

KOSHER KOALA

Newsletter of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society

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*The Jacobius family outside their home
– Preußisch Friedland c.1915*

See p.3 for story

President's Report

To all our members we extend our best wishes for a happy, peaceful and healthy New Year.

I am pleased to report that the new Resource CD which we sent you earlier this year is proving its worth. A new member submitted the research database details for her family and we found a match with a current member. Have you checked the database?

Another member, while surfing the family name online, found an unusual reference to a publication. We happen to have this book in our library and she was able to borrow it. Don't forget to check the library listing that is on the Resource CD and note that some books can be borrowed. Please contact us if you did not receive the CD.

I was asked by our indefatigable Past President, Librarian and Resources Person, Rieke Nash, to remind you to check your entries on JewishGen's Family Finder, as many members' contact details are out of date. You will need your ID and Password to make changes. If you have forgotten them, we might have a record. Where known, we have also notified JewishGen's Family Finder about those members and ex-members who have passed away.

The latest Eastern Suburbs workshop in July was a great success, with many new people being assisted by some of our experienced members. As well as providing reference materials, we have now purchased an additional laptop to expand our internet searching with wireless capabilities.

Jeannette Tsoulos
President

New Members

We extend a warm welcome to new members Annette Reed, Brian Lenny and Jane Harris

Memories of Martyn Prins

In September, the Society lost one of its favourite members, Martyn Prins.

Martyn joined us in 1995 and became our Dutch research expert, helping other researchers and translating Dutch records. He was instrumental in choosing our extensive collection of Dutch records. Martyn's own family research reached back to the 1650s from Amsterdam with family names including Prins, Goldsmit, Schaap, Briska and Van Rood.

Each year, Martyn would generously add a substantial donation to his membership renewal, wishing "your hard-working committee a good New Year". He was such a loyal member that we will always miss him.

He was an enthusiastic competitor and active organizer in Seniors Soccer and Croquet. Martyn, aged only 66, passed away from cancer on 14 September, 2012 after a short illness.

We send our sincere condolences to his wife, Griselda, his children, John and Pia, and his sister, Helen Prins.



Martyn Prins

Photo: Courtesy of Martyn's family

Four amazing days in Poland and former West Prussia

Our Ancestral Journey in June 2012

Evelyn Frybort

Monday 4th June: My sister, Vicki Israel, and I began our first trip to north-west Poland, to the provinces of Mazowieckie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie to visit the ancestral towns of our parents, Ruth (née Jacobius) and Joseph Zakrzewski. We stopped in Radziejów, Aleksandrów Kujawski, Nieszawa and Debrzno (Preußisch Friedland in pre-War Germany), as well as the Polish State Archives in Włocławek.

Chris Malcewski, our guide, collected us from our hotel in Warsaw and we drove 300 kms to the Włocławek Archives, where Chris ordered the books of births/deaths/marriages in which we were interested and we photographed them.

Until 1808, it was not necessary to register births, marriages and deaths. From 1808, everyone was registered in the same books, but by 1826 Jews had their own separate records. It was amazing to touch these old records, especially the earlier ones written on parchment. We were allowed to handle the books with bare hands – no white gloves needed.

We drove 35 kms on to Radziejów, home of our paternal grandmother, Golda Leszczynska. Chris had organised to meet Krzysztof Watrobicz, the Town Librarian and Historian, who specialises in the town's history, including its Jewish past. He had collected everything he could from many sources, including the Internet, and had set up a display in the Community Centre. The wall hangings alongside the main staircase display documents and photos of the former Jewish presence in Radziejów. The Museum or 'Room of Memory' has folk exhibits depicting the lives of the mainstream population. There are also a few recovered remnants of Jewish tombstones. Krzysztof gave us some background information about the town's former Jewish community and then took us on a walking tour of the town.

Jews had been living in Radziejów since the 15th Century. They were not allowed to live in the city centre and had to settle just out of town. They mostly lived around the Rynek (Square) and along ul. Toruńska and ul. Szewska. A lot of the old buildings are still standing. Krzysztof pointed out one building on ul. Toruńska and said it had been the Jewish bank. The early synagogue was outside of town. Later on, two more synagogues were built one block back from the Rynek on ul. Zachodna – a brick one and a timber one, next to each other.

Before WWII, Jews numbered about 10% of the population. The last Jew to live in Radziejów, a Mr Grojnowski, had a shoe shop. He left the town in 2010.

At the request of a cousin of ours living in Sydney and whose mother had lived on the Square, Chris, Krzysztof, Vicki and I knocked on the door of the house of a lady who had been a neighbour prior to WWII. We were warmly welcomed and invited in by her son who lives with her. The lady, now 89, remembered the family and spoke about some of the Jewish customs she could recall, such as Jews only eating fish or poultry – no other meats.

During our walk, we also saw the former *Mohel's* house, was still standing in ul. Franciska. We noted that it had a wrought iron design of a dragon and grapes above the door. We also saw a well-maintained High School which had previously been a primary school for Jews and non-Jews. Some of the houses previously owned by Jews still appeared to be in their original condition, at least from the outside.

Just to walk the streets where our ancestors walked was amazing and we wished we had a film crew with us. We took lots of photos trying to capture the atmosphere. The surrounding countryside is very beautiful.

Next, we drove about 2-3 kms to the site of the former Jewish cemetery. There are no remaining tombstones. It is now a park. According to Krzysztof, the cemetery used to be elevated on a large mound 5 metres higher than now.

After we had left Radziejów, Krzysztof Watrobicz emailed Chris links to our family names on the Geni website (<http://www.geni.com>). Although I had already known about this site, we were impressed with his

interest in assisting us. He asked if we could send information and photos regarding our family presence in Radziejów. He also requested such information from any other descendants of former Jewish residents.

