

# Jewish Genealogy Downunder

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newsletter  
of the  
Australian  
Jewish  
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Society  
(Vic) Inc.

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## Remembering the early Jewish settlers of Bendigo:

Dr Howard Freeman (rear) and historian James Lerk, who is holding a brass finial from the Bendigo synagogue, circa 1872. See pages 8 and 9 for the full story.

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## FEBRUARY 2012 MEETING

The AJGS (VIC) together with the Makor Jewish Community Library invite you to a presentation by

**Rodney Eisfelder**

**Digitised Newspapers: A Useful Resource for Family Research**

Wednesday, 22 February at 7.30 pm (date to be confirmed)

Until a few years ago, researching old newspapers was a tedious task requiring visits to the newspaper archives of our local or international libraries. Digitisation has now brought these archival resources into our living rooms. Already, 234 Australian newspapers and magazines dating from the 1820s to 1956 are accessible online. Many other historic newspapers such as the UK's well-known *Jewish Chronicle* have now been made available to the family researcher.

Rodney will use a slide presentation to explore how technology has opened the doors to this worldwide resource.

Beth Weizmann Jewish Community Centre, 306 Hawthorn Road, Caulfield South 3162.  
All welcome. Members \$4; non-members \$8. Enquiries: [admin@ajgs-vic.org.au](mailto:admin@ajgs-vic.org.au) or (03) 9523 6738.

## ***Jewish Genealogy Downunder***

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### **Editorial policy**

We welcome contributions from members which will help others further their research. This might include sharing recent findings or the discovery of interesting resources. The editor has the right to accept or reject any material submitted or edit as might be appropriate. Material appearing in this newsletter may be reprinted by other newsletters as long as proper attribution is given.

*Jewish Genealogy Downunder* is free to all members of AJGS (Vic) Inc.

### **AJGS (Vic) Inc. Committee of Management**

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#### **Internet Discussion Group**

Website: www.ajgs.org.au (online forum)

### **AJGS (Vic) Inc. membership fees (new in 2012)**

Individual	\$35
Family	\$40
Concession	\$15

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## **EDITORIAL**

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This issue of *Jewish Genealogy Downunder* includes a detailed report on a historical group visit to Bendigo in north-west Victoria. This day-long tour was organised by the Australian Jewish Historical Society (Vic) and is one of a number of tours that have been initiated or co-sponsored by that society. The Jewish Museum of Australia also offers walking tours of Carlton, the city of Melbourne, East Melbourne and St Kilda, which are also very popular.

Last year, a three-day visit to the distant inland town of Broken Hill in New South Wales was well attended, and the program was given extensive coverage in this newsletter. So why do we cover these events, considering that our focus as genealogists is family research with an emphasis on ancestry and family connections?

The point we wish to make is that the history of Jewish immigration, the creation of institutions to preserve Jewish religion and culture, together with success stories of settlement and integration of newcomers, provide a rich social context for family research.

It is important for us to remember that mid-19th century mining towns in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia played an important role in supporting Jewish communal life. Most European Jewish settlers arrived, with little or no English, to escape persecution, discrimination, poverty and conscription and brought with them a strong commitment to maintaining their identity as Jews.

In these towns, Jews found a role in civic life, most prospered economically and their circumstances gave them opportunities to create the elements of a Jewish community. They faced the challenges of building a synagogue, seeking consecrated land for a cemetery, employing a rabbi and providing Jewish education for the next generation.

Those of us who joined tours in Bendigo, Ballarat, Broken Hill or Hobart were given the chance to appreciate the importance of blending our interest in genealogy with the political, social and economic underpinnings of our current vital Jewish communities. We encourage our readers to take advantage of future tours, whether they be metropolitan based or in rural areas.

We take this opportunity to welcome Max Wald as a new member on our Committee of Management (see page 4). Max has already attended two international conferences on Jewish genealogy, and his enthusiasm for family research will be an asset in our work.

Kurt Friedlaender has indicated his intention to step down as treasurer of the AJGS (Vic) after many years of dedicated service in this role. We thank Kurt for his valuable contribution, and we are seeking his replacement. If you feel you would like to join our very dedicated team, contact Allan Jankie on 0403 040 838.

We wish all our readers a healthy, peaceful and prosperous new year and look forward to hearing about your genealogical success stories.

**Lionel Sharpe**  
**Editor**

## IAJGS conference 2012

The 32nd International Conference on Jewish Genealogy will be held at the Marriott Rive Gauche Hotel in Paris, France, from 15 to 18 July 2012.



It is hosted by the Cercle de Généalogie Juive and is a full bilingual French and English conference. For further details, visit [www.paris2012.eu](http://www.paris2012.eu).

A special hotel rate of €119 per night includes a French breakfast. This rate also applies to a number of days before and after the conference. The link to hotel registration brings you to the French-language Marriott site. If you feel uncomfortable making the reservation in French, go to <http://marriott.com> for the English-language version and be sure to use the conference code ZX4ZX4A to get the discounted price.

Registration cost for the conference (by 29 February 2012) is €185 for one person and €320 for couples. At today's rates, single-person registration is about A\$245.

Tours of noted sites in the Paris area are scheduled. They include the Louvre, Montparnasse, Montmartre and other sites.

## Trip to Lithuania

US-based genealogists Howard Margol and Peggy Freedman are organising another group trip to Lithuania, from 19 to 29 June 2012.

"If you are interested in tracing your roots in Lithuania, Latvia, Eastern Poland close to Lithuania, or Belarus, now is the time to sign up as we will be limiting the group size to 25," Peggy explained.

Included are visits to archives, synagogues, ghettos, Holocaust sites, meetings with Jewish leaders, sight-seeing, guides/interpreters, and two days to visit and spend time in your shtetl of interest. All meals are included (except for one dinner and two lunches), along with the finest hotels, modern buses and more.

