

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY



KOSHER KOALA



AUTUMN/ MAY 2021

AJGS
L'dor V'dor

Image: Bratislava Neolog Synagogue built in 1893, demolished in 1967–1969
Vintage Postcard: Wikimedia Commons/ Public Domain
Headstones thought lost discovered in Bratislava cemetery - see story page 19

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FEATURES

THE POSTCARD FROM UNCLE KLAUS: THE FINAL CHAPTER

BOB SELINGER

In our collection of family memorabilia there is a photo of my mother's brother, Klaus Wittner. For as long as I can remember, the photo stood on my grandmother's dressing table. We also have a postcard he sent from Antwerp in late October 1937.



Uncle Klaus

My grandparents and parents rarely spoke of their lives in Germany before they emigrated to Australia 1938/39. Of Klaus I was only told that he was born 2nd November 1917, and that he had been on a ship bound for Spain which had sunk. Somewhat romantically, I envisioned that he must have been supplying the Republicans in the civil war and his ship had been torpedoed!

Klaus had been in *Hachshara*, the Zionist training program for young people intending to emigrate to Palestine. He had three siblings: my mother Hilde, Ruth who emigrated to the USA, and Paul who emigrated to Argentina. Paul named his son Claudio (the Spanish equivalent of Klaus). Klaus was the youngest and born almost eight years after our mother Hilde. His loss had a devastating emotional effect on the family.



Family Wittner
Berlin w15
Nettlebeck St. 10

Dear all, The work is not really so bad. We've got new coal and consequently I don't have as much work to do. I had to stow 14 tons of coal daily. I have (?) from 4-8 (?) which means twice daily. I am extraordinarily well.
Kiss Your Klaus.

My mother had recorded, on a rough family tree, that Klaus' death had been in 1937. My grandmother pencilled part of a family tree on the back of a painting of her great-grandfather on which she wrote "Klaus 1938.". My brother, Ben (named Klaus Benjamin at birth) was told that his birthday, 23rd January, 1939, was "aimed to coincide" with the first anniversary of our uncle's death.

You can understand why I might have been a bit confused! I became determined to find out the date and circumstances of Uncle Klaus' death.

Looking back, I realise I started with the wrong question, which was "Can I find out which ships were sunk around January 1938?"

Answering this question, I found the *Endymion*, sunk off Cape Tinoso by a Spanish Nationalist submarine on 21 January 1938. It fitted the bill, I thought, with a touch of smugness and some glee. The *Endymion* was a steamship with a cargo of coke. Klaus mentioned in his postcard "loading 14 tons a day" on the ship in Antwerp. And there was that sub! There was a slight problem, which I chose to simply ignore – the *Endymion* was a British ship. Was it likely Klaus had managed to get himself to England and board a ship there? What about the Hachshara training?

A second possibility was the *Arctic*, grounded at Corunna on 30th January.

As it turned out, both were wrong.

Ben emailed Aubrey Pomerance, a contact he had developed over other matters at the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Aubrey directed us to the *Jüdische Rundschau* of 1st March 1938, with the following report:

With the loss of a Hamburger steamer in the North Sea in heavy storm, two Jewish crew lost their lives; to wit, Klaus Wittner and Julius Hamburger. Klaus Wittner was a chaver in Hachshara, who was on the ship to train as a seaman.

...and then a death notice

At the beginning of February, we lost our dear chaver (comrade) Klaus Wittner through a tragic shipping disaster, who was practising his profession.



This was inserted by colleagues from the *Union of Jewish Youth* and the training organisation *Merkas Hechaluz*

Ben and I had a light bulb moment: this was certainly a “tragic shipping disaster.”

To find out more about *Jüdische Rundschau* I turned to Wikipedia and amongst the footnotes found the periodical collection at the University of Frankfurt. It led me to more information about Hachshara. The edition of 3rd March 1938 included a section on training for the sea. Was this the training Klaus been involved in?



D. Training in fisheries and seafaring
Training centres: Fisheries centre on the island of Bornholm (Denmark): Training in coastal and lake fishing. - Seafaring home in Hamburg: Learn all deck and machine occupations in seafaring. - Also for young people with religious attitudes: Training centre in Livorno (Italy): Learn all types of fishing work.

Hot on the trail I once again turned to Google and discovered an extract from a book *Jewish Topographies, Visions of Space, Traditions of Place* page 190 “A View of the Sea” (Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, Alexandra Nocke Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008) which stated that the merchant marine training program, Hachshara in Hebrew:

...was conceived... by Naftali Unger, a young emissary from Histadrut Trade Union Federation of Palestine, and Lucy Borchardt, owner of the Fairplay Tugboat Shipping Company of Hamburg. The plan was to use the ships of the Fairplay Company as training for young Jews in order to obtain the immigration certificates of the Palestine office, for which a professional or technical qualification is a pre-requisite.

I then found a reference to *Stolpersteine Hamburg*, which also referenced Fairplay:

In Hamburg, ... young men were also able to complete a hachshara course as a sailor on the ships of the Fairplay Shipping Co., ...

I then discovered a concrete link between the training offered by Lucy Borchardt's Fairplay Shipping Co. and a "tragedy at sea":

On 28 Jan. 1938, the Goldmann family suffered another blow of fate. Son Kurt (born in 1901) went to sea as a carpenter on the steamer *Richard Borchardt* of the Fairplay shipping company. On the way from Nordenham/Britain to Pasajes/Northern Spain, his ship was caught in a severe storm. When it sank in the North Sea, none of the eighteen crew members could save themselves.

The owner of the steamer, Lucy Borchardt, was implicated in the accident by a former employee, who claimed:

...the crew had consisted only of untrained seamen, who could not have coped with a storm, since Mrs. Borchardt was always keen to employ untrained Jewish boys, who of course are not seamen and never will be.

Upon investigation the Hamburg Maritime Accidents Investigation Board (Hamburger Seeamt) refuted this accusation.

The search for information on the *Richard Borchardt* and its sinking led me down many interesting paths. For some little time, I was distracted by Lucy Borchardt (see breakout on page 8). But I continued to find out more about the ship. Returning to the register of sunken ships I found the *Bussard* (the original name of the *Richard Borchardt*); And then, in a long Wikipedia list of shipwrecks, I found an entry that read:

Richard Borchardt, Germany: The collier departed from Hamburg on a voyage to Nordenham, Germany. Two lifebuoys were discovered on Heligoland, Schleswig-Holstein on 4 February. Believed foundered in the North Sea with the loss of all nineteen crew.

