



KOSHER KOALA



Reconstruction of the synagogue ceiling & bimah in Gwoździec;
Main exhibition of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw.
Magdalena Starowieyska, Dariusz Golik CC BY-SA 3.0

WINTER 2019

AJGS
L'dor V'dor

EDITORIAL

THE FUTURE OF AJGS

AJGS is at a crossroads. What does the future look like for our society?



AJGS is on its way to celebrating its 30th year. Sadly, many of the founding members are no longer with us or are no longer involved in the day to day administration of the society. For AJGS to survive, it is essential that we attract new members and engage our existing members. AJGS attracts researchers from all walks of life. We have an enormous knowledge base that has the potential to help each other and many researchers in our community.

In the coming weeks AJGS will be sending out a short email survey so you, our members, can tell us how you feel about the services and resources currently offered by the organisation. You can help us shape the future by telling us how you think we could evolve to face the next 30 years.

As the popularity of genealogy as a serious research venture increases, and with the rise of websites such as Ancestry and My Heritage and TV programs like Who Do You Think You Are?, we have an opportunity to evolve the society into a 21st century organisation. But what does that mean exactly?

When AJGS started the internet barely existed, genealogy was a hobby for people who had time to search through archives and could afford to travel to ancestral lands and... search through archives.

Today it's quite a different landscape.

- What do you, our members, expect from your society?
- How can we encourage sustainable membership growth without extending ourselves too far or too fast?
- How can our human knowledge base – our long-standing members – help new members effectively?
- How would you like AJGS to use the funds collected?
- Would you engage in an online environment like a Facebook group?

These questions and more will be canvassed in the survey and at the AGM. But I would like you to think about what you would like your society to offer, and what you can offer your society.

FEATURES

TRIBUTES FOR GENEALOGICAL GIANTS

LIONEL SHARPE OAM 1932-2019



Lionel Sharp
(screenshot)

Lionel Sharpe was an academic, a passionate community worker and a dedicated genealogist.

Born in Australia, Lionel worked in his Russian-born father's Melbourne business before completing a Bachelor of Arts in psychology. He began his career as a Social Worker and later joined the Jewish Welfare Society (now Jewish Care).

In 1989, Mount Scopus Memorial College invited him to join an advisory committee to support pupils with disabilities. He worked tirelessly to increase funding for these students, eventually distributing almost \$500,000 a year, raised through the Posh Op Shop.

His great passion for genealogy began when he helped his daughter, Monique, complete a school project that involved the creation of a family tree.

After attending a lecture presented by the late Sophie Caplan, founding member and first President of AJGS, he was hooked. Lionel was eventually elected Honorary Secretary of AJGS Victoria.

As an academic Lionel worked as a research associate at Monash University's School of Historical Studies and published several books on the history of Jewish communal institutions.

In the 2009 Queen's Birthday Honours, he was awarded Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of his service "to the community, particularly through social welfare and Jewish organisations". Lionel Sharpe will be remembered for his dedication to and his wide involvement in the Australian Jewish Genealogical community. He was a dear friend to us all and will be sadly missed.

ANGELA SHIRE – 1851 CENSUS PROJECT

Petra Laidlaw informed various JewishGen mailing lists that Angela Shire, one of the most generous and scrupulous research colleagues of the 1851 (UK Census) Database project, passed away in April.

As publisher, with Gaby Laws, of the [*Synagogue Scribes*](#) and [*Cemetery Scribes*](#) websites, many people benefited from her always-sound advice. She also published transcriptions of synagogue and other records, including *Great Synagogue Marriage Registers 1791-1850*. (available in the AJGS library)

Ms Shire demanded exacting standards of evidence, not least for herself, but she was always constructive and practical in her approach.

Those who knew her found her a warm, amusing, thoughtful and steady friend. She died peacefully after only a short illness and will be greatly missed.



Angela Shire
(Photo: C E Newall)

Felipe Rocha de Souza joined AJGS in January. Currently living in Australia for work, Felipe has uncovered his Sephardic roots and has been navigating the onerous process to gain Spanish Citizenship. He shares his experience.

[Interview extracts have been edited for clarity]



Signed copy of the Alhambra Decree (Public Domain)

On March 31, 1492, the Catholic monarchs of Spain – Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon – issued the [Alhambra Decree](#). The *Decreto de la Alhambra, Edicto de Granada* – also known as the Edict of Expulsion – ordered the expulsion of practicing Jews from the Kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, including its territories and possessions, by 31 July of that year.

On June 24, 2015, as a form of reparation, the Government of Spain passed Law 12/2015, to allow foreign nationals who could prove their descent from Sephardi Jews forced to flee or convert and who could demonstrate a bona-fide connection to Spain, to obtain citizenship without the usual residence requirement of the [Spanish Nationality Law](#).

Portugal passed a similar law in 2015. As a result, several hundred Turkish Jews who were able to prove that they were descended from Portuguese Jews, acquired citizenship in the first year. To date more than 1,800 descendants of Sephardic Jews have acquired Portuguese nationality and over 12,000 applications are in process.

In Spain applications for this special category of citizenship were initially only open for 3 years, but then extended by a year. Applications will close October 1, 2019. Acquiring Spanish citizenship via this route does not require applicants to renounce their existing citizenship.

Applying for Spanish citizenship via this route is not an easy path. New AJGS member Felipe Rocha de Souza is in the final stages of navigating the labyrinthine and complicated requirements of his application and talked to *Kosher Koala* about the process.

Felipe Rocha de Souza was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The eldest of 3 children, his parents (who were also both born in Brazil) have European ancestry. His mother's side (surnames Martinez/Baron/Montoya/Hidalgo) originated in Spain; his father's side (Souza) originated in Portugal. In 2012 Felipe and his family migrated to Miami in the USA.

While working at Miami International University, Felipe overheard a lunchroom conversation between some of the academic staff, about the history of Sephardic Jews:

...we were all in the Staff kitchen talking about family history and genealogy/ancestors and ... I overheard him [Professor Victor Uphaus] saying that many Jews were forced to convert in the Inquisition and leave behind or hide their actual faith... He was also saying that most of the Latin communities in Brazil, Venezuela, Puerto Rico and Colombia had a wave of Jews who migrated... to escape the inquisition; he mentioned that Portugal and Spain had acknowledged the impact of the Catholic Church on all these families who were forced to leave Spain/Portugal and migrate to other far away locations to escape the Inquisition. After hearing a little of the history I felt that somehow I was linked to this and it felt like a deeper connection...



