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# The Kosher Koala

Newsletter of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society, Inc  
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**Sunday**

**January 6**

**from 9.30 a.m.**

**Monday**

**January 14**

**from 10.00 a.m.**

***Kathryn Michael(UK)***

**Sunday**

**February 2**

**from 9.30 a.m.**

**Monday**

**February 11**

**from 10.00 a.m.**

**Sunday**

**March 2**

**from 9.30 a.m.**

**Monday**

**March 10**

**from 10.00 a.m.**

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Rieke Nash

Planning is continuing for an enjoyable and worthwhile conference in Canberra in October, 2008. By keeping the cost down we hope that many of you will be able to join us for this very special event. Our thanks go to Vernon Kronenberg and the ACT Jewish Community in Canberra for their enthusiasm and hospitality.

The talk by Daniela Torsh on her experiences with researching in the Czech Republic and Austria created much interest and for those who could not attend it is reprinted in part in this edition. Members with an interest in this area should request a copy of her detailed handout.

At their Remembrance Day Service this year over 200 members and friends of the NSW Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women (NAJEX) were delighted with the wonderful talk by Kim Phillips. Her presentation on the Jewish soldiers who are buried at Gallipoli, was very moving and professional.

Joining the Mokotoff-Polakoff excursion to Salt Lake again proved productive. For example, I was alerted to unusual possibilities on the Stephen Morse website for tracing family in the US, such as his Birthdays and Related Persons site where Gary Mokotoff showed me how to find a married name using only a first name and date of birth. A meeting with Todd Knowles produced a surprise family hit for me in his revamped edition of the Isabel Mordy collection. I had never thought to search this collection as the family were late 1800s arrivals in London.

To assist members who are too busy during the year to attend our Sydney workshops, we have scheduled two in January. (See page 1 for dates and times). A visitor from London, Kathryn Michael, will be attending the Monday one.

The Society has had a great year with increased membership and many enthusiastic researchers making significant progress. We are looking forward to another busy and productive year and hope that you will renew your membership. Your contributions have provided funds that we have used to purchase useful resources and publish Koshers Koala.

May 2008 bring success and enjoyment for you and your families.

Rieke Nash  
President

[president@ajgs.org.au](mailto:president@ajgs.org.au)

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## EDITORIAL

By Miriam Shifreen

*And Who Do You Think You Are?* On December 2 this SBS television program featured actor Stephen Fry. This new weekly genealogy program from Britain shown on Sunday nights traces the family trees of well-known people in Britain.

Exploring his mother's family, it reveals Stephen Fry's Jewish roots in Vienna and the members of his family who died in the Holocaust. He travels to Vienna to the building where his grandparents lived until they were deported in 1942 firstly to Riga, and reads a plaque on the wall listing all the Jewish families who had once lived at that address.

The next series will be based on people now living in Australia. Genealogists will enjoy this program.

*Angel, Lipman and Morris Segelov* appears on page 3. This is just a small excerpt from student David Hazan's meticulous research for the annual Hans Kimmel Prize initiated by AJGS founding president Sophie Caplan.

For those of you who missed the absorbing talk given by Daniela Torsh at our last meeting *Lost In Prague: A Czech Girl Looks For Her Roots* page 6 will be essential reading, especially if you have Czech or Austrian roots. And check all the resources mentioned on pages 10 – 11.

As I wrote in the September editorial, Kim Phillips was the guest speaker on November 11, at the Remembrance Day Memorial. Photos from the event are on page 12. I again refer you to her excellent website: [www.spirits-of-gallipoli.com](http://www.spirits-of-gallipoli.com)

*The Knowles Collection* is a new resource for those tracing their English Jewish ancestry, as W. Todd Knowles explains on page 13.

Sheila Helprin advises us on how she researched and wrote her family history in *The Truth: Oral History* on page 14. See the review of her book in the September edition of the K.K.

How *A Photograph of the Late Alexander Charlson* killed by the South African version of the *Kelly Gang* is found by his nephew, Alec Charlson on page 16.

Further details of *USHMM's online inventory of the ITS collection* from Gary Mokotoff, Editor of *Nu? What's New?* are on page 17.

*HAPPY HUNTING IN 2008*

Miriam Shifreen,  
Editor

[ed@ajgs.org.au](mailto:ed@ajgs.org.au)

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## ANGEL, LIPMAN AND MORRIS SEGELOV

by David Hazan

There were three brothers from Brest. One died at an early age, one lived in Wales and the other went to Australia.