The reference to wreckage on Heligoland led me to ask Google if this place had anything to offer. Hey presto! The Heligoland museum had a reference to four articles in Hamburg newspapers. A fabulous site called [Europeana](#) gave me access to three of the articles and Dr Sönke



Knopp of the Hamburg Historical Museum supplied a fourth.

Would I finally confirm definitively if Uncle Klaus had been on board the *Richard Borchardt*?

I ended up with a comprehensive range of sources from February to early March 1938, mourning the loss of life aboard the *Richard Borchardt*. Several of these explicitly named Klaus Wittner as the stoker aboard the ship.

And an entry in *Judische Rundschau* from 4th March 1938, inserted by Beth Chaluz, Hamburg, states:

We mourn the first victim from our ranks that a shipping tragedy has claimed. Klaus Wittner began his work just a few months ago. Having just come from the Youth league *Werkleute*, life on board was more difficult for him than for some others. Thus, it had not been an easy decision for him to stay with the merchant marine *hachshara*. Klaus was loved by us all. He really got into the spirit of life as a seaman. He was able to bring others closer by his positive attitude. He was happy in his work. Whenever he returned from a trip, he was full of plans. Before he set off on his last journey, we had a long discussion on questions regarding *hachshara*. We will truly preserve his memory”

On 12th March 1938, the owner of Fairplay Towboat Shipping Company published a notice in *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*:

With deep sadness we announce the loss of the whole crew of our steamer *Richard Borchardt* which was last seen on 29 of last month sailing westwards and with 18 brave officers and men has since sunk. We honour their memory!



The entry named all on board, including Klaus Wittner.

Two newspapers reported on the inquest into the sinking. From these reports we learned that the ship departed Nordenham, at the mouth of the Weser River in northern Germany, on 28th January 1938 and was to go first to Dover, to take on



two “neutral observers”, and then on to Pasajes, in Spain. The journey would have normally taken 6 days. The captain was 45 years old; his two officers had captain’s qualifications.

Mention is made in one article of a “trimmer” – presumably Klaus. A trimmer’s task was to load coal. In the second article he is listed as one of the stokers.

The ship departed at 0400 and the pilot left at 0805. On the 29th of January, around 1230, it was about 15 nautical miles west of a lightship. The wind was 9 to 10 WSW on the Beaufort Scale, then varied from 7 to 10 through to the 30th of January.

Reports indicated the ship was last sighted west of Borkum Reef. On the 4th of February, a report in *The Times* noted wreckage, including life buoys and parts of the superstructure, was discovered on the coast of Heligoland, just off the north coast of Germany.

The Fairplay shipping company sent out rescue tugs. Other boats and planes joined in the search. No survivors were found.

And so, at last, we have our answer. Finally, Uncle Klaus takes his rightful place in the annals of the Wittner/Selinger family - Klaus Wittner born 2nd November 1917, died at sea 29th/30th January 1938.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following who supplied with me with leads and sources:

Bjorn Siegel: Institute for the History of German Jews

Jörg Mainzer: Fairplay Towage Company (FAIRPLAY Schleppdampfschiffs-Reederei Richard Borchard GmbH)

Dr Sönke Knopp: Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte

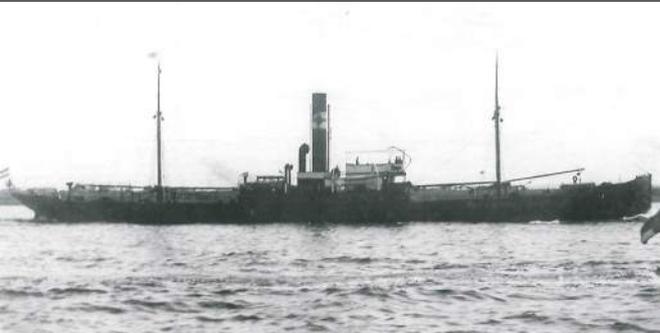
Aubrey Pomerance: Jewish Museum, Berlin

Thanks, particularly to brother Ben, for encouraging me to stick to it; and, of course, the wonderful world of the Google search engine.

THE BEAUFORT SCALE

The Beaufort Scale, is an empirical measure that relates wind speed to observed conditions at sea or on land. Its full name is the Beaufort wind force scale.

- 7 on the Beaufort Scale indicates High wind, moderate gale or near gale and describes sea heaping up and white foam from breaking waves blown in streaks along the direction of the wind;
- 8 equals a gale with moderately high waves of greater length and edges of crests breaking into spindrift;
- 9 is for strong/severe gale with high waves; dense streaks of foam along the direction of the wind; sea beginning to roll and spray affecting visibility”; and
- 10 is a storm or gale with very high waves with long overhanging crests; foam in great patches blown in dense white streaks along the direction of the wind; the surface of the sea taking on a white appearance; rolling of the sea becomes heavy and visibility is affected.



RICHARD BORCHARDT

1906 Schiffswerft H. Koch, Lübeck

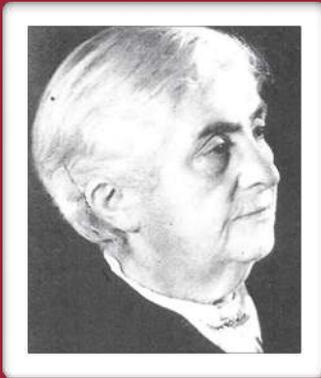
Bau-Nr. 168

74,90-11,04-6,63 m

555 BRT / 900 PS / Dreifach-Expansionsdampfmaschine

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1906 | gebaut für DG Argo, Bremen als BUSSARD |
| 1917 | an Leonhardt & Blumberg, Hamburg, neuer Name: OTTO LEONHARDT |
| 1924 | Verkauf an K.W.E. Sturm, Hamburg, neuer Name: BRIGITTE STURM |
| 1929 | an August Bolten Wm. Miller's Nachfolger KR, neuer Name: KRA |
| 1935 | China Reederei (Aug. Bolten), Fischereinummer HH 216 |
| 1936 | Verkauf an Fairplay Schleppdampfschiffs-Reederei |
| | Richard Borchard GmbH, Hamburg, neuer Name: RICHARD BORCHARDT |
| 1938 | im Sturm gesunken, letzter Kontakt westlich Borkumriff Feuerschiff |

MOTHER BORCHARDT



Lucy Borchard/ Borchardt (née May)
Born December 10, 1877 in Hamburg;
Died February 4, 1969 in London.

Widely known as Mother Borchardt, Lucy Borchardt was a German shipowner and owner of the Fairplay Tow Steamship Shipping Company, founded in Hamburg in 1905 . She was an important member of Hamburg's Jewish community and helped organise the training of immigrant Jews to become seafarers during the Nazi era, so-called “Seefahrts-Hachshara”).

A 1935 profile in *Aus alter und neuer Zeit* [*From Times Old and New*], the illustrated supplement to the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* [*Israelite Family Paper*] newspaper, describes her thus:

As far as we know, the only female shipowner in the world... They all unreservedly recognise the expertise [of] this woman. - Even within the Jewish Parish of Hamburg is mother Borchardt... known and respected.

(Reference: <https://jewish-history-online.net/source/jgo:source-166/> Image: Die Fairplay Schlepper-Flotte im Hamburger Hafen, Winter 1929; Wikipedia Commons)



FAMILY SECRETS: THE SEARCH FOR MY MOTHER'S SISTERS

ROSE RAYMEN

While researching her family history Rose Raymen discovered that her mother had kept a painful secret hidden from her children. It took more than a decade to uncover the truth.



My parents, Zelda and Joseph Zylberstein, Kalisz, Poland, 1933

My father, Josef Zylbersztejn (Joseph Silver), was born in Kalisz, Poland, in 1909. My mother, Zeld (Zosia) Haze, was born three years later in the same town. In early 1938, my parents married in the Free City of Danzig (now Gdansk), where my sister Jetka (Judy) was born.

In late 1938, my parents fled Danzig. They arrived in the Chinese port city of Shanghai in May 1939, where my brothers, Lew (Leon) and Daniel, and I were born. We left Shanghai just before Christmas 1948, arriving in the Port of Haifa, Israel, on Valentine's Day 1949.

My sister Judy, then aged 17, was the first in the family to emigrate to Australia, moving to Melbourne in 1955. The rest of us followed the following year, although Judy returned to Israel in 1959, where she still lives today.

We knew my father had a younger sister named, Chana-Sura/ Sonia (b1913, Kalisz) and my mother had a younger brother named Aaron-Abram/ Aleksander/Sasha (b1914 Kalisz).



Zelda and Joseph with Judy,
en-route to Shanghai, 1939

In about 2006, while researching the family, I contacted Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Jerusalem, enquiring if my parents had submitted Pages of Testimony prior to their leaving Israel. Yad Vashem advised me that yes, they had indeed submitted POTs and included a printout of the information they provided.

To say I was shocked to learn that my mother had three sisters she had never spoken about would be an understatement! I found the news almost impossible to comprehend. Surely, my mother would have told us about them. Why would she keep this secret from her own children? Didn't we have a right to know? I phoned my sister, Judy, in Israel and her response was that this must be some sort of mistake, our mother only had one younger brother.

Yad Vashem had included copies of my uncle Sasha's POTs in the package. Although the given names and ages he submitted differed slightly from those in my mother's testimony, he also mentioned his sisters and stated that the eldest sister had been married, providing the name of her husband –Icek Sieradski.

I contacted the Polish State Archives (PSA) in Kalisz, and received a reply in Polish, which read, "*Please note that the national language of Poland is Polish and we do not reply to any other language.*"

A friend, who was a moderator for JewishGen at the time, mentioned that if I joined, which was free of charge, I could post messages in the JewishGen Discussion Groups to receive some assistance. I was completely overwhelmed by the responses I received from JewishGenners around the globe. One of the replies was from Stanley Diamond in Canada, the Executive Director of *Jewish Records Indexing - Poland (JRI-Poland)*. Stanley advised me that the Kalisz State Archives (Archiwum Panstwowe w Kaliszu), held Registration Cards for former residents of

the town. I contacted some of the other individuals who offered to help me and asked if they could translate my emails to and from the PSA, which they did.

As I was unable to confirm the accuracy of any of the given names, I requested that the Kalisz State Archives do a search for any children of my maternal grandparents, Hersz and Marjem Bajla Haze née Babiacka. I received a reply some months later, notifying me that a number of documents had been identified and that I should transfer the cost of the records in złoty, the official currency of Poland.

I posted another message, and again received invaluable help. One of the people who contacted me was Barbara Rubinstein, a linguist and translator in Sweden. Barbara not only translated the Registration Cards sent by the PSA but also prepared a comprehensive spreadsheet, which included both sides of my family.

There was no denying it now. Here was the proof: three other children born to parents Hersz and Marjem Bajla Haze in Kalisz: Pessa (b1911), Szajndla (b1918), and Feigel (b1923).

I enquired about ordering birth certificates for my mother and her sister Pessa (outside the 100 year moratorium) and received help to decipher the Cyrillic Russian birth documents I found on JRI-Poland. However, as the births for my aunts Szajndla and Feigel were inside the 100 year boundary, it was suggested that I contact Krystyna Duszniak, a Polish family history researcher in Melbourne, for help to access them. Krystyna advised that as I wasn't a direct descendant, it would be essential to supply documentation connecting me to my aunts. In a letter on my behalf to the Civil Records Office in Kalisz (Urząd Stanu Cywilnego w Kaliszu), Krystyna specified, that the birth certificates were only intended for 'genealogical purposes.' In 2018, I finally received the long-awaited birth extracts for my mother's younger sisters, Szajndla and Feigel.

It has been almost fifteen years, since I first contacted Yad Vashem and after much soul-searching, I've come to terms with the decision my mother made not to tell her children of the unimaginable loss and suffering she endured.

Sadly we do not know the fate of my three aunts. Uncle Sasha believed they perished in Majdanek Camp, but so far I have been unable to confirm what actually happened to them. I'm still trying to ascertain whether Aunt Pessa had any children.

The quote 'Ignorance is bliss' comes to mind, *'If one is unaware of an unpleasant fact or situation one cannot be troubled by it.'*



Pavel Thorsch, when he worked as a banker in Vienna

My father, Pavel Thorsch, was born in Brno in Czechoslovakia. While living in Prague during and after the Shoah he worked for the Prague Jewish Community and The Joint, a humanitarian organisation now known as JDC. When I stay in Prague, in our family's restituted house, I catch a tram from the bank of the Vltava River in Praha 7 and get off at the stop right in front of the building where he had worked in Republic Square. It has taken me fifty years to work out this connection.

My parents refused to talk about their tragic pasts. By the time I began to ask questions my father was dead and my mother, who died in 2007, was extremely reticent to share her memories.

What I did learn was that my father fled Vienna soon after the Anschluss in March 1938 taking his Catholic wife, Grete, and his Jewish mother, Ida, with him to live in Prague. He was lucky to find a job with the Prague Jewish Community, most likely through his cousin, Hanuš Rebenwurz, from Strážnice. Post war Hanuš was the Chief Rabbi in Prague, but he had also worked for The Joint. Their offices were in Wenceslas Square near the famous statue of "Good King Wenceslas". Locally it's called "the horse". Today there's a Starbucks there, next door to a McDonald's.

Dad and Hanuš were both born in 1902, a few months apart, and regularly returned to their grandparents' home in Strážnice during holidays, birthdays and funerals. Hanuš grew up in Strážnice but Dad, who grew up in rural Tovačov, was sent to high school in Brno.

Because my father married a Catholic woman, he was initially protected from deportation. But, in February 1945, he was sent to Terezín. This is where he met and fell in love with my mother.

The Joint, also called American Joint, is formally known as the *American Joint Distribution Committee*. It was established in 1914 by the US Ambassador to Turkey, Henry Morgenthau and New York philanthropist, Jacob Schiff as a humanitarian organisation,



The Joint Board; founder Jacob Schiff appears in the lower right corner. ([Wikimedia Commons](#))

initially assisting Jews in Turkey who were suffering under Ottoman rule. During World War II The Joint helped Jews from Central Europe emigrate and settle in faraway lands like Australia and South America. Now known simply as the JDC, the organisation continues to do vital humanitarian work.

In April 2020, the *JDC Archives* in New York received a set of digital files pertaining to the Prague office of The Joint, 1945-1950. The collection comprises more than half a million pages.

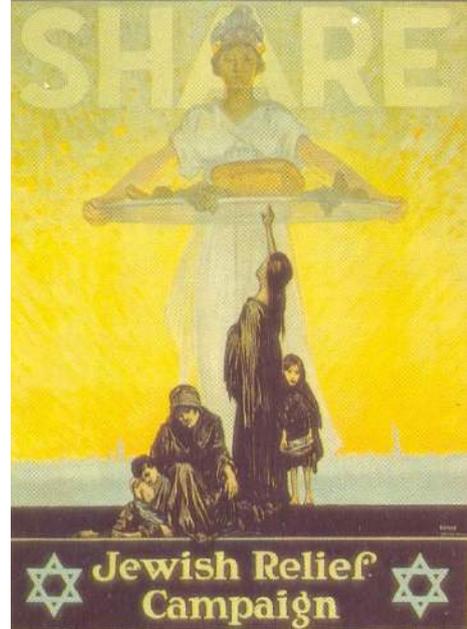
This was momentous, as The Joint records from Prague have been unavailable for research ever since the Czech Secret Police, the StB (Státní bezpečnost), confiscated them and locked the office in January 1950.

After the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, and the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia crumbled, the files were held in the Czech Ministry of the Interior. In 2008, the JDC files were transferred to the *Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes* in Prague. With the agreement of the Institute, the collection was also shared with the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington DC.

Because of COVID 19, the JDC offices were closed through most of 2020, but volunteers turned their attention to the Czech JDC files. Other JDC staff whose work was disrupted by COVID joined them. The result is an index, with nearly 11,000 entries including my father, my mother and me. When the names of accompanying family are added to the chief emigrant, the total number of names indexed approaches 22,000.

The Joint worked with countries throughout North and South America and Australia to help obtain visas, arrange sponsorships and ensure that the migrants would be taken in by the local Jewish communities. This is exactly what happened in our case. The JDC files show how The Joint gave my father a glowing reference, authorised our luggage and communicated with the Australian Jewish Welfare Society.

From top: JDC Campaign Poster, Czech Ministry of the Interior, JDC Office in Israel, Daniela with her parents, 1947, A Jewish survivor in Vienna, looks on as her two-year old daughter is given a treat by Harry Weinsaft of the Joint Distribution Committee. (Photos supplied by the author & Wikimedia Commons)



Our little family left the Nádraží Praha-Holešovice railway station on 14 October, 1948 arriving in Genoa in Italy on the Ligurian Sea three days later. We boarded the Lloyd Triestino liner *Toscana*, after staying a couple of nights in a pensione, and sailed for Sydney on 19 October, 1948. The ship was full of Italians who had also decided to make a new life in far off Australia. We sailed through the Red Sea and onto Ceylon (Sri Lanka), then to Fremantle and Melbourne, until we finally docked in Sydney two months later.

Friends of my father from his days working at the *Creditanstaltbankverein* in Vienna, met us at the wharf in Darling Harbour and drove us up to their beautiful Federation bungalow in Roseville. We lived there for six months until Dad found a job working as a store-man packer on the wharves in Darling Harbour near Chinatown. Dad's friend, whom I called Uncle Fritz, then helped him get a job in a Jewish owned import export company called Bulk Buyers in Clarence St.

I write this article as I am preparing to go to a Seder hosted by Uncle Fritz's granddaughters, Michelle and Karen Sanders. Our family connection with the Sanders family is still strong after more than ninety years.

The JDC case files include dates, birthplaces, addresses and other information on relatives abroad and sometimes biographical details about their wartime experiences.

After more than 40 years of researching, in the 38 files I received from the JDC I finally found a description of my father's work for The Joint. He was an administrative clerk in the accounting section. This may have been a massive step down from the well paid job at the *Creditanstaltbankverein* in Vienna, but he, Mum and I survived thanks to the Joint and the Sanders family.

You can now explore the [*AJDC Prague Office Emigration Files Case Index*](#) online at the [JDC Archives](#). Family members can request digital copies of the documents through the online [Request Information Form](#).



Dr Peter Arnold OAM is a member of the Society. He is co-author of *Worlds Apart, the Re-migration of South African Jews*, with the late Colin Tatz and Gillian Heller, and author of *A Unique Migration: South African Doctors Fleeing to Australia*. This article is an update of an earlier article in *Kosher Koala* Volume 15 No. 1 March 2008.

Like most South African Jews, all my grandparents migrated from Lithuania. After I became aware of the *Family Tree of the Jewish People* and the *All-Lithuania Database*, I started a family tree. It now contains more than 6,000 names.

My mother's family proved hard to trace – the name, ZIV in all its spelling variations, was just too common. It became transliterated into various spellings, starting with an 'S' or a 'Z', with an 'I' or one or two 'E's in the middle, one or two Fs or a V, with or without an E at the end – SIFF, SIFE, SIEFF, SEEFF, SIV, SIVE, ZEFF, ZIV, ZIVE – it became a genealogical abyss, in which I got lost.

By contrast, my father's family name is quite rare: AMOLSKY. It was changed to AMOILS by one of the first to arrive in South Africa. Subsequent arrivals followed suit. My grandfather told me that AMOL was a place name (he thought perhaps a river somewhere) and that the 'SKY' indicated that they had originated in that area. WARSAWSKI, MOSCOWSKY, GORODETSKY, WIENIAWSKI etc are common enough, after all.

So, where was, or is, Amol? I wrote up my voyage of exploration in the *Kosher Koala* in 2008 – a long time ago in terms of AJGS membership.

While updating, I will revisit some of that article here:

THE HYPOTHESIS

...what if an unusual surname takes its origin from a place, a town for instance? What if that town has a known history and if historical events actually fit with what is known, in general, of the migration of the Jews?

Can we indulge our imaginations a little and go back to Biblical times, where they correspond with the historical record? Can we go back to the millennia before Abraham, before there were any Jews? Far-fetched? No, because that is where DNA studies take us.



So where is this place Amol, which, I hypothesise, gave rise to the surname AMOLSKY? It is a city, once a capital city, in northern Persia, on the Silk Road to China.

THE HISTORICAL TIMESPAN

The Jews of Persia, many of them merchants and traders, fled or were expelled during the virulently antisemitic Islamic and Mongol regimes of the 13th and 14th centuries. Some fled east, through what is now Turkmenistan and Pakistan, and then into India. Others, perhaps aware that the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas was welcoming Jews into his country because of their literacy and numeracy, moved northwest, through what is now Azerbaijan and Georgia, through the Ukraine and Belarus, into Lithuania.

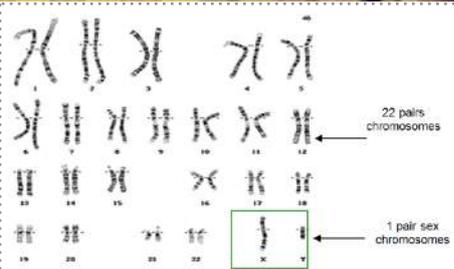
THE BIBLICAL TIMESPAN

The Jews of Persia were descended from those who had been taken away by Nebuchadnezzar II following his destruction of Jerusalem and the first temple in 587 BCE. Many did not take advantage of Cyrus's offer in 539 BCE to return to the Kingdom of Judah, but remained in Persia.

Cyrus (580 - 529 BCE) was succeeded by Darius (522 - 486 BCE) and he, in turn by Xerxes (520 - 465 CE) known to Jews



From top: Cyrus the Great allowing Hebrew pilgrims to return to the Land of Israel and rebuild Jerusalem, painting by Jean Fouquet circa 1470; Human genes; Zionist Federation in Iran gathering 1920; Alborz Mountains, Amol (Images: Wikimedia Commons)



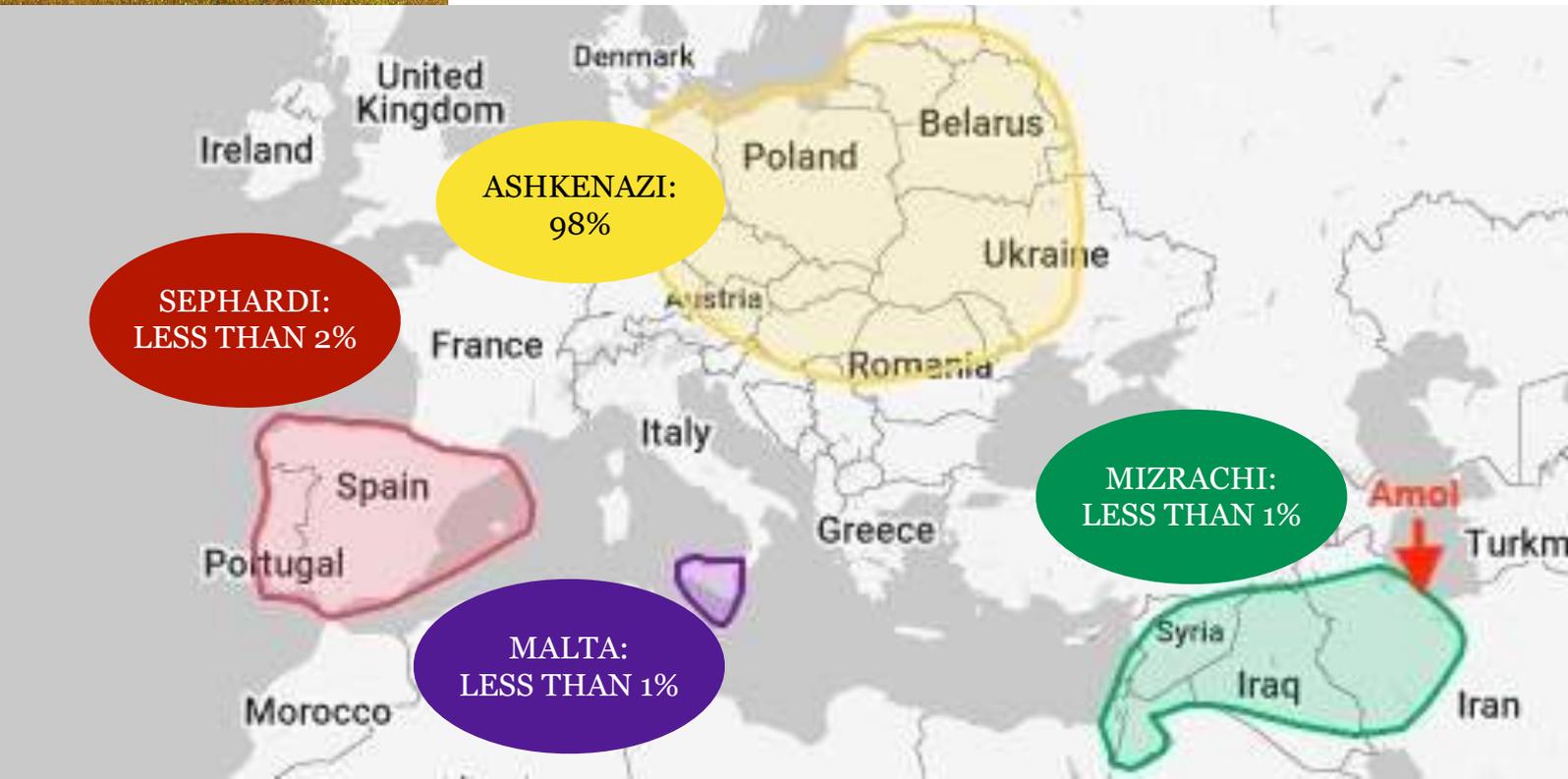
as Ahashverosh. Had Esther not succeeded, I would not be here today.

The science and data available in 2008 indicated I was descended from a man who had lived in the region around what is now Pakistan, 20,000 years ago – long before there were any Jews.

In my genealogical hunt for other AMOLSKY family, I found AMOLSKYs in the US and Corsica. I managed to trace two American family trees, but our Y-chromosomes (male) did not match.

Between 2008 and today, genetic genealogy has evolved markedly. In modern genealogical analysis, Jewish genetic markers indicating Mizrachi, Sephardi and Ashkenazi heritage can be detected, even in minute amounts.

Recently my DNA was analysed again and below is the latest result: it confirms that I do indeed have a trace of Mizrachi heritage, consistent with the AMOL and AMOLSKY story out of Persia [the green area on map below], but I also have traces of Sephardi genetic markers [the red area]! Of course most of my DNA is Northern European Ashkenazi – consistent with a lot of miscegenation!



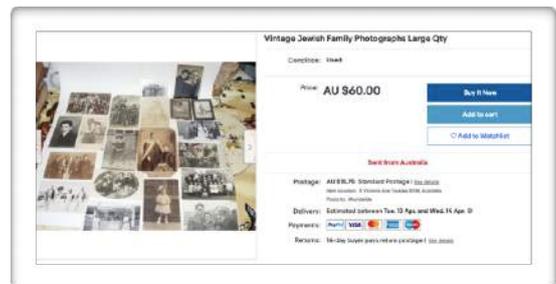
NEWS & VIEWS

AJGS REUNITES SIBLINGS WITH LOST FAMILY PHOTOS



AJGS President Barbara Simon and VP, Dani Haski, have been instrumental in reuniting two Sydney based siblings (who are happy for us to share the story but wish to remain anonymous) with a set of precious vintage family photographs that were discovered for sale on eBay. The rightful owners were identified through a confluence of coincidences and the photographs were handed over to the pair, aged 70 and 80, at an afternoon tea in Double Bay.

They were thrilled to see pictures of their parents as young marrieds, their aunts, uncles and cousins in South Africa, and baby photos and school photos of themselves. A full account of how we solved the puzzle of who owned the photos will be published in the next edition of *Kosher Koala*.



The eBay post that started an adventure

JEWISH NEWSPAPER COLLECTION LAUNCHED ON TROVE



Barbara and Dani also had the opportunity to attend the official launch of the Jewish Newspaper collection on Trove at the National Library of Australia (NLA). A cross-institutional endeavour between the NLA, the National Library of Israel and AJHS, the collection consists of every Jewish newspaper published in Australia almost to the present day. This huge project was made possible by the generosity of benefactors such as the David Lesnie Foundation, the Embassy of Israel in Australia, the Besen Family Foundation, and Eitan Neishlos and Lee Levi, as well as the copyright owner Polaris Media Pty Ltd, the publisher of the *Australian Jewish News*.



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Australian Jewish Newspapers

180 YEARS OF AUSTRALIAN JEWISH NEWSPAPER HISTORY GOING ONLINE



The collection includes *The Australian Jewish News*, *Herald* and *Times* from Sydney and Melbourne as well as more eclectic titles such as *Australier Leben*, a Yiddish publication, and seven issues of *The Dialectic : Jewish Monthly*, published in 1875, which planned to:

...give to the Essays, Lectures, & Speeches, delivered at the Melbourne Jewish Literary and Debating Society, a local habitation and a name.

The collection includes scanned copies of old newspapers as well as issues of 'born digital' publications from more recent times.

You can [explore the collection](#) on the [Trove website](#).

LOST HEADSTONES UNEARTHED IN SLOVAKIA



Jewish Genealogy Portal Facebook Group Admin, E. Randol Schoenberg, [posted](#) about an exciting recent find in Bratislava. Several hundred gravestones from the 17th-19th century thought to have been destroyed between 1942-44 were uncovered in February at the edge of an old Jewish cemetery. Bratislava was formerly known as Pressburg.

Schoenberg writes:

Pressburg was once a leading religious center, with yeshivot that attracted torah scholars from all over Europe. Perhaps the most famous rabbi was the Chatam Sofer (Moses Schreiber 1762-1839), whose grave was one of the few rescued when the old cemetery was decimated during World War II.

In 1982 the communist regime built a tramline over the site. But at the turn of the century, the neglected remains of the old cemetery — 23 graves in their original location, including the grave of Chatam Sofer, were partly restored, and the whole site was turned into a memorial.

Few records from Bratislava/ Pressburg have been recovered so the headstones provide a potentially valuable source of genealogical information for those with roots in the area. Volunteers have already photographed over 300 stones and have been matching headstones to archival pictures. Chairman of the Jewish Community of Bratislava, Tomáš Stern, M.D., is hoping the international community will help his small community to preserve and protect these valuable headstones.

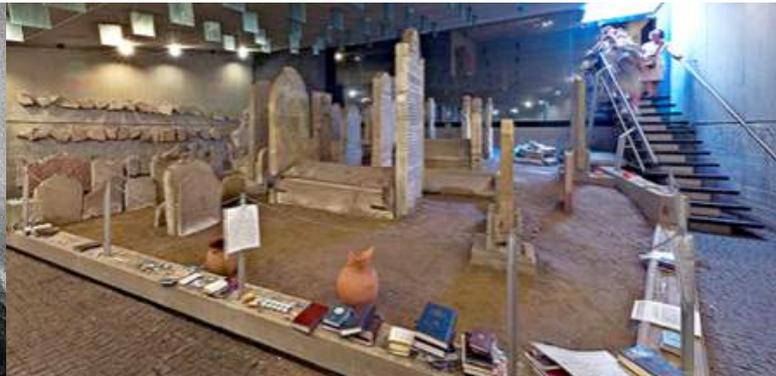


Stern told Koshers Koala:

Without any doubts, this is one of the most important, modern findings of mostly Baroque tombstones, which will significantly help us to supplement the missing information about the history of the Pressburg Jewish community from the times, when it was the most important in the region, and its significance outweighed the significance even of the Vienna Jewish Community... The importance of the findings is also emphasized by the fact, that for many decades it was assumed that the tombstones were destroyed during the Second World War.

A fund has been established on the [JewishGen-erosity page](#) (select Czech Cemetery) on the JewishGen website.

Top: The cemetery was established at the end of the 17th century and used up to the late 19th century;
Left: headstones were dug up in 1942/43;
Top row (L to R): the headstones discovered in February 2021 in undergrowth; Lithograph of Chatam Sofer (Moses Schreiber), the memorial on site today;
Bottom Row: Recovered headstones identified in archival images.
Images reproduced with permission ©archív Tomáš Stern





The US National Archives has reported on the preparations for release of the 1950 National Census. Census data is an extremely valuable source of information for genealogists. While UK census data is only released 100 years after being collected, US census records are released by the National Archives after 72 years. The 1950 Census is therefore due to be opened to public view on 1st April, 2022.

Technology has paved the way for new processes. In a report on preparations, Hilary Parkins explained some of the challenges the Archives faced:

The 1940 census was the first to be digitized and released online rather than only as microfilm accessed in a research room. The demand for digital access in 2012 was already strong, but it has only grown stronger over the ensuing years. The closure of research rooms due to COVID-19 meant that digital access was the only access for staff as well.

Even the global Covid19 pandemic couldn't slow down the process, although it did throw up some unique challenges for the Archives and staff working remotely:

All staff working with census data need special clearances because the information is restricted until the public release, and they need the ability to access the images that are stored on a secure server. With employees working at home and the 2022 deadline looming, the approach to this part of the project had to be completely reimaged in terms of a remote workforce.

Some information, such as 1950 census enumeration district maps, is already available in the Archive's online catalogue. A guide to the 1940 census will give you some clues as to how to navigate the 1950 records when they are released next year. Steve Morse also has a paper and other resources pertaining to the 1950 census on his website.

CONFIDENTIAL This inquiry is authorized by Act of Congress (48 Stat. 21; 13 U. S. C. 201-218) which requires that a report be made. The information furnished is accorded confidential treatment. The Census report cannot be used for purposes of taxation, investigation, or regulation.		FORM P1 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE BUREAU OF THE CENSUS 1950 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING										
FOR ALL PERSONS				FOR PERSONS 14								
RELATIONSHIP Enter relationship of person to head of the household, as Head, Wife, Daughter, etc.	RACE White (W) Negro (Neg) American Indian (Ind) Foreign born	SEX Male Female	How old was he on his birthday?	Is he now married, widowed, divorced, or separated?	What State (or foreign country) was he born in? If born outside Continental United States, enter name of Territory.	If foreign born— Is he naturalized?	What was this person doing?	If H or O in item 15— Did this person do any work at this place?	If No in item 16— Was this person doing any work at this place?	If No in item 17— Even though not doing any work at this place, was he doing any work elsewhere?	If Wk in item 15 or Yes in item 16— How many hours per week?	1. If employed (W) 2. If looking for work (L) 3. For all other persons (O) What kind of work was he doing?

JEWISHGEN LAUNCHES ROMANIAN FACEBOOK GROUP.



Many of the JewishGen Special interest Groups (SIGs) are evolving. The Romanian group Rom-SIG has rebranded as *The JewishGen Romania Research Division*. Their stated goal is:

to acquire, transcribe, translate, and share historical records of genealogical value to the descendants of Romanian Jews.

They've launched a [JewishGen Romania Facebook Group](#) to connect fellow researchers. The group will be used to share updates on their progress and post requests for volunteers.

As with most Jewish genealogy Facebook Groups, it is a private group and you must apply to become a member.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA MEMBER DRIVE



Your story, our history

The National Archives of Australia is one of our most important institutions and a critical genealogical resource. Sadly, budget constraints are hampering their efforts to preserve and digitise records that are disintegrating or media that is becoming obsolete. To try and fill the gap the National Archives has launched a [membership program](#). Perks of membership include invitations to exclusive, member-only events—including exhibition previews and behind-the-scenes tours, entry to the Members Lounge at the National Office in Canberra and 10% discount at the Archives Store and Cafe Constitution.

KOSHER KOALA IS COLLECTING AJGS MEMORIES



In November, AJGS turns 30. We will be having a special celebration so keep an eye out for your invitation.

As part of our commemoration, *Kosher Koala* would like to know what AJGS means to you and how AJGS has helped you with your research. You don't need to write an essay. We're looking for stories of surprising finds, unexpected discoveries and coincidental connections you've unearthed with the help go your AJGS colleagues. We're after short, sharp statements to include in a bumper, 30th anniversary issue of *Kosher Koala*. To share your thoughts and stories, [email Kosher Koala](#) before September 30, 2021.

SLEDGEHAMMER

COUSINS REUNITED: THANK YOU EVELYN!

JANETTE KAY

Today, I would like to publicly acknowledge Evelyn Frybort for her great strength and dedication to research across the globe, and sincerely thank her for helping me reunite with long lost family. This is our story.

During World War II my mother's brother, Mauritz, left Cologne and went to Brussels where he met his wife, Betty. In 1942 Mauritz was arrested, sent to prison in Brussels and eventually transported to Auschwitz. My cousin, a war baby, never got to meet her father as they never heard from him again. To escape the Nazis, my cousin was sent to live with a family in Belgium. They took care of her until it was safe for her to be reunited with her mother.

Betty remarried and the family moved to Antwerp. I have no idea how my mother found her after the war, but in 1973, my mother and I visited Betty and her daughter, my first cousin, in Antwerp. In the years that passed, my mother and Betty passed away and I lost contact with what little remained of my mother's family. It niggled me, I looked through all my old address books and couldn't find an address or name.

When I retired from work some years ago, I embarked upon writing up my family history and the entry for my first cousin remained blank. I couldn't even remember her name. I simply wrote "I have since lost contact with her."

In early 2021, I came across some old photos. They were familiar but I realised I hadn't looked at the backs of the images because they



The photos that started the search —
Top: L to R: The author's mother, Regina, cousin Lillian and Aunt Betty in Israel in 1973.
Bottom: Lillian with her husband Leo and two older children—Natalie & Mauritz..₁

were in the album back to back. As luck would have it, there on the back of the photo was my cousin's first name, Liliane. She was pictured with her husband, Leo and their two children, Natalie and Mauritz, named for the father she never knew; but there was still no surname.



The author, Janette Kay, with AJGS member Evelyn Frybort

AJGS stalwart Evelyn Frybort and I have been friends for most of our lives. Knowing of her long experience in genealogy, I contacted Evelyn to see if she could help me trace my cousin, now that I had a first name, Liliane, and maiden name, Goldman. I wasn't sure if that was enough information.

Using her exemplary research skills and broad network of family and research contacts across the globe, Evelyn soon presented me with an address and family name in Antwerp. Still not certain it was correct, I nervously wrote a letter and enclosed copies of the photos. Three weeks later, I received a joyful email from Liliane, my long lost cousin. She had also been trying to locate me.

She wrote:

Just received your letter today. I'm still ... emotional reading [it]. I tried many times to find your contact under the name Salomon & Goldmann, without success. Unfortunately I didn't have your name, Kay! Finally I'm so glad you contact us. More than 47 years passed, this means a lifetime, and so many things happened.

The email was followed by an emotional phone call and happily, renewed contact. I can now add the missing pieces of my genealogical puzzle and delete the words "I have since lost contact" from Liliane's entry in my family tree.

My thanks and gratitude to Evelyn. Even though so many years have passed, it is wonderful to be reunited with my cousin and her family; and, as soon as the Covid-19 pandemic is over, Liliane and I, with Evelyn by my side, have plans to meet in person.



Left to Right: Maurice, Nathalie, Yael and Noa (Liliane and Leo's twins), Liliane, Philippe (Nathalie's husband) and Leo, in Antwerp in 2021

WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

HONOURING JEANNETTE & SUNNY

KYM MORRIS

On the 14th March 2021, we gathered together for the first time since COVID-19 restricted our activities, to celebrate the contribution of two of our past Presidents, Jeannette Tsoulos and Sunny Gold.

I first met Jeannette and Sunny when I joined the AJGS committee, first as a general committee member, then as Treasurer and Secretary under their leadership. Both are long serving members of AJGS, Jeannette having joined in 1994 and Sunny the following year. Like most of the AJGS membership, finding out about family was their reason for joining, although their journeys started out quite differently.

Jeannette's interest in genealogy sprang from being part of a large, close extended family. Her mother had 52 first cousins and they saw a lot of each other growing up. It wasn't as difficult for her to find information about several generations of ancestors as nearly all of them arrived in Australia in the 1800s – the last to arrive were here by 1909.

Jeannette joined the committee and helped steer our agenda for many years. Although she has stepped back now, Jeannette continues to volunteer for AJGS and our members because she finds the stories of Jewish families all over the world fascinating, and really enjoys helping people research their families.

What Jeannette finds really wonderful about AJGS is how so many members keep volunteering for the Society, helping in workshops, answering queries, giving talks, writing our newsletters and managing our website – too many people to mention individually, but all volunteering their time and expertise.





(L to R) Current AJGS president Barbara Simon, Secretary Kym Morris with AJGS Life Members Sunny Gold, Jeannette Tsoulos and Peter Nash

Sunny Gold, a member since 1995, joined our committee in 2004 and fondly recalls spending many pleasurable hours with Peter and Rieke Nash at their home, sorting through AJGS admin matters.

Sunny's interest in genealogy was largely sparked by the extensive research of her late father, who, himself, was also a member of the Society. Research, on her father's side, revealed a detailed family history, spanning 8 generations, dating back to the 1800's. Sunny also traced her mother's family back to the first blood libel in the 1600's. A branch of her family's history is written up in George Sackheim's book, *The Scattered Seed*, a copy of which is held in the AJGS resources library. Both these extraordinary women have held multiple roles on the committee for many years, and both are past-Presidents of our society. Sunny did mention that sadly she had to stand down from her role as President after a year or so having suffered a serious heart attack – but hastens to reassure us that it was in no way brought about by being elected President. Jeannette, of course, stepped in as Interim President until the following AGM.

I admire their commitment and desire to serve our genealogical community; their passion to pursue their own research and of most importance, their selfless volunteering in helping others to do theirs. I appreciate their knowledge of resources and their incredible memory for people and events. I have also enjoyed their company and value their collegiality and support. I thank them both, most sincerely, for all they have done for the AJGS as an organisation, and for me personally.

Jeannette and Sunny were presented with silver tree pins and life membership of AJGS.

LIMMUD OZ 2021



13 JUNE, 2021 12pm

AJGS will be presenting *Help me find my Jewish Ancestry*;

Tickets available at the [Limmud Oz website](#)

SUNDAY WORKSHOPS

AJGS Sunday workshops are back! As Covid19 restrictions ease we have restarted our Sunday workshop program to give members and guests the chance to access our resources and one on one assistance with their research.

NEXT SUNDAY WORKSHOP

20 JUNE, 2021 | 10am-1pm | LINDFIELD

AJGS LIBRARY

The [AJGS Library Catalogue](#) is available to view online. Browse the large collection of hard to find indexes, resource books and memoirs we have in our collection at Lindfield. Publications are available to access during Sunday Workshops.

The screenshot shows the AJGS Library Catalogue website. On the left is a teal sidebar with an open book icon, the text 'AJGS Libraries', and a list of items: 'AJGS Resources' with a red '408' badge, 'Followers' with a '0' badge, and 'Following' with a '0' badge. The main content area has a search bar at the top with the word 'search' inside. Below the search bar is a navigation bar with letters A through Z and a '#' symbol. The letter 'A' is highlighted. Below this is a grid of book covers. The first row includes: 'Across the Street and Far Away' by Eugene Aronson; 'Address Book for Germanic Genealogy 6th ed.' by Ernest Thode; 'EMIGRANTEN ADRESSBUCH' (Address book of Jewish immigrants in Shanghai); 'Album Fotografii' (Album of the Yiddish Theatre); and 'Alva's Boy' by Alan Collins. The second row includes: 'Ancilla to Toledot Charlap' by Arthur F. Merton; 'AND THE ARK RESTED'; 'Annals and Deeds in' (with Hebrew text); 'Annihilation of Lithuanian Jewry'; and 'Anos Muchos y Buenos : Turkey's Sephardim' (with Hebrew text). The bottom right corner shows a thumbnail for 'Anyksčiai, Lithuania'.