Bottom left: Felipe's grandmother, Albertina Baron; Centre (left to right): Felipe, his mother, Suela, father Geraldo and brother Samuel; Top Left: Felipe's grandfather's passport; Top (Left to right): Felipe's sister, Aline, mother Suela and Felipe with his newborn nephew, Isaac.

Felipe knew he had Spanish roots and was keen to discover if he had the Sephardi Jewish lineage required to apply for citizenship through this initiative.

He started his genealogical journey as many of us do: by talking to his grandmother. Felipe's maternal grandmother was an infant when her family migrated from Spain. She's now 87 and sadly knows very little about her own family history.

...my grandmother used to say she was Catholic, but it meant nothing for her. It was more like fitting into what society wanted or not to be any different from most of the people in the culture she was adopting. She said... her family was considered by other people as being "gypsies" because they would not stay more than 3 years in the same city. My grandmother does not know if this happened because ... they were trying to hide from something or if it was a real struggle when adjusting to a new place or culture, given that they were all illegal in Brazil. They came on a ship with hardly anything and were trying to escape wars, persecution and trying to be at peace in a new environment where they could get by more easily than those tough times in Spain.

The citizenship law requires that applicants prove both their Sephardic roots and a special connection to Spain. The fact that Felipe already had family roots in Spain and spoke fluent Spanish counted towards the latter criteria but fulfilling the former would take some effort.

Felipe compiled some of the easy-to-obtain documents from the authorities in Brazil but found some challenges sourcing documents in Spain and Portugal.

...for my lineage from Portugal, I could not find enough evidence that would substantiate my application through their Law.

For my Spanish ancestors, I was able to compile a whole bunch of documents dating back [to the] 1800s – from Almeria, Murcia, Galicia, even areas close to Morocco.

I had to go to Spain and Portugal to trace my lineage and to request the birth certificate in the Civil Registry of Spain, in Madrid, in person. So while on a business trip in Europe, I made a stop and lodged the request with the civil registry. Two months later they responded, saying they had found the original birth certificate of my great-grandfather and were sending it to me in Miami.

The legislation requires certification of all genealogical documents by the FCJE – [Federación de Comunidades Judías de España](#) (the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain). But how do you prove a connection to Judaism that may have been severed up to 500 years ago?

Some of Felipe's family surnames appeared in lists of Sephardic surnames available on the internet but this is not admissible as evidence. Felipe realised he would need more professional help to verify if his family had Sephardic lineages.

He contacted [Dr. María José Surribas Camps](#), from the University of Barcelona, a professional genealogist and scholar of Jewish genealogies from the medieval period. She researched his family surnames and supplied a surname report with certified copies of documents dating back to the time of the expulsion sourced from the Spanish national archives. These documents showed clearly that at least two of Felipe's ancestral surnames – Souza and Martinez – have deep Sephardic roots supported by documentary evidence.

As Dr Camps states in her report:

Both Souza and Martínez, surnames of the paternal and maternal line of the petitioner respectively, are surnames adopted by Sephardic Jews at the time of their conversion to Christianity, both before and after the promulgation of the Edict of Expulsion of the Jews in 1492... The descendants of those Jews who, when they converted to Christianity, adopted the names of Souza, Sosa, Sousa or Martínez are of Sephardic origin.

Felipe also obtained a surname report from Jacón Benzazon, the Central American representative for [The Cercle de Généalogie Juive](#), which is an affiliated member of IAJGS.

Alongside researching his lineage, Felipe was required to sit a series of exams to assess his proficiency in Spanish language and culture – he sat these tests in Sydney. He was also required to supply certified



A document from the General Archive of Simancas referencing Fernando de Sosa, a convert from Torrelaguna and Pablo de Sosa, a convert from Pedraza de la Sierra; dated April of 1493.

security checks from the FBI, as well as relevant authorities in Brazil and Australia (because this is his current residence).

Finally, even though Felipe has uploaded all his documents to the online application portal, he must also submit all his original documentation in person, officially notarised by a recognised Spanish authority, a trip he is making this year.

To date the whole process has cost him over \$AUD5000.

KK asked Felipe what the most challenging part of his journey has been:

It was difficult to approach the Synagogues and explain the case of my family because we are already considered Christians and Conversos... There were many friends of mine that could not even pass phase 1 and provide evidence of their lineage originating from Portugal or Spain, which made it impossible for them to proceed.

I approached AJGS because I wanted to learn more about my ancestry and hear from experts or from different people, ...and see how they could help me to trace my lineage back...

HELLO CLEVELAND! IT'S CONFERENCE TIME AGAIN

DANI HASKI

This year's [IAJGS International Conference](#) is being hosted by The Jewish Genealogy Society of Cleveland from the 29th July to 2nd of August, 2019.



Cleveland is the home of the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#) and so appropriately the keynote address on the opening afternoon, titled *Jews and Rock and Roll*, will be given by [Professor Daniel Goldmark](#), director of The Center for Popular Music Studies at Case Western Reserve University.

The fun continues at the gala dinner on August 1st, with Cleveland native, [Dr. Michael Krasny](#), author, host of the award-winning KQED Forum radio program, and professor at San Francisco State University, discussing Jewish humour.

As Dr Krasny observes:

Embedded in the jokes and folklore and tales and anecdotes is the history of a people, a tribe, their value system and their rich ongoing heritage. It is a work of cultural anthropology, a wide portal to understanding Jewish identity and an immersion into the hilarity, joy and power of laughter.

The Cleveland conference will feature over 200 programs, lectures, panel discussion and workshops focusing on genealogical methodology, available archival resources and the history of Jewish communities across the diaspora.

Other available resources include links to hundreds of free databases grouped by category including General Interest, Government Archives, Holocaust, Immigration and Naturalisation, Maps, Military Records, Newspapers and Sephardic, as well as locality specific categories.