"Howard and I are very familiar with the archives, the archivists, Lithuania and the main places of Jewish interest. Our previous trip participants can be contacted if references are desired."

For further details, see [www.litvaktrip.peggyspage.org](http://www.litvaktrip.peggyspage.org) or email [litvaktrip@gmail.com](mailto:litvaktrip@gmail.com).

## The Great Solomon Reunion

A reunion of the Solomon family will be held from Saturday 10 March to Monday 12 March 2012, in Melbourne, Australia.

It will be held at the Alma Sports Club, Wilkes Street, North Caulfield, from 9 am to 5 pm each day. About 250 Solomon and associated family members are expected to attend the three-day event. They are the descendants of Vaiben and Emanuel Solomon, brothers who arrived in Australia as convicts in 1818 and who later prospered in business, politics and the arts in South Australia.

Speakers will include Todd Knowles of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City; Rabbi John S. Levi, OAM, author of *These are the Names: Jewish Lives in Australia 1788-1850*; and Madeleine Say, picture librarian at the State Library of Victoria.

Associated family names include Alexander, Barnett, Benjamin, Boas, Keesing, Cashmore, Cohen, Daniels, Fewster, Isaacs, Joshua, Jacobs, Jacobsohn, Marks, Lipman, Marks, Morell, Moss, Montefiore, Myers, Phillips, Salom, Victorson and Voules Brown.

For further information, email Katrina Cowen or Jenny Cowen at [katrina.jenny@bigpond.com](mailto:katrina.jenny@bigpond.com).

Hanna Yahalom prepares for the move.



## Books on the move

The Lamm Jewish Library of Australia will open its doors on 8 February 2012.

The bookshelves are emptying at the Makor Library as construction and refurbishment of the new library, which began in July, nears completion. Staff, volunteers and 54,000 catalogued items are now making the move from the Beth Weizmann Community Centre, next door to the Lamm JLA, to a new, modern hub of multi-faceted Jewish learning.

The national facility will include state-of-the-art computer software, with cataloguing available in English, Hebrew and Yiddish. More than 30,000 books are available, with thousands of audiovisual materials including DVDs, CDs, video cassettes, posters, and journals in English, Hebrew and Yiddish included in the collections.

A new reception and security entrance will provide safe entry to the library, meeting spaces for community organisations, private areas for study and research, and open areas for discussion, book clubs, children's story time and film screenings.

An official launch is being planned for Sunday 18 March that will include a ceremonial ribbon-cutting followed by a fun, family friendly, open house event.

On receiving the keys to the building named for his family, principal donor and president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry Dr Danny Lamm said: "I am excited about the opening of the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia, which brings together the various important Jewish library collections under one roof."

Library director Leonie Fleiszig noted: "A small, humble Jewish library that began with a few books in a room at the first Beth Weizmann in St Kilda Road in the mid-1980s will now be an invaluable community resource."

The Lamm JLA will house a number of collections including the Makor Jewish Community Library, the Kadimah Library and the archives of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society (Vic) and the Australian Jewish Historical Society (Vic).

## NEW MEMBERS

The AJGS (Vic) extends a warm welcome to the following new members:

- Eli Fryher
- Andrew Gonczol
- Robert Pratt
- Andrew Tirkel

# How I entered the amazing world of genealogy

by Max Wald

I was born in Melbourne in 1940, and I am married to Peppy (Janie Stone).

My parents (now deceased) were born in Poland – my mother, Peshka, in Bialystok, and my father, Laibl, in Biala Podlaska (near Miedzyrzec). Both arrived separately in Melbourne during the 1930s.

In late 2003, Peppy and I decided to go on the first adult March of the Living, held in April 2004. At the first information evening for the march, we were told that we would have time to visit the shtetls of our parents. I realised it would be a great opportunity to walk where my parents walked. I realised I did not know of any family prior to my dad's father, Max, who I was named after and who passed away six months before I was born. It would be a great opportunity to get some documentation of my family from archives while visiting the towns in Poland.

With advice from Lena Fizman, who had already researched her family's ancestors in Poland, I began.

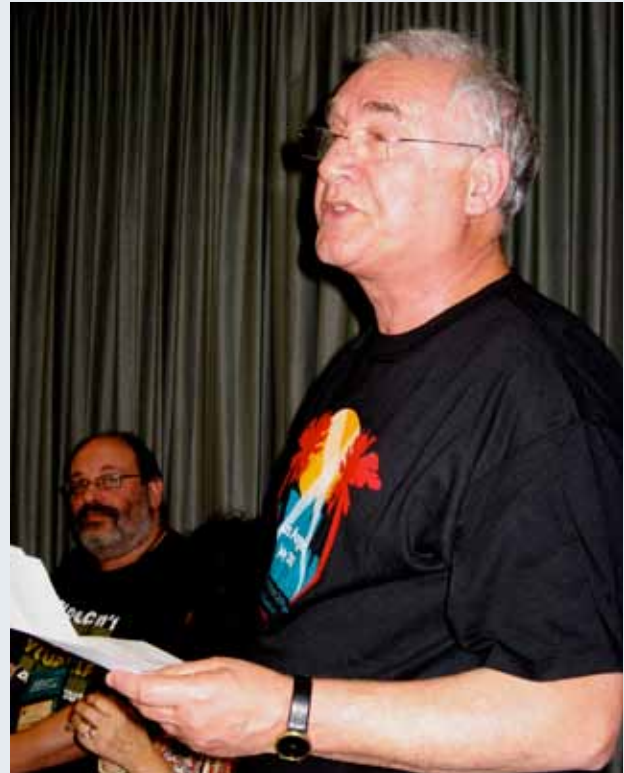
In 2004, the only way I could make contact with Biala Podlaska was by fax. I contacted Urzad Stanu Cywilnego, the civil offices in Biala Podlaska and Bialystok. I was lucky to connect with a lady, Edyta, who worked at the council offices in Biala Podlaska and who had some knowledge of English. After forwarding her my family details, and further correspondence, all by fax, she told me she had located a number of ledger entries of birth and marriage details of my family in the city archives. I was very excited that something had been found.

In Bialystok, the only documents I could find were the marriage record of my mother's parents, since most records from Bialystok were destroyed during the war. At that stage, there was no way I could get the copies electronically, so I organised dates that I would be in the towns to meet the town officials.

When I attended the council offices in Biala Podlaska, Edyta showed me the ledgers of my family details (marriages and births), and I saw the signature of my grandfather Mordechai Perkelwald written in Yiddish. Edyta and the head of the council were extremely helpful.

I have since recovered many records as far back as the late 1700s on my father's side, but I have hit a brick wall on my mother's side (the Levertowskia and Alter families from Bialystok).

The Perkelwalds (our original surname) have quite a unique story, as their name appears in only two towns – Miedzyrzec and Biala Podlaska. As the name emanated from Miedzyrzec, I am convinced that the Perkelwalds are all related in some way. I am in the process of connecting the dots. I have obtained copies of most of the 200 or so documents available through JRI Poland, and I am currently organising translations of these documents.



Max Wald relays his experiences of the IAJGS conference in Los Angeles to an audience of AJGS (Vic) members in 2010.

I attended the International Association of Jewish Genealogy Societies conference in Los Angeles in 2010 and in Washington in 2011.

During my research, I connected with a relative living in Paris, Paulette, who told me about my grandmother's family of which I had no idea and who were rounded up in the Paris Deportation. I visited Paulette earlier this year. The names of these relatives are written on the Wall of Remembrance at the Paris Holocaust Centre. She helped me fill in a lot of blanks and led me to another relative in New York who I met after the Washington conference.

In September 2009, my uncle, Hymie Wald, died. At his funeral and minyan, as happens on such occasions, you meet family you haven't seen for a long time. I realised my cousins' children and grandchildren didn't know each other, so I decided to organise a family reunion. I obtained family information from all branches of the Wald family in Melbourne and created a large family tree, using Family Tree Maker 2005.

On 14 February 2010, 140 descendants and relatives of Mordechai Max Wald met at Caulfield Park for a picnic lunch. I displayed a 3.5 metre by one metre family tree, so people could see where they fitted into the puzzle. The theme was: Who do you think you are?

Family names by marriage include: WALD, MICHAELS, HALPRIN, SHENKER, HAMERSFIELD, GOLD, SNIDER, SACKVILLE, CRAFTI, DVASH, JACOBS, NEW, NUCHOWICZ, LERMER and ORWIN.

**Max Wald recently joined the AJGS (Vic) Committee of Management.**

# Some tips on searching locally for BDM dates

by **Vaughan Duggan**  
vaughan@duggan.jp

I am currently attempting to identify the date of birth (DOB) of 19 people who belonged to a local organisation since its inception in the late 1800s. Most were born before 1910. While I have found eight of these dates, and a large amount of information about them and their families, the remainder have defied my efforts. As it happens, the deaths of 16 of the people were registered, as were the marriages of 12 (four didn't marry). Three persons remain a complete mystery because of their common names.



In the course of my research, I have compiled some tips that may assist other society members in their family research.

## Victorian online births, deaths and marriages

Although this is an obvious option for searching BDM information, you can search and obtain certificates online at a better rate (\$17.50 versus \$27.80) than if seeking the full and official statement from Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria (<http://online.justice.vic.gov.au>).

Leaving aside those four people who were known to have been born overseas, most of the remaining 15 births don't appear to be registered, even though there is conclusive evidence (from their marriage and death certificates) that they were born in Victoria. While most of their siblings appear to have been registered, only a few had siblings whose births were not registered. Some of the more plausible reasons why births are not registered include parents living in remote localities and not able to register, parents just forgetting to register due to the pressures of the newborn, name changes later in life, registering the person under the mother's family name, adoption and misspelt names appearing in official registers (and not being detected by search engines).

## 'Digger' – Genealogical Society of Victoria

GSV's search engine, 'Digger', allows you to search for BDMs across different eras up to 1985 by various parameters including family name, given name(s), year, father's given name, mother's family name, age at death and location. If you are unsuccessful, it is useful and wise to use the 'wildcard' facility which will include other similar sounding and entered family names. As we know, some records are entered incorrectly for a multitude of reasons. Also you can re-order the family name options by one of the parameters (eg mother's family name) listed above. This can identify other siblings and marriages.

If you are successful, certificates can be purchased from BDM Victoria using the registration number and other information available. 'Digger' can be accessed on site at the GSV or online if you are a GSV member.

## Death certificates

Death certificates (DCs) are helpful, as they provide the informant's advice about the deceased person's age at death,

which allows an estimate of their DOB as anytime in the 12 months prior to date of death (DOD). DCs also provide the location of burial, which can be followed up for any other information including gravestone information (which can be obliterated with time) and who is buried with the particular person. Unfortunately cemeteries (and undertakers), until recently, didn't seek or keep full DOB information. Very few gravestones provide DOB information.

Cemetery administrators are quite helpful and more cemeteries are providing online services. Cemeteries also give a clue to a person's religion, as people tend to be buried according to religious affiliation. Taken together with their address at death, inquiries can be directed to the nearest relevant religious centres for possible DOB information from any administrative records or religious ceremonies.

DCs also provide details of any issue, including their ages at the death of the parent or whether they are deceased. DCs can provide marriage information and the length of time the person has resided in Australia, if not born here (and where the person was born). Some DCs indicate whether the person was subject to an inquest.

Overall DCs are very valuable sources of information if all else fails, but it is worth noting that they can contain inaccurate information, because it is provided by third parties, who are mostly under duress due to the person's passing.

## Marriage certificates

As with DCs, early marriage certificates (MCs) don't provide full DOB information, but they provide age at marriage. This allows calculation of another 12-month period when the person could have been born (ie in the 12 months preceding the marriage date). If the 12-month periods of both DC and MC overlap, the smaller overlapping period can be used as an estimate of DOB, in the absence of a birth certificate or other record. You know you are dealing with a difficult case if these two periods don't overlap!

With my particular project, I was hoping that identifying the institution that performed the marriage, as shown on the MC, may have led to other documentation that indicated the participants' DOB. This was a forlorn hope!

Parental information shown on MCs can be compared with similar information on DCs to ensure you are dealing with the same person. Generally, MCs provide more accurate information, because it is provided in real-time by the participants (informants).

## Wills and probate

In the absence of a DC, you can obtain the DOD (but not the DOB) of a person who has either left a will, or not left a will (ie died intestate), through the administration of their probate. If it exists for your particular subject of research, the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) holds such information.

Indexes for the period 1841–1925 can be accessed online ([www.prov.vic.gov.au](http://www.prov.vic.gov.au)) and for the period 1926–1992, onsite at North Melbourne via microfiche. PROV officials will be able to order in the file of your identified person for next-day perusal onsite. All of these services are free of charge, but registration is required.

Information possible from this potentially rich source includes residence, marital status and occupation at time of death, copy of any will (which itself can provide rich information), assets of the deceased, third parties seeking satisfaction of debts, names of relatives and legal firms involved.

*Continued on page 7*

# My cousin the nun

Rachel Dronzek was born 15 October 1929 in the town of Sniadowo (near Lomza) Poland.

She was the daughter of Simcha DRONZEK and Fajga ZLOTOWICZ. Simcha was the brother of my grandmother Haya Sheina Dronzek, so Rachel is my first cousin once removed.

Rachel's mother died when she was quite young, and her father remarried in 1937 in Lomza. In February 1939, her half-brother Izio was born.

In mid-1942, the Germans fully occupied the Bialystock region (including the city of Lomza) of Poland that had previously been occupied by their (up until then) Russian allies. In November, there began a systematic roundup of the Jewish inhabitants for transportation to camps and eventually the death camps of Treblinka and Auschwitz.

Sensing what was about to occur, Simcha and his wife, Ita, rounded up their two children and fled into the nearby forest to try to avoid the Germans.

Simcha and Ita were soon captured and transported to Treblinka, where they perished. Nothing is known of the fate of baby Izio.

Rachel somehow managed to survive living in the forests with the partisans for nearly two years, and when the Russian armies rolled through the area and liberated it in June/July 1944 she came out of hiding.

She walked back to her home in Lomza. There was nobody there that she knew. Her family had been extinguished. All Jewish life as she had known it had been destroyed by the Germans.

With nobody to help her, she decided to go to the Benedictine Monastery in Dworna Street and seek their assistance.

They greeted her with open arms and some short time later she decided to convert to Catholicism. She then became a Benedictine Nun, to be known from this time on as Sister Paula.

Fortunately, my grandparents had migrated to Australia prior to the war. (My grandmother had left Poland with her two children in August 1938 to meet up with my grandfather, who had come to Australia a few years earlier.) After the war's end, my grandparents began to search for any relatives that may have survived. Together with a maternal uncle living in New York, they discovered Rachel in the Benedictine convent in 1948, some four years after she had gone there.

My uncle and grandparents spent the next 27 years trying to convince her to leave Poland, a place none of them wanted to return to. Eventually in 1975, she travelled to New York, with the convent's Mother Superior and met up with her Zlotowicz Uncle, an orthodox Rabbi! My grandparents also travelled to New York for this reunion. During this time, they



The Jankie family (from left): Adam, Helen, Jeremy, Michael and Allan, with Rachel/Sister Paula.

finally convinced her to seek a transfer to a more suitable country than Poland for them to visit her.

She chose Israel, and after a lengthy 'vetting' process by the Israeli authorities, she finally took up residence in the Benedictine Monastery on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem.

During September this year, our whole family travelled to Israel for our niece's wedding. It was the first trip there for both my husband and I, and we decided to try and make contact with Rachel/Sister Paula while we were in Jerusalem.

After calling her on the phone and speaking with her Mother Superior, we discovered that Rachel/Sister Paula speaks very limited English. We arranged to visit her on the upcoming Saturday.

She arranged for a maxicab with an Arab driver to pick us up from our hotel (there were seven of us), and at 10.30 in the morning we finally met her. She showed us around her 'home', where she lived with nine other nuns in very Spartan conditions. We saw the chapel, the cemetery and the gardens, which overlook the eastern wall of the Old City and have magnificent views.

For those who have been to the tourist lookout on the Mount of Olives, the monastery is next door to this spot, above the Valley of Gethsemane. We conversed in a mix of broken English, Hebrew and Polish. She also speaks French and Latin fluently.

Rachel/Sister Paula was very eager to show us her collection of photographs she had received from the



few family members who had visited her over the past 35 years. Included among them was a copy of one of my wedding photos as well as a photograph of my grandparents visiting my mother in hospital after my birth. I had never seen this photograph before.

We gave her a copy of her family tree, and the tears welled up in her eyes as she saw for the first time in her 82 years the names of her grandparents, g-grandparents and g-g-g-grandparents as well as the scores of people living around the world who share her ancestry. The look on her face reinforced for me one of the reasons we have been compiling our family trees for the past 35 years.

**by Helen Jankie**

*Continued from page 5*

It must be said that accessing DOB information from legal firms is almost impossible, even when the person and their issue have been deceased for scores of years.

## Inquests

Some people have been subject to a coronial inquiry, the details of which can be accessible from the PROV, along similar lines to wills and probate. This source can provide DOD, but rarely DOB information. Obviously, some medical information (including relevant hospital) can be sourced and the timing of the circumstances resulting in the inquest. Requests for information from medical authorities, including through Freedom of Information (FOI), tend to be unsuccessful due to confidentiality concerns and long embargo periods (eg 110 years in NSW).

## Government agencies

Almost every person has their DOB registered with at least one government agency (eg VicRoads, ATO and Centrelink);

however, more stringent privacy legislation to prevent identity fraud makes these avenues very difficult to access. One government source that is the exception is the National Archives of Australia ([www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)), which has an extensive and accessible collection of official military, migration and other records. It is worth noting that the Australian Defence Force didn't seek full DOBs for those enlisting in World War I.

At the time of writing, for the people under review, I have identified the full DOB for eight, a range of less than 12 months for six (using MC and DC information) and a range of 12 months for another two (using DC information). As indicated above, the remaining three have remained elusive due to their relatively common names (eg Smith).

***Vaughan Duggan is a current member of the AJGS (Vic). He recently published his family history, In Search of the Lost Shamrock, which was subsequently awarded third place in the Alexander Henderson award for original Australian family history books published in 2010.***

# Historical day trip to Bendigo

The Australian Jewish Historical Society (Vic) arranged a day trip to Bendigo on Sunday, 13 November 2011, to explore the origins of early Jewish settlement of this town on the Victorian gold fields.

The visitors, mostly from Melbourne together with some local Jewish residents, arrived in their own cars at the Bendigo Neighbourhood House, where the local Progressive community, Kehillat S'dot Zahav (Hebrew for gold diggings), held a short Shacharit service on the Sunday at 10 am. The service was led by the Honourable Justice Nathan, a retired Supreme Court judge.

The central Progressive congregation conducts services for the small but regular community in Bendigo and its surrounds.

Bendigo, formerly known as Sandhurst, is 150 kilometres north-west of Melbourne and is the second largest inland city and fourth most populous city in the state of Victoria. The current urban population is about 92,000. Soon after gold was discovered in 1851, a rich alluvial field was found around Bendigo where gold could be easily extracted. By 1861, the Jewish population rose to 208 (mostly males), but by 1920 it had fallen to 35. The magnificent synagogue was sold and pulled down in 1926.

The *Bendigo Advertiser* devoted two pages in its Weekend Supplement of 5 November 2011 to the story of the Jewish presence in Bendigo, and included a photo featuring the Star of David on the old post office clock face. No explanation has been found for this unusual addition to the clock. A photo of tour guides Howard Nathan and Ned Upton wearing kippot was given a full front page.

Following the service, Dr Howard Freeman, president of the Australian Jewish Historical Society (Vic), talked about the growth of the Jewish community in Bendigo and its eventual

decline after World War II. James Lerk, a local historian, displayed a brass finial which once adorned the synagogue roof and told stories about well-known Jewish identities such as Barnet Lazarus, who was a pioneer in quartz mining in 1852, which made him a fortune.

To assist those participating, historian Helen Bruinier (pictured), a great granddaughter of one of the Cohn brothers, prepared a drive-by brochure based on the Cohn Family 150th anniversary of the three Cohn brothers' arrival on the Bendigo diggings in 1857. Helen also opened her home for a picnic lunch for the gathering and gave a moving account of her remarkable brewing family who migrated to Bendigo from Denmark in 1853. One of the Cohn brothers, Jacob Cohn, served two terms as the Mayor of Bendigo (1887–1889) and was involved in local projects including the rebuilding in 1897 of the landmark Shamrock Hotel.

After lunch, Sarah Austen, a local Jewish resident and historian, gave a guided tour of the Jewish section of the Whitehills Public Cemetery, telling stories about the lives of the pioneers.

The group was invited by Ned Upton and Howard Nathan to have afternoon tea at 'Beektah', their farming property in Mia Mia, on their return journey home.



## Sidney Myer (1878–1934)

Sidney Myer is well known throughout Australia as the founder of a thriving chain retail business, which today trades in all states and the ACT under the name 'MYER is my store'.

Bendigo is particularly proud of this Jewish-born entrepreneur, and a memorial featuring a glass-etched 'family tree' has been erected in the grounds of the Bendigo Art Gallery in View Street, to honour his pioneering contribution to the city.

Simcha Baevski was born 1878, the youngest of 11 children of Ezekiel Baevski, a Hebrew scholar, and his wife, Koono Dubrusha, née Shur.

In 1899, Simcha migrated to Australia to join his brother Elcon Baevski, who had immigrated in 1896 from Krichev in the Russian province of Mogilev, within what was known as the Jewish Pale of Settlement. Several months later, he changed his name from Simcha Baevski to Sidney Myer (Myer being the second name of their eldest brother, Jacob, who had passed away).

In December 1899, the brothers Elcon and Sidney obtained a hawkers' licence and were so successful merchandising fabrics and garments in rural Victoria that they decided to open a small drapery shop in Bendigo, a town which was prospering from wealth generated by the discovery of gold.

In 1900, the brothers formally became partners in new premises in Pall Mall. But the partnership soon foundered on Elcon's strictly religious orthodox opposition to Saturday trading, and he returned to Melbourne, establishing himself as a clothing manufacturer in Flinders Lane. Sidney bought him out for £320 and continued the business in Bendigo.

The drapery store drew crowds of customers with irresistible bargains and novelties temptingly displayed. Sidney had a flair for discerning new fashion trends and presenting stock attractively. By 1907, the so-called 'Bendigo's Busiest Drapers' had more than 60 staff and had expanded its premises. In 1911, the well-known Myer's Bourke Street business held its first sale and continues to trade in the Bourke Street Mall.

Sidney Myer passed away in 1934. More than 100,000 mourners lined the suburban streets of Melbourne during the funeral procession. His most recent biography, *Sidney Myer A Life, A Legacy*, by Stella M. Barber, was published in 2005 (Hardie Grant Books, Prahran, Victoria).





# Origins of the Jewish community of Bendigo



*This is an extract of the talk given by Dr Howard Freeman OAM at Bendigo on 13 November 2011*

The Jewish community of Sandhurst (now Bendigo) began with the goldrush in 1851. The news flashed around the world, as fast as it could do in the 1850s, and Ballarat then Sandhurst were infected with fortune seekers. The Jewish population of Victoria at the end of 1851 was about 360, and 10 years later it was 2900.

Ballarat had formed a minyan by 1853 and Bendigo by 1854. The Jews of Bendigo were almost all shopkeepers. The first religious service was held in the Cape of Good Hope Stores, next to the present site of the *Bendigo Advertiser*. This was the High Holydays in 1854, and in their sudden enthusiasm they quickly decided to build a synagogue. A request for a grant of land was made, and a small weatherboard structure was consecrated in 1856 in Hopetoun Street. By 1872, a permanent fortress-like synagogue of local brick replaced the wooden one, but it was demolished by the mid-1920s. The fittings lay in an adjacent paddock for several decades, until one of the finials was saved from the barn of a neighbouring farmer by the Jewish Historical Society.

The first minister was a Hungarian hotelkeeper and pawnbroker who had done good work in Hobart Town. His name was Isaac Friedman, and he had an extensive religious background. He was appointed in 1858 and stayed for some 10 years as minister. Friedman was later the cause of a crisis. He had circumcised a boy born of a non-Jewish mother. The boy had been regarded as Jewish because had been brought up as Jewish by his father, and had later had a bar mitzvah. It was then that the charges were laid against Friedman for having wrongly circumcised the lad. The reverberations echoed for years, and led to the formation of the Beth Din in Melbourne, the first Beth Din in the British Empire outside London.

In 1870, the members of the congregation appointed Rev Isaac Stone, but he stayed only four years and went to Ballarat, and they could not find a replacement. As a result, the shul temporarily closed down, but reopened when Moses Saunders came back from London where he had learned to be a shochet.

The last minister was Polish-born Joseph Goldstein, who died in 1904 and was not replaced due to the decline in the fortunes of the community, largely because the gold had run out. The synagogue ended its days as a corn store and was demolished in the 1920s because it was unsafe. The First World War devastated what remained of the community, as a high proportion of the young men had enlisted and were either killed or injured. The community largely drifted back to Melbourne.



The *Bendigo Advertiser* covered the story of the Jewish presence in Bendigo in its 5 November Weekend Supplement.



The graves of Daniel Barnet Lazarus, Joseph Lazarus, Barnet Lazarus and Dinah Lazarus.



The graves of Moritz, Marguerita and Roschen Cohn.

# POSTINGS

## BRITISH-JEWRY: Internees Indexes downloadable from the National Archives

Seen on another list: Digital microfilm available to download free from TNA at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/digital-microfilm.asp](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/digital-microfilm.asp).

This includes HO 396: Internees Indexes, containing records of mostly Germans, Austrians, Italians and their spouses who were interned or considered for internment during the Second World War.

Note that the files are very big, so you'll need a fast internet connection and a lot of disk space if you plan to save any images.

The TNA website states:

"Digital microfilm allows you to search and download some of The National Archives' most popular records, which were previously available on microfilm. The National Archives has a large collection of microfilmed records, and we hope that making these available online will increase their accessibility. This will ultimately allow the microfilm readers used at The National Archives, Kew to be retired.

"The digital microfilm method of delivery is by using very large PDFs. Each download contains a whole piece, which could be up to 800 pages long. This means that digital microfilm is only available to online users with a broadband connection, and to users in the Research and Enquiries Room at The National Archives.

"These records have not been indexed and so you will need to scroll through the PDFs, much as you would when using a microfilm. However, we would be more than happy for users to transcribe any of the digital microfilm content and post it on Your Archives, The National Archives' online community of records users.

"These documents are currently free of charge to download."

Our website is at [www.british-jewry.org.uk](http://www.british-jewry.org.uk).  
[British-Jewry-admin@rootsweb.com](mailto:British-Jewry-admin@rootsweb.com) is the address to use for help.

Happy searching!

Jill Hyams <[jill@hyams.plus.com](mailto:jill@hyams.plus.com)>  
Staines, Middlesex

## Twitter announcements for genealogists

The following announcements have been made on Twitter:

(1) [www.lulu.com/product/ebook/25-great-topics-for-genealogy-society-blogs/16662104](http://www.lulu.com/product/ebook/25-great-topics-for-genealogy-society-blogs/16662104).

(2) For those in and around Belgium, it may be more convenient to research the files here than in Jerusalem at Yad Vashem:  
[http://arch.arch.be/content/view/1045/212/lang,nl\\_BE/](http://arch.arch.be/content/view/1045/212/lang,nl_BE/).

Keep up to date on archives, databases and genealogy in general and Jewish and Israeli roots in particular with <http://twitter.com/JewDataGenGirl>.

Rose Feldman <[rosef@post.tau.ac.i](mailto:rosef@post.tau.ac.i)>

## Russia opens first Jewish history museum

Russia has opened its first Jewish History in Russia Museum.

Visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFMdv58JVA0> (with English subtitles).

Jan Meisels Allen <[janmallen@att.net](mailto:janmallen@att.net)>  
IAJGS Vice President

10 Jewish Genealogy Downunder

## British Newspaper Archive offers online searching of historical newspapers

The British Library and Brightsolid are working in partnership to digitise British historical newspapers.

The website offers access to up to four million fully searchable pages, featuring more than 200 newspaper titles from every part of the UK and Ireland. While there are 'only' four million pages digitised as of today, thousands of new pages will be added to the collection daily until they reach 40 million pages over the next 10 years. The newspapers mainly date from the 19th century, but included are runs dating back to the first half of the 18th century.

See: [www1.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/](http://www1.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/).

You need to register to search the archives. A list of all publications and dates are available on the website, as is the possibility to browse by location. Searching is free on this site, but it costs to view images.

To purchase a subscription and learn about the charges, go to [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/payments](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/payments). You can purchase a two-day package, a monthly package or a yearly package.

I have no affiliation with Brightsolid or the British Library. This is posted solely for information for those who may be researching Great Britain historical newspapers.

Jan Meisels Allen <[janmallen@att.net](mailto:janmallen@att.net)>  
IAJGS Vice President

## 1851 Anglo Jewry database updated

Mark Nicholls, chairman of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, recently announced that the 1851 database on the society's website has been updated.

This database has a mass of information about the Jewish population of the UK in the mid-19th century and also extends that information both backwards and forwards from 1851. It covers mainly England, Wales and Scotland with a few additions from Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Most of the names, but not all, are linked to the 1851 census. The database is approaching 29,000 names, which is probably more than 90 per cent of the Jewish population in Britain at that time. It brings together the work of nearly 250 contributors from around the world.

For each person, the database aims to show where they were and what they were doing, decade by decade, throughout their life. A handful of entries go back to the 1750s or 1740s, and some go through to the 1940s and 1950s. The core information, available on most but not all entries, is where and when the person was born; who their parents were; who they married and when; who their children were and when they were born; where they were living in 1851; and their occupation in 1851.

Additional information, wherever available, includes places of residence in other decades through to the 1910s; the same with their occupations; a snapshot of faith affiliation(s) across the person's lifetime; and date of death, cause of death and place of burial. There are notes on, for example, published biographical sources, related people in the database, and contradictory data sources etc. Wherever possible, source references have been included with each item of data.

Visit the JGSGB website at [www.jgs.gb.org.uk/](http://www.jgs.gb.org.uk/).

# POSTINGS

## JewishGen Holocaust Database update

Since our last announcement, JewishGen's Holocaust Database has added 36 databases, accounting for more than 200,000 records. Ten databases were added during 2011, comprising more than 120,000 records.

JewishGen's Holocaust Database now includes more than 2.4 million records, from more than 190 component databases. Some of the component datasets added in 2011 are listed below.

When you perform searches at the address above, you automatically search all of the component databases. A listing of the component databases with a description and link to each database introduction can be found by scrolling down the main search page address listed at the end of this article.

The database continues to grow, thanks to partnerships with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and Yad Vashem. In addition to these institutions, we have begun to receive original research by JewishGen users and academics. We believe JewishGen is an ideal location to 'publish' these pieces.

Among the additions this year are the following:

- Assorted Romanian Lists. From hundreds of source documents, for various Romanian towns during the Holocaust period. The project introduction explains how to find original source documents from the USHMM – about 73,000 records.
- Dutch Lists. A compilation of more than 40 different source documents. The lists include victims and survivors who were either Dutch by nationality or were relocated to Holland after the war. The lists were originally prepared by the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam – more than 24,000 records.
- Miskolc, Hungary (and surrounding towns) Victims. John J. Kovacs (a Miskolc survivor) undertook a project to commemorate the victims from Miskolc and the surrounding area by creating this data set. The source is the Jewish Community of Miskolc. An introduction includes the names of all the towns, information about Miskolc and a photo of his fourth grade class – about 11,000 records.
- Piotrkow Trybunalski Ghetto Tax List. Larry Freund compiled the data of almost 11,000 records representing those who paid taxes from 1940 through early 1942. A copy of the lists was donated to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research by Ben Giladi, who received copies from the Piotrkow Trybunalski branch of the Polish National Archives – about 11,000 records.
- Various Other Data Sets. These include Joel Waters' work compiling victims from Leova and the Cahul Camp, Kupiskis victims primarily documented in 1946 by the midwife from the Jewish Maternity Hospital in Ponevezh, and Paul Silverstone's latest maritime data set of Czech subjects interned in Mauritius.

In addition, we already have in for review more than 29,000 records from the Bergen-Belsen Book of Remembrance, and close to 5000 records for two Lublin, Poland databases compiled by Robinn Magid.

To see the added material, visit JewishGen's Holocaust Database home page at [www.jewishgen.org/databases/Holocaust/](http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Holocaust/).

We would like to thank all the volunteers who have assisted in making this data available.

Nolan Altman <NAltman@JewishGen.org>  
JewishGen VP for Data Acquisition  
JewishGen Holocaust Database – Coordinator  
December 2011

## JewishGen's Online Worldwide Burial Registry

JewishGen is proud to announce its 2011 year-end update to the JOWBR database ([www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/](http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/)). If you're a new JOWBR user, we recommend you view the first two explanatory screencasts at [www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/Screencasts/](http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/Screencasts/).

This update adds about 60,000 new records and 16,000 new photos. The database is adding 120 new cemeteries along with updates or additions to a further 225 cemeteries.

In what may be our most diversified update, we are adding or updating records to cemeteries from 37 countries. This brings JOWBR's holdings to 1.76 million records from more than 3350 cemeteries/cemetery sections from 64 countries.

Donors contributing to this update include a mix of individuals, Jewish genealogical societies, historical societies and museums. We appreciate all donors' submissions and the transliteration by a faithful group of JewishGen volunteers.

Of particular note in this update are additions to: Brno and Ivančice, Czech Republic • Ontario, Canada • Albany, NY • Petach Tikvah/Segulah and Savyon, Israel • Czernovitsi, Ukraine • Czech Republic • Balassagyarmat, Hungary • Tiraspol, Moldova • Mexico City, Mexico • Wroclaw, Poland • Catskills, New York • Soroca, Moldova • Rhodes, Greece • Suriname • Greece, India and Turkey • New countries including first listings for Bolivia, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Malta, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Russia, Slovenia, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia.

Nolan Altman <NAltman@JewishGen.org>  
JewishGen VP for Data Acquisition  
JOWBR Coordinator  
December 2011

## JRI-Poland database change

You will notice a change to the Jewish Records Indexing – Poland database searches the next time you use the system.

The Executive Committee of JRI-Poland has decided to institute a log-in system to access our database. Reasons, include future system enhancements and the concerns of our data donors.

As most of you know, JRI-Poland is an independent organisation, and our database is hosted by JewishGen as a convenience to researchers. To simplify the login process, JRI-Poland is using the secure JewishGen log-in system.

Please use your JewishGen researcher number and password to log-in to the JRI-Poland database. If you are a subscriber to this discussion group, you have a JewishGen researcher number and password.

It is highly recommended that you log-in to your account BEFORE starting any searches. The log-in link comes right before the search fields on the JRI-Poland search page. Logging in DURING a search is known to have intermittent issues that are being investigated. If you have any difficulties, repeat your search after log-in.

Stanley Diamond  
On behalf of the Executive Committee of Jewish Records Indexing – Poland ([www.jri-poland.org](http://www.jri-poland.org))

# Procedure for ordering LDS microfilms

In 2010, the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society (Vic) entered into an agreement with the Church of the Latter-day Saints (LDS) (better known as the Mormons), enabling our society to be a licensed repository for their microfilms.

FamilySearch.org offers a network of 4500 facilities, providing public access to genealogical records from all over the world. These range from the world's largest collection situated in Salt Lake City to locations in more than 80 countries.

Last year, the AJGS (Vic) agreed to join the Affiliates Program run by the LDS. Through this program, genealogists and family history researchers around the world may order copies of original microfilms from the LDS library in Salt Lake City and view them in an approved local library.

Because of our close association with the well-established Makor Jewish Community Library in South Caulfield and because the library houses our genealogical resources, Makor was seen as an ideal centre for receiving and viewing films.

The Makor Library has now moved into the new Lamm Jewish Library of Australia, adjacent to the Beth Weizmann Community Centre, and already some of our members have availed themselves of this service. The library will reopen on 8 February 2012.

The procedure for ordering microfilms is as follows:

## STEP 1

You must identify which microfilm has the records you are interested in. For those interested in Poland research, there is a complete list of Mormon microfilms containing Jewish records at [www.jewishgen.org/jri-pl/jri-lds.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/jri-pl/jri-lds.htm). For other countries, search the FamilySearch Library catalogue to see what is available.

## STEP 2

Once you have identified which film(s) you want, you need to open an account with FamilySearch. To do this, go to their website at [www.familysearch.org/films/](http://www.familysearch.org/films/) where you will be greeted with a request to log in (if you are already a member) or to sign up (if you are a new member).

Clicking on the 'Create an Account' button at the top left of the welcome page will take you through a simple step-by-step process of opening an account, which is free of charge. Once you successfully fill out the required information, you will receive an activation request email from FamilySearch, which

will confirm your account. Once you respond to that 'activation request' email, your account is confirmed almost immediately.

## STEP 3

Once your account is set up, it is vital that you enter in a 'default Family History Centre' to tell FamilySearch where you want your microfilm(s) sent to.

Sign in and click on the 'My Account' button at the top left of the screen.

An 'ACCOUNT DASHBOARD' will appear showing all the details of your account, and all the menu options of actions you can undertake.

Take the last option 'My Family History Centre' and nominate 'The Australian Jewish Genealogical Society Victoria'. Currently, it is the second option listed under Australia/Victoria.

Save that selection, and you are now ready to order in microfilms.

## STEP 4

There are two types of microfilm loan available to researchers – 'short-term' and 'extended'.

A 'short-term loan' allows the researcher 90 days of usage of the microfilm and costs about \$7.50 per microfilm loan. Prior to the expiration of the 90-day period, the researcher can renew the loan for a further 90-day period with the payment of another \$7.50 (approx). At the end of the loan period, the microfilm(s) are returned to Salt Lake City.

An 'extended loan' costs \$19.50 per microfilm and allows the microfilm copy to remain at the Makor Library on permanent loan.

It may take up to two months for a film you have ordered to arrive. Timing depends on whether or not a copy is readily available.

Once the film has been received at the Makor Library, you will be sent an email notification.

While there is no official limit to the number of films which may be ordered at one time, be mindful that they may all arrive at the same time and there may be insufficient time to view them.

## New database for AJGS (Vic) members

Members have been informed by email that the AJGS (Vic) is developing a Family Finder database to help consolidate the ancestral family trees of our members.

A six generation chart is available by email request from Liz James <[lizronjames@hotmail.com](mailto:lizronjames@hotmail.com)>.

After filling out their charts and attending a recent meeting, two members discovered that they were researching the same ancestors, one member found four more generations of his family and another traced ancestors back to 1700 in Poland.

Once completed, return your charts by email or mail to Liz James, PO Box 189, Glenhuntly, Victoria 3183.

## ITS records to be available in the UK

The Weiner Library in London will become the seventh repository where the public will have access to the vast collection of the International Tracing Service.

The library already hosts the UK's largest collection of papers and testimonies of refugees and Holocaust survivors.

Transfer of the collection was initiated by the UK ITS Stakeholder Group, which is comprised of UK scholars on Nazi Germany as well as groups and institutions from across the UK engaged with the Holocaust and its aftermath.

Additional information can be found at [www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?id=705646982&view=News](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?id=705646982&view=News).