Tuesday 5th June: We continued our research at the Włocławek Archives for another 3 hours. We photographed more family vital records and searched 2 volumes of Radziejów *Ksiegi Ludnosci (Books of Residents)* 1815-87 and 1887-1914 where we found the households of our ancestors going back to the early 19th century. These records list everyone who lived in a particular household over a period of about 20 years. It lists their births, when they came, and when and why they left. One of the books was in Russian and our guide was able to translate when needed.

We found marriage certificates in other registers, and just kept photographing documents. One of the registers was so fragile that it was falling apart, had holes in it and was very hard to handle. One of the documents we asked for yielded a folder which stated that these Books of Residents no longer exist.

We reluctantly left this treasure trove, so we could go to Aleksandrów Kujawski where our father, Joseph Zakrzewski, was born in 1904 and where he lived for his first 15 years.

In Aleksandrów Kujawski, we were met in front of the City Council Chambers by Zbigniew Soltysinski, a City Councillor and amateur historian, very involved in collecting information on, and promoting knowledge of, the former Jews of Aleksandrów Kujawski.

Zbigniew guided us for the rest of the day – from 2pm to 8.30pm. He wanted no payment – but asked to have a reporter interview us for the local paper, and that we send him a family story relating to Aleksandrów Kujawska.

It is difficult to imagine how Jews lived in Aleksandrów Kujawska as the buildings of interest are no longer there. Without Zbigniew guiding us around and Chris translating, it would have meant very little. It appeared to be a beautiful big town with lots of parks and trees. There is no main square, just tree-lined streets. Most Jews lived in ul. Ogrodowa.



ul. Słowackiego, Aleksandrów Kujawska 2012

Photo: E. Frybort

The shop run by our grandmother, Golda Zakrzewska, was located on ul. Długa (Long Street) now called ul. Słowackiego, the main street leading into the town. There were Jews who had shops with their living quarters above or at the back, but there were also wooden stalls with no attached living quarters. We saw the former *Mohe*'s house. The Synagogue, a timber building which was demolished as recently as 1992, used to be located diagonally opposite the Jewish Primary School.

We were taken to the Jewish Cemetery where a memorial has been erected. Zbigniew told us that there was controversy regarding its proposed location as the neighbour on the land adjoining the cemetery

claimed that it would lower the value of his land. Therefore, the memorial is actually about 50 metres from the Cemetery.

We were interviewed by a reporter and photographs were taken for an article about our visit for a regional newspaper which reaches 400,000 people.

Zbigniew gave us a tour of the Railway Station, which was at one time the biggest in Poland. The station was once a stately building with intricate iron lace stairs, posts and ornate trimmings, but was allowed to deteriorate into a state of disrepair during Communist rule and subsequently due to a shortage of funds. As the town was previously on the border of Prussia, Jews were not allowed to live close to the station.

Zbigniew accompanied us to Nieszawa, a town located by the Vistula River where Israel Zakrzewski, our paternal grandfather, was born and raised. It was a village with a lot of original houses remaining and a Rynek which now serves as a car park. We were shown the location of the former Synagogue and then taken out of town to ul. Parkowa where we visited the site of the Jewish Cemetery. There were no tombstones. I thought about all my Zakrzewski and Bobrownicki ancestors whose graves were desecrated but whose burials took place in this beautiful location overlooking the Vistula. Only one bit of evidence of the cemetery remains – a series of stones forming a square, where a *Tzaddik* was buried and where people came to pray and consult him.

Wed 6th June: We returned to Aleksandrów Kujawski and again met Zbigniew who took us inside the City Council Building where we were introduced to the Mayor and other Councillors. He arranged for the Museum Curator to open the museum for us. The museum has a display of the town history which includes two panels on the history of the Jews of Aleksandrów Kujawska. There were photos and a panel with a list of 90 names of former Jewish residents and their fate. Golda and Israel Zakrzewski, our grandparents were on the list. The information came from Yad Vashem. They would like us to send more complete information. A reporter came and asked questions and took photos for the local paper. There were also photos of some of the town landmarks and two remnants of Jewish headstones from the nearby town of Służewo.

From Aleksandrów Kujawska, we drove to Debrzno, the town where my mother was born and lived until early adulthood. Debrzno was Preußisch Friedland, Germany, prior to World War II. 80% of the town was destroyed during the war by both Germans and Russians. After the War, Poland's border moved westwards and the town came under Polish control. The Germans who survived the war left and moved west to Germany. After the war, it was settled by people from Poland and other Eastern-bloc countries.

Debrzno is an isolated town set in beautiful countryside with two picturesque lakes. The few remaining old buildings are in a Germanic style. Some soulless Soviet buildings, including apartment blocks were constructed during the post-war Communist period. Only four original buildings survive on the Rynek. The old town hall (Rathaus) is now a furniture store.

The Synagogue and Jewish Cemetery in ul. Mokotowska in the town centre no longer exist. However, a second Jewish Cemetery still exists on the south side of the town, on the far side of ul. Młyńska (Mill Street). At the southern end of town, off ul. Harcerska, there is a clearing in the woods. After walking about 50 metres in an isolated flat area, the remaining tombstones appear. Currently, there are 21 erect headstones. We had to walk through overgrown bush to photograph these headstones.

In 2005, local youth had a project to clean up the cemetery and set up the stones. It was vandalised in 2010 and the remains were set up again. The only formal sign in the cemetery is a plaque on a tree stump saying *Obiekt Zabytkowy* (Historic building).

Chris, our guide, had arranged for us to meet the Mayor, Miroslaw Burak, the Chairman of the City Board Janek Beme, the Manager of the Vital Records Office and a reporter. We were invited into the Mayor's office, served tea and spent three hours being interviewed, telling our family story, showing our Debrzno family photos and being shown many pre-war photos.

The Manager of Vital Records told us that records are kept in town for 100 years and then sent to archives in Słupsk. She found and gave us photocopies of the birth certificates of our mother, her sister and brother. Everyone shared the excitement when the records were found. There was an index book, with reference numbers, showing that there are birth records in the Słupsk Archives for our mother's older sisters and the marriage certificate of our grandparents. The family house and store shown in our own family photos no longer exists – no-one could recognise it; however the school where our mother worked as a secretary is still there. Possibly our family house was on ul. Traugutta. The Mayor and the Chairman of the City Board continued to show us hospitality and personally guided us around the town well into the evening.

The mayor invited us to his home for schnapps and then to a lakeside restaurant for dinner. Janek Beme continued to show us around the whole evening.

We met the local historian, Marec Romaniec. He explained the history of the area and took us to his office in an arts and craft centre where he co-ordinates an arts and craft co-operative for unemployed artisans. He has a large collection of photos from old Preußisch Friedland. He asked us to email our photos to him, so he could study them and help us. As we were driving him home, he pointed out our mother's school where she would have worked before the War. He told us that Jews were not allowed to live in town and had to live in the village south of the town, but those Jews who had been there for a long time were allowed to continue living in town. The percentage of Jews in Preußisch Friedland varied from 7% to 30% at different times. The shooting club of Preußisch Friedland still exists – our grandfather had been a member.

We also visited the home of a stamp and postcard collector. When Chris had spoken to him earlier in the day, he was out of town, but specially drove home to meet with us. He lived in one of the bleak Soviet buildings. He was an excitable, very enthusiastic man who showed us his medals and international awards and gave us gifts of stamps, postcards etc. He proudly showed us his awards from Israel.

We drove around the city for a final look, dropped Janek back to his office, then left Debrzno at 10pm utterly exhilarated and exhausted.



Vicki Israel, Krzysztof Malczewski and Evelyn Frybort
Sępólno Krajeńskie 2012

brightly coloured petals and children were dressed up. We reached Poznan about 3 hours later, and after bidding farewell to Chris, we caught the express train to Berlin where we continued our amazing travels.

Thursday 7th June: As we departed from Sępólno Krajeńskie in the morning, Chris took us to a wooded area across the lake, where he showed us the location of the Jewish Cemetery where there were a few remnants of tombstones. Little did we know at the time that this town's former name was Zempelburg, one of our maternal ancestral towns.

We made an early start for our drive south to Poznan. We were delayed several times *en route* due to religious processions (Patron Saint Day) in villages along the route.

Roads were blocked, streets were strewn with

Postscript: Since our return, Zbigniew Soltysinski, Krzysztof Watrobicz and others have continued to send snippets of information they have unearthed about our families. I have posted information on the Ger-SIG mailing list and have received many encouraging replies which spur me not only to add to our family tree but to also prepare material for the Virtual Shtetl Website and JOWBR.

Researcher/guide Krzysztof Malczewski can be emailed at: krystek@krystek.a4.pl.

Seeking Sophia – Finding Anna Deitch – in Zarasai, Lithuania

Caroline Josephs

Standing in the Zarasai cemetery in Lithuania and wondering what has brought me to this – to Lithuania in 2012. It is a strangely beautiful place. I am looking for a trail to someone I never knew, my paternal grandmother, Sophia, and her mother, Emma (or Anna) Daites/Deitch – in a country I haven't expected ever to be visiting.

It is quiet here, a tiny walking track almost overgrown with waist and thigh-high flowering grasses, wild white flowers. There are ancient headstones for the graves, some leaning perilously, some still upright, among the greenery. They seem to be whispering to each other. Their whispers melt into the breeze around our ears. They are in small clusters. Later I learn that there are many more among the tall trees in the woods on the tip of the peninsula (there are perhaps 400 in all). Hebrew lettering on each points to a time and a culture, to an absence of progeny to take care of ancestors' graves.



Zarasai Cemetery 2012

Photo: C. Josephs

Perhaps many of the offspring now are themselves in unnamed mass graves. Or have fled to climes more friendly. It is a place of absences. Where are the people who would carry on the ritual of putting stones on graves, revering the memory of their dead?

Stones speak. They speak of a life that is now silent. They speak from the living to the dead – of memory – of keeping that person in the heart although they are no longer a physical presence.

What happens when the line of ritual is broken? Do the lichens inhabiting the Hebrew letters know more than we do? Of departures? Their children and relatives have now gone from this beautiful, tear-filled place? The tears could fill a lake.

The lake is large, one of the biggest in this country, surrounding the peninsula of the cemetery, stretching out on all three sides. Today it is calm, the water mirror-smooth. A tall forest covers the outer tip of the peninsula. A few farmhouses are behind us, dotted among the greenery.

We have driven down a narrow dirt track with high grasses impeding our way. Only the headstones and the rusted broken gates on stone at the entry have given us a clue that this is the place we have been directed to by a young man from the tourist office. Not Jewish, he is of a new generation in Europe fired by remorse

for all that befell the Jewish population of his country of his grandparents' time – distant enough now to be a little freer of the pain, and to long for a reconciling with the past.

The young man in the tourist office is disinterested in our presence until, taking a deep breath, and risking blanket resistance to what I am about to divulge, I say, "I am on the trail of my Jewish great-grandmother. I believe she was born in this town." At this, he stops re-arranging the pamphlets in his circular stand, and ushers me into his office, pulls out a chair. "Please sit down. Would you care for a cup of tea?"



Abraham Hillman and his wife Emma (née Daites) c.1896

I show him photographs of my great-grandparents, apparently taken in Latvia before departing for Glasgow in 1896. I have been given copies of these from a relative, June Hillman – in Glasgow, just days before. The Hillman family departed to Glasgow in 1896 – this we know. I place on the table between us the only evidence – from a researcher in Latvia – documenting my great-grandmother's birth – she was Emma or Anna Daites or Deitch. The birth was in Novoalexandrovsk, the town of Zarasai since Lithuania's independence from USSR in 1998. It seems that Emma Hillman (née Daites/ Deitch) was born here in 1857. The young man seems excited. "You must meet

with Ilona, the Director of the Museum here in Zarasai," he tells me. "She is most interested in the Jewish heritage of Zarasai, and is working to have the history and culture revived, as well as restoration of the Jewish cemetery."

He draws a map for us to find the Museum, gives us the director's phone number and detailed directions to the now neglected Jewish cemetery. He also shows us a book in Russian which is the current document for Zarasai's lost Jewish history. There are three Jews left in the town. All others fled the country or were executed during the Nazi era in the 1940s. Many left prior to that particular wave of extermination.

"Do you know Russian?" he asks expectantly. "No," I say, the first glimmer of wishing for that country's language appears. "Hebrew?" "No," I feel even sadder that I have never learned that many-layered language either. My parents retained just a little Yiddish.

We make our way in our hired car to the Museum. Donald drives, my companion on this trail. (We have recently 'found' each other after the death of his wife some four years previously – and for me, after more than 20 years of living alone.)

The museum is a grand-looking building in Russian style, ponderous, large. There are major building works at the rear. We pick our way through puddles, rubble, and bits of concrete, to the back door, but that too, is firmly locked. We can raise no one. The museum is closed for the day! I am dispirited, frustrated. Donald suggests, "You have the phone number. Why not call? The Director is probably in the building." I call on the mobile. A voice answers, a woman, but she cannot speak English. There is a brief pause, and then another voice. I say, very slowly, "Can...you...speak...English? We...are...outside".

"I will come," the voice responds. And she does. The young woman meeting us is the Director's assistant. We encounter each other along the path in front of the museum. The young woman smiles a welcome. The day brightens. Lithuania has ushered us in.

In the office of the Director, Ilona, we arrange ourselves around a coffee table. Vilma, her English-speaking assistant, acts as our interpreter. The Director speaks Lithuanian, Russian, German, as do most older people we encounter in Latvia and Lithuania. The younger people or those in tourism might speak English.

For close to an hour and a half we share information. Vilma photocopies all my documents and photographs. The hope is for restoration of the Jewish history of Zarasai. Anti-semitism lives on in the town, they tell us. There is opposition to the restoration of the cemetery.

Vilma shows me the large book of Jewish history of Zarasai, the one we have sighted in the tourism office. And leafing through it, she finds a page and points to three names of families living in Zarasai in the 1800s. I see 'Deçu' and say, "That could be my great-grandmother's family who were Daites, Deitch, or other variations. She nods enthusiastically. Surnames for Jews, we have learned, are only 200 years old and they were fluid. (Prior to that, they would have used patronymics). Names changed according to whom they were dealing with. If Russians held sway, the name would be Russianised, or Lithuanianised for the time after independence, or Germanised for commerce with Germans.

I am back home in Sydney. It is two months after this visit and a copy of the salient page has still not been sent, though it was promised 'the next day'. I receive an email from Vilma apologizing. Patience strained, I write back saying, I hope to hear from her soon. I recall the statue outside the Museum on the park beside the immense lake. It is just a face, stone, mammoth, anguished, with two giant hands, emerging from the earth, clawing at earth, desperate – terrified, menacing.

I had left Zarasai with a sense of unfinished business. Writing to Ilona, I suggest that I return to do an artwork in the Jewish cemetery. It is clear what it is – to work with each headstone – to see what emerges, to paint the image that once was gazed on by a bereaved relative – to paint the delicate beauty of the place, the engravings on stones, the differing colours of lichens on them, the blue sky, the dark sky, the forest, the lake, the track, the old rusted gates falling off their hinges, the stones awry and untended, the stories of beings who once were someone's loved ones falling into silence.

Like a detective, like a spy, I am unable to join up the fragments – and yet –

I try to imagine what it may have been like for my great-grandmother there in the 1860s, 1870s perhaps the 1880s. How was it for her mother at her baby's birth in 1857?

And when the family moved, probably to Liepaja, as indicated by my grandmother's brother David Hillman, in a letter to Samuel (Hillman?) saying that 'the Hillman family were much respected in Libau' (the former name of the ice-free Baltic seaport, where many families settled for long periods to obtain the necessary papers to emigrate in the 1890s.)

At last, the long awaited page arrives from Vilma, with two short paragraphs translated into English.

One says, in Vilma's quaint Lithuanian English,

The forest was the most profitable trade, it was a range of three merchants – Deitch, Okunis and Levin. A wood was used for the local needs, a part of them merchants sent to Daugavpils and to the railway station. Processed wood products (boards, the crosstie, etc) were exported to the abroad.

The second paragraph also mentions the Deitch (Daites) family:

Or 1868 data gives that in Zarasai has lived 126 merchants [Jewish]. They have ruled the trade of corn and flour. The largest merchants were Pen, Shteimanne Flash, Deich, I.Pen, A Ginsburg, and Joffe. The traders were supplying the corn not only to the local residents but sold them to the traders of Daugavpils or sent it to Liepaja and the port of Riga. At the crop failure, the crop prices rose, the traders exported their commodity to the provinces of the middle Russian. However, the crop trade has gradually began to decline and become unprofitable because of the crop yields sharply falling.

These paragraphs do not seem much, but to me they are rich manna!

My great grandparents' name appears in both – Deitch and Deich (or Deičus – a Lithuanian translation). My grandmother Sophia – according to her death certificate – was born in Daugavpils, not far from Zarasai. We have previously stayed in Daugavpils, just across the border in Latvia.

I am joyful to receive these pieces of information, and send off a small gift – mugs with Australian paintings of birds – to Vilma and her Director. Here is more documented evidence that my great-grandmother's family were indeed in Zarasai in the 19th century. Vilma responds,

Oh thank You very much, You don't have to do it, it's our job. I will feel out on the limb because I keep You to wait for this information ...

What I know now is that my great grandmother's parents were perhaps involved in wood, corn and flour trades. I know that Sophia, my grandmother, was born in Daugavpils. I know how close those two towns are/were.

I also know that trade occurred between Zarasai (Novoalexandrovsk) and Liepaja where my grandfather was probably born.

I can find no record of my paternal grandfather Philip Josephs' birth so far, but have located a row of 1890s era shops, where he might have had a tailoring shop, or have worked in one belonging to someone else. I don't know. Libau was a thriving Baltic port and a lot of exchanges would have taken place on the waterfront and between travellers there, perhaps in the large market that existed then. Perhaps Philip heard intimations of future pogroms there, that led him to determine to leave. Perhaps he made friends with the Hillmans or fell in love with Sophia and that may have been a contributing factor. Who knows what is inspired from the heart?

The trail begins to make sense. The dots, so indistinct, take on colour, texture, begin to connect.

Vilma writes to me after some months. She tells me that she has found in a book entitled *Zarasai laiko vilnyse* (Zarasai in the waves of time) by Laima Raubiskiene (p.144) the following:

At the street of doctor Dominykas Bukontas there was a house of the Jew Deitch, in which before the First World War was the governance treasury. It was a beautiful, two-storey brick house. Burned in 1919, January about the midnight, during the immeasurable freeze. It burned up residence of Lithuanian military unit through the negligence. Lighted at 10 o'clock at night, when many soldiers have been sleeping. The fire started near the exit. Soldiers jumped through the windows. From this beautiful house left only the brick wall, pulled down by the owner, the bricks was sell out. [Vilma's English]

I am perplexed by this paragraph. Did Deitch own the building and live in it, or did the military? What was the relationship of Deitch to that building or to the soldiers, I wonder? Vilma cannot tell. Except that Deitch lived there prior to World War 1. Was this Deitch related to my great-grandmother?

I do know however from the previously translated paragraphs that trade declined at some point and it may have contributed to the Deitch family's departure for Liepaja – perhaps as a first move towards emigrating to Glasgow. We don't know if that were their first choice, or perhaps the way the ship went. Did it go via Liepaja, Hamburg, or Bremerhaven? How to find the ship that landed the family in Glasgow in 1896. What led to the marriage there of Philip Josephs to Sophia Hillman in 1897?



Sophia Hillman c.1896

The Tale of Two Surnames

Rieke Nash

I always knew that my great-grandmother was Sarah Shulman and that her husband, Getzel, died at a very young age leaving her with four young children.

On a 1997 trip to Poland the Polish State Archive in Włocławek gave me a copy from a *Book of Residents*. This not only confirmed that Gecel Szulman died at age 34, but provided his date and place of birth and the names of his parents. Unfortunately, there were no surviving records for his birthplace, Lipno, but his parents were listed as Joachim Szulman and Pesse Kwiat.

As an Archive Coordinator for the Jewish Records Indexing – Poland (JRI-Poland) project, and Team Leader for the small towns in the Włocławek district, it has been a frustrating task documenting vital records as there were many missing registers. An Archivist told me that, during the war the Nazis had collected the Jewish registers for these towns, put them on a train to take back to Berlin but the train was bombed. Where records have survived, the JRI-Poland team have indexed registers and made them available on their website.

So in 2007, when the file for the small shtetl of Dobrzyń nad Wisłą arrived, I was delighted to find a marriage for a Joachim Szulman and a Pessa Kwiat in 1841. I had never considered Dobrzyń as a ‘family’ town, but it was not unusual for couples to come from different towns and sometimes to settle in a third town in the district.

The copy of the marriage certificate from the Włocławek archives showed their ages and parents’ names. Joachim Lewin Szulman from Lipno, the son of Samuel and Hana, was nineteen and Pessa Kwiat, the daughter of Iciek and Chaj, was twenty-nine. Iciek Kwiat signed the document. As these Dobrzyń indices only started in 1826, and if she was actually 29 years old, Pessa’s birth predated these records.

When I discovered that there were Jewish records for the years 1808-1825 in the Catholic records for the town and that they were filmed by the LDS, I was eager to document any further resources that were available. On visits to Salt Lake City with Gary Mokotoff’s Research Group, I was able to scan many of these early records for a number of towns. Back home, I created index files that would eventually be added to the JRI-Poland databases. Luckily, for this part of Poland, many residents were already adopting surnames and the use of patronymics had been quickly abandoned.

While indexing the records for Dobrzyń nad Wisłą, I was mystified that there were no Kwiat until, in an 1821 record, Iciek Kwiat appeared as a witness. His signature was identical to his 1841 one, so I was confident that it was the same

man. Why hadn’t he appeared earlier? I searched my records for a combination of an Iciek and a Chaja (Iciek’s wife) as parents and, to my delight, found a



Dobrzyń nad Wisłą Synagogue

Photo: L. Dmochowski , 1908 from the book *Album Fotografii - Dobrzyń nad Wisłą sprzed lat* (see [New Resources](#))

birth record for a child, Pessa, born in 1812, exactly when my Pessa should have been born, according to her marriage record.

To my surprise, the surname, however, was not Kwiat but Blum. Now the Polish translation of Kwiat means 'flower' and Blum in Yiddish also translates as flower! Why had Iciek changed to a Polish name? We will never really know, but possibly it was for business reasons. A further inspection of the index file revealed Iciek and Chaja's 1809 marriage record, naming their parents.

Also named on the birth record, as a witness, was the child's grandfather, Joel Abraham Holender, aged 54. He is my great-great-grandmother's grandfather and would have been born around 1760.

Once again, I had transcribed records without realizing they were mine. I am amazed what can be gleaned from existing sources.

Recently, our member, Gregory Sachs, returned from Poland and donated a book of photos of Dobrzyń that included a 1908 photo of the Synagogue built in 1816. Can I confidently assume that my Blum/Kwiat family had attended services there?

Cooma Grave Re-dedication - update

The article on the re-dedication of the Shannon graves in the last issue of *Kosher Koala* elicited some reader responses which are reproduced here.

There was a mistake about Abraham Moses' brothers as he wasn't the youngest. He had two older convict brothers and one younger. He and Leah also did not arrive with four children, they arrived with three. The fourth was born a year later in Sydney.

*Jeannette Tsoulos
24 July 2012*

This article contains some statements which can be disputed. (1) The male Shannon line reached London via Gibraltar from Morocco, not via the Netherlands. They may have had earlier Portuguese roots, but the earliest documented version of the surname is Benshanan, and the earliest traced ancestor Mashod had both forename and surname in Arabic form. (2) Samuel did not serve out his sentence in Tasmania; he was assigned to James Cox there, but transferred to George Cox, James' brother, of Mulgoa NSW about October 1823. (3) Samuel's wife was Emelia - Amelia is a late variant of her forename. (4) I can only document 7 or 8 children for Samuel and Emelia, the older children born before 1848 were probably born at Mawle's Gully rather than Cooma. (4) I think the reason why Emelia's grave has not been located is that she was buried with her husband - the 'private cemetery' being the Wren's Nest plot. (5) Israel/Lewis was transported in 1834, not 1831 - during 1831-34 he was confined on the 'Captivity' hulk in the Thames. (6) I doubt that Israel/Lewis and Sarah had as many as 16 children - I can only document 12, 7 of whom survived into adulthood.

*John Stanhope
28 July 2012*

The President of the Australian Jewish Historical Society ACT (and AJGS member), Sylvia Deutsch replied:

It is good to see that the report of the Cooma excursion by the Australian Jewish Historical Society ACT has elicited interest and comment from descendants of the Shannon brothers. I hope that they are pleased to learn that we Jews who live in the region - Canberra is the nearest active Jewish community to Cooma - feel a sense of kinship and concern for the Jewish pioneers of the Monaro. I hope that they are also pleased with the generosity of AJHS ACT founding President, Earle Hoffman OAM, in underwriting the cost of restoration of the Shannon brothers'

graves. Earle initiated the AJHS ACT's practice of visiting a place of Jewish interest in the region each year on the Canberra Day public holiday in March.

On the issue of disputed historical data, we welcome all input. The historical background for this excursion was largely researched by longstanding and dedicated AJHS ACT committee member Margaret Beadman OAM, using various historical sources, both online and documentary material. (Our research, for example, suggests that it is doubtful whether Amelia/Emilia Shannon is buried in the brothers' grave.) It is the nature of historical research that different researchers contribute to the historical record, both building up knowledge and also identifying possible inaccuracies. From such work emerges a true picture of the past.

Sylvia Deutsch
9 Oct 2012

New Resources in our Library

The Genealogist's Internet: The Essential Guide to Researching Your Family History Online (5th Edition) by Peter Christian, Bloomsbury, 2012.

This 400+ page publication is very readable and full of helpful hints. While aimed mainly at British researchers, beginners are not forgotten and topics such as privacy, social media, search engines and descriptions of family tree sites are discussed. While anyone with an ancestor who lived in the UK at some time will find this book useful, most researchers will benefit from it and it can be consulted at workshops. Most appropriately, it has been donated to the Society by Booktopia (www.booktopia.com.au).

Album Fotografü - Dobrzyń nad Wisłą sprzed lat (Photographic Album - Dobrzyń on the Vistula, years ago) has been donated to the Society by Greg Sachs who recently visited this small sztetl, north-west of Warsaw. It features a 1908 photo of a wooden synagogue built in 1816, while the views of the river bank and town streets provide some idea of the environment where our ancestors lived and went to shul.

IAJGS 2012 Paris Conference

Thank you to Jack Jellins for donating the syllabus, handouts and the Family Finder from the Conference. We have also received the audio files for most of the speakers, and some of the French presentations. Of interest are the sessions from the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) where they discuss their latest projects and findings. This conference focussed on Sephardi and East-European research, as well as the usual inspiring discussions of worthwhile ideas for making progress. The list of talks is available from the Society.

Egyptian-Jewish Emigrés in Australia by Racheline Barda, Cambria Press 2011.

The description of the lives led by Jewish families who emigrated from Egypt to Australia makes fascinating reading. Barda's interviews with many of these migrants describe their former lives in Egypt, linking them to the historical background of the times.

Lion Hearts: A family Saga of Refugees and Asylum Seekers by Henry R. Lew, Hybrid Publishers, 2012

This is a biography of Lonek Lew, the author's father, told through the lives of people who knew him.

From the publisher's website:

Using his father's clear and detailed accounts of his life in pre-war Poland, the Holocaust and his colourful life in Melbourne, as well as personal meetings and memories, the author assembles portraits of extraordinary people living through extraordinary events.

This book is of particular interest to those with roots in Bialystok.

News

IAJGS Awards 2012

The following were awarded at the IAJGS International Conference in Paris in August. Mazel Tov to all!

IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award: Dr. Jeffrey S. Malka, for his pioneering work in Sephardic genealogical studies

IAJGS Award for Outstanding Contribution to Jewish Genealogy via the Internet, Print or Electronic Project: Logan Kleinwaks, for the creation and management of the Genealogy Indexer

IAJGS Award for Outstanding Program or Project Award: The ViewMate Project

IAJGS Award for Outstanding Publication by an IAJGS Member Association: Great Britain Jewish Genealogical Society for *Shemot*

Stern Grant Award 2012

The 2012 Award was shared by two projects.

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee: to continue the printing, digitising and indexing of records in their archives, particularly those focusing on the overseas rescue, relief, and rehabilitation of Jews during the middle of the 20th century.

The Israel Genealogy Research Association (IGRA): to complete the development of a search engine able to handle both English and Hebrew searches.

Report from Prague

The National Archive has started digitising the 180 Familiant books in their collection in Prague. They are mostly from Bohemia, but there are also some from Moravia. This is a unique collection which documents the allocation of Familiant numbers to Jews in Bohemia and Moravia.

The digitisation and scanning process will be finished by the end of 2013. JewishGen has donated about half a million Czech Crowns towards the cost of digitisation, checking scans, and preparing an index to all volumes.

Ing. Jaroslav Klenovsky of Brno, a freelance researcher who also works for the Brno Jewish Community and the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic based in Prague, has identified around 20-30 more Familiant books held in the Prague Jewish Museum, in the Moravian Land archives in Brno, and in the Silesian archives in Opava in the far north eastern part of the Czech Republic.

Dr Matusikova intends to create an original index for the entire Familiant collection using the indices included in each volume. The new general index will have the following information:

Name of father, name of first-born son, region and place of settlement or name of the Estate, volume number and page (folio) number where the family is recorded.

Most of these records are from the nineteenth century but they also include information which goes back to the previous century.

I asked Dr Matusikova about the 1724 census of Bohemian Jews which Dr Hanna Ebelova from Charles University has begun to transcribe. The Rothschild Foundation has given a grant for the whole 1724 census to be put on the Internet along with the 1793 and 1783 censuses which have already been published by the National Archives. It's a three-year project.

Daniela Torsh from Prague

12 October 2012

Changes at Findmypast

With the new *World Collection*, you can now gain access, in one place, to the collections from Britain, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and the United States.

As part of the Australia & New Zealand Collection you will now have access to Passenger Lists for UK ships, recording the journeys of 26 million people who left the UK and Ireland between 1890 and 1960 – including arrivals to all Australian and New Zealand ports.

When you buy new credits on *findmypast.co.uk* they will now restore up to a maximum of 280 credits that have expired within the last two years. To re-activate your expired credits, login to *findmypast.co.uk*, click 'subscribe' on the top right of the page and choose the number of new credits you wish to purchase. Once you've bought these, you'll be able to see your new credits total – which will include your expired credits – on the top right of any page.

Findmypast <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/> and Genes Reunited <http://www.genesreunited.co.uk/> have announced that they will make transcripts of the 1911 England Wales Census available free until 18th November 2012. You will need to register (free) if you don't already have a username. You will still have to pay for the image, but the detailed transcription is free (normally 5 credits).

New Memorial for Pultusk Jewish Cemetery

On 5 July 2012, there was a ceremonial unveiling of the new memorial at the Jewish cemetery in Pultusk, Poland. The ceremony was attended by about a hundred people, including a large group of former Jewish residents and their descendants Pultusk. For a report (in Polish) and photos see:

<http://www.sztetl.org.pl/pl/cms/aktualnosci/2593,upamietniono-cmentarz-zydowski-w-pultusku/>

UK National Archives changes the 30-year rule

From 2013, the UK Government will move towards releasing records when they are 20 years old, instead of 30. During the ten-year transition period, two years' worth of government records will be transferred annually to the National Archives until 2023. After this point, government will revert to transferring a single year's worth of 20 year old records to The National Archives each year. For more information see:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/news/739.htm>

Jewish heritage trip to Lithuania 25 June - 5 July, 2013

For 20 years, Howard Margol and Peggy Mosinger Freedman have been leading trips to Lithuania for groups of people interested in their Jewish heritage. The details and itinerary for the 2013 trip are on their website at: <http://www.litvaktrip.peggyspage.org/>

Jewish Genealogy Downunder, Vol.14(3), September 2012

This latest issue contains a really useful article, "Researching family history in South Africa", by Bubbles Segall. Available in our resources library or from AJGS (Vic).

Rokiskis, Lithuania – call for photos

The historian at the Rokiskis Regional Museum (Tyzenhaus), Giedrus Kujelis, has asked if anyone has photos of the synagogues which once stood in Rokiskis. There was a wooden synagogue and three plots of land assigned to synagogues, plus Rabbi Dober Zelkind's Talmud Torah, the Zionist Forum, and Youth Minyan.

If you have an image of one or more of these buildings, please contact Phil Shapiro, email:

fxva123@aol.com

Interesting websites

JCR-UK - update

<http://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/leeds.htm>

Leeds Hilltop Cemeteries have been added to the JCR-UK website. These entries include photographs of headstones.

Leo Baeck Institute goes digital

<http://www.lbi.org/digibaeck/>

The Leo Baeck Institute is a New York City-based research library devoted to the study of the history and culture of German-speaking Jewry.

DigiBaeck is the new gateway to the Institute's digital collections. DigiBaeck provides instant access to materials ranging from rare 16th century renaissance books to memoirs that document the experience of German-Jewish émigrés.

IGRA – update

<http://genealogy.org.il/>

The Israel Genealogy Research Association (IGRA) has announced a new version of its Beta Search Engine for the All Israel Database (AID) allowing you to search names in Hebrew or Latin letters. All databases include the transliteration of the names. Double names are split into separate fields.

IGRA has also added new databases:

- * Rehavia Address Book, June 1935
- * Members in Agricultural Organisations in Petah Tikvah, 1931-6
- * List of Candidates for the First Knesset (Constituent Assembly), 1949
- * Practical Nurses, 1951-2
- * List of Persons Authorised to Act as Lawyers in Civil Courts, 1956
- * Drishat Shalom (Regards), 1919 – includes the names of those sending regards to their families, and the names of people in their families and where they lived.
- * Voters' List from Petah Tikva for the 18th Zionist Congress, 1933
- * List of Teachers of the Department of Education of Hava'ad HaLeumi, 1940
- * Candidates for the 1941 Histadrut Haklalit (General Council Elections)
- * Candidates for the 1941 Va'adat Hapoalot (The Women's Workers' Council)

Kazerne Dossin – Mechelen, Belgium

<http://www.kazernedossin.com/EN/>

Kazerne Dossin grew out of the former Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance which was founded in 1995 by a number of Jewish survivors. In 2001, the Flemish Government got behind plans for a new Holocaust and Human Rights Museum and put in place the financing to renovate and develop the museum site. The new museum complex is due to open in December 2012.

They have an extensive collection of documents which are progressively being digitally scanned but which can only be viewed on-site. These documents primarily relate to Belgian Jews, but remember that many Poles and others made Belgium a temporary home. See the website for detailed descriptions of what they hold.

Mémorial de la Shoah – Paris, France

<http://www.memorialdelashoah.fr>

This website has a searchable database of victims and resisters. Some of the deportation lists include maiden names of married females; most include date of birth.

Les enfants juifs de Paris déportés de juillet 1942 à août 1944

(Jewish children deported from Paris – July 1942-August 1944)

<http://sig.tge-adonis.fr/Paris1942/>

This website (in French) has a search facility by name and by address. It also has an interactive map of Paris showing where the children were living at the time of their deportation, so that you can see the names of others at that address. It includes the child's age but no other family information.

Gesher Galicia Map Room

<http://maps.geshergalicia.org/>

Maps are currently available for the following places:

Belz, Bohorodczany, Brody, Bukaczowce, Chodorow, Dobromil, Grzymalow, Korolowka, Kazimierz, Krakow, Lancut, Lwow (Lviv, Lemberg), Nienadowa, Podhajce, Polupanowka, Przemysl, Rohatyn, Romanowe Siolo, Ropczyce, Skala, Usciedzko, Nowy Wisnicz, Zborow, and Zurawno.

New maps are continuously added, so check back regularly.

Świątokrzyski sztetl

<http://swietokrzyskisztetl.pl/en/welcome>

A website devoted to the Jewish history of Chmielnik and the Swietokrzyskie Voivodeship. Contains list of people in various towns in the region, survivor testimonies, photos and much information. It is a pre-cursor to a museum in the restored synagogue in Chmielnik, due to open in 2013

The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, London

<http://pism.co.uk/history/index.html>

The archives of this Institute and Museum hold many documents relating to Polish military history under British command, the families of Polish military men who were evacuated to Russia during WW2, and others pertaining to Poland under Russian rule. Some of the holdings have been digitised and placed on-line. While mostly in Polish, the lists of names are mainly typed and easy to read. Some files are very large and quite slow to download.

Thanks to Rivka Schirman and JRI-PL Digest, August 10, 2012 for this alert.

Riga Lists

Detailed list of those in the Riga Ghetto, compiled by Tamara Zitcere. This is a large PDF file which can be slow to download, so be patient. It looks as if nothing is happening. <http://www.rgm.lv/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Rigas-geto-maju-gramatas.pdf>

This is a detailed and searchable database of the 20-21,000 Jews living in Riga in the inter-war period. It is an XLS file that can be downloaded to your desktop. Fields include Family name, Maiden name, Other surname, First name, Father, Mother, Date of birth or age, Place of birth, Place of origin or citizenship, Date of death, Pre-war Residence, Pre-war Address, Occupation, Gender, Family Status, Date of registration.

<http://www.iiig.org/Research/IijgResearch/RigaHouseRegisters.aspx>

Thanks to Marilyn Richardson, Latvia-SIG Digest, for these alerts.

Ukraine-SIG Info Sheets

http://www.jewishgen.org/ukraine/RES_Infosheets.asp#R

Five new Information Sheets have been added:

- * Abbreviations used in Russian documents
- * Bibliographic terminology used in Russian Archives
- * How to identify Jews in Russian language data sources
- * Jewish and non-Jewish names in Russian documents
- * Terminology for Russian administrative divisions

Australian Jewish Genealogical Society Database

Surnames being researched by our new members – October, 2012

Id	Surname	Old name of Town	Current name of Town	Country	Date
703	CHAPMAN		LONDON	ENGLAND	1826
703	CHAPMAN		YASS	AUSTRALIA	1839
699	COHEN	BETHNAL GREEN	LONDON	ENGLAND	Up to 1881
698	GORNEY		BREST LITOVSK	BELARUS	1912-1939
705	LOWY		INNSBRUCK	AUSTRIA	1930-1933
705	LOWY		BRATISLAVA	SLOVAKIA	1933-1942
705	LOWY		BRATISLAVA	SLOVAKIA	1945-1948
705	LOWY		TRENCIN	SLOVAKIA	Early 1900s
705	LOWY		ZURICH	SWITZERLAND	Early 1900s
698	WAINSTEIN		BERLIN	GERMANY	1924-1941
698	WAINSTEIN		BERLIN	GERMANY	1945-1948
705	WOLLNER		SURANY	SLOVAKIA	1928-1944

Remember to update your listings as you research additional family members and towns. Send details to Rieke Nash: society@ajgs.org.au

Dates for your diary

AJGS workshops and meetings

Nov 4	9:30am-12:30pm	Workshop – Rev Katz Library, Lindfield
Nov 12	10:00am-1:00pm	Workshop – Rev Katz Library, Lindfield
Dec 2	9:30am-12:30pm	Workshop – Rev Katz Library, Lindfield
Dec 10	10:00am-1:00pm	Workshop – Rev Katz Library, Lindfield

Future IAJGS Conferences

2013 – Boston 4-9 August: temporary website http://iajgs.org/2013_Boston/2013.html

2014 – Salt Lake City 27 July – 1 August

2015 – Israel

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