[The Resource Room](#) will be open from 9am most days of the conference, except Sunday.

Representatives of major organisations will be available in the Resource Room at specific times for consultation. Organisations represented include:

The Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfusot

- Representative: Haim Ghiuzeli.

USHMM

- Holocaust databases that are usually available only in-house on dedicated computers.
- Representative: Peter Lande.

Yad Vashem:

- ITS database and other databases usually only available at Yad Vashem on their laptop computer.
- Representative: Zvi Bernhardt.

The only Australian presenting at the conference this year appears to be Perth based Eli Rabinowitz. Mr Rabinowitz will be presenting two sessions – one for educators, the other aimed at inspiring young people to understand the lessons of history and the inherent power of their ancestors' stories.

All details can be found on the [conference website](#).

WHAT LIES BENEATH: SL-NSW UNEARTHES SYDNEY'S HIDDEN HISTORY

DANI HASKI

Thousands of people travel through Central Station every day, but how many know what once lay beneath it? Dead Central will take you on a journey back to 19th century Sydney, to rediscover a place you thought you knew.



In late June, Sydney Metro workers uncovered the grave of a former Sydney resident who had died over 160 years ago. The body of former draper and father of 14 Joseph Thompson (identified by a legible metal nameplate), along with the tens of thousands of others who had been interred in Devonshire St

Cemetery, were supposed to have been moved when the land was resumed to make way for Central Railway Station. So far, an archaeological dig on the construction site has unearthed more than 60 graves and 5 vaults.

The State Library of NSW (SLNSW) currently has an exhibition [Dead Central](#), which highlights the history of Devonshire St Cemetery, from its pre-colonial topography to its consecration as a multi- denominational burial ground, to the extensive efforts made in 1901 to document the process of removing tombstones, crypts and remains to make way for the development of Central Station.

Devonshire St Cemetery–Dixson Library,
State Library of New South Wales.
Two images merged by Wayne Hill (Flickr).





Established in 1820, the Devonshire St Cemetery contained a small Jewish section, alongside those for the various Christian faiths. By the time the cemetery closed in 1867 the burial ground was severely overcrowded, holding the remains of over 30,000 people.

Through an engaging audio tour the history of the site is brought to life with vivid audio re-enactments of parliament and readings from local newspapers. Maps, drawings, paintings, photographs, notebooks and newspaper clippings illustrate the landscape – both physically and politically – and document the difficult exhumation and relocation of bodies and memorials to the newly established Botany cemetery. The process was meticulously recorded by Arthur and Josephine George, whose notebooks feature in the exhibition. Families were given two months to remove their loved ones to another cemetery, such as Rookwood or South Head.

Accompanying the exhibition, SLNSW has launched a podcast called [The Burial Files](#) (available through iTunes, Google Podcasts, Soundcloud and Spotify), which digs deeper into the story of the cemetery and the lives of those buried in it. *The Burial Files* has been produced by Sabrina Organo, the State Library's Creative Producer of Multimedia.

Over six episodes, you'll hear from leading historians, curators, archaeologists, forensic experts and railway enthusiasts – each revealing a little-known piece of history about a place we thought we knew.

In Episode 6 we learn about Samuel Lyons (1791-1851), a Jewish tailor from London who was [convicted for stealing a handkerchief](#) on the 16th of February 1814.



Top left: transcriptions of inscriptions on headstones from Jewish section – Arthur Foster; left: The Burial Files Podcast; Bottom Left: Sandhills (Devonshire St) cemetery, with Elizabeth St in the background–Glass negatives of headstones ca. 1900-1914 / Mrs. Arthur George Foster (SLNSW); Bottom: The Old Cemetery, Devonshire Street, 1894 – Julian Rossi Ashton (SLNSW)



Lyons was sentenced to transportation for life and arrived in Sydney in January 1815, aboard the Marquis of Wellington. He did not take well to life as a convict and was punished repeatedly for absconding, eventually being sent to Hobart where, on 24 July 1819, he was sentenced to 200 lashes and 4 years at Newcastle, for robbing government stores.

But Lyons life of delinquency was short lived. According to the [Australian Dictionary of Biography](#):

On 20 May 1822 Lyons married Mary Murphy according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. Next year he returned to Sydney and began life anew. He opened a small store in Pitt Street and in March 1825 he received a conditional pardon. ... he received an absolute pardon on 15 May 1832.

As a businessman, Lyons had great success as an auctioneer. He sent his children back to England to be educated and went back himself in 1836. He returned to Australia a few years later, re-established his auction house and flourished. Lyons was extremely active in the educational and political life of the colony, occasionally drawing the ire of newspaper columnists. While renouncing his Jewish faith when he married, Lyons returned to the fold later in life:

In the 1828 census Lyons had declared himself a Protestant but after his wife died on the 19th of April 1832, he rejoined the Jewish community and became a prominent member of the York Street Synagogue... His sons George and Samuel and his daughter Hannah were, however, brought up in the Christian faith. He never remarried.

Lyons died in Sydney on the 3rd of August 1851, aged 60. He was buried in the Jewish section of the Devonshire Street cemetery. In 1901 his tombstone was transferred to Botany cemetery.

The exhibition and accompanying podcast give those of us with deep roots in Sydney valuable and fascinating insights into the development of the city of our ancestors.

Royal Australian Historical Society : proposed plans of area near Central Station, Sydney (Public Domain, SLNSW)

DEAD CENTRAL

STATE LIBRARY OF NSW EXHIBITION GALLERIES

25 May 2019 to 17 November 2019

MON-THU 9AM-8PM

FRI 9AM-5PM

SAT/SUN 11AM-5PM

COST: FREE

THE BURIAL FILES

Available on [iTunes](#), [Google Podcasts](#)
and [Soundcloud](#); For more information
visit the [Podcast Website](#)





SBS SERIES SHEDS LIGHT ON DARK FAMILY SECRETS

*[Artemis Productions](#), who used to make the Australian version of *Who Do You Think You Are?*, has produced a new family history mystery series for SBS.*

[Every Family Has a Secret](#), helps ordinary Aussies unravel the details of an unsolved family secret to discover the truth. Sponsored by Ancestry, and hosted by Noni Hazelhurst, the series tackles some big, sensitive areas using the resources of Ancestry, including DNA testing, and a roster of international experts.