In the year of 1793, when Poland was partitioned and Russia annexed Brest, the Jewish population of Brest had grown to around three thousand, and in the next century it would grow to around thirty-two thousand, making up more than sixty-five percent of the total population of forty-six thousand. The town of Brest-Litovsk was on the border of three different countries: Russia, Poland and Lithuania. Morris mentioned that sometimes he was Russian and sometimes he was Polish.

In the late 1800s the fierce winds of anti-Semitism swept through Russia, bringing with them waves of pogroms. Also, the wheels of the first failed Russian revolution, the Bread revolution, had begun to turn, and the Russo-Japanese war had commenced.

Not much is known about the actual events taking place in the lives of the Segelov family at the time they were living in Brest. Their father Jacob Meyer Segelov was apparently a punt operator in Brest. He is also listed as a locksmith on Morris's wedding certificate. Morris told stories of living close to an orchard. He and his brothers, being typical boys, would steal fruit from the orchard and run off to their home, jumping into bed, fully clothed to hide from the angry farmer. We also know stories of the cold winters in Brest where Goldie, their mother, would warm her children's beds by putting a brick in the fire, wrapping it in a towel and putting it in their beds to warm them. Morris also told that his mother was a traditional woman who wore a red *sheitel* and as it slipped backward on her head you could see the strands of her black hair.

Morris's eldest brother, Angel, was born around 1880 and Lipman, the middle brother, was born about 1885. Morris was born on the October 5 1890. It is believed that they had two sisters, who were both younger than the brothers.

While the date of when the three brothers actually left Brest and set off for Great Britain is uncertain, there could only have been one six month period when it could have occurred. According to family legend, the three boys left after Morris' barmitzvah, around October 5th 1903. It had to have been before April 1904 as that is when Angel was engaged to a Russian Jewish girl by the name of Nellie Snipper in London. Therefore the brothers



**The three brothers Segalov**

had to have left Brest after or during October 1903 and arrived before April 1904.

There may have been no single discernible event that caused the brothers to leave their family behind to journey to Great Britain. The records say that they were all tailors, although they worked in different jobs when they arrived in Swansea, Wales. Despite this, it takes no great leap of faith to surmise that compulsory military service, pogroms and a great fire in 1901 influenced this decision.

Lipman apparently returned to Brest prior to 1934 but he was unable to find any trace of his family. Everyone had disappeared.

The extreme difficulty involved in escaping the pogroms in Russia occurred because of the difficulties of travel, poverty and the fact that getting a passport meant informing the authorities that you were leaving rather than completing army service. This may explain why the three Segelov brothers didn't have passports.

Once in Wales, the stories of the three brothers move in different directions and in later years there was little contact between the families and their descendants.

Angel stayed in Swansea, but sadly died at age thirty-seven from a botched kidney operation, leaving a pregnant widow and three remaining children. Many of his children also died young. Finding information about Angel proved quite difficult, but, through access to the internet, contact

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with Angel's granddaughter was made and she provided information about the family.

Contact was also made with Lipman's descendants, many of whom left Wales with some immigrating to North America. Although his children were not Jewish, when Lipman died at the age of sixty-one he was buried in the Mayhill Jewish cemetery in Swansea.

As a young boy Morris studied Torah and Gemorah, with his uncle, Israel, who was a great scholar. It is said that studying Torah was all that his uncle did. According to Morris's daughter, Patricia, when he was young, his parents wanted him to study to become a Rabbi, but as the political climate of Russia changed, his parents felt that the best option was for the brothers to leave. The journey to flee from Brest was arduous and dangerous. From this journey, Morris sustained a constant reminder, a frostbitten toe, which his children used to stick pins into as he told stories of his past.

### Morris



Interested in learning, Morris also saw property as a potential way to make money. He was a Justice of the Peace. Aligning himself with the authorities was probably a vestige of a childhood spent responding to the edicts of various Russian authorities.

In Wales he lived with his brother Lipman's family. He went to night school and learned the tailoring trade. At the age of nineteen, in 1909, Morris went to America, according to his daughter, to take over the shoe businesses owned by his uncle, who had no children. We believe this uncle was Adolph Treger and wife Chana, however, this does not explain the entry in the ship's log on his entry to America, which implies a family member, Samuel Kalin. Morris apparently did not like the cold of

New York and so returned to Wales. At the age of twenty-two, in 1912, having difficulty getting along with his sister-in law he decided to take the challenge and look for new frontiers. Morris headed to Australia, away from the cold weather.

Morris boarded the Themistocles and headed for Australia via London, Plymouth, Teneriffe and Capetown. He always told the story that he was supposed to be on a boat which sank, but was delayed playing cards and while we cannot confirm this, the dates of his travel certainly do support the notion that he was in fact supposed to be on the ill-fated Titanic. The Themistocles docked in Melbourne in October 1912. From Melbourne, Morris travelled around the country looking for opportunities. He spent time in Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and Newcastle before making Maitland, north of Sydney, his home.

Morris settled in Maitland in around 1914. He set up a dry cleaning and suit repair business at 2 Church Street, Maitland. Morris regularly attended council meetings to learn about the community and opportunities available. It was through his dry cleaning business that he became aware of the Audet family and the Jewish Community.

Once it became known in Maitland that Morris was Jewish, he was directed to the Audet family. Coralie was still a school girl, but of the five girls in the Audet family, Coralie caught his eye. Coralie would walk past his shop on the way to school and as she passed by he would say "That's the girl I'm going to marry," and she would reply, "Indeed you're not." Morris began dating Coralie when she went to Teachers' College in Sydney and would always make an effort to meet up with her, whether in Sydney or Maitland. Their courtship spanned eight years as she became a teacher and went to teach near the Queensland border. Morris's persistence in their relationship is evidenced by the numerous letters we retain. These letters show the wit and charm he used to court her.

Not wanting to wait any longer to marry, Morris paid out Coralie's teaching bond and on 26 December 1926, the two of them were married by Reverend I. Morris at Coralie's parents' home, *Raymont* in Mount Pleasant Street, West Maitland. The *chuppah* was brought to the house from Newcastle. The entire neighbourhood came to watch the spectacle of a Jewish wedding. Coralie and Morris honeymooned at the Blow Hole in Kiama, south of Sydney, and when they returned they would always tell about the enormous cherries which they had eaten.

During all this time, it is believed Morris tried to keep contact with his brothers. Morris knew of

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Angel's death and had also sent money or tickets to Lipman for his passage to Australia. Angel's son Ruben arrived in 1926 and it was no co-incidence that he settled in the Newcastle area. It is believed that Morris and Coralie tried to make a "shidduch" with Coralie's younger sister Rae. The proposed match was unsuccessful and this may have been one of the reasons Morris and Ruben lost contact.

Morris had a fabulous sense of humour and he always laughed at adversities. He always said "*beware of the man who can't laugh at himself.*" He was always ready to learn and to teach and his stories delighted many generations. In fact, his favourite joke was about his tertiary education. "*I went to university. I did. I went in the front door and out the back door.*" He passed the foundations of a Jewish life to his children by encouraging them to learn Hebrew and Jewish customs despite the fact that they attended Catholic schools.

Morris and Coralie had three children, Patricia, John Nathan, and Phillip Meyer. During that time, Morris bought and sold properties, but during the Great Depression the family moved to Newcastle and lived over their shop at 3 Newcommen Street, Newcastle where Morris sold suits.

Morris would take the children for walks on Sunday evenings and he would talk to them about civics, construction and property. In grade three Patricia's teacher told the class that whoever knew the answer to a question would get an early mark. The teacher asked about the three little pigs. She asked about the sorts of houses that the pigs built, and Patricia answered the question, "Brick Veneer". When she got home she told her parents and they couldn't stop laughing

Morris was a great story-teller and the quintessential people person. After his retirement, he would often help out at Patricia and Adrian's Pharmacy at Christmas time. He had little product knowledge, but this was more than made up for by an uncanny ability to engage anybody in conversation. That way there was little chance of the customer walking out before a more knowledgeable sales assistant became available.

My mother and aunt fondly remember their grandfather coming to their house at 7 am daily, whistling outside the door and taking them for a walk around Dudley Page Reserve armed with a paper bag of delicious snacks, most often cherries. During these walks Morris would regale them with the most fanciful stories. He told of encountering a roaring lion and reaching into its mouth and down to its tail and saving the townsfolk by turning the lion inside out. Another story (more based on fact) involved throwing burrs into the Rabbi's beard and

running away. He well-prepared them for the magpie season by instructing them to wear their hats backwards with sunglasses backwards to confuse the birds.

Morris and Coralie were continually dedicated to the Jewish communities in which they had lived. They were very active members of the Newcastle Synagogue when they lived there. When they came to Sydney they joined the Great Synagogue, the very same community where Coralie's Great-Great-Grandfather, a British-Jewish convict named Mordecai Moses, had been *shammass* (although the congregation from York Street had by then relocated to Elizabeth St).

Unfortunately there were misunderstandings and unhappiness between Coralie, Morris and their sons and despite attempts of reconciliation the families were inevitably divided.

Morris died in February 1969 from heart disease after a long illness, aged 78. Coralie never remarried, rather she dedicated herself to her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. She died on Anzac Day 2006.

### **Conclusion**

Through the Hans Kimmel project, I have found something quite amazing. I have discovered how, although people may be guarded and very unwilling to share their past with you and that sometimes they give you only the smallest titbit of information, they can however be willing to open up to you if you approach from a different angle.

As a part of any research project, there are people to thank and acknowledge. As such, thanks to my mother Debbie Hazan, my aunt, Rachele Gentin, my grandmother Patricia Taffel, the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society and Jenni Buch from the Belarus SIG (Special Interest Group) and everyone else who helped me with this project.

*This is a very small excerpt from year 10 student David Hazan's Hans Kimmel Project. The project, initiated at Moriah College by AJGS founding president, Sophie Caplan, has resulted in many Sydney students recording their grandparents' stories.*

*Not only has David done meticulous research into his family tree, the historical and geographical details of Brest and the reasons for his family's immigrations to new lands but he has also supported his research with a detailed appendix. Family stories were enhanced through official records, newspaper announcements and websites. By combining all these together, he has skilfully brought his family story to life.*

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## LOST IN PRAGUE: A CZECH GIRL LOOKS FOR HER ROOTS.

By Daniela Torsh

My first attempt at family history in Prague was straight out of a Franz Kafka story.

In the biting cold, snowy Czech winter, the day before I was due to return home to Sydney in 1993, I spent hours in the back of a Prague taxi driving high and low all around the city looking for the National Archives. The grumpy Czech taxi driver insisted the address I clutched on my scrap of paper wasn't right. I had got it from a reliable source but he had the local knowledge and I hadn't a clue where we were.

I never found the building.

It has taken me over 15 years since then to be able to understand why I couldn't find the place and to get a clearer picture of how to do Jewish genealogy in the Czech Republic.

My story is really that of an amateur stumbling about and being persistent and also very lucky. But I could not have got as far as I did without a lot of local help from some new friends I made along the way.

Because my search went across the borders to Slovakia and Austria, especially Vienna, I am going to mention a bit about those places too. But my focus is from the 18th to 20th centuries in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia - what used to be known as The Czech Lands. I was born in Prague after the war; my mother came from Prague and my father from Brno so this is the *context* for my search for my family.

My own experience of trying to find out about my family comes from the fact that I left Prague as a very young child to settle in Sydney. When we left in 1948 my parents thought we would never return and they discouraged me from speaking Czech and they told me virtually nothing of their past. So I began my search with no Czech language except for a few babyish words: *heska holka*, *heske klug* and *mocnik*. *Pretty girl*, *handsome boy*, and *cake* didn't really help a lot when it came to uncovering the past.

At least I knew the basics: where and when I was born; where and when my parents were born. But I knew virtually nothing about their extended families, my homeland, its language or its history and I also knew virtually nothing about Judaism either as my parents like many other Holocaust survivors decided that in our new country I should fit in better if I was raised as an English speaking Aussie kid and preferably a Christian one.

It took me years to realise that Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler, Franz Kafka, and Egon Erwin Kisch were all Czech Jews like me. I hadn't even heard of the Maharal, Rabbi Yehuda Loew, until my first visit back to Prague in 1983 with my mother. We visited the old Jewish cemetery off Maiselova ulice where the legendary creator of the famous Prague Golem is buried. Because my mother, Mimi Torsh was with me on that trip in 1983 I didn't have to try and speak Czech to anyone. That was the one and only time we travelled together as she soon became ill with Alzheimer's and so I had to start going there alone after that.

Under the Communist Party, Golden Prague had gone grey and I wasn't impressed. Ten years later I went there again for work to research a story for SBS TV about the coming split of Czechoslovakia. I decided to use some down time to try and find my roots.

So this is why I felt lost in Prague. I was there alone; I knew no one; I couldn't speak the lingo; all our family had left or been killed; I didn't speak Czech and my German was pretty rudimentary. And my time was very limited. I left that visit without locating the archive but the following year I did find it with help from a friend I'd made at Czech TV - a senior producer and work contact I made through SBS TV.

It was sheer beginner's luck that she had gone to film school with the Rabbi of Prague, Karel Sidon. Through a phone call to Karel Sidon I was hooked up with Dr Lenka Matusikova at the National Archive and I haven't looked back since. I have discovered that it is possible with persistence, patience, and determination to dig into the enormous riches that lie waiting in the Czech Republic to be rediscovered even if you can't speak Czech or know nothing about its history or culture.

The new Czech Republic has now become so much more open to outsiders. The archives which I couldn't find at all 15 years ago now have a website with pages in English. This is a tiny example of how the Jewish Records are slowly becoming more accessible to non Czech speakers, who may not be able to visit the country but can use the internet and online research to get so much information today.

This process has begun to gather speed in recent years as the Czech Republic has joined the European Union and the horrors of the past, the war, and Nazi and communist occupations are slowly being put aside. More Czechs are speaking English though it is still not wise to assume that if you write an email you will get a reply. Language



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and the culture are still huge barriers. And anti-Semitism has not completely gone either.

Any historical research in the Czech Republic has to wade through frequent major upheavals and radical changes. In my own research I have had to learn a lot about my homeland's past which has been upsetting and unpleasant. Mitigating that has been the unfailing generosity and friendship of so many Czech people. As the economic situation in the former Czechoslovakia has improved so has the ability of the archives to provide more and more information about the history of the Czech Jews.

There is a lot of catching up to do though as the finances of the Czech Archives are way below what we in Australia expect as normal. They have hundreds of years of records dating back to the 12th century. Theirs is a collection that is substantially bigger than anything in Australia and their resources paradoxically are much smaller than ours. But there is growing interest in making the Jewish records available especially for descendants.

I think it will become even easier to do genealogy research in the Czech Republic in future. And I don't just mean by physically going there either. I think the basic records of Births, Deaths and Marriages will be available internationally perhaps through the Mormon records or some other mechanism in the next few years.

To get that basic BDM information now you have to write or email the National Archives in Prague. They and not the Jewish Community hold over 3,000 Matriky which are the record books of the vast majority of the Jewish Communities that existed over the past 300 years in the Czech Lands of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. The records known by the collection reference of *HBMa* tend to peter out in the 1940's but these books are a treasure that the Nazis collected for their projected Museum of a Dead Race during the terrible years of 1939-1945. At the war's end the record books were taken from the storerooms and the many hiding places all over the country and deposited in the National Archives in Prague.

Today they are located in the suburb of Dejvice in the 6th district to the north of the CBD across the Vltava River close to the Hradcanska metro station. If you know the place and date of birth of a relative you can write or email Dr Matusikova the woman who is the curator of this collection and she will reply with a copy of the record. It is possible to personally visit the archive's reading room and view the Matriky or the microfilm copies. But make sure you write, email or call ahead to Dr Matusikova first. And take your passport with you for ID. The librarians who look after the needs of

the users mostly speak only Czech though a few can also speak German. None speak English. It is advisable to have someone with you for translation if you cannot speak Czech or German.

The Czech Republic has a national system of archives and the network extends across the country to regional archives in the larger cities and towns and also smaller local archives as well. Each archive has its own collection made up of different types of records and these are cared for by professional librarians and archivists. The records for Jews are held along with all other citizens. The tricky part of knowing where to go and how to find the right place for the right record can be negotiated more easily if you employ a local researcher. But if you cannot afford to do that or want to do the research yourself then the obvious place to start is at the National Archives in Prague.

Dr Lenka Matusikova as the senior archivist who looks after the Jewish BDM records has catalogued an index for all these records according to the town or place where your relative was registered as domiciled. These records created by the Jewish communities for each Kehilla are written mostly in German in an old style script which is not easy to decipher unless you are specially trained to read it.

Before 1726 the Jewish records were written in Hebrew and those that survived are held by the Jewish Museum in Prague. In later years some of the records are in Czech, though not many.

Because of the poor condition of the record books and their age it is not permitted by the National Archives to make copies. So take your digital camera and tripod and you may be able to photograph pages for your own use. The archive has begun to film all the records and they are gradually going onto microfilm. But they are a long way still from being digitised or transcribed or available to search online.

I have used some professional local researchers myself as I found it much too difficult at first to decipher the old German script. I began with Eugen Stein who found my Thorsch family back to Michel Thorsch, a goldsmith born 1765 in Boskovice. Eugen sadly died last year but his widow and co-worker Iva Stein continues to do family history research. I have had a lot of success as well with another local researcher Dr Jaroslav Klenovsky who is based in Brno. In recent years I have been lucky enough to gain access to the National and Central Archives in Prague and with the help of Dr Matusikova have found many more records and have become more familiar with the old German script so I only occasionally need her help. Unfortunately she is the only archivist employed to

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look after the Jewish records as the Archives has a small dedicated staff and is not well funded. Dr Matusikova has responsibilities other than the Jewish records so her time is pretty limited. She speaks and writes German and English.

Her unpublished index of the collection includes each town listed by its current Czech name. Jews lived all over Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia but the Jewish Communities didn't extend to every small hamlet or village so people had to collect in larger towns to attend shule or have births, deaths and marriages recorded. Sometimes Jews were registered in the town of their birth - not where they lived.

The Familianten Laws brought in by Emperor Charles VI in 1726 limited Jewish populations in the towns and meant that some children were born illegitimate according to the State, keeping their mother's name. It's too complex for me to go into here but the political and racial problems of the Jews led to all sorts of idiosyncratic results. This means it may take a fair bit of detective work to find the right Matriky and sometimes due to the exigencies of war and politics Matriky were destroyed lost or damaged. As a result there are unfortunately gaps in these records. Dr Matusikova is still finding and gathering records which have been hidden away in local or regional archive collections. So luckily there is some new material still coming in and the collection is expanding.

The lacunae in the records can sometimes be filled by looking at other records. I will discuss six extra types of records here.

The first are records for household registrations, usually under the head of the household but often including the rest of the family: wife, children, and even servants.

The second type are Census records, house by house so if you have an address you can find out who lived in an apartment: how old they were; their occupation and their religion.

The Census of Jews was done regularly every few years from about 1724 in Bohemia and later in Moravia. These original Census records are held in the local and regional archives. The 1793 Census of the Jews of Bohemia has been studied and the results recently published in a series of volumes by the National Archives in Prague. The only copies of these 7 volumes are held in American, Austrian, and British libraries and of course in the Czech Republic. They are written in Czech and German.

Last year I was lucky enough to find some school records for my grandmother, Ida, in Moravia which revealed a lot more about her WINTER family than

I had managed to get from either the National Archives in Prague or the Regional or City Archives in Brno. School records are the third kind of record other than vital statistics BDM that can be found and used in family history research.

In the local Hodonin archives I was able to find three more WINTER siblings I never knew my grandmother had. That discovery led me to find some living cousins in Israel and America just this year. After so many years of searching that was a massive breakthrough for me.

We are now planning a family reunion in 2008 in our ancestral town of Straznice in south Moravia. Further to the north just last year in the local archives of Ostrava and Frydek-Mistek in Silesia I found census and domicile records for my grandmother's brother Berthold, who was an engineer working for the railways. From the Census forms I found out the names of his wife and son and also the places Berthold WINTER and his family had lived in Olomouc and Ostrava.

You can write to these local archives or email them and sometimes you can be lucky and get a reply with some information. If you are able to write in Czech you will most likely get a higher rate of response. There are some good local translators in Australia who can help you translate your requests and if you can afford it I would recommend that for a better result. The local archives have limited opening hours for the public so make sure you arrange your visit in advance and find out when they are open and whether there is anyone there who can speak your language. They allow you to photograph the records so take your digital camera and tripod along.

As well as the National and local and regional archives the other important State archive that is worth contacting is the Czech War Archive in Prague. This is the fourth sort of record you can access.

If you are looking for relatives who fought with the Czech Army in the Second World War they have extensive records. It is housed in a terribly run down building in the 8th District on Sokolovska street on the Vltava river. They have a reading room but you have to apply for access months in advance.

I didn't know that when I found the place - it was another baffling and frustrating search - I met one of their researchers but she advised me to write them for information.

It took a while but they sent me some amazing information about two of my father's cousins who were in the Czech Army fighting in Palestine in a



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tank brigade. I got pages and pages of copies of their army records which turned out to be absolutely fascinating as one of them, Dr Hanus REZEK, a barrister trained to be the Rabbi for the Jewish soldiers in that army. Apparently there were so many Jews who joined up they needed their own military chaplain. Don't expect a quick reply though as this archive is really seriously understaffed and resourced but I found it worth waiting for. (First World War records are partially held in Vienna in the Kriegsarchiv but only for officers).

The National Archives in Prague has a few different repositories and buildings. The new main archive building in Chodovec in Prague 4 was built in 1992 and that's where the Police Records and the deportation records are held. These are the fifth and sixth kind of records available in the Czech Republic.

The historical Police records are now being digitised and you can access them online though that project is not yet complete. By going there myself I was able to get the police records for my great-grandfather Jacob Pollak who owned a large shop in Celetna in Prague 1 and the information there was startling. It included complaints from the neighbours' shops - his competitors noted that he didn't observe the blackout provisions and kept trading in defiance of the regulations during the First World War.

This archive gave me the date of the death of my great grandmother Wilhelmine Pollak which I had been searching for many years. The pages of my grandfather Victor's passport showed the many places where he had travelled for business and pleasure before the war.

The deportation records for my family told me where my mother Mimi POHNERT and father Pavel THORSCH had been living in the Terezin concentration camp; when they moved from one barracks to another and also what jobs they did in the camp. These archives have different information to the deportation records held by the Jewish community.

### **JEWISH RECORDS**

Up till now I've written about the State archives, the civil records but of course there are also voluminous records held by the Jewish Community of Prague and the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic.

Despite the dispossession and obliteration of the Jews of Czechoslovakia *it is amazing what has survived*. I haven't space here to go into that story but the Prague Jewish Museum has a huge amount

of material and it is possible to use their library and their new reading room to examine their files and other books and documents. Obviously it helps if you can read Czech or German as so much of their material is in those languages.

The Prague Jewish Museum has recently set up a new reading room in an old synagogue at the Andel metro station in Smichov, Praha 5, across the river from the CBD. Last year I was able to inspect the documents of my great grandfather Jacob Pollak's ancestral town Bestin near Horovec which included membership lists of the synagogue and donations and even a photo of the old shule which is now a private house!

The Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic is based in the old Jewish Town Hall in Maiselova Street in the First District and they hold the original Nazi card files of all the deportations of Czech Jews in the Shoah. They will provide a certificate for your relatives to verify their death or their survival and this gives the transport number and the individual number as well. This exact same information has now been published in three volumes by the Terezin Initiative and the Sydney Jewish Museum Library has a copy of them.

The Terezin Memorial is based at the former concentration camp an hour by car, bus, or train north of Prague, where there is also a small Museum in the former Magdeburg Barracks. My mother, Mimi, worked as an artist in the camp so this is a subject I have pursued and the artists of Terezin is one of the major exhibits in the Magdeburg Barracks Museum along with sections devoted to the Music of Terezin, the theatre and other subjects.

### **CEMETERIES**

After the fall of the Berlin Wall the Czech Jewish Community has been given back many of its synagogues and cemeteries in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. In Prague and Brno, the Jewish community has engaged managers to oversee the restoration of their significant buildings and cemeteries. In Prague, Mr. Majomir Maly can arrange for restoration of graves and in Brno his equivalent is Dr Jaroslav Klenovsky.

The New Jewish Cemetery in Prague 3 in the District of Zizkov has a caretaker, Mr. Ivan Berkovic who can look up his database and tell you if your family member is buried there or not. He can also tell you where the grave is. Not many other Jewish cemeteries other than the Brno one have such an easy to find arrangement. So many of the cemeteries have eroded over time; been damaged by the Nazis or bombing and more recently local

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neo Nazi and anti Semitic attacks that even though the stones may still exist, no cemetery records are extant and even if there are records, often the stones have been removed or destroyed.

There are many different groups attempting to map and repair the graves all over the Czech Republic. Unfortunately there is no national registry or directory and the work is piecemeal, unfunded, and uncoordinated. Some cemeteries can be found online though and there are gradually improving means to locate family graves.

If you are lucky enough to find a grave it will have some information which will be useful like a Hebrew name for example. Many of the stones are inscribed in Hebrew; in later years in German and even later in Czech. In recent years books about the towns and their cemeteries have been published for both Bohemia and Moravia and some of these are quite informative.

### **INTERNET SOURCES**

I've listed a lot of websites below that are useful but of course this is just a drop in the ocean of what is out there on the internet. I'm sure you all have heard of the Jewish genealogy website known as JewishGen. *I can't recommend it highly enough.* The Czech and Austrian SIG (Special Interest Group) has been critical to my research and the many members of that discussion group include some very knowledgeable and expert researchers who have helped me immensely. I urge you to check it out.

Since I began my search for my family about 30 years ago, a lot has changed in Central Europe. One of the drivers for that change has been the development of the internet and on line search tools. Another significant force has been the very effective lobbying by the International Jewish Community for proper restitution in Czechoslovakia and Austria.

Another major change in the last decades was the split in 1993 of Czechoslovakia into two separate Republics, the Republic of Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. As far as I know all the Slovak Jewish records for Births, Deaths and Marriages are now held by the National Archives in Bratislava. For a fee they will research your family if you can give them some basic details. Their records are also not complete. But sometimes if you cross the borders you can be lucky. I have found quite a few of my Moravian ancestors in Vienna.

The beginning of my story was that I started knowing virtually nothing. The end of this story is that I am now drowning in research material and am struggling to put it all together into a coherent

form I can honestly say that I have had hours and hours of excitement and enjoyment researching in the Czech Republic and Vienna and I hope that my experience will inspire you to embark on your own journey. I urge you to join the AJGS which I have found very helpful and supportive. And you should also join the JewishGen Austrian/Czech SIG which is tremendously helpful and completely free.

*Daniela Torsh is a member of our Society and has been a psychologist, journalist, filmmaker and is now an inspired genealogical researcher.*

### **RESOURCES FOR CZECH RESEARCH**

#### **By Daniela Torsh**

*This is an extract of the detailed fifteen-page handout prepared by Daniela for distribution at her talk on this topic in November. Members can obtain a copy from the Society. Just add \$3 to your membership renewal.*

#### **PRAGUE ARCHIVES**

##### **Czech National Archives**

They hold the household registration records for Prague and some regional areas as well.

[www.nacr.cz/english/conscriptions.aspx](http://www.nacr.cz/english/conscriptions.aspx)

The records give head of household, wife with maiden name, children and other relatives who lived at the same address, date of registration, number of house, occupation of man, year and place of birth, religion, deaths in family, marriages. E-mail: [na@nacr.cz](mailto:na@nacr.cz)  
Tel: +420 974 811 111.

##### **National Archives in Dejvice, Prague 6**

All the Jewish births, deaths and marriages records for the last few hundred years are held at the National Archives in Dejvice, Prague 6

Statni ustredni archiv v Praze, Milady Horákové 133, Praha 6 – Dejvice  
General email: [na1@nacr.cz](mailto:na1@nacr.cz)  
Tel: +420 974 847 825.

Local and regional Czech archives are also very worthwhile checking for census records, domicile records, school records.

#### **PROFESSIONAL CZECH RESEARCHERS**

Czech family history researchers who will do paid work for you include Mr Jaroslav Klenovsky in Brno and Mrs Iva Steinová and Mr Julius Muller in Prague. Iva's husband Eugen and she worked together and did my first family tree. He died last year but she continues the work. Iva can write and speak English. She also reads Hebrew and German and Czech of course. Her contact details are: Slunecni nam 6, Praha 58, 158 00 Czech Republic  
Email: [i-e-stein@seznam.cz](mailto:i-e-stein@seznam.cz) Tel: +420 251 613 267

Dr. Julius Muller has his own company, Toledot.

The website is: [www.toledot.org](http://www.toledot.org)

Tel: +420 267 312 130 Email: [jmuller@toledot.org](mailto:jmuller@toledot.org)

Dr Jaroslav Klenovsky in Brno  
tř. Kpt. Jaroše 3, 602 00 Brno, CR  
tel./fax: +420-545 244 007  
[jaroslav.klenovsky@zob.cz](mailto:jaroslav.klenovsky@zob.cz),  
[www.zob.cz](http://www.zob.cz) (click for English)  
Tel Office +420 544 509 608

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## 1793 CENSUS IN BOHEMIA

During the past five years, seven volumes of the Bohemian Jewish census of 1793 (Soupis zidovskych rodin v Cechach z roku 1793) have been published in Prague by the State Archives [ Statni ustredni archiv v Praze]. The final volume VI/2 is a cumulative "name and place" index which makes searching much easier. It also includes a list of errata and a useful bibliography.

This final volume has some explanatory German text, whereas the other volumes are entirely in Czech, but the actual census entries are transcribed from the old German records and therefore in German.

The libraries and research centres which have copies include the Jewish Family History Centre in Prague; Central Archives, Prague; YIVO Institute in New York; and the LDS (Mormon) Family History Library in Salt Lake City; British Library, London; Adler Society, Vienna; Harvard's Widener Library.

## CZECH JEWISH SOURCES

**Federation of Jewish Communities in Czech Republic**  
[www.fzo.cz/enodk\\_mez.do](http://www.fzo.cz/enodk_mez.do) (click flag for English)

Useful history, links and map of location of Jewish Community offices throughout the country. The Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic is based in the Old Town Prague Ghetto at 18 Maiselova Street. That is where the Prague Jewish Community is also based and the High Synagogue and the Chief Rabbi. They have a kosher restaurant for community members but visitors can also eat there. There is also the original card file for all transports of Czech Jews. They will certify copies for you for a small cost. Mail address is: Federace Zidovskych Obci v Ceske Republice, Maiselova 18, P.O. B. 297, 110 01 Praha 1, Czech Republic

## Prague Jewish Museum

[office@jewishmuseum.cz](mailto:office@jewishmuseum.cz)

They have a new reading room at Smichov right near the Andel Metro station in Praha 5. They hold a lot of records from destroyed synagogues and Jewish Communities and of course historical records.

Website: [www.jewishmuseum.cz](http://www.jewishmuseum.cz) Their main office is at: U Staré školy 1, 110 00 Prague 1, Czech Republic

Tel: +420 221 711 511; fax: +420 221 711 584

Pani Dr Vlastimila Hamackova is in charge of the Museum archives.

## TEREZIN (THERESIENSTADT) CONCENTRATION CAMP

The **Terezin Memorial** is at the concentration camp itself, housed in one of the old barracks.

Tel +420 416 782225

Director is Dr Jan Munk. Their website: [www.pruvodce.com/terezin](http://www.pruvodce.com/terezin) has English.

Address: Principova alej 304, