rigal described friendly societies as charities, which they were certainly not and compounded the error by writing . . . “Most genealogists sooner or later hit a problem when they discover that the generation they are tracing . . . has disappeared among the ‘nameless poor’. He went on, “From the beginning of the Resettlement in Cromwell’s time, Jewish charities were set up to cope with the problems of the Jewish poor. Records of some of these charities have survived and provide considerable information, not only of the Jewish poor, but also about donors and officers of the charity.”

The friendly societies developed to cater for the needs of a new social group of relatively well-paid skilled workers comprising former farmers and agricultural labourers created by the Industrial Revolution. Together with small shopkeepers and self-employed artisans the societies grew and expanded, particularly in Victorian times, the heyday of British manufacturing industries.

Charity, the care of the poor, the aged, widows and orphans and the chanting of psalms, are traditional obligations and have always been part of Jewish religious life. The friendly societies, however, were very different. They were non-political mutual societies: funded and governed by their members. They were not charities and did not accept or canvas funds. At a time when there were no state benefits or social insurance, the societies provided members with financial assistance when illness or injury prevented them from working, modest retirement pensions, funeral expenses for members and their spouses, including a headstone. Some societies had the additional benefits of free medical, hospital, convalescent, optical and pharmaceutical provision.

Not only were they not charities, they were not burial societies either. The latter restricted their benefits to burial and funeral expenses for modest membership weekly fees of one or one half-penny (1d or ½d). Friendly society fees in Victorian and Edwardian times were far higher at between four and seven shillings (20-35p) per week.

These were often even more with the addition of “voluntary” levies for the regular social event which members were expected to attend, for the regalia worn by committee members and honorary officers.

The only people who could become members of friendly societies were those who could afford these fees, over and above the usual family budget for food, accommodation, clothes and heating, and pay them regularly so as to maintain the funds which had to be
The inclusion of the word “friendly” in their title and mention of regalia are distinctive and important, for their regular meetings were modelled on freemasonry complete with ritual, regalia and grandiose titles finishing with relaxing socialising. Ordinarily, societies also held social events annually to which members’ wives were invited. The cost restricted membership to those who could afford to belong. The poor could not afford the cost of the benefits and the well-to-do did not need them.

These socio-economic restrictions are interesting and important for by 1901 no less than an estimated 30-35 per cent of the heads of London Jewish households could afford to belong to one of the many individual societies or orders (societies with branches).

In the 30 years that I have researched the friendly societies I have only found one which excluded Jews: this was a women’s society formed in Georgian times with an address in Drury Lane. In the 18th and early 19th centuries Jews usually belonged to a “general” society although there were societies established by and for Jewish membership from the 18th century.

Jewish societies were distinguished by providing specifically Jewish benefits such as for shivah (the week of confined mourning) and ensuring a minyan (the presence of at least 10 men) both at the funeral and during the week of mourning.

In the March issue of Shemot, the illustration on the first page of the article from the 1874 Jewish Directory shows three “Jewish” courts (branches) of the non-Jewish Ancient Order of Foresters. They were formed to attract members who wished to be with fellow Jews, probably Yiddish-speaking and providing the specific benefits.

Possible untapped sources of charity records, applications for pensions and lists of pensioners have no relevance to friendly society records. Unfortunately it is rare to find old society records, membership lists or minute books, although I do have a few in my collection of Anglo-Jewish Friendly Society memorabilia.

The author is a member of JHSE and of the Friendly Societies’ Research Group. He is also a Freeman and Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Scriveners.
Gravestones yield key facts

by Louise Messik

During the past two years I have been fortunate to have been entrusted with the original birth, marriage and death records of the West London Synagogue of British Jews. This was the first congregation which agreed to participate fully with JGSGB in opening up its records. Latterly I have become involved with the synagogue in the enormous project of replotting its cemetery at Hoop Lane in Golders Green, in north-west London.

Currently, it is virtually impossible to locate a grave from records unless you are sure of its actual physical location. It is a labour of love as each plot has to be located and then a secondary (new) numbering system will be drawn up with cross-reference to the old one.

West London Synagogue has been lucky as neither the Hoop Lane Cemetery nor the Balls Pond Road Cemetery in Islington has suffered from serious vandalism although some of the graves have had lead and brass objects stolen. The stones which have fallen have done so through the passage of time and the elements.

Fascinated by cemeteries

It was at Hoop Lane that my fascination with cemeteries and the information that each tombstone contains began. My mind conjures up images of lives gone and runs riot when I see an old double grave, usually of a man, which has his particulars inscribed at the top, with room below for those of his spouse on her death. Yet no further name is recorded. Did she remarry and does she now lie with her second husband? When she died, was she buried abroad?

Many of the old stones are intricately carved and are quite beautiful, withstanding well the test of time. Others are ostentatious and in some cases extremely large and ugly, sitting uncomfortably in their surroundings. The photograph (below left) shows an entire family buried together in a large plot. Their memorials are in the shape of books with their names inscribed on an open page in their “library”.

There are tall obelisks, shortened columns (indicative of a life cut short), plain graves and fussy ones. Epitaphs are written in Persian, Hebrew and German and many other languages: a veritable eclectic mix. There are sad graves of tiny children and one triple grave of three children who died within two days of each other.

We are conscious of the fact that graves become weathered and suffer the ravages of time. It is additionally sad that families leave them neglected, thus depriving us and those to come of the treasures of our history. However, some graves can be over-restored as is the case of Rufus Isaacs, Marquis of Reading whose grave has been in Hoop Lane since he died in 1936. It has the appearance of being made of limestone which has now been cleaned so diligently that the inscription is barely visible.

The Balls Pond Road Cemetery in Islington is the oldest Reform Synagogue cemetery and the first burial took place there in 1843. It is no longer a working cemetery and is housed behind locked gates.

By agreement with Islington Council it is preserved as a conservation area for small wildlife. Recently the council, which had paid little interest over the past few years, has once again fulfilled its obligations and is maintaining it in an acceptable way. It is anticipated that the cemetery will have an open day twice a year.

The life of Edward Joseph

For genealogists a cemetery can be a treasure trove of information. Many of the old stones contain addresses and from this starting point you can begin to work backwards.
and forwards in time particularly if the interred is part of a known community.

Take Edward Joseph as an example. I saw that at the time of his death in March 1893 he was living at 25 Dover Street, Piccadilly, London. I referred to West London Synagogue’s Register of Marriages and found that as an 18-year-old bachelor and “Importer of Works of Art” he married Elizabeth Jonas on 3 December 1873. His address was given as 158 New Bond Street and the name of his father was Abraham (deceased). The bride, who was 19, lived at 135 Maida Vale and her father, David, was a merchant. I then turned to the Register of Births and discovered one child, Marie, born on 27 October 1874, with the home address given as 24 Sussex Place.

Back to the burial records where I found the grave of a stillborn child dated 10 November 1880 when the couple where still living in Sussex Place. Elizabeth died two days later on 12 November, presumably from complications after the birth. Edward was therefore left with his six-year-old daughter to look after. I was intrigued to piece together the jigsaw puzzle of his life.

Another example is David Falcke of Gloucester Place, London, and of Sutherland House, Yarmouth, Norfolk. He died, aged 51, in Boulogne on 1 September 1866 and was buried in Balls Pond Road on 8 September. He had married Emily Isacs on 8 September 1846. They had four children, Blanche (30 July 1847-17 October 1895) who died unmarried (her grave is left, below); Jacob Herbert Sidney (18 January 1848-15 April 1849); Maria Theresa (b. 15 March 1851) and Douglas Isaac (b. 3 September 1855). Each entry carries an address in the Register of Births.

The grave to the right of the group is of his widow, Emily, who appears to have remarried. Unfortunately the name and surname of her second deceased husband is not totally visible but the name Emily is visible and it says: “Widow of David Falcke and of John Nathaniel Whitmore”. There is an Emily Whitmore noted in the grave next to David in the burial registers so I would assume that this is correct.

Two further examples of stones with addresses are Sir (John) Arthur Levy, Kt. of 38 Hertford Street, Mayfair, and on the same grave his brother, Alexander Michael Levy of The Mount, Cookham Dean. The other photograph is that of Louise, daughter of the late Montague and Rachel Lazarus, of 536 Oxford Street, W.

Perhaps this article may whet your appetite to do some more research and will prove to you what a major source of information such places can be. Wandering round cemeteries is not morbid as once I thought. Instead I find it intensely peaceful and incredibly interesting. I have learned so much and no doubt will continue to learn and become more excited with what I discover on each visit.

The author is on the Council of JGSGB and is a member of West London Synagogue where she sits on the Cemetery Committee.

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2. Marriages are searchable on www.jewishgen.org/databases/UK/. The original books are kept at the Hartley Library, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton SO17 1BJ. Tel: 023-8059 2180, Fax: 023-8059 2989, e-mail: libenqs@soton.ac.uk.
3. Ditto births, searchable on www.jgsbg.org.uk/jgsbgmembers. The original books are also kept at the Hartley Library.
4. The burial records are searchable on line at http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/UK/.
The Slapoffski families of Oxford and Australia by Harold Pollins and Keira Quinn Lockyer

In his book *The Jews of Oxford* (1992), David Lewis spoke of the arrival in the 1870s of “the Slapoffski family who were ‘professors of music’ and kept music warehouses” (p. 99). He identified it as the family of “M. E. Slapoffski” and even suggested that the small Jewish community in Oxford may have used a room above his music warehouse in St Aldate’s for a synagogue (p. 21).

This was at a time when there is no record of the precise location of the peripatetic synagogue. Marcus Eleazer Ert Slapoffski—the one he refers to—was variously described, in directories, the census, and in the birth certificates of his children, as a music seller, entertainer or musical conductor, but mostly as a musician. However, he was designated “professor of music” at least twice: in the birth certificate of his first child, Rachel, in 1875 and also in the 1901 census, when he was living in Northampton.

David Lewis might well have used the phrase “Slapoffski families” as there were, in fact, two households in Oxford with that name, and both were in the music business. The head of the other family, Adolph Slapoffski, was described in his 1857 marriage certificate as a musician, but in the certificate of his second (1863) marriage as a professor of music; in the 1871 census he was a musician again but he was normally given the description of “professor of music” thereafter. Strangely, in several Oxford directories the occupier of his business address is shown as George Slapoffski, although there is no trace of such a person. Undoubtedly this was a misprint which was then thoughtlessly repeated.

The first question to be resolved is: were the two families related in some way? The answer is quite clear. They were not. Adolph was born in Goldingen, Courland, i.e. Latvia, and Marcus was born in Holland. How then did they come to have the same surname? The sole source for an explanation is the evidence of Marcus’s grandson, Marcus Slapp (1915-2005), originally Slapoffski but changed to Slapp by deed poll in 1937. He stated that his grandfather’s surname was originally Ert, and his wife, Kaatje, was apparently his niece and had the same surname. The birth certificates of her children confirm that Ert was her maiden name.

When she was orphaned she had become Marcus’s ward and then his wife. In his application for naturalisation of September 1874, Marcus said he was unmarried and it is noteworthy that in that application his name was given as Marcus Eleazer Ert Slapofski. This would appear to confirm that he sported the name Ert before his marriage. It was not a name taken over from his wife. There is a complication. His first child was born on 20 January 1875, five months later and the mother was given as his wife Kaatje Slapofski formerly Ert. We have been unable to find a reference to his marriage in either England or Holland.

Marcus Eleazer Ert was born sometime in the 1820s: various sources give different birth dates from 1821 to 1829. According to Marcus Slapp, his grandfather was born in Holland in 1821 and aged 17, left to study music in England, turning up in Oxford in 1875, but as noted below he was recorded earlier there. He continued: “[In Oxford Marcus] met Adolph Slapofski believed to be a non-Jew and quite possibly from Hungary, with whom grandfather formed a professional partnership as the ‘Slapofski Brothers’. At that time he added Slapofski to his own surname”.

In his naturalisation application of 1874 Marcus stated he had lived in the United Kingdom for 24 years, i.e. from 1850, an arrival somewhat later than in his grandson’s statement. As noted above, Adolph was not born in Hungary and below we show that he was in fact a Jew. More important is the fact that they had met before their residence in Oxford. While there is no other evidence of the existence of the Slapofski Brothers, there is a reference to Herr A Slapofski (“Hungarian Violinist”) and Herr M Slapofski (“Hungarian Vocalist and Guitarist”) giving a “Hungarian Brothers Concert” in the public hall in Godalming, Surrey, on 30 December 1865.

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**Family tree of Marcus Eleazer Ert Slapoffski**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marcus Eleazer Ert Slapoffski c 1825-1908</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m Kaatje Ert c 1854-1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Fyla 1875-1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleazer Marcus 1876-?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fyla m Judah Gertler 1877-?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham Lion 1879-1879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph m Sophie Glassman 1881-1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myla 1884-1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myla 1884-1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus Slapoffski m Minnie Schama (Slapp) 1915-2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen 1952-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara 1955-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clearly these were Adolph and Marcus, and they were certainly associated at least a decade before the date given by Marcus Slapp. His knowledge of their relationship, when he wrote in the 1990s, was a little garbled. Being a Hungarian brother might perhaps explain why Marcus’s country of birth in the 1881 census was written down wrongly by the enumerator as Hungary, and why Marcus Slapp thought that Adolph came from that country.

Both Slapoffskis were in Oxford in the 1860s. In 1866 Adolph was recorded in the Oxford Directory, being the first reference to him in Oxford. In his 1874 application for naturalisation Marcus Eleazer Ert stated that he had lived in Oxford for 10 years, i.e. from about 1864. His reference from the Mayor (“The person referred to in the enclosed papers [Mr Slapoffs] is well known to me as a very quiet respectable man”) gives some support to his residence in Oxford but it is noteworthy that his main references are from a music seller in Clerkenwell and his assistant who declared that they had known Marcus for upwards of 10 years. In his application Marcus gave his Oxford residences as 12 and 20 St Aldate’s Street.

Earliest record

The earliest documented record of him in Oxford is in the Oxford City Electoral Register in a list of those eligible to vote for a Member of Parliament between 1 November 1868 and 1 January 1870, Marcus, musician, at 20 St Aldate’s Street (and Adolph, Professor of Music, at 9 Turl Street). Marcus’s landlady was Mrs Streak, a draper and she appears at that address in subsequent directories, but the two Slapoffskis were clearly peripatetic.

At the time of the 1871 census, while Adolph’s wife and son were in Oxford, he was at 7 Mitre Square in the City of London, in what appears to have been a lodging-house with a landlady (housekeeper) and four lodgers. One of the four was Marcus Eleazer, unmarried, aged 43, musician, born Holland. I take this to be Marcus Eleazer Ert Slapoffski whose name the enumerator did not report accurately. Adolph’s family was in Oxford in that 1871 census, in the shape of Anne Slapoffski, a teacher’s wife, aged 32, living at 9a Turl Street. (In fact the MS version of the census has the name written by the enumerator in error as Flapoffski).

She was born in Australia and was accompanied by her son Gustavus born in London in 1862. She was Adolph’s second wife. Marcus was in the next census of 1881 in Turl Street and also for the subsequent censuses of 1891 and 1901 although the address changed from 9a to 13 Turl Street. Actually the name on the birth certificate of the son was simply Joseph. He appears later as Joseph Gustave, but for most of his life he was known as Gustave.

Marcus’s family did not last long in the city of Oxford. The family appears in the 1881 census at 4 Union Place with Marcus, aged 54, as a naturalised British subject. His wife’s age was recorded as 26, and there were three children, Eleazer aged five, Fyla aged three and Joseph aged two months. In fact, there were two earlier children: Rachel was born in 1875 but died the same year and Abraham Lion was born in 1879 and died a few months later. The household was completed by a servant and a visitor, Falk Levitas, born in Kovno, Russia, his occupation being “ostler”.

Marcus’s only appearance in any Oxford City census was in 1881. In Oxford six children were born but only three survived infancy; they were the three listed in the 1881 census (Eleazer, Fyla and Joseph). The third one who died was a daughter Myla. Joseph was the father of Marcus Slapp, who explained what was happening to the family; he wrote that in 1886 his grandfather moved to Bath with his family because of his wife’s illness.

However, they must have moved there a little earlier, at some date between Myla’s birth in Oxford on 2 February 1884 and her death in Bath on 12 September 1885. Kaatje, the wife, died in Bath on 10 August 1889. His son Joseph was sent to Norwood Orphanage because Marcus Ert was touring with his orchestra. However, the rest of the family returned to Oxfordshire as in the 1891 census, his daughter Fyla, was living at 80 St Aldate’s Street, Oxford, and in that census Marcus Ert, described as “entertainer”, and his older son, Eleazer, were in Oxfordshire, at the village of Bletchington, lodging at the Red Lion Inn.

In the last two decades of his life Marcus was surprisingly mobile. According to his applications to the Jews’ Hospital and Asylum he was living in 1895 at Little Alie Street in the East End of London, in 1897 he was back in Oxford at Southmoor Road, and in 1898 at Hill Street, Birmingham. At the 1901 census he was with his daughter Fyla in Northampton, Fyla described as “musical entertainer” and her father as “professor of music”. Marcus Slapp stated that Fyla “accompanied her father and acted as his hostess after
her mother died”. Joseph was living in Coventry in 1901, employed in that city of bicycle manufacture, as a “cycle finisher”. He was a boarder in what was probably a completely Jewish household: the head and four boarders being cycle workers, a fifth being a gas fitter.

We know something about the character of Marcus Slapoffski from a booklet he wrote and published himself. _Autumn Gleanings_ is undated but is given the date “c. 1891” in the catalogue of the Bodleian Library. It is a work of religious piety including meditations on the glory of God. Presumably therefore he must have been a member, perhaps an active one, of the Oxford Jewish congregation.

He eventually settled in Northampton and in 1905 his daughter Fyla was married to Judah Gertler. Her age on the marriage certificate was wrongly stated as 25—she was born in 1877. In November 1907, her husband, a draper, had a public examination at the Official Receiver’s Office in Northampton and he made his first and final payment in May 1908.

Marcus died at the Gertlers’ home in Leighton Buzzard on 4 August 1908. His son Joseph, Marcus Slapp’s father, was married in Northampton in 1909. Of the three surviving children of Marcus Slapoffski, Joseph and Fyla remained in England but, Marcus Slapp stated, the oldest son, Eleazer Marcus Ert emigrated.

I have been unable to establish to which country Eleazer emigrated. On the birth certificate of Marcus Slap of 30 April 1915 his father Joseph is described as “Photographer (Master)” and this occupation explains his appearing (as J. E. Slapoffski) as publisher of two postcards of churches in Aylesbury. During World War II his son Marcus Slapp served in Burma (part of the 14th Army) as a captain in the Royal Corps of Signals, having already served in the Army in North Africa.

Musical family
Adolph’s father was also a musician, according to the 1857 marriage certificate, but in the 1863 marriage certificate he was described, like his son, as a “professor of music”. In 1865 “Herr A Slapoffski” as mentioned, was reported in the _Surrey Advertiser_ as being, with Marcus, the Hungarian Brothers, giving concerts. Soon afterwards in that year he was in Oxford, presumably accompanied by his wife and son.

There remain two intriguing questions. First, if Marcus Eleazer Ert adopted the name Slapoffski for functional purposes, to enter into activities with Adolph Slapoffski, why did he so completely adopt it to the extent of conveying it to his wife and children and on to the next generation? Second, a 21-year old man, named Abraham Eleazer Ert, was married on 6 September 1882 at the East London Synagogue to Regina Hes. He was a diamond splitter (a familiar occupation of Dutch Jews) and his father was Samuel Ert. There is no other reference to him and one wonders if he was a connection of Marcus Eleazer Ert Slapoffski.

The other Slapoffskis
The other Slapoffski family, as mentioned, was that headed by Adolph who was born in Courland. His recorded ages in the censuses from 1881-1901 are consistent and suggest he was born in about 1827 which broadly agrees with the age of 74 on his death certificate of August 1902. His first documented appearance in England was in 1857 when he was married in Cambridge on 20 February in that year to Elizabeth Jane Hunter, whose father was the Scottish-born William Hunter, a major in the 28th Foot, the North Gloucestershire Regiment. She died in labour in Cambridge four months later, on 24 June 1857, but there is no record of a baby, which must have been stillborn.

It is not known how long Adolph was in Cambridge but he married his second wife, Anne Hunter, in London, on 2 January 1863, soon after their son Joseph was born on 20 August 1862. She was his first wife’s sister, the father being the same major William Hunter, but apparently wrongly described on the marriage certificate as of the 22nd Foot (the Cheshire Regiment). He was in Australia in the 1830s where his two daughters were born. He died in India in 1845.
The family emigrated to Australia at the turn of the century and their arrival can be traced in the passenger lists of migrants to Victoria. Mr and Mrs Slapoffski, presumably Joseph Gustave and his second wife, Elizabeth “Lillie” Williams, although there appears to be no record of a marriage, arrived in Victoria in August 1900 which explains why his children were living with their grandparents, Adolph and Anne, in Oxford at the 1901 census.

Musical family

Both the son, Gustave, and his wife Elizabeth, were musicians. She was usually known as Madame Slap, and was a classical vocalist in England, where she sang for the Carl Rosa Opera Company, and also in Australia. She sang in two performances before Queen Victoria at Balmoral Castle.11 Gustave had been a pupil of Sir Arthur Sullivan at the Royal Academy of Music in 1875 and four years later played the violin at a season of the Offenbach opera La Marjolaine at the Royalty Theatre.12

Gustave had been recommended by Sir Henry Wood as a conductor for an opera tour of Australia which explains his arrival in that country in 1900. This agrees with The New Grove Dictionary of Opera which states: “For most of the middle-to-late history of opera in Australia, the notable conductors were foreigners who arrived with touring companies and stayed (such as Alberto Zelman senior, Gustav (sic) Slapoffski . . . 13 Gustave was the conductor and Madame Slap a soloist, along with Dame Nellie Melba, for the concert in Melbourne in 1901 for the Inauguration of the Australian Federal Parliament.
Madame Slap was a well-known opera singer in Australia. Among other features of Gustave’s Australian career, were that in 1903, he was the first to conduct a series of Wagner’s operas in Australia and also toured America. Moreover, he was a musical advisor to J. C. Williamson’s, the biggest theatrical company in Australia for 100 years. After a long and distinguished career as a conductor and teacher he died in 1951, nearly 90 years old.

After Gustave and his wife had gone to Australia in 1900 10 more family members arrived in April 1902, including Adolf, Gustave’s father. He was listed under a mis-spelled “Slapoffski”, and died soon after on 23 August 1902. He was buried in Melbourne Cemetery, Victoria, the death certificate stating that he had been resident in the state of Victoria for five months.

The significant point is that he was buried by Rev Dr Joseph Abrahams and the certificate refers also to “A Solomon”, who was the chasan of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation where Abrahams was the minister. Abrahams was also the son of Rev Barnett Abrahams and brother of Israel Abrahams. This undoubtedly proves Adolph was Jewish.

**Peace-time soldier**

Adolph’s grandson, Claude Leo, the seventh child of his son Joseph Gustave, was a peace-time soldier in the Australian Army, which he joined on 11 January 1913. While serving as a gunner in the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery he went absent without leave on 17 May 1913 and remained absent until 9 March 1914. At the subsequent court martial he was charged with absence and with losing clothing and “regimental necessaries”.

He pleaded guilty to both charges and was sentenced to 28 days’ detention and his pay was to be stopped until he had made good the cost of the various lost items, to the total of 11 shillings (55p).16

In World War I he again served in the Army and was married to Vera Olive Fairlie Montgomerie in 1915, on the eve of his embarkation for Europe in January 1916. She divorced him in September 1917, soon after he returned to Australia, on the grounds of “the respondent’s conduct in England”. After the War her lawyer pursued him for the cost of the divorce, the documents ending in May 1920 with the lawyer telling of preparing an application to the Supreme Court to have him ordered to pay the balance or be committed to prison for contempt of court.17

Interestingly, he is listed in the *Australian Jewry Book of Honour* (AJBH, 1922) and also in the Australian section of the *British Jewry Book of Honour* (BJBH, 1922). Halachically he was not Jewish, as his mother was not. Unfortunately his army papers are not yet available, from which one could have learned the religion he claimed when he attested. He is buried in Woodend Cemetery in Victoria in the Presbyterian section, so it is most unlikely that he considered himself a Jew and is undoubtedly in the AJBH and BJBH in error.

 Harold Pollins is a joint author of Louis Kyezor, King of Whiton.

 Keira Quinn Lockyer has written the life of her great-uncle Louis Kyezor, VC, in the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Journal, June 2005.

**REFERENCES**


3. www.newspaperdetectives.co.uk/master1866S6.htm. There are further references in four issues of the *Surrey Advertiser* in January 1866 to “A Slapoffski” giving concerts, one being to the Hungarian Brothers: www.newspaperdetectives.co.uk.

4. He is listed among the residents of the Jews’ Hospital and Orphan Asylum: RG12/419 folio 173 p. 7.

5. Bodleian Library, Bod. 1419 e 5403 (9). This is discussed briefly in *London Gazette*, 15 November 1907, p. 7740; 29 May 1908, p. 4048.


9. I am grateful to Lionel Sharpe, Honorary Secretary of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society of Australia (Victoria) Inc., for supplying me a copy of the death certificate of Adolph Slapoffski. This was one of a number of death certificates of Jewish men collected by Professor Bill Rubinstein in the early 1980s.


15. See note 9 above.

16. National Archives of Australia, Series A915: “Gnr Claude Leo Slapoffski RAGA, District Court Martial, 30 March 1914”.

17. National Archives of Australia, Series A2489: “Claude Leo Slapoffski, a returned soldier receiving a pension, 1919-1920”.

16—Shemot, Volume 13,4
Presidential comment

by Anthony Joseph

HOW to do it books have flooded on to the genealogical market over the past 20 years. What started as a small trickle of standard textbooks has become a gushing torrent of advice manuals; yet more of them are likely waiting in the wings to pour on stage. Most of these works have something useful to offer the reader and many are sound, solid reference texts. They are well worth their presence on any genealogist’s bookshelf.

However, inevitably there is some duplication of effort since any comprehensive guide cannot avoid covering the same primary information sources. Our own Society (JGSGB) has joined the production line and added its extremely helpful contribution to the genre with several publications including the Beginner’s Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Great Britain.

Among this cornucopia of advice, the contributions from the London-based Society of Genealogists are probably the most authoritative. Founded in 1911, it is the most senior such body in existence worldwide. Years ago, in response to increasing demand for a lead on research guidance, this society began a policy that has slowly but positively evolved. It decided to produce a series of do-it-yourself monographs under the generic title “My ancestor was... how can I find out more about him/her?” The results have been hugely successful and an early title in the series was My Ancestor Was Jewish.

This was originally crafted by the late Isobel Mordy who was for many years on the executive of the Society and was also responsible for indexing numerous volumes of the Society’s magazine. Isobel had an interesting personal odyssey that led to her becoming one of the leading genealogists of her day, with a special interest in Jewish pedigrees and their sources. The daughter of a non-Jewish engineer and a Jewish mother, the details of her maternal background were kept from her during her childhood in Stoke-on-Trent.

She gained a place at London University to read mathematics and while there she came into contact with Jews, more or less for the first time in her life. Some of them were her relatives and she was astonished, to put it at its mildest, to learn that this was the case.

Many years later, after retirement from a career in caring for children, she resolved to explore her roots and she became immensely tenacious in ferreting out Jewish sources. She also amassed an enormous database, which was microfilmed by the Mormon Church and, after her death in 1993, her papers were bequeathed to the Society of Genealogists where they are kept as the Mordy Collection.

Her legacy to the genealogical community is immeasurably valuable and the Society’s book that she put together soon sold out. It was edited and expanded by Michael Gandy with considerable input from Charles Tucker. More recently it has been completely revised but it still adheres to the format and design that Isobel created for it: such a fine foundation is worth preserving. I have greatly enjoyed the privilege of overseeing this revision and thereby doing something to perpetuate the memory of the remarkable lady who was Isobel Mordy.

REFERENCE


Genealogy and gangsters

by Victor Stone

IT is some 35 years since I last visited Las Vegas and another 35 years will have to elapse before I visit it again. It is gross, coarse and hideous. I believe that the idea behind holding the conference in Las Vegas was to encourage those Jewish genealogists living in California for whom Las Vegas is at a convenient distance and well known to them as a holiday retreat or for some nefarious other purpose. To this extent the conference succeeded as there were many attendees from California.

The organisation by the small body of members of the JGS of Southern Nevada could not be faulted—they did a marvellous job and the Flamingo Hotel was inexpensive and its facilities sufficient. The 16 or so meeting rooms for the lectures were all situated on one floor, providing ample opportunity for exercise in getting from one to the next since, as luck would have it, my choice of successive talks took place inevitably at the far extremes of the floor. It is important that at these international conferences there should be a central lounge where attendees can easily congregate and meet each other.

With the outside temperatures reaching 115°F (46°C) there was sufficient incentive not to go on too many excursions but to attend the myriad talks which were available, which is, in reality, the purpose of the conference.

As I can only comment on those talks which I went to myself, I would single out some excellent lectures

- Stephen Baird on Genealogy and Genetic Diseases
- Davida Handler’s Introduction to LitvakSig
- Neil Rosenstein’s Rabbinic Genealogy
- Stephen Morse’s Creating One Step Search Tools

aimed particularly at the ease of using the Ellis Island databases. There were also update lectures by Warren Blatt and Stanley Diamond.

NEW YORK CITY 2006 CONFERENCE

THE New York Jewish Genealogical Society is the host for the 2006 IAJGS annual conference to be held at the Marriott Marquis in New York City from 13-18 August. The Conference website is at www.jgsny2006.org/.
The Fischlers of Lancut

by Sylvia Budd

This is the story of a large Jewish family from the small town of Lancut in the south-east of Poland and the devastating impact of the Holocaust on its members.

David Leib Fischler was born c. 1862 in Lancut where he married Rivka from Lezainsk in 1884. It was probably an arranged marriage and apparently Rivka was not too impressed with David at first, but later decided to marry him. Between 1885 and 1919 they had 10 children.

According to the Encyclopaedia Judaica, Jews had lived in Lancut since the 16th century. In the early 18th century a magnificent baroque synagogue was built to replace the old wooden one which had been destroyed by fire. The synagogue still stands, but is now a museum.

Poorly paid peasants

By 1900 there were almost 2,000 Jews in the town, comprising some 40 per cent of the population. It was a very poor area and most people lived from hand to mouth. There was no industry to provide employment, so many of the inhabitants were shopkeepers or artisans. The land all around Lancut was owned by Count Pototzki, who was a signatory of the Polish bank. He also owned dairy herds and a brewery and relied on peasants to work for him; he exploited them shamelessly by paying low wages.

The Fischler family lived in a small terrace house with two rooms downstairs and a loft. The parents and the girls slept downstairs and the boys in the loft. Later, additional storeys were added when Leah, the second daughter, married so that she and her husband could live there. Downstairs the house had a stove and a wood-burning oven so that Rivka and her daughters could bake the family’s bread. There was also a cellar, used for storing food.

The area of southern Poland where the family lived, called Galicia, was under Austrian occupation until the end of World War I when it reverted to Poland. The family name, Fischler, is Austrian, not Polish. David Fischler had attended a German-speaking school and spoke fluent German. He was well educated and had worked as a teller in a bank but after the war the bank was closed and he lost his job. To support his family he set up a business in Lancut selling textiles from a market stall to the local peasants. It was hard work as the stall had to be erected each morning and taken down each evening and all the goods stored overnight. Other members of the family also worked on the stall at one time and another.

Orthodox living

The family were observant orthodox Jews. David wore a beard and a traditional streimel (fur-trimmed hat) on Shabbat. He would not even have his photograph taken. His wife wore a sheitel (wig). On a Friday night the men and boys would go to a stiebel which was more strictly observant than the synagogue and which was usually full to overflowing. Afterwards they would go home for the Shabbat meal with singing both before and after. All the family would crowd round a big table sitting on benches at each side and with the father at the head of the table to enjoy the best meal of the week. Afterwards the boys would go out with their friends, visiting the local Jewish organisations, deciding which one to join. The Shabbat midday meal had been taken on Friday to the bath house to cook overnight; it was carefully labelled so that the family would get back its own meal.

David died in 1931 aged 69, following an illness lasting about a year which had resulted from internal damage to his chest incurred when he was operating a winch to bring water up from the well.

Although the family consisted of 10 children, there was no time when they were all at home together. During World War I the two oldest sons, Israel and Itzaak, emigrated to Holland and the younger children did not know them at all. Their details follow but the birth dates of the older siblings are approximations.
1. Israel (born c.1885) married in Holland and had a son, Aaron Shimon. They lived in Rolde Drente near the German border. In 1940 Aaron met his youngest uncle, asking if he could join him in England, but Max, being newly arrived himself, was sadly unable to help him. The whole family was deported to the camps and none survived. Max still has the postcard, written in Yiddish, of Aaron Shimon at school in Holland.

2. Isaac [Itzaak] (born c.1887) also married in Holland and had one child. The family lived in Assen, near the German border. They were also deported and did not survive.

3. Hadassah (born c.1901) never married and worked on the family’s market stall and helped her mother at home.

4. Hirsch (born c. 1903) married a German-speaking woman from Yaroslaw and had a daughter. At the outbreak of war they thought they would be safer in her home town, so they went to live with her parents, but to no avail as they all perished.

5. Wolf (born c.1904) went to Russia at the outbreak of war. At some point he met his brother Benjamin there and after the War returned to Lancut. He found no one left so moved on to Belgium, where he met and married his wife, Lola. The family emigrated to Israel and had three sons, twins, David and Mordechai, and Shmuel. David, who died of cancer, had two (?) children and a grandchild.

Mordechai married a Moroccan woman and had three children, two sons and a daughter. Mordechai eventually died of cancer.

Shmuel married and had two daughters, Liran and Maya; the elder daughter is married with a daughter.

6. Leah (born c.1907) was married a year or so before the War. She and her husband lived in the upper floors of the family home in Lancut which were built on when she married; she had one child.

7. Benjamin (c. 1909-1989) also went to Russia at the outbreak of War. It was bitterly cold in winter and there was no fuel for fires so Benjamin pulled up a fence to burn. He was caught, sent for trial and sentenced to death. After the trial, the Jewish woman judge told him to run away, which he did. He met a Jewish woman, Leah, and returned to Lancut with her. They were unable to stay so they went to a Displaced Persons camp in Salzburg (Austria) where their son David was born. They then went onto Israel and had a daughter, Rivka.

David married a Russian Jewess called Etty and they had two sons, Zohar and Tal, both of whom live in Israel. Rivka married and had two daughters, one of whom lives in Bnei Brak, while the other lives in Safad.

8. Sabina, Yiddish name Shaindel (born c.1915) never married. She worked on the family market stall and helped her mother at home.

9. Shmuel (born c. 1917) went to Russia at the outbreak of War, but separately from his brothers Wolf and Benjamin. He disappeared in Russia and nothing further is known.

10. Max, who changed his name from Moishe, was born 10 May 1919. He left Lancut in May 1937 and reached England in March 1939. He married Ada Blaicher in 1945 and has two daughters and four grandchildren.

The picture of the family shown here is a collage sent to Benjamin by his aunt, Sarah Greenburg, from America.

Regarding the more extended family, there is no information about either sets of grandparents. On Rivka’s side there was a sister, Sarah Greenberg, who emigrated to America, probably in the 1880s. She married twice, but had no children. She was relatively well off financially and used to send money to the family in Lancut on a regular basis. She visited Lancut once in 1919 and apparently wanted to adopt Max, who was then baby, and take him back to America, but his mother refused.

On David’s side there were two brothers and two sisters, but they were not apparently on good terms with him possibly because David had taken over the house in Lancut which had belonged to his father. One of the brothers lived in Lancut and also had a market stall selling fabrics. He had one son called Ephraim whom Max met in Israel after the War. The other brother, who had a son and a daughter, lived in Dembitzer where he had a business selling leather to shoemakers. The daughter went to America.

**Inevitable outcome**

Those members of the Fischler family who remained in Lancut during the war, namely Rivka, and her three daughters Hadassah, Leah and Sabina all perished in the Holocaust. According to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Lancut was taken by the Germans on 9 September 1939, and many of the Jews were expelled to either Russia or Germany. Some returned, and their numbers were augmented by Jewish refugees from Krakow.

During 1942 and 1943 all the Jews of Lancut were slaughtered at various locations. It is not known exactly what happened to the Fischler family, but it seems likely that they perished either in Pelkinia or the nearby Necheziol forest in August or September 1942 or in the ghetto at Szeniawa in May 1943, or were transported to Auschwitz. Max was in England when he learned from Wolf and Benjamin the horrific news that the rest of his family had perished.

Thus, out of a family of 10 children only three survived the Holocaust, namely Wolf, Benjamin and Max. Benjamin had at least one lucky escape from death and Max almost certainly owed his life to a series of amazing escapes. His story is worth telling in more detail.

Max had been interested in socialism and justice since he was a young boy. This interest was fostered by a trainee.
rabbai who had strong Communist leanings, and who had been employed to teach Max his *bar mitzvah* portion. His opinions were further reinforced when he spent a year in Krakow as an apprentice upholsterer and the boss used him as cheap labour.

In May 1937, together with his friend Natan Kestetcher and his brother Shmuel, Max took part in a big demonstration involving thousands of peasants from the surrounding areas. As they marched they called out slogans encouraging the peasants to join the Labour movement.

It was claimed that they had called out “Long live the Red Army” and both Natan and Shmuel were arrested. Max hid in the cellar of his home until it was dark and then walked to a nearby town where he spent the night with friends. The next day, disguised as a rabbi, he returned home, collected a few items such as some clothes and his upholstery tools and left home. He was just 18 and had neither money nor passport and intended to go to Spain to fight against fascism in the International Brigade.

**East European adventures**

Max set off on foot towards the Czech border without any maps. At the small town of Rzeszow he met his sister Leah who was buying textiles and she gave him money to take a train to the border. Once in Czechoslovakia he made his way towards Austria, taking casual work on the way. After various adventures he reached Vienna and went on to Salzburg where he was arrested and sent back to Vienna but his escort told him to disappear! Max continued on foot, sleeping rough, and developed scabies. He began to feel ill and decided to return to Vienna where he went to the Polish Embassy expecting to be returned to Poland. To his amazement he was told, “We’ve got enough Jews in Poland”, and was sent away which almost certainly saved his life.

He turned to the Jewish community for help and was given a train ticket and advised to make for Brno in Czechoslovakia where he was given lodgings and sent to a doctor. He wrote to his family for papers to prove he was a political refugee, but after two weeks he was arrested, deported and put on a train for Poland with an escort, but as he was feeling better and still wanted to go to Spain he jumped through the toilet window of the moving train and broke his leg. A bystander called an ambulance and a reporter wrote about Max and, by chance, the article arrived after his arrest, and he took them to the authorities. Max was then sent to a refugee hostel in Brno, but as the political situation deteriorated he realised that he had to get out of Czechoslovakia as soon as possible and he began visiting various embassies seeking a visa.

Then Max had a further amazing stroke of luck in that he met another Polish refugee who introduced him to a Sudenten-German MP. This man not only arranged for Max to have an international passport but also for him to travel to England on a collective visa of a group of political refugees organised by the British Labour party.

After various further set-backs and narrow escapes, Max finally boarded a train in Prague bound for the port of Gdynia where he had to show his papers. To his enormous relief he was allowed to go but only after two officials conferred and one said “Let him go, we’ve got enough Jews in Poland”, the same words that had saved him in Vienna.

So Max arrived in London in March 1939 to begin his life in England. He took various jobs, learned English and met his future wife, Ada Blaicher whom he married in April 1945. They settled in London and Max worked as an upholsterer. Max and Ada have two daughters, Rhona and Hilary, and four grandchildren, Daniel, Vicki, Michelle and Sophie.

As a postscript, Max was able to visit his two surviving brothers, Wolf and Benjamin in Israel in 1957—an extremely emotional reunion for the only three survivors of the once large Fischler family.

**Author’s note:** I met Max Fischler at a Yiddish group and when he discovered I had an interest in family history, he asked me to help him compile his own story. This article is based on information he supplied and is written with his permission.

- The author is a retired bank economist who has been involved in family history for about 10 years.

- *VICTOR STONE* writes: By far the best and most amusing talk was not really on genealogy at all: Ron Arons spoke on Bugsy Siegal and Meyer Lansky, to whom the original Flamingo Hotel and organised gambling in Las Vegas owe their existence.

Bugsy kept a suite with bullet-proof windows on the top floor of a previous embodiment of the Flamingo Hotel; the suite had one entrance and five exits, one leading by a secret ladder to the basement where it is alleged there was a chauffeured getaway car ready at all times.

He was eventually assassinated by fellow gangsters some 300 miles away from Las Vegas.
Footsteps in the past
by Doreen Berger

PORT ELIZABETH—THE NEW CONGREGATION.

To the Editor of the Jewish Chronicle

Sir, We see so little in your publication about this far-distant but rising colony, that I venture to write a few lines, hoping that the same may prove interesting to your readers. On religious matters here is (sic) but little to say. A short time since a meeting of co-religionists was held for the purpose of forming themselves into a congregation, and also for the purpose of establishing a burial-place, since hitherto, in case of death, the body had to be conveyed to Graham’s Town, a two days’ journey from here. At the meeting provisional trustees were appointed, and application made to the Town Council for a piece of ground, which was immediately granted, but, alas, from that day it still remains in abeyance.

There are now residing here about 12 families and a number of single men, all, I am happy to say, in good positions. The latter, I am sorry to say, as is always the case, take but little interest in what concerns our faith. In speaking of the senior portion of our community, I may say, and you may believe me, being one myself, that they are anxious to get married, but, alas, there are no ladies of our own faith.

I see occasionally from your paper that there are in England Jewish ladies as anxious to get married as we are. I may say without fear of contradiction, that any Englishman of our faith with a family of grown-up daughters would find it here easy to earn a livelihood as he finds it difficult to do so at home; besides which, he would secure husbands for his daughters in a position that he could not hope for in England. Of the climate you doubtless have heard much; suffice it for me to say that it is all that could be desired.

I cannot hold out any inducement in anything in the shape of amusements, except it may be the occasional theatrical performance or a concert, but if a good climate, an almost certainty of respectable livelihood, and a great probability of good husbands for their daughters will satisfy the fathers of families, then I say—come.

I am, sir, yours obediently, Young Hopeful, Port Elizabeth, Cape of Good Hope, 18 July 1862.

Jewish Chronicle 5 September 1862.

PORT ELIZABETH—THE NEW CONGREGATION.

To the Editor of the Jewish Chronicle

Sir, Another month has past in the same dull style as previous ones, leaving behind it the feeling that some effort should be made, without further delay, to draw the few Jews here more closely within the bonds of brotherhood. It has been felt that unless some great efforts were made to attract men back to their religion, many might soon cease to feel that they were members of the noblest faith in the world.

Resolutions were come to after mature consideration, in spite of the many painful objections, difficult to be got over; the most serious of which is the feeling some entertain of being ashamed of admitting the creed of their forefathers. It is a difficult matter to believe that some men well-to-do in the world, educated men—aye, and many of them with families around them—men quite independent of the world, should be afraid of admitting that they are members of a faith which is so noble; and all this for fear of losing that hollow friendship of their Christian friends. In spite of the many obstacles in our way, the apparent indifference of several inhabitants, we have at last succeeded in bringing about a highly essential and important object.

Without further preface, I will inform you of what, no doubt, will be as gratifying for your readers to hear as it is for me to record—that we have established a Hebrew community at this port. At a meeting held at the residence of Mr J. Wallach on 7 July last, the above community was established.

I am, sir, yours obediently, Observer, Port Elizabeth, Cape of Good Hope, 15 August 1862.

Jewish Chronicle, 14 November 1862.

NOTE: A Mr M. Wallach of Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony, who could have possibly been a son of the above gentleman, was married at Brighton on 26 August, 1863 to Julia, the eldest daughter of Mr C. H. Sloman, of London.
Freemen as forebears

by Rosemary Wenzerul

The Barnett family has lived in London for about 250 years or maybe longer and spans 10 generations, from the oldest to the youngest entries on my family tree. Although information about the early family is understandably sketchy, I thought it would be a good idea to set out what information I have.

Barnett Barnett(i) was my great-great-great-great-grandfather who was circumcised in London on the 26 January 1768 probably eight days after his birth. His parents were Lyon and Pheby Barnett but I have no dates for them, nor do I know where they were born.

On the basis that a generation is about 25 years, one can assume that they were in their 20s when they married, so were born around 1745, but I do not know whether they were born in England nor whether Barnett was their first child. He died at Allens Rents, Gravel Lane, St Botolph on 26 December 1816, aged 48.

Accurate note-taking!

I got this address in 1994 from my cousin Alan Simmonds but I did not make a note of its source as I was just beginning my family history at that time—I now know better! He thought the information came from the IGI indexes.

Barnett married Elizabeth and had several children but we only have information about his son Lazarus (b.1788). From the earliest records I have, Lazarus worked as a general dealer and at the age of 68 was granted the Freedom of the City of London. His certificate, dated 22 October 1856, states: “I hereby declare that I am not an alien, nor the son of an alien, and that I am above the age of 21 years.” At that time he was living at 15 Ebenezer Square, Houndsditch. He died 16 years later on 8 November 1872 at 5 Gravel Lane, Houndsditch, but on his death certificate he was now described as a jeweller, so must have changed occupation late in life.

Lazarus married a lady called Ann and they had the following children: Joshua, Elizabath, Bella, Julia, Bloomah, Abraham and John but there may well have been more. Joshua (b.1815) was a clothier and at the time of his marriage to Nancy Benjamin at the Great Synagogue, Dukes Place on 7 May 1844 he was a general dealer. The place of residence for both the bride and groom was given as 27 Rosemary Lane, Aldgate. They had a large family of seven boys and six girls. Joshua was granted the Freedom of the City of London at the same time as his father, when he was a mere 41 years old. He lived at 9 Harrow Alley, Houndsditch and died on 20 December 1873, aged 58. He was buried at West Ham Cemetery.

In father’s footsteps

My great-grandfather Baron was their second son and he married Agnes Nunes-Martines from a Sephardi family in January 1874, only 40 days after his father’s death. They were married at 15 Wood Street, Spitalfields and on their marriage certificate Baron was also shown as a general dealer. In 1885, on the birth certificate of his first son, Joshua, he was a commercial traveller. Sixteen years later, in the 1901 census, he had progressed to being a jobstock buyer, someone who would have purchased the entire stock of a business which might have gone bankrupt.

They had eight children, two of whom later became my grandmothers, Miriam and Rosetta (Rose). My parents were Miriam’s son Barry (Vandermolen, known as Molen) and Rose’s daughter Marjory (Goldston), who were first cousins.

Unfortunately, my husband and I do not have any children to continue this line, but one of my first cousins,
Historically, only City Freemen could:

- Vote in Parliamentary elections
- Vote in civic elections, for each ward’s Common Councilmen and Aldermen
- Be exempt from all tolls payable on animals brought into the City for sale
- Be exempt from all market tolls payable anywhere in the country
- Be exempt from naval impressment
- Enjoy certain legal privileges with respect to being tried and imprisoned.

Contrary to popular belief, City Freemen do not have the right to herd sheep, or animals of any kind over London Bridge, or any other bridges, although this belief probably stems from the Freemen’s historic exemption from tolls on animals brought into the City for sale.

According to the City of London Record Office (CLRO) website, before the mid-19th century the Freedom of the City of London was a practical necessity for those who plied a trade or made their living in the City of London. Indeed, certain groups of people were compelled on pain of prosecution to be Free of the City, including retail traders which, I guess, my ancestors were.

Apparently, Jewish and non-Christian British subjects were allowed to be admitted to the City Freedom after 1830, although some Jewish Freemen were also admitted before 1738.

Many other people chose to become Free of the City because of the privileges it carried with it, or for reasons of their own. However, some of those who should have been Free often evaded it, on grounds of cost or principle, and some were prosecuted for this.
The once-Jewish Bennys!

by Alan Benny

THE surname Benny is fairly uncommon in Britain although it does occur in Cornwall. However, my branch has no connection with this area, as we shall see.

My father, Herbert Benny, was born in London in 1892 of Jewish parents. In the later part of the 19th century there was a (now discredited?) school of thought which supported assimilation of Jews into the general population and I can only surmise that my grandfather Philip Benny was of that view, since none of his six children who survived into adulthood seems to have retained much connection with the faith.

Indeed, my father told me that he himself did not have his own bar mitzvah ceremony. Instead, a ceremony took place at school en masse and since he did not have a best suit he was kept away from school for a week or two, nominally ill. In later life, one of his favourite foods was a ham sandwich, so he clearly drifted away from the faith!

Herbert married a gentile, so I am in the position of having undertaken both Jewish and Christian family history searches, which offers an interesting comparison.

For research on both Jews and non-Jews, one makes use of the standard sources: talking to relatives, using the birth, marriage and death indexes1 and looking at censuses and probate indexes. Before 1837, parish registers take over for gentiles, and these can take one’s ancestry back much further: I have found gentile ancestors who were born in the later years of the 17th century in England and Scotland, in a fairly straightforward searching method. Unfortunately, Jewish records in England are sparse before the 19th century and, until recently, difficult to access.

Both my parents were born in London, but my father’s occupation, working within the motor industry, took him to Coventry, where my two brothers and I were born. This removed us from all our relatives, but fortunately he did keep in touch with one of his sisters and an aunt, Frances, born in 1865, whom we boys were able to meet once a year. From my earliest childhood I knew that the family name had not always been Benny and that my great-grandfather Jacob had come from Hungary.

Talking to Frances, more than 50 years ago, I got a confusing story that the name had been Bene (the Latin for well—a complete red herring) and other tales about the family name Berger which I and all my family carried. In about 1953 I took some notes about the family from Frances, on scraps of paper, which miraculously managed to survive and which I rediscovered in 2003. They included some valuable items of information such as the fact that her father was born in Szatmar in Hungary.

Beginnings of research

A chance event in 1982 started my wife on family history research and I joined her in this activity. Fortunately my parents were both still alive then and I began by talking to them. My father was almost 90 but his mind was as clear as ever and he provided me with a lot of details, almost all of which have proved to be accurate. My mother, aged 80, saw my questioning as a sort of inquisition and had to be handled more gently. Her memory proved rather less comprehensive and accurate.

A few years later I made contact with a cousin on my father’s side, almost 20 years older than me, and she provided me with more information. For example, she confirmed that my great-grandfather came from Hungary, but it was from near Debrecen, a town close to the eastern border. As she was unmarried and had no family she also gave me a number of letters from his and his wife’s earliest years in England and a number of birth and other certificates and some personal heirlooms.

Benny family tree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ferencz Benes</th>
<th>m Maria</th>
<th>c 1778-?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>c 1806-?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>c 1810-?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Benes/Benny</td>
<td>m Julia Seeman</td>
<td>1820-1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m 1826-1916</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>c 1773-?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rossetta Woolf</td>
<td>c 1857-1939</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>c 1853-1931</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorah</td>
<td>1854-1923</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>1856-1913</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrietta</td>
<td>1862-1874</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances</td>
<td>1865-1954</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851-1926</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Jacob</td>
<td>c 1881-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violet Caroline</td>
<td>c 1884-1972</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>c 1886-1974</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard</td>
<td>1888-1968</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena</td>
<td>1890-1977</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert Samuel</td>
<td>c 1892-1985</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After extensive searches during 1986-1987, I found my great-grandparents in the censuses of 1851, 1861 and 1871. In 1851 they were lodgers in Great Prescott Street, Whitechapel: Jacob Bene, aged 29, a tailor, born in Hungary and Julia Zaman, aged 23, a tailoress, born in Germany. By 1861 they had moved to St Martin’s Street, Westminster, he now called himself Jacob Benny, aged 41, born in Hungary at what appeared to read Schathinar, which I now presume to be Szatmar. His wife was born in Prussia at Eior (known from other family sources as Exin). These are warnings about what census enumerators can do with foreign place names!

In 1987 I discovered that a census of Jews in Hungary had been made in 1848, and a copy of this was available at the Mormons’ centre in South Kensington. This consisted of six microfilm reels which I ordered and searched through the one which included Debrecen and some adjacent counties. In this entire reel I found only one possible Bene and a small number of Benes, including a Jakob, aged 28, which fitted my great-grandfather’s details.

Many Benes!

The other Benes names included Abraham (42) and Israel (38), who could have been Jakob’s brothers, and Ferencz Benes (75), born Iszenburg, Bohemia (born c. 1773) with wife Maria (70), born Varad, Hungary, who could have been Jakob’s parents. It therefore seems to be a possibility that these are my great-grandfather and his parents, and that the family name was in fact Benes, originating in Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic). Other Hungarian records are few, so I may never get confirmation of this genealogy.

In this 1848 census Jakob had a wife Hani, a son Ignaez and a daughter Hani. The year 1848 was a turbulent time in central Europe: did Jakob leave to look for a safer home for his family? Was the family dispersed? Shall I ever know? It may be significant that I can find no trace of a marriage in England between Jacob and Julia: if this is the Hungarian Jakob he might still have been married and could not remarry in England.

Records exist of immigrants by sea to England in the period 1848-1851. In 1993 I wrote to Len Metzner who had worked on aliens’ shipping lists (kept at the National Archives at Kew) but the results proved inconclusive.

My great-aunt Frances had told me that her father Jacob was one of the first to be buried in the Willesden Cemetery and in 1997 I wrote to the cemetery authorities and was rewarded with a most helpful letter giving gravestone inscriptions which included Jacob (7 August 1820-1876), Julia (1 January 1826-1916) and Frances (18 January 1865-1954) as well as other family members. The original records of the dates of birth for Jacob and Julia almost certainly do not survive in Hungary and Poland, and their dates were doubtless provided by Frances from personal family knowledge, a real bonus for me from across the generations.

Turning now to Jacob and Julia’s children, only the last one, Frances, has her birth listed in the FRC indexes. The date of birth on her certificate (22 January 1865) differs by four days from the date on her gravestone. This could be explained by the fact that the birth was registered on 4 March, over the legal limit of six weeks after the event, so the informant, Jacob, “moved” or (was advised to move) the birth date to bring it within the period. This forms a comment on the circumstances of that time, when non-registration of births was just becoming an offence on which a fine was levied. Frances’s mother’s name was given as Julia Benny, formerly Zaemon—her own letters show it to have been neither Zaman nor Zaemon but Seeman. When Seeman is pronounced in the German manner, the English versions can be understood.

**Post office sources**

I could not find the dates of birth of all of Jacob’s other children, although their approximate dates can be deduced from the census records. I had been told that their third son Simon worked in the Post Office, so in 1988 I paid a visit to the Post Office Archives. There I found many details about Simon, the grades he held, his minor misdemeanours as a young man, the amount of his pension, and his birth date, 19 February 1856. I also found that his older brother Benjamin had started work in the Post Office, but he soon left so did not draw a pension and no other information was available about him. My father knew his father Philip’s (the oldest son) birthday as 25 December, which could only be 1851, but the ages given in the census returns provide merely an indication about the dates of birth of the other children.

I was told that Benjamin had gone to America, but that either in New York or on the voyage he had met with an accident and had returned home, mentally disabled. The 1871 census gives his occupation as “sorter in Post Office” while by 1881 his occupation was “wood carver”.

He evidently became too much for his elderly mother to look after, and he was placed in St Lawrence’s Hospital, Caterham, the Metropolitan District Asylum for the reception of imbeciles and chronic harmless lunatics, where he was to be found in the 1891 census. These records showed his admission on 6 March 1883. According to his death certificate, he died on 5 February 1931 at Tooting Bec Hospital, but neither the asylum nor hospital records say when he was moved. Frances used to visit him at Caterham. By a curious coincidence, while my wife and I were searching for Benjamin’s details in the asylum records, we came across one of my mother’s ancestors, a Roman Catholic refugee from Poland, who died there after a 10-week stay.
Jacob’s oldest daughter Dorah became an elementary school teacher, but I know little about her or about Henrietta, who died of scarlet fever at the age of 11. His youngest child, Frances, lived to 1954 and I knew her well in her retirement. She had been a domestic economy teacher and had often holidayed in Germany and elsewhere in central Europe, in the inter-war years. She told me of an incident in the 1930s when she was sightseeing in Germany and a man in the crowd had thrust a small swastika flag into her hand. It seemed that Hitler was to drive past, and everyone was meant to wave their little flags and cheer. She kept the flag out of interest, but when World War II started she deemed it politic to destroy it.

Philip, my grandfather, was the oldest of Jacob’s children, and I picture him as a capable and intelligent man but, perhaps due to his character or to being spoilt as the eldest son, he was feckless and careless of the lives of others. He also had some eccentric behaviour, for example always giving his age two or three years less than it really was and never appearing in any census where he had to complete the form (1881, 1891, 1901). He added a second name of Berger to all family members, including his mother and aunts retrospectively, for no reason I can find.

Teaching posts

Philip’s career started as a pupil-teacher in the Jews’ Free School. In 1999, reading a book J.F.S. The history of the Jews’ Free School, London since 1732 I noted a short extract which appeared to refer to Philip. Moses Angel, for many years headmaster of the school, kept a log book from 1863 to 1898. Dr Black told me that this log book was kept at the London Metropolitan Archives so I went there and found information about Philip’s brief career at the age of 15 (1866-1867) as a pupil-teacher. The 1871 census gives his occupation as “teacher”, so he must have obtained further teaching post(s). I have some items about Philip in the years which follow, including a reference from the Jewish Victorian which quotes from the Jewish Chronicle: “We are informed Philip B Benny, of the Daily Telegraph, leaves England this week for the purpose of visiting the principal towns of Canada and the United States, where he is about to give a series of lectures . . .”

My father told me that about 1906 Philip’s wife and children walked out on him. He had had “a bit on the side” and had at least two children (by a Mary Lyon?) by the time his last legitimate child was born in 1892. He evidently kept in contact with his second family, for his death certificate gives the death on 25 November 1926, as “Philip Berger Benny otherwise George Henry Willson”, and his death was reported by E L Willson, “a son”. His age was given as 72, although it was actually 74, and his occupation: “a journalist”. He was living at either Camberwell or Southwark.3

I will not attempt to describe Philip’s Benny family in any detail. In the years I knew them, none of his children appeared to have any association with the Jewish faith. Indeed, Violet at an early age became a nun in a convent: on her death, as with all the nuns there, a biography was written about her and the convent sent me a copy when I wrote to them. Helena, too, became a Roman Catholic, though not a nun. All the boys served in World War I and all survived.

Walter emigrated, first to Zacatecas in Mexico and later to Venezuela, after which he disappeared. He married in America and I have copies of photographs of him and some of his four children. While in contact with England, he changed his name from Benny to Jenkins. There may well be some of his descendants still living in Central America.9

I have compiled a table listing all the people named Benny descended from or related to Jacob Benny. This includes those born with the surname and those who married in, and names are removed as they die or marry out or change their name. After the 1850s, the number grew quite quickly to a peak of 15 in 1912 and now stands at 12. Since the only remaining Bennys who are likely to marry or have children are all female, it would seem that unless any children are given their mother’s maiden name my little Benny group will shrink from now on and will have died out at some time during the 21st century.

In conclusion, I would say that Jewish family history demands searching wherever one can and keeping one’s eyes open for anything that might lead to information. A Jewish upbringing, which I do not have, perhaps with some knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish, would appear to be helpful. In my experience, gentile family history can proceed much faster using relatively standard methods, although searching widely does produce useful extra information.

● The author is a retired physicist who now works for the West Surrey FHS Burial Indexes and the National Burial Index.

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5. Walter emigrated, first to Zacatecas in Mexico and later to Venezuela, after which he disappeared. He married in America and I have copies of photographs of him and some of his four children. While in contact with England, he changed his name from Benny to Jenkins. There may well be some of his descendants still living in Central America.
6. I should be interested to have news of any Willson descendant.
8. 6 June 1879.
**BOOK REVIEWS**

**Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust**

**Following** the success of Max Arthur’s *Forgotten Voices of the Great War*, this compelling volume chronicles some of the most moving and revealing oral histories of those who survived the Holocaust. There are more than 100 testimonials from men and women who escaped the camps, hidden children, even eye-witness accounts of some of the worst atrocities in human history.

Lyn Smith has worked at the Imperial War Museum’s Sound Archive for some 25 years, recording interviews with those whose lives were affected by Hitler’s policies, or who were witnesses to the persecutions, including those of aid workers and troops who liberated the camps.

Even in the face of the most extreme forms of barbarism and brutality, the human spirit survives and shines through in some of these poignant vignettes, together with the grimmest of Jewish humour. Little acts of goodness prevail, instances of kindness, of mutual support and humanity help to relieve the dark, overwhelmingly serious nature of what we read. Children recall their bewilderment in the face of unexpected persecution.

For example, Edith Baneth, a Czech Jewish survivor, cannot understand why her ice-skating teacher will no longer teach her. John Silberman recalls how his parents’ gentile friends acted out of self-interest and did not support them. Toivi Blatt, a survivor of Sobibor, recalls that “nobody knows themselves”. So that it proves impossible to predict human behaviour in extreme conditions. Hidden children such as six-year-old Nicole David had to learn to be compliant and self-disciplined while being sheltered by a Catholic family in St-Servais-Namur, yet they dutifully reminded her to repeat her Jewish prayers at night.

Historically, the reminiscences begin before the war in various places in Europe, and proceed through the years of persecution, the search for refuge, the expansion of the Third Reich, life in the ghetto and in the camps, Partisan resistance, descriptions of death marches and finally, liberation and its aftermath.

There are inevitably problems of storytelling, how stories are told and how they are interpreted. Testimony can be fraught with complications of voice, authority and meaning but in this volume Smith manages to present a highly readable account of interesting memories which open up new vistas for social and political research. The stories may be short, but the effect is cumulative, gradually building layers of revelatory and insightful material.

However, for specifically genealogical researchers, the volume unfortunately lacks an index, making cross-referencing difficult, if not impossible. There are many fascinating photographs, some previously unknown to me, but no list to indicate where or when they were taken or where to find them.

**Sorrel Kerbel**


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**Jewish Ancestors?**

**Jewish Genealogy in Lithuania**

**This handy little guide is a good size to carry around and is packed with useful information on how to track down your Lithuanian ancestors.** Sam Aaron, Co-ordinator of the LitvakSIG’s Raseiniai District Research Group and a member of the JGSGB Lithuanian SIG, devotes a chapter to describing how he carried out his own family research, starting in 1997 before the advent of Internet sources.

Correspondence was conducted by post and it took months for the Lithuanian authorities to reply to his letters, but eventually he succeeded in finding his roots although he started with only sketchy details of his family. He did not even know the correct name of its shtetl.

The book describes in a logical way what information exists in Lithuania, such as census returns, vital records, various tax lists and how to access Lithuanian data through your computer. Several databases are listed and examples of some of the search screens are shown. The author suggests other sources in the UK, South Africa and the USA which may well yield valuable information.

At the end of the book is a clear map of Lithuania with all the shtetls marked, followed by a list of shtetls with their former and current names and the district and region where they are located.

Both beginners and experts can benefit from this book: it is well written and researched with a section on further reading. I am almost sorry not to have Lithuanian ancestors—I can only hope that a Polish genealogy guide will appear very soon!

**Judith Samson**

EFFMAN Behrens of Hanover (c.1634-1714) was born in Bokkum (Bochum), between Dortmund and Essen, into a scholarly family. His father, Isaac, was a merchant, who later moved to Hanover and his mother was Lea Jacob, sister of Elieser Liebmann, father of Jost. He began his career as Hanover Court Jew as a minor merchant, supplying luxuries to the court such as jewels, gold, silk, textiles and tobacco. Gradually he established himself as a minter of coinage, moneylender and diplomatic mediator.

He eventually served three Guelph princes: Duke John Frederick of Luneburg-Celle, (1665-1679) and Electors Ernest Augustus and George Louis of Hanover, the latter being the future King George I of England (1698-1727). He helped to unify the Hanoverian territories into a single influential state with well-organised financial and economic systems.

He had not yet risen to prominence at the time of his first marriage to Miriam Sara Yenta, a young widow and a sister of Chayim Goldschmidt. Leffman was not an obvious catch as Yenta’s previous husband Salomon Gans came from a well-respected family. However, while the Jews tried to arrange marriages within their peer group, a union with the child of a learned parent was particularly desirable as scholarship has always been valued in the Jewish community.

At a time when few of the common mass could read and write, a Jew who had celebrated his bar mitzvah was, by that very fact, literate, a characteristic which helped further to set him apart.

This literacy however, was primarily in Hebrew. Although Ruben Gomperz, another Court Jew, is known to have conducted business in fluent spoken and written German, it is not known to what extent other Court Jews were literate in that language as the two did not necessarily go hand in hand. The Rothschilds of Frankfurt-am-Main were known to have employed Judendeutsch, which was a mixture of Hebrew and the local dialect.

Scholar, not businessman

Of all the Court Jews under consideration, Leffman appears to have been at heart a scholar rather than a businessman. For a long time he was leader of the Hanover-Neustadt community, most of whose members were connected with his household and his in-laws, Josef Hameln and Freude Spanier, spent their final years with him.

Leffman acquired the right to found a cemetery in Hanover in 1673. Thirty years on, he built a synagogue for the community on the site of one which had been demolished nearly a century earlier. He contributed to the library of his son-in-law David Oppenheim in Prague and when it could no longer be kept there for reasons which included censorship, he arranged for its removal to Hanover. If the local Jewish community looked up to him as its leader, it was for his Talmudic knowledge rather than for his worldly achievements and despite the pressures of business, he spent part of each day in rabbinical studies.

Selma Stern, a German-Jewish historian writes: “The inscriptions on his tombstone and in the community memorial book praise him as a friend of the poor and the oppressed and as a father to widows and orphans. He is called a leader of his generation, one who loved the study of the Bible and who made his home a place of worship.

“A contemporary described him as ‘a man whose countenance reflected honesty and dignity’. Some anecdotes relate that he used wisdom and tact in rewarding people for

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**Court Jews**

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**The most expensive hat in history**

_by Susan Miller_

LEFFMAN Behrens of Hanover (c.1634-1714) was born in Bokkum (Bochum), between Dortmund and Essen, into a scholarly family. His father, Isaac, was a merchant, who later moved to Hanover and his mother was Lea Jacob, sister of Elieser Liebmann, father of Jost. He began his career as Hanover Court Jew as a minor merchant, supplying luxuries to the court such as jewels, gold, silk, textiles and tobacco. Gradually he established himself as a minter of coinage, moneylender and diplomatic mediator.

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“A contemporary described him as ‘a man whose countenance reflected honesty and dignity’. Some anecdotes relate that he used wisdom and tact in rewarding people for
their good deeds and Jewish writers report that he was a thoughtful guide of his co-religionists and an energetic organiser of the Jewish community of Hanover.

“Very little of his personality is revealed through his official activity. A quiet and introspective person, an worldly scholar rather than a financier entrusted with the intrigues and political affairs of the great, he disliked splendour and ostentation. In a time of exciting diplomatic and state activity, Leffman appears oddly temperate and self-restrained, as one who was amused by the sight of men hurrying busily about their petty affairs.”

However, Leffman was not always the gentle scholar. According to the Encyclopaedia Judaica, he attempted to murder a relation who renounced Judaism and used his influence at court to escape trial. He also obtained the support of his patron to suppress the writings of an anti-Semitic author. You do not get to the top if you are soft all the way through!

Like his contemporaries in Berlin, Duke John Frederick tolerated the Jews in order to benefit financially, both from their taxes and their skills. At the start of his career, Leffman acted as an intermediary, obtaining money from various sources and transferring it to the ducal treasury. The Duke allied himself with Louis XIV of France (1643-1715) and Leffman and his son Herz were entrusted with the transport of Louis’ subsidies to the Duke via Amsterdam and Hamburg as quickly and secretly as possible. Leffman’s profits consisted of five per cent, plus any increase in value via the exchange rate.

Royal banker

John Frederick was succeeded by his younger brother Ernest Augustus (1679-1698) and it was under his reign that Leffman’s career expanded into that of financier and banker. The new duke was an ally of the Great Elector and as he no longer received the French subsidies, used the Jew’s skills to obtain funds for the treasury to the extent that Leffman became the duke’s financial controller and only occasionally did he act as army commissioner. However, the Court Jew was of particular help with his patron’s titular ambitions.

Leffman, with the assistance of his son Moses Jacob, a direct ancestor of mine, was involved in the long drawn-out diplomatic manoeuvres and was instrumental in raising the sums involved, over a million talers. After one reversal of ducal policy, he was in charge of the movement of large amounts of money from Paris to Hanover and had the banknotes and cash packed into wine casks, which were transported by boat via Metz and Coblenz. There was no Bankers’ Automated Clearing Service in those days!

The duke eventually became the ninth Elector of Hanover in 1692. His insignia of office was the Kurhut or elector’s hat and it was jokingly called the most expensive hat in history. This Electoral Bonnet, heraldically described as “a crimson cap, turned up with ermine”, appeared in the centre of the Royal Arms of Great Britain from the Act for Union with Ireland in 1801 until 1816, when Hanover became a kingdom in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars and the hat was upgraded to a crown.

The words mazel tov (good luck!) were written over the entrance of Leffman’s home in Hanover. He may have enjoyed good luck in his business career, but it deserted him in his private life as all his children predeceased him and he was survived by his third wife. Moses Jacob died while at the Leipzig Fair, a further calamity for the family as the goods of any Jew who died there were forfeited and their nearest burying ground was 35 miles away, at Dessau.

The sons of Moses Jacob did not enjoy their grandfather’s luck. A few years after Leffman’s death in 1714, these Court Jews were arrested on false charges of fraudulent conversion and subsequently resisted torture. On their eventual release, my ancestor’s brothers were declared bankrupt and driven from Hanover like common criminals. The collapse of the Behrens banking firm had long-lasting repercussions throughout Europe.

● The author is a member of the Association of Scottish Genealogists and Researchers in Archives.

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Fascinating story behind a painting

by Marion Kaye

Many old documents have been left to me by various members of my family and among them is one that reveals an interesting story, the basis of which is as follows.

My parents and several close members of their family left Darmstadt in Germany during the years 1936 to 1938 and came to London where they set up new homes, as did many of their compatriots at that time. Among those who came was my grandmother, Dorothea Strauss (née Schönmann) who was born in Darmstadt in 1887.

She was a well-educated young woman for those days who enjoyed writing and, luckily for her descendants, she kept an extremely detailed journal, starting from the time my father was born in 1909.

I have often used this journal to help with my own research, as she vividly described what life was like in Germany under the developing Hitler regime.

In the 1960s when my grandmother was living in a bedsitter in Finchley, in north-west London, she decided to pass the time by recording the history of each of the pictures hanging on the wall of her room.

One particular portrait was of a man called Bernhard Schweich (sometimes Schweig) who often adopted the name Issachar Bär, painted by his son Karl Schweich, a well-known artist of his day, who was born in Darmstadt around 1824.

This is what my grandmother wrote about the painting:

This is a portrait of his (Karl’s) father, the court gold-embroider Bernhard Schweich. Most of the paintings of this artist depicted German landscapes. I remember a large picture, which, as children, we admired in the picture gallery of the grand-ducal palace in Darmstadt. Later it hung in a the new museum built by a cousin of my uncle Eugen Sander, Alfred Messel, the great-great-great-grandfather of Lord Snowdon.¹

Karl Schweich lived with his family in Düsseldorf, where he was active at the academy. In the year 1821, his father the court gold-embroiderer, Bernhard Schweich, married into the business of his father-in-law. The latter, Jakob Woolf, was a brother of my great-grandmother, Jeanette Bruehl (married in Worms).

The sister of the artist, Aunt Bertha, was our only relative in Darmstadt, our home town. Although a contemporary of Goethe, she lived until 1915 and told us a lot about the court and the family.

In a small archive which she left, I found a copy of the Hessische Landeszeitung of 10 July 1821. That is even from before her birth. The paper had been preserved because it contained an official notice of the separation, with costs, of her mother’s property from the business interests of her husband. The newspaper, which was divided into eight pages, was so small that it could be accommodated on one page of a modern British newspaper, of course it also contained information of interest to the general community.

Thus there is a report from London that Lord Wilberforce recommended to the House of Commons, that slavery be abolished worldwide. Simultaneously, the Marquis of

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Descendants of Jakob Woolf

Unknown Woolf m ?

Jakob Woolf aka Koppel m ?

-1814

Lea Woolf m Bernhard Schweich

1795-?

1791-1877

Jeanette Woolf m Aaron Bruehl

? 1800-?

Caroline Bruehl m Josef Goldschmidt

1829-?

1826-1857

Ferdinand Sander m Regina Messel

1791-1877

Karl Schweich

1824-?

Bertha Schweich

? 1827-1915

Wilhelmina Goldschmidt m Julius Schönmann

1855-1927

Dorothea Schönmann m Sigmund Strauss

1887-1973

1879-1936

Henriette m 1. Eugen Sander

? 1860-?

-1814

1914-1987

Ernst Nathan Strauss m Gerda Schlochauer

1900-1972

1914-1987

Marion Lucy Strauss m Martin Kaye

—Shemot, Volume 13, 4
Lansdowne presented the same recommendation in the House of Lords. Other events could have happened today: the movement of navies and the threat to one country by another. Also reported, rather belatedly on 10 July was the death of Napoleon I, of colon cancer on 5 May.

Finally, it is also of interest that when Karl’s father, Bernhard, married Leah (Lehne Koppel) Woolf, his new wife insisted on a pre-marital agreement, as shown below. When her husband Jacob Woolf died he left her with considerable means as he had been the chief gold-embroiderer for one of the Dukes of Hesse, probably Ludwig II. It was his responsibility to embroider cloth for ceremonial robes as well as for the sumptuous interior furnishings that were currently fashionable with the court.

In my grandmother’s notes is a reference to this agreement with the translation of the announcement as reported in a Darmstadt newspaper. I still have in my possession a poor, albeit decipherable, photocopy of the actual paper in which it appeared. The painting is currently in the possession of my cousin.

On a personal note, although I was not a court embroiderer, I spent most of my life working with fabrics—could this be a hereditary gene?

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**Translation of a certified German translation from the Hebrew dated 16 October 1821 of the ketubah (marriage contract) dated 30 June1821 made between Issachar, vulgo Bar (Bernhard Schweig) and Leah, daughter of Jacob vulgo Koppel**

HE who prophesied the future at the Beginning (of the World) gives strong support to the words of this contract and this union which has been negotiated and agreed by the two parties, specifically, on the one hand, by the bridegroom Mr. Issachar vulgo Bar (Bernhard Schweig) of Reichenberg, son of Mr. Mayer and, on the other hand, by the maiden bride Lea, daughter of the deceased Jacob vulgo Koppel (gold-embroiderer).

The bachelor Bar, the bridegroom, honoured the maiden bride Lea and married her with a golden wedding ring and in happiness led her under the wedding canopy according to the laws of Moses and Israel.

She accepted the marriage also in accordance with custom and usage. The aforementioned Bar brought into the marriage as trousseau his entire possessions and furnished himself with suitable clothes for the Sabbath, holidays and for the workday as is correct and appropriate. He also obtained a witnessed Chalitza-letter from his brother Jacob according to custom.

In turn, the bride Lea through her supporter and guardian, the local and worthy Mr Joseph Hirsch, brought as trousseau into the marriage everything which came to her as inheritance following the death of her father, specifically in ready money 2,500 GL and goods, according to description 627 GL. And suitable clothes and is correct and appropriate then the named wife shall take everything she brought and half the addition. But if he dies in the third year or subsequent years without heirs, or if he dies before his wife in the first two years but with heirs from her, then she shall take everything she brought and the whole increase which-amounts to the sum of 3,750 GL.

If, God forbid, the aforementioned Mrs Lea dies in the first year after the wedding, which shall be counted from today, without leaving healthy and living heirs from her? consacrated husband, Mr Bar, he must return to her legal heirs all the wealth (she) brought in, but may deduct the usual costs. Should she die in the second year counted then the named wife shall take everything she brought and half the addition. But if he dies in the third year or subsequent years without heirs, or if he dies before his wife in the first two years but with heirs from her, then she shall take everything she brought and the whole increase which amounts to the sum of 3,750 GL. If, God forbid, the aforementioned Mrs Lea dies in the first year after the wedding, which shall be counted from today, without leaving healthy and living heirs from her? consacrated husband, Mr Bar, he must return to her legal heirs all the wealth (she) brought in, but may deduct the usual costs. Should she die in the second year counted from today, without leaving healthy and living heirs from her? consacrated husband, Mr Bar, he must return to her legal heirs all the wealth (she) brought in, but may deduct the usual costs. Should she die in the second year counted from today, without leaving healthy and living heirs from her? consacrated husband, Mr Bar, he must return to her legal heirs all the wealth (she) brought in, but may deduct the usual costs. Should she die in the second year counted from today, without leaving healthy and living heirs from her? consacrated husband, Mr Bar, he must return to her legal heirs all the wealth (she) brought in, but may deduct the usual costs. Should she die in the second year counted from today, without leaving healthy and living heirs from her? consacrated husband, Mr Bar, he must return to her legal heirs all the wealth (she) brought in, but may deduct the usual costs.

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Done (in) Darmstadt (on) Sunday, the second day of Tammuz 5581, 30 June 1821.

We the undersigned witnesses have obtained for each party from the other, all parts of the above document, through a witness, as is fit and proper hereby to take possession. Everything shall be done and confirmed. (Signed) Benjamin Seeb, son of the late Rabbi Hirsch Neustedel as witness. Bonnem Enoch, son of the late Elias, cantor and notary of the Jewish community, as a witness.

The signatures of the witnesses . . . and I know . . . that they signed the above document and I therefore confirm and witness their signatures in accordance with custom and precedent, with my own signature. (signed) Kallmann Mengeburg, District Rabbi. The agreement of the above (German) translation of the Hebrew marriage contract of Bernhard Schweig, local resident and the authenticity of the Hebrew original are hereby certified.

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**Hochherzoglich Hessische Zeitung**

(Newspaper of the Grand Duchy of Hesse)

Issue No. 80, Darmstadt, 10 July 1821.

Declaration by Lehne Wolf of Darmstadt: Lehne Wolf, surviving daughter of the locally deceased court gold-embroiderer Koppel Wolf, (and) the betrothed of local citizen and gold-embroiderer Bär Schweig, has declared in writing that she does not intend to enter into a joint enterprise with her future husband but wants to reserve her benefits as a wife within the law (and) which is (hereby) announced publicly for everyone’s information.

Darmstadt, 29 June 1821.

Grand-Ducal Government Office of Hesse (Hallwachs).

● The author, now retired, is a volunteer at the Thames Valley Air Ambulance. She is also the Membership Secretary of the JGSGB.

**REFERENCE**

1. Lord Snowdon was the subject of an article I wrote in 1999 for Shemot 7,4.
I never knew my grandparents. They had all arrived on these calmer, more hospitable shores from turbulent Eastern Europe towards the end of the 19th century. Of course they produced fashionably large families and, as my parents were each the youngest offspring, it was unremarkable that my grandparents were laid peacefully to rest before or very shortly after I was born.

This meant, however, that I would never hear first-hand vivid and colourful tales or catch a glimpse of life in “the old country”. My parents grew up in an England which first felt the impact of World War I, the hedonistic new freedoms of the 1920s and then the sinister lurch of Europe towards fascism and its concomitant anti-Semitism.

Little wonder, then, that a foreign, Jewish family background was not one they wanted to recall or talk to me about with much enthusiasm. However my mother did regale me with one anecdote which I found enthrallingly romantic.

Brazen abduction

It seems my maternal grandmother Gitel Lezter (1859-1931) was one of a large family of girls. She had no brothers (or none that survived) and one of those pretty sisters caught the eye of a local nobleman who arranged her abduction in a closed carriage!

There now descends a complete and utter blank in this tale, never satisfactorily explained. No doubt my grandmother was reticent over the sordid details and carefully omitted them. At all events her wronged sister was returned to the bosom of the family, but died soon after, perhaps in childbirth?

This piece of family history has always fascinated me by its marked similarity to a passage in A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens wherein Doctor Manette recounts being summoned at night to the chateau of the Marquis de St Evremonde to attend a dying peasant girl who had been torn from the arms of her betrothed and abducted and ravished by the wicked nobleman. Hence the terrible vengeance sworn by the girl’s younger sister, the future Madame Defarge, on “all the accursed race of Evremonde”.

So far, so melodramatic. My more prosaic genealogist son Richard kindly volunteered to do some research for me. For example, where had my grandmother lived?

Useful database

A search for Gitel Lezter (b. 1859) on the Jewish Records Indexing-Poland Project1 corroborated by the birthplace given on the 1901 United Kingdom census, led him to the town of Rzeszow in Galicia, the southern region of partitioned Poland under Austrian rule from 1772 to 1918. Its grandest inhabitants were the Lubomirski family of ancient and distinguished lineage. Was it possible that a hot-headed sprig of that aristocratic family had been determined to possess a pretty local Jewess? Perhaps he felt it was his droit de seigneur?2

Readers may be interested to learn that descendants of the Lubomirski family are still very much alive. However, I doubt if they would take kindly to enquiries from me into possible misdeeds during the Victorian era.

If one is fortunate enough to have ancestors from Rzeszow, a treat awaits. A wonderful lady by the name of Eden Joachim has produced what she modestly describes as a booklet, but in fact is a photocopy of the entire ledger of Jewish births in Rzeszow from 1835 to 1866 detailing more than 4,000 births.3 This was how I found the unnamed male child on the family tree.

REFERENCES
1. www.jewishgen.org/jri-pl/.
2. The supposed right of a feudal lord to have sexual relations with a vassal’s bride on her wedding night.
3. edensa@aol.com. A donation of $50 would be acceptable.

● The author, originally from Portsmouth, trained as an opera singer, and is Richard Cooper’s mother. A branch of her family is Millets, the “outdoors” shop.

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A branch of the Lezter tree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moizes Eizik Lezter m Szeindel Salender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1826-1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frimet 1843-1888 m Salomon Rinenberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ytte 1849-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnamed male 1853-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther Chanya 1857-1920 m Pinchus Millet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gitel 1859-1931 m Soilig Millet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sissel 1863-1864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freide 1866-1867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanny Berns 1900-1980 1899-1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne m John Cooper 1927-1997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What to do in Jewish Krakow

by Mike Gordon

With the arrival of cheap flights to Poland from Luton and Stanstead, major areas of the country are now easily accessible. Places such as Łódź, Szczecin, Warsaw and Krakow are long weekend destinations and many people in their 50s are now venturing to have a look at places they heard of from their parents and grandparents, often in less than complimentary terms.

I took one such trip to Krakow recently and this article presents up-to-date information on what is now open and on display in the old Jewish district of Kazimierz, about 10 minutes amble from the magnificent Old Town Square, itself now under architectural examination.

In two days, I discovered seven synagogues, some newly opened after restoration, a large restored cemetery, Oscar Schindler’s pharmacy and factory (over the river), exhibitions and research centres, as well as several "Jewish-style" restaurants and bars offering klezmer and liturgical music. There is a large exhibition centre, plus displays about life in the ghetto and artefacts which change on a regular basis. Bookshops contain many titles on local Jewish life, religion, history and the Holocaust.

Seven synagogues

We were told that of the seven synagogues, only two were active but for genealogists there were plaques and memorials in most buildings. The Polish state took on the job of restoring many of the buildings and has done it well, retaining as much of the original material as they could and treating the subject with great respect.

In one ancient restored synagogue, now a museum, we saw an audio-visual show made up entirely of German military footage. These images illustrated the establishment of the ghettos and then their clearances.

Within the body of one synagogue was an exhibition of family photographs chillingly similar to those photos we all have stashed away in boxes. They included family weddings, street traders, children playing: people just like our boobas and zeidas, aunts and uncles. Where possible the families were named and details given. Similarly, there were memorials showing synagogue worthies and plaques of families lost. It was during these visits that reality crept in—these people died simply because of what they were, nothing more, nothing less.

Finally there is the Galicija Museum, which on the day I visited was hosting an exhibition entitled “A Contemporary Look at the Jewish Past” but I ran out of time to do the displays justice. There is so much to see and absorb and that is before you sit down and start to your actual research or plan your visit to Auschwitz.

The Remuh Cemetery, behind the synagogue at 40 Szeroka Street was named after the famous 16th-century rabbi and religious writer Moses Isserles. The cemetery was used from 1551 to 1800. Vandalised and restored, it now has its own Wailing Wall built from the remains of tombstones discovered when the cemetery was restored.

The Old Synagogue dates back to the 15th century and is now a full-blown Jewish museum; others display frescoes, one has a newly renovated ceiling and walls and yet another is now an art centre. All of these buildings are contained in an area of less than two square miles and most have easy access.
## Index for 2005

WHERE titles do not reveal the name of the family or person being researched, as in “Why aren’t they smiling?” the articles have been indexed under the name(s) being researched, see Family names. The family name is in the first column, the author in the second. Book reviews are listed under this title by author.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Hirschfield</th>
<th>Y Jones</th>
<th>2.15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts</td>
<td>Kaplan</td>
<td>H Kaplan</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants for posts in the London Sephardi</td>
<td>Krantz</td>
<td>S Grossnass</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation, 1879</td>
<td>Kutnowski</td>
<td>A Cohen</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art of survival, H Jarvis</td>
<td>Mairants</td>
<td>V Jablon</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Library maps collection, A Carlucci and D Hall</td>
<td>Marks</td>
<td>J Romney Wegner</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newfield</td>
<td>P Bernard</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book reviews</td>
<td>Schneider</td>
<td>L Culank</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron, S, A Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Lithuania</td>
<td>Seligmann</td>
<td>A Yamey</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auslander, J, Genealogical Gazetteer of the Kingdom of Hungary</td>
<td>Teutsch</td>
<td>M Howes</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beider, A, A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from Galicia</td>
<td>Fascinating story behind a painting, M Kaye</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M, “Jewish” Schools of Leeds 1880-1930</td>
<td>Finding Jewish ancestors in New Zealand, N Isaacs</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedman, J, Leeds Jews in the 1901 Census</td>
<td>Finding my father’s family, D Gold</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedman, M, Essays on Leeds and Anglo-Jewish History and Demography</td>
<td>Fior tombstone</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedman, M, 25 Characters in Leeds Jewish History</td>
<td>Fischlers of Lancut, S Budd</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kagan, J, Novogrudok, The History of a Shtetl</td>
<td>Footsteps in the past, D Berger</td>
<td>1.35, 2.35, 3.33, 4.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazarus, M, A Club Called Brady</td>
<td>Freemen as forebears, R Wenzerul</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafaeli, E, The Modest Genius, Reb Aisel Harif</td>
<td>Friendly societies, R Kalman</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith L, Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust</td>
<td>From sh'tiebel to showbiz, V Jablon</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Old Jewish Section of Rookwood Necropolis Cemetery, Sydney, Australia (CD)</td>
<td>From Swiegals to Schwoltz, B Valman</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, J, Rothschild Buildings—Life in an East End Tenement Block</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Library maps collection, A Carlucci and D Hall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Home Office rules—OK! L Culank</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemeteries—Balls Pond Road and Hoop Lane, L Messik</td>
<td>Hull—early Jewish immigrants, A Bennett</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity record goldmine, G Rigal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colney Hatch: the Victorian mental institution, A Jacobus</td>
<td>Jewish friendly societies, R Kalman</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation and cousins, M Howes</td>
<td>JC Index—a prime resource, C Fox</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Jews in Europe, S Miller</td>
<td>Jewish Genealogical Society of Denmark, D Fielker</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Czeching” out your ancestors, O Fleming</td>
<td>Jewish soldiers in the late 1800s, H Pollins</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Jews of Losice—helping save their history, V Lewin</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths of two Heimans, H Dakers</td>
<td>Keeping an old language alive, S Barry</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubowitzes of Pasvetin, V Dubowitz</td>
<td>Krakow, what to do there, M Gordon</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Early Jewish immigrants to Hull, A Bennett</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecologist and his midwife, A Yamey</td>
<td>Ecologist and his midwife, A Yamey</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Family Names</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascoli</td>
<td>G Marks</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnett</td>
<td>R Wenzerul</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson</td>
<td>S Miller</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bergmann</td>
<td>A Yamey</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Y Jones</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czarapak/Gold</td>
<td>D Gold</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>C Newall</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenstein</td>
<td>H Jarvis</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>D Gold</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomperz</td>
<td>S Miller</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grayman</td>
<td>M Benson</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Letters to the Editor</td>
<td>1.25, 3.7, 3.18, 4.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links to the Maggid of Dubno, S Grossnass</td>
<td>Lithuanian records research, J Diamond</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living the high life in Notting Hill, P Bernard</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost Italian roots, G Marks</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Map collections of British Library, A Carlucci and D Hall</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most expensive hat in history, S Miller</td>
<td>Myer Davis—the father of Anglo-Jewish history, C Newall</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Naturalization records at National Archives, R Kershaw</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand, finding Jewish ancestors, N Isaacs</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Index—continued on page 35
I first met Elsebeth Paikin at the International Conference of Jewish Genealogical Societies in New York in 1999. Some members will know her as co-ordinator and webmaster for JewishGen’s Scandinavia SIG (Special Interest Group).

When I met her again in London in 2001 she told me about her intention of starting a society in Denmark and knowing of my regular visits there, she asked if, when they got going, I would go to Copenhagen and talk to them about British resources. Their society was inaugurated early in 2004, and this summer we left our friends in Jutland and drove over to Copenhagen for the long-arranged meeting.

The usual meeting-place was unavailable during the summer holidays, so we met in the home of the treasurer, an elegant apartment in a Copenhagen suburb which had a spacious room which amply accommodated the dozen members attending. I had somehow expected us to be sitting around informally in armchairs, but they were lined up in rows in front of me!

However, this did not spoil the cosy atmosphere, and I did my best to illustrate the many resources available in London by describing some of my own researches. Many of the Danes are searching for ancestors in Britain, and of course I recommended that they join the JGSGB. They seemed sufficiently impressed, probably more by the fact that an Englishman could address them in Danish.

Small but thriving

It was a small meeting by our standards, but one must remember that the entire population of Denmark is half that of London, and the proportion of Jews is probably even lower than ours, so this thriving little society has only around 60 members. They meet once a month for a packed programme of lectures and visits. A lively quarterly journal reports on these, gives information about resources in Denmark and elsewhere, publishes book reviews, and puts researchers in touch with each other.

There is evidence of interest from abroad in Danish ancestors, and local resources obviously enable one to trace back at least to the 18th century. In deference to the 200th anniversary of Hans Christian Andersen’s birth, there is a brief account of his meeting at the Hambro Bank in London in 1847 and his subsequent friendship with Joseph Hambro.¹

Denmark, like other Scandinavian countries, has always had a policy of religious tolerance; the story of the clandestine mass evacuation of the Jewish population to Sweden during World War II is well known. Jews were given permission to settle in the country in the 1660s, though they were in the Danish-occupied parts of northern Germany from 1622. The first synagogue was established in 1684 in Copenhagen by permission of King Christian V.

The society’s lectures have included historical accounts of Jews settling in local towns. By the 19th century, Jews were fairly well integrated into the community² and there was the same influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe at the turn of the century as elsewhere. There is a Society for Danish Jewish History and a recently-opened Jewish Museum was designed by Daniel Liebeskind.³

The author is a retired maths teacher and the former Editor of Shemot.

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3. The museum website is at www.jewmus.dk/. The society’s website is at www.jewishgen.org/jgs-denmark/.

Index—continued

O
Once-Jewish Bennys, A Benny ........................................ 4.24

P
Photos often tell lies, A Shapiro ..................................... 1.31
Presidential comment, A Joseph ................................. 2.14, 3.27, 4.17
Pre-war Jewish elementary education, A Jacobus ............ 3.12
Pseudo-Levys of Bethnal Green and Spitalfields, A Jacobus ........... 1.14

R
Rape of my great-aunt, A Cooper, ................................. 4.32
Relation in the Chamber of Horrors, S Miller ..................... 1.16
Researching Lithuanian records, J Diamond ................... 1.8

S
Sarah Lyon and her descendants, J Wolkovitch ............... 3.20
Sarah Lyon—the Leeds Connection, M Friedman ................ 4.6
Sarah’s second marriage, A Cohen ................................. 3.19
Sephardi congregation applicants ................................. 1.25
Slapoffskis of Oxford and Australia, H Pollins ................. 4.12
So, who were they? M Gordon .................................... 2.9
Strange series of events, Y Jones ................................. 2.15

T
Tracking my ancestors Down Under, J Romney Wegner .... 2.20
Tragedy of the Fürth family, R Millward ......................... 1.26

W
What to do in Jewish Krakow, M Gordon ....................... 4.33
Why aren’t they smiling? H Kaplan ............................. 3.14
AUSTRALIA

The Kosher Koala Vol 12 No. 3 September 2005
A family story: the Ottolenghi/Ottolanguage/Langley family of Australia and New Zealand. The Ottolenguishes leave London for Australia and New Zealand in the 1850s attracted by the discovery of gold in Victoria and Otago and the new cities of Melbourne and Dunedin.

Jewish Genealogy Downunder Vol 7 No. 3 August 2005
A report of the Ottolenguish family reunion in Melbourne 2005, and a family website.

BELGIUM

Los Mestros, No 59, juin 2005
The migration of Rhodian Jews to Africa and the Americas from 1900-1914. Yitzchak Kerem traces a Sephardi diaspora from Rhodes.

FRANCE

Gen Ami, No 33, Sept 2005
Abraham Lazard, de la Bohème à la Lorraine, ses descendants à la conquête de l’Amérique includes the founders of the bank Lazard Brothers and pioneers in the United States.

ASHKENAIS ET SÉFARDES

Descendance d’Eliezer Wallach le Saint, of Dornach who died in 1696.
L’origine du général Joseph Katz. Bernard Katz sets out to discover if the general is his long-lost cousin.

UNE HISTOIRE DE CHANTRES EN ALSACE. Descendance de Samuel Hirschell Well-Stern. Cantors in Alsace and descendants of Stern (d. 1817).

GERMANY

Stammbaum Issue 27 Summer 2005
Genealogical research for German Landjuden in Nassau. Part 1: the period before the introduction of vital registers, in 1817. There is a list of 18th-century Schutzjuden (protected Jews) of Steinfischbach.

ALEMANNIA JUDAICA.
A website www.alemannia-judaica.de features lists of Jewish cemeteries, photographs of former synagogues, descriptions of past Jewish communities and Jewish museums in Baden Wuerttemberg.

WEBSITES SUPPORTING GERMAN-JEWISH GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH:
An Internet-based archive of German-Jewish periodicals also lists yearbooks. The website www.compactmemory.de is in German but an English version will be available soon.

In the 17th century. A family tree of descendants of David Wallach (b. 1750) is given.

Looking for the missing link. Samson families lived in both Bernburg and Wolfenbuttel in Saxony and Eli Samson is trying to find a connection between the two branches. He provides a family tree of descendents of Loser Lazarus Samson of Bernburg who died in 1838.

A visit into the past. The author is researching his family Marx from Edeltingen and Schweinfurt in Bavaria and provides a family tree of direct descendents of Manasses Marx born in 1770.

ISRAEL

Sharsheet Hadorot Vol 19 No. 3 August 2005
The Toledano family of Gibraltar originally came from Morocco in the early 18th century. A family tree gives the descendents of Abraham Toledano, born in 1710.

Jewish Genealogy Downunder Vol 7 No. 3 August 2005
A report of the Ottolenguish family reunion in Melbourne 2005, and a family website.

UNITED STATES

Avotaynu Vol XXI No.2 June 2005
Holocaust closure: The role of Germany and the Swiss Red Cross. There are still problems in gaining access to the Holocaust archives of the Red Cross International Tracing Service in Arosien, Germany. The author explains their importance and the latest developments in trying to gain access.

Mining Russian revision lists for hidden information. This article gives examples of research in some early 19th-century Lithuanian records.

New printing technique is boon for genealogists: print-on-demand (POD).

U.S. courthouse records hold valuable genealogical information.

Using GenMerge to analyze the Jews in Pusalotas in Lithuania helped the author’s research. A 14-day trial version can be downloaded on www.genmerge.com.

Guidelines for converting documents written in Hebrew and Yiddish into English provides detailed information and websites.

Two approaches in Jewish onomastics. Alexander Beider reviews two books on Jewish names by Menk and the Guggenheimers respectively.

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The search for Koenigsbuch on the Internet; this family came from near Krakow, Poland.

A journey in the wake of a forgotten yesteryear. The Chelouche family from Oran, Algeria settled in the Holy Land in 1840.


Index of Voter Lists in Constantine (Algeria) and its district in 1880 includes a website www.sephardicstudies.org/constantine.html.

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LOUISIANA

Becoming Canadian: Jewish immigration to Toronto 1900-1930 suggests some useful records.

Ontario birth, marriage and death certificates includes addresses of archives. For vital records of other Canadian provinces there is a website www.cbs.gov.on.ca/mcbs/english/4UBMCE.htm.

Jewish newspapers as a genealogical resource. The smaller the town, the more likely that the newspaper reported personal Jewish news.

Who is a Jew and related topics? With the thriving global interest in tracing one’s roots many people have discovered unsuspected Jewish ancestry.

TWO APPROACHES IN JEWISH ONOMASTICS. Alexander Beider reviews two books on Jewish names by Menk and the Guggenheimers respectively.

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LOS ANGELES

Roots-Key Vol. 25 No. 2,3 Summer/Fall 2005
This issue celebrates 350 years of Jewish life in America and includes many family stories of pioneering ancestors.

NEW YORK

Dorot Vol. 26 No. 3 Spring 2005
Online News gives many useful websites for New York research as well as worldwide.

WASHINGTON

Mishpacha Vol 24 No. 3 Summer 2005
Archival resources lists non-electronic sources of information by country.

Consolidated Jewish surname index updated at www.avotaynu.com/ csi-home.html.


Databases on Amsterdam Jewry at http://dutchjewry.huji.ac.il.