In episode 1 (which aired on SBS on the 25th of June and is available to watch any time at [SBS On Demand](#)), two Australians discover the truth about their fathers.

Actor David Field uses DNA to establish the veracity of his grandfather's deathbed confession: that the man he grew up with was not his biological dad.

More relevant for Jewish genealogists is Angela Hamilton's journey back to the town where her father, Pal Roszy, grew up, to uncover the events that shaped a man she remembers as cruel and abusive, and an unapologetic anti-Semite.

Screenshots–Top: Angela Hamilton with host Noni Hazelhurst; Middle: Angela Hamilton with Nazi Hunter Dr Efraim Zuroff; Pal Roszy's ID card.

Next page: Angela visits the grave of her father's first wife who was Jewish

After her father's death Angela found personal documents pertaining to his war time activities. She also learned, much to her surprise, that her father's first wife, Rosza Grün, was Jewish. Rosza died in 1943 at the age of 29, reportedly of heart failure.

Throughout the show, Angela Hamilton displays a level of grace and compassion that is astonishing under the circumstances. While she has sympathy for what her father went through in his early life, she cannot reconcile with the actions that he took during the war.

In an [interview on the SBS website](#), Angela reflects candidly on her discovery:

“I’m the daughter of a war criminal, I’m the flesh and blood of this man. It’s repugnant and vile to me,” she says. “But [uncovering the secret] does deliver justice and it does deliver truth and ultimately peace. It had to be as harrowing and as ugly as it was because that was the truth of it.”

Angela also recounted her story to Richard Fidler on [ABC Conversations](#).

Every Family has a Secret is a 3 episode series available to view (in Australia) at [SBS On Demand](#).

SHARE YOUR STORY

Kosher Koala relies on you, our members to share your stories – whether they are of triumph or tragedy. Our aim is to help you and other researchers by sharing the HOW as much as the WHO, WHAT and WHERE.

- Have you made a breakthrough in your research?
- Have you discovered something intriguing, exciting or mysterious about a particular relative?
- Have you hit a stubborn brick wall you need help to knock down?

[Tell us about it!](#) *Kosher Koala* wants to help you share those stories, solve those mysteries and break through those brick walls.

What else would you like us to write about? What other subject areas are you interested in learning more about?

Are you a new member of AJGS? *Kosher Koala* would love to highlight your genealogical journey.

- Does DNA do it for you?
- Do old maps muddle you up?
- Is the world of online family trees overwhelming?

[Send us your questions](#) and AJGS experts will do what we can to answer them.



NEWS AND VIEWS

ITS BECOMES AROlsen ARCHIVES



The *International Tracing Service* (ITS) in Bad Arolsen, Germany has rebranded and will now be known as the [Arolsen Archive](#). The archive recently released, in conjunction with Yad Vashem in Israel, digitised versions of more than 13 million documents. They contain information on more than 2.2 million people victimised by the Nazi regime in WWII. Documents include prisoner cards and death notices.

The archive grew out of a program set up in 1943 by British Red Cross as a registration and tracing service for victims of Nazi persecution. After relocating several times as the war progressed, and coming under a host of different administrative organisations, the archive finally settled in Bad Arolsen, Germany. In 1948 the name was officially changed to the *International Tracing Service*, and in 1955, the [ICRC](#) took over the administration.

Today the Archives are governed by representatives from 11 member states including France, Germany, Israel, Poland, U.K. and U.S. It is funded by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.

The initial mission was for ITS to help trace missing persons, clarify people's fates and provide family members with information. In the decades since it was established the ITS has amassed over 30 million documents relating to the incarceration, forced labour, and post-war allied assistance for more than 55 million individuals.

Today, tracing people is a small portion of the organisation's work. The *Arolsen Archive* is now a major research centre, allowing victims and their family members to access copies of original documents and enabling subsequent generations to find out what happened to their forebears.

GEDMATCH OPTS-IN TO GREATER PRIVACY



In 2018 GEDmatch made headlines when their database was used to solve a decades old cold case which led to the arrest of a notorious serial killer. At the time there was much debate about the ethics of law enforcement utilising genealogical DNA services in this fashion. GEDmatch updated their terms of service to include the use of data to solve murder and rape cases specifically.

Early this year, GEDmatch went outside the remit of their own service agreement and allowed law enforcement officers in the US to utilise their database to solve a case that was not a rape or murder, but was still a horribly violent crime. This action attracted vociferous criticism and on the 18th May 2019, GEDmatch updated their terms of services again, to explicitly allow users to consent to law enforcement using their data.

Prior to this change, GEDmatch had 3 levels of privacy:

- a PRIVATE kit – which cannot be used for any comparison to any other kit

- a RESEARCH kit – which could be used for comparisons to other kits, but the user would not show up on match lists (therefore they would not be visible in match lists for criminal investigation kits); and
- a PUBLIC kit – which is displayed on match lists for any other kit.

GEDmatch have now amended their PUBLIC privacy level to include an explicit OPT-IN and OPT-OUT option for law enforcement purposes. The default position at the time of activation of the new system is OPT-OUT. Gedmatch users must read the new terms and choose to opt-in.

As explained in [a report by the Legal Genealogist](#):

The new system fully conforms to all legal definitions of informed consent — particularly in light of the candid admission in the terms that GEDmatch can't promise there won't be new non-genealogical uses of the site someone figures out in the future that nobody is even thinking of today — and to the provisions of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as well.

SJM AMPLIFIES HOLOCAUST VOICES WITH AN APP



As Holocaust survivors age and die it is more urgent than ever that they have the opportunity to leave behind a record of their testimony. Projects such as Steven Spielberg's extensive [Database of Oral History Testimonies](#) and Australian projects such as [The Twelfth Hour Oral History Project](#) are critical to retaining the memory of these events in modern consciousness.

Many of these interviews are hours-long so making these testimonies in a format that is accessible beyond the confines of Holocaust researchers is critical to opening up the story to subsequent generations.

Late last year the Sydney Jewish Museum launched their [SJM Voices app](#) (currently only available for iPhone; non-iPhone users can borrow a compatible device at the museum). *SJM Voices* contains a collection of curated soundbites from Holocaust survivors to enhance the exhibition experience inside the museum. The app features survivor testimony from the Shoah Foundation and SJM testimony projects and describe the build-up to the Holocaust:

Gerry Levy - *"And there were signs, 'Jews are not wanted here' [Juden sind hier unerwünscht], on every store, on every cinema, on every theatre, even on the trams, on the entrance of every tram."*

How people used humour to cope with the horror:

Peter Rössler, - *"We used to get soup and the soup was quite watery with a few free floating potato bits, sometimes cabbage, sometimes beetroot, and there was a song about the lady who distributed the soup telling her to put the ladle deep into the soup so as to catch a lot of potatoes."*

Helena Goldstein - *"And because they were hungry, they were so quarrelsome, you know, they were always fighting, about little things ... And in these conditions, I wrote a satirical weekly, so to say, to make fun out of our misfortune, and maybe if they will laugh a little bit they'll stop fighting."*

And how they coped with the devastating situations they found themselves in:

- Leon Berk reveals his involvement with the partisans;

- Susan Karas and Paul Drexler describe being deported;
- George Grojnowski speaks about his striped uniform jacket;
- Babette Rich recalls her Death March;
- Yvonne Engelman and Helen Grossman describe the “indescribable” at liberation

Utilising GPS technology the app is location specific and only works within the confines of the museum.

IZMIR SYNAGOGUE RESTORATION BEGINS



[Jewish Heritage Europe](#) reported the beginning of works on the Etz Hayim Synagogue in Izmir. A grant from the Izmir Development Agency will cover 75 percent of the estimated cost of the restoration which is over 2 million Turkish Lira (around half a million Australian dollars). Izmir is home to a unique collection of Sephardi Synagogues built very close to each other. Many are in a state of decay. The Etz Hayim Synagogue is thought to be one of the oldest, possibly dating back to the 14th or 15th century, when Jews expelled from Spain were invited to resettle Turkey.

Nesim Bencoya of the Izmir Project told JHE:

...The work will include full restoration of the walls, roof, wall paintings, and flooring... The project will include a consultation service arranged by the Kiriathy Foundation of Tel Aviv and provided by preservation architect Naor Mimar... Restoration experts from Israel and Turkey have already met and consulted on how to proceed.

“The restoration of the Etz Hayim Synagogue will be an important milestone in the making of the Izmir Jewish Museum, and we hope that its restoration will open the way to a deeper recognition.”



Etz Hayim Synagogue Interior:
Photo: The Izmir Project

Full restoration is expected to be complete by January 2021.

AJGS VIC WORK HIGHLIGHTED



Peter Kohn recently wrote [a lovely story in the AJN](#) shining a light on the great work AJGS Vic. does helping Jewish Day School students discover their roots.

Family history projects are part of the high school curriculum in most Jewish Day Schools, where they help connect students with the stories of their own ancestors in particular and recent Jewish history in general. The projects open the students’ eyes to diverse stories within their own families, as well as those of their classmates, exposing them to aspects of world history and highlighting how ordinary people’s lives can be affected by these larger events.

The AJN story explains how AJGS Vic. stalwart Liz James helped 14 year old Mt Scopus student Jeremy Arndt discover the stories of his three times great grandfathers – Joseph Joffe (1888-1967), a pioneer of Brunswick Hebrew congregation and Clifford Baitz (1888-1962), who ran a wine bar with renowned vintner Samuel Wynn.

At the end of the process Jeremy Arndt produced a detailed report, complete with photographs, documents and an extensive family tree chart to share with his family.



Gal Beckerman of the *New York Times* published [a harrowing but hopeful story](#) about Nachman Blumental (1905, Borshchiv, Ukraine-1983, Tel Aviv, Israel), one of a group of Jewish refugee intellectuals who followed Soviet troops back into Poland as they routed the Nazis at the end of WWII. They collected and recorded evidence in the aftermath of the tragedy that had taken everything from them. Blumental lost his first wife, Maria, and three year old son, Ariel. He personally investigated the circumstances of their death.

As recounted in the *New York Times*:



Maria and Ariel, ca. 1942.
Photo: Yivo archives

In 1948, he travelled to the village where Maria and Ariel were killed in June 1943. Blumental arrived with his notebook, intent on a forensic investigation, interviewing multiple villagers who witnessed the murder. His wife was passing as a Catholic woman and hiding with their son when they were arrested by Polish policemen. A Nazi officer then led them to the local Jewish cemetery and shot them.

In his handwritten notes, Blumental transcribed, word for word, the various accounts of the killing, an event he was told “everybody was watching.” ... As a result of his investigation, the policemen who arrested Maria and Ariel were indicted in 1950. Blumental also exhumed their bodies and buried them in the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw.

Blumental, a philologist who spoke a dozen languages, was obsessed with the use and misuse of language. He analysed Nazi documents and communications to reveal how they used language to conceal or obscure the grim reality of genocide. He composed a huge collection of dictionary cards with definitions and lexicography of words in German, Yiddish, and Polish. These cards formed the basis of his book of *Słowa niewinne* (Innocent Words), published after the war.

Blumental considered language the Nazis’ greatest weapon and his dictionary documented how the Nazis used language as part of their campaign to exterminate the Jews. The dictionary is made up of words whose meaning shifted with Nazi usage, such as in the case of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp’s Entry and Exit Book, where “exit” was used as a euphemism for “murder.”

Blumental had a long association with the YIVO Institute of Jewish Research. He collected ethnographic and historical documents for them prior to the outbreak of war. In February 2019, YIVO acquired Blumental’s archive, a collection of over 200,000 items that include survivor testimony, original German documents concerning ghettos, camps, and sites of mass murder, as well as artefacts and ephemera such as songs and poetry from various ghettos.

Blumental’s son, Miron Blumental, who has carried the collection across the world with him since his father’s death in 1983, told YIVO:

I did not wish my father’s personal archive, a product of decades of intensive and emotional work, to be shut in a dark room. I wanted it to be preserved and used by researchers everywhere...



Nachman Blumental, 1949.
Photo: Yivo Archives

The collection contains information on several hundred individuals, including survivor testimony, and YIVO have mounted a fund-raising initiative to digitise and index the collection. For more information [contact YIVO](#).

LINKS & WEBSITES

AUDIO TOUR OF HOBART SYNAGOGUE



ABC Radio Hobart presenter Paul McIntyre recently toured Hobart Synagogue. [His conversation](#) with congregant David Clarke was broadcast on ABC Radio weekends on Sunday June 23rd.

During his tour David explains the origins of the Synagogue's Torah scrolls, the architectural history and some of its unique features and the feeling he gets sitting inside the building, sometimes on his own, quietly reciting his prayers.

MYHERITAGE DIGITISES ALL ISRAELI CEMETERIES



In 2014 MyHeritage and BillionGraves launched a program to digitise the world's cemeteries. In March 2019 My Heritage announced it had digitised existing graves within all Israeli cemeteries. Israel is the first country in the world to have the bulk of gravestones photographed, digitised and available to search.

Billion Graves uses some paid staff but generally crowdsources an army of volunteers to photograph and index cemeteries. As a result of the partnership, My Heritage referred over 30 thousand volunteers to Billion Graves. To date those volunteers have contributed 3.5 million photographs and 3.2 million transcriptions.

According to My Heritage:

In Israel specifically, we found it necessary to recruit full-time employees to complete the work. We hired 5-6 full-time photographers and several dozen transcribers, and have invested more than one million dollars on this important and time-sensitive project. All told, we photographed 638 cemeteries throughout Israel. 2.1 million photos were taken of 1.5 million gravestones... This kind of project is never 100% complete because there are constantly new burials, and we'll need to develop a strategy for handling them in the future.

The index is available to search in either [My Heritage Supersearch](#), where BillionGraves is a distinct collection with over 31.5 million records; or on the [BillionGraves website](#).

You can contribute to the Billion Graves project using their app (available in the Apple App Store and on Google Play)

CANADIAN GENEALOGY DASHBOARD



Nu? What's New? has reported on an interesting new webpage created by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Montreal. Called the [Genealogy Dashboard](#), the page facilitates fast searching of one hundred Canadian and Jewish genealogical resources. By filling in the fields at the top of the form and pressing the GO button, the search fields in the long list of resources is pre-filled. You can then simply press the SEARCH button for each resource you wish to search, to view results.

Resources are grouped into six distinct categories:

- Canadian: census, immigration, naturalisation
- Quebec and Montreal: civil records (birth, marriage, death), directories
- Death/Burial: obituaries, burial records
- Jewish: Jewish databases, Jewish newspapers, Jewish Organisations, Holocaust
- General: Ancestry.ca, Google newspapers, Facebook, Phonebook, Societies; and
- Family Trees: Ancestry, Geni, MyHeritage

For more information click [HERE](#).

POLISH ARCHIVES ADDS NEW SEARCH RESOURCE



Polish archives can be difficult to navigate but a [recent post](#) on the private Facebook group *Jewish Genealogy Portal* alerted me to an important update to their system.

Currently the most efficient way for Jewish researchers to look for indexed Polish records is to go straight to JRI-Poland. I can certainly see this continuing to be the norm. However, the Polish government recently launched a new website called [SEARCH IN ARCHIVES](#), to facilitate a search of most Polish archives. This site will eventually replace their [existing search site](#).

The new site consolidates material from many archives across Poland, including the [Central Archives of Historical Records](#) (AGAD), [The Archive of New Files](#) and [The National Digital Archives](#). The site also facilitates access to digital collections from regional archives from Bialystok to Zielona Góra. There are a small group of archival collections not affiliated with the website. A full list of participating archives can be found [HERE](#).

The site claims to have 38 million scans from 100 participating institutions. But, as with any website in another language, navigation and searching can be a confusing and frustrating endeavour. A large search box dominates the top of the page and you can select to view only results with accompanying photographs or scans. Additionally, there is an advanced search option, a dropdown of individual archives, which yields contact details and information about the individual institutions, and a browse button that opens up a series of online collections.

There isn't much in the way of explanations or translations but if you have some idea of what you're looking for and looking at, this may prove to be a useful resource for high quality images that are free to use.

If you open [Search in Archives](#) in Google Chrome you can set it to automatically translate each page.





[Aufbau](#), the newsletter published between 1934-2003 by the German-Jewish Club of New York, has been digitised. The library of the Leo Baeck Institute in New York and the Metropolitan New York Library Council provided funding for the project.

The German-Jewish Club of New York was established around 1924. Initially the newsletter reported on club activities, Jewish culture and local events, as well as providing useful information for newly arrived refugees. As war with Germany loomed the newsletter transformed into a newspaper and contained more articles on events occurring overseas, particularly the deteriorating situation for Jews in Germany.

Aufbau became one of the more vocal publications critical of the Nazi regime and between 1944 and 1946, they printed numerous lists of Jewish Holocaust survivors located in Europe, as well as a few lists of victims.

Some of the high profile writers who contributed to the publication included Hannah Arendt, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, and Stefan Zweig.

An index to personal names that appeared in *Aufbau* is available online from the [Aufbau Indexing Project](#).



THE PINKASSIM PROJECT



Accessing records from before the 18th century is nigh on impossible for Jewish researchers. But now The National Library of Israel has launched the website of [The Pinkassim Project](#).

Pinkassim is the Hebrew name for the special registers or minute books in which Jewish communities and regional councils across Europe kept records between the 16th and 19th centuries.

On the pages of these volumes can be found documentation detailing the administrative functioning of the Jewish bodies that created them, the communities' relations with the non-Jewish world, and the ways in which Jewish society organised its social, economic, religious, cultural, and family life.

The Pinkassim Project is a collaboration between the National Library of Israel, the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture at Leipzig University and internationally renowned scholars.

The National Library of Israel, together with the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem, holds the largest collection of pinkassim in the world, although Pinkassim are found in collections across the globe. The Pinkassim Project aims to locate, catalogue, and digitise all surviving record books, and make them freely available online.

In its first phase, the Pinkassim Project deals just with the pinkassim created by the community and regional councils and has also limited itself to those created in the early modern period (c.1500-1800), widely regarded as the Golden Age of Jewish self-government.

Digitisation and translation work will take time but several pinkassim are available to view on the [website](#). Some of the communities digitised so far include:

- *Sefer Ha-zikhronot*, the pinkas of the Jewish Community Council of Poznań (Pozna) in north-western Poland. It is one of the oldest surviving pinkassim covering the period between 1592 and 1689.

- *Pinkas Kehillat Frankfurt am Main*, which covers the period between 1552 and 1802, is one of the oldest and most extensive pinkassim to have survived from early modern Europe. Frankfurt am Main was one of the largest and most important German communities. Containing over 500 documents written in both Hebrew and German in Hebrew letters, this pinkas sheds light on every aspect of Jewish life in Frankfurt; and



A page of the Pinkas Kehillat Frankfurt am Main in the viewer (Screenshot)

- *Pinkas Kehillat Dubno*, which covers the period 1715-1835, is from a major Jewish community in western Ukraine. Written in Hebrew and Yiddish, it contains regulations, announcements, and election lists, as well as a complete communal constitution from 1717.

These important volumes shed valuable light on day to day life in these communities and the individuals who contributed to the administration of the community. They will, in time, provide valuable insight for genealogists.

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY IN ZURICH



[The Archives of Contemporary History \(AfZ\)](#) is part of the [Institute of History at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich](#) (ETH Zurich). The purpose of the archive is to preserve and index private collections – mainly personal papers of individuals and archives of private organisations. There are three thematic areas: politics, economy, and history of the Jews in Switzerland.

Within the framework of the AfZ is the [Documentation Centre of Jewish Contemporary History](#). The mission of this centre is to secure records that shed light on Jewish life in Switzerland, primarily from the second half of the 19th century up to the present.

Main areas of focus include:

- History of Jews in Switzerland
- Anti-Semitism and right-wing extremism in Switzerland
- Persecution of the Jews, Holocaust, and emigration to Switzerland and further
- Swiss refugee policy
- Refugee relief during and after the Second World War

Collections include [Swiss Jewish Newspapers](#) and a collection of photographs from [Bildarchiv Schweizer Juden](#) (BASJ).

Unfortunately this is a difficult site to navigate. The virtual reading room has a hierarchical filing system. Two small links at the bottom connect to an alphabetical list of contributors but it takes another two clicks to finally get to an image link. Once you do it seems to take forever for images to load (I had better luck with Firefox than Safari).



[The Danish Jewish Museum](#) has two interesting resources for genealogical researchers. [Safe Haven](#) is a searchable database of documents relating to Danish Jews who fled to Sweden during WWII. There are over 6000 documents, called Protocols, in the database.

The protocols ... are copies from Riksarkivet in Stockholm and offer an insight into the experiences of the Danish Jews during their flight. Furthermore the protocols sheds a light on the routes, times of arrival and payments for the fare.

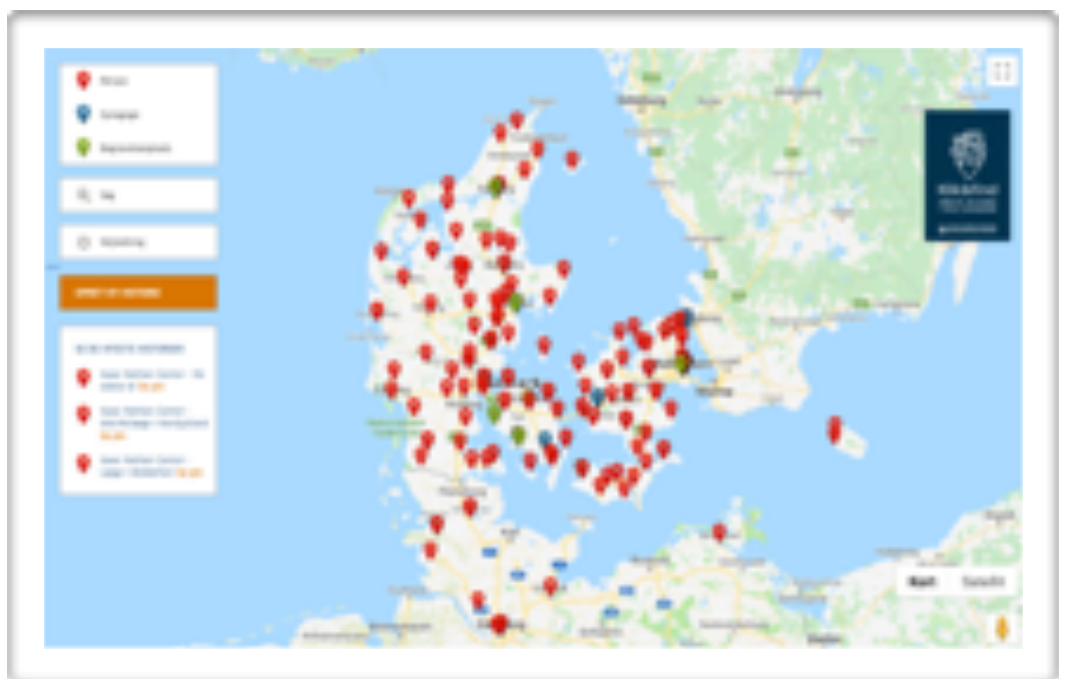
The other resource is called [Klik & Find](#) and utilises the power of Google Maps to highlight Danish Jewish history from 1600-1930, including people, synagogues and cemeteries.

When you click on a pin a window pops up and when you click on the link at the bottom a new page opens with information and records pertaining to that individual or site.

Red pins denote people; Interesting characters include:

[Nathanael Wulff Wallich](#) (1786, Copenhagen-1854, London), who was one of the first Jews in Denmark to train as a surgeon. Unable to secure a job in Copenhagen, Wallich travelled to the Danish colony of Serampore in India where he worked for the English East India Company and helped to develop tea cultivation in India. He finally settled in London.

And the family of [Joseph Salomon](#) (1773-1845) and Jette Hesch, residents of Rudkøbing. Their son Salomon Joseph (1803-1847) became a saddle maker and married Rikke Lazarus in 1827. They had 8 children but Salomon died in an accident when the youngest child was only a year old, leaving Rikke to raise the children on her own.



Blue pins denote synagogues and green pins denote cemeteries (if the blue or green pins are not visible click on the key on the left hand side of the screen). Many of the synagogues highlighted on the map no longer exist. The collected histories showcase the centuries-long connection of Jews in Denmark.

Interesting titbits include:

- the [arrival of Mendel Simonsen in Slagelse](#) on the 23rd of February, 1740;
- the [establishment of a tobacco spinning mill](#) in Nakskov by Jacob Sostman in 1674. He was the first Jew to be granted permission to build in the city; and
- the [synagogue in Copenhagen](#), designed by architect Gustav Friedrich Hetsch, and dedicated on April 12, 1833, by the chief rabbi Abraham Alexander Wolff.

The site is in Danish but some pages have a link to an English language version. If you use Google Chrome, you can set it to automatically translate into the language of your choosing.



Mikołaj Gliński at Culture.pl has authored a long and fascinating article investigating the development of Polish synagogue architecture. Covering almost 800 years of architectural history and illustrated with historic photographs and postcards, he meticulously describes the development of a unique style of synagogue in Poland. The article draws heavily on the work of Kazimierz and Maria Piechotka, from their book *Landscape with Menorah* (originally: *Krajobraz z Menor*, published in English in 1959).

The first synagogues in Poland were built in the late Middle Ages, as from the 12th century, increasing numbers of Ashkenazi Jews chose to settle there. The earliest of these buildings which still stand today were built in Lower Silesia (Strzegom and Oleśnica) and Kazimierz, near Kraków (The Old Synagogue).

Crowned by their attics, the great blocks of synagogues became one of the dominant elements in the silhouette of multiethnic Polish towns, along with the church spires and cupolas of Orthodox churches in the East.

Kazimierz and Maria Piechotka—Landscape with Menorah (Krajobraz z Menorq; Trans. Mikołaj Gliński)

Gliniski traces the influence of social restrictions and practical considerations:

...a synagogue should not stand out from the surrounding town buildings, and that in particular, it should make no impression of competing in importance with the town's church building. (Relatedly, the location of a synagogue was also selected so as not to stand too close to the church.) This is also why most early Polish synagogues have a flat roof, as any other style would have made the structure look taller.

The origins of the Renaissance-style attics which crowned the synagogue buildings are perhaps more down-to-earth than one would expect. In fact, the attics were originally added for safety reasons; in case of fire, the wall that ran around the building's roof was designed to prevent its spread.

He also looks at the evolution of interior features like the Bimah, moving as it did from a free standing platform surrounded by a balustrades or bower to a more elaborate "tower" like structure that represented kabbalistic ideas of a connection to heaven described in The Zohar

The appearance and evolution of bimah-towers in Eastern European synagogues has been linked to the wave of Hasidic mysticism that arose in 17th-century Poland... The Zohar, the founding work of the Kabbalah, played an important role here. According to this mystical school of thought, the illuminated bimah-tower was the source from which the holy words of the Lord emanated. ...a vision of halls with a column in the centre – a channel which served as

left: Tłomackie Synagogue, Warszawa; Centre: Zolkiew_Synagogue; Right: Synagogue, Posen/ Poznan.



Right: Interior caged Bimah, Synagogue Krakow;
Lower right: Old Synagogue, Krakow

a means of communication for ascending and descending souls, prayers and supplication.

In the 18th century, Baroque architecture in churches began to influence the design of Synagogues and wooden synagogues were adorned in elaborate carvings of exceptional craftsmanship. Brightly coloured painted frescoes began to appear in the interiors reminiscent of Ottoman tents, possibly a romanticised notion of Orientalism denoting the Middle Eastern origins of Judaism.

The 19th century saw the development of large, monumental buildings reminiscent of Greek temples—Kępno (1815 r.), Krzepice (after 1825), Wrocław (1829), Lwów (1845)—complete with columns and colonnaded porticos, unusual circular sanctuaries with domes rooves—Praga, Warsaw (1835), Lwów(1845)—and elaborate Moorish style buildings, mostly in German speaking areas—Działoszyce (1852); Bydgoszcz (Muttray, 1884); Tarnów (1909).

In concluding his article Glinski states:

The Tłomackie Synagogue was blown up by the SS-Gruppenführer Jürgen Stroop to symbolically mark the end of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This also marked the unfortunate, untimely end of the long tradition of synagogue architecture in Poland. From among some 400 synagogues and houses of prayer operating in Warsaw until 1941, only one stands today. This – the Nożyk Synagogue in Twarda Street – is a poignant reminder of the the once vibrant realm of synagogue architecture in Poland.

Destroyed by fire, war or simply the ravages of time this lost world has thankfully not vanished entirely from the cultural consciousness of Poland itself.

Bottom left: Gwoździec Synagogue (photo Ethnographic Museum in Lviv) 1940

Bottom right: Reconstruction of the synagogue in Gwoździec Magdalena Starowieyska, Dariusz Golik - Museum of the History of Polish Jews CC BY-SA 3.0



EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

AJGS runs regular workshops where you can access resources, websites and the knowledge of other members.

Monthly Sunday and quarterly Monday workshops are held at The Rev Katz Library, North Shore Synagogue, Treatts Road, Lindfield. Quarterly Sunday workshops are also held at Waverley Library, 48 Denison St, Bondi Junction.

Check out [The Calendar on the AJGS website](#) for details or see below for dates, times and locations.

DAY	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
SUNDAY	AUGUST 4	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	AUGUST 18	1400-1700	WAVERLEY LIBRARY
MONDAY	AUGUST 19	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	SEPTEMBER 8	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	OCTOBER 13	1430-1730	AGM – NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	NOVEMBER 3	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	NOVEMBER 17	1400-1700	WAVERLEY LIBRARY
MONDAY	NOVEMBER 18	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	DECEMBER 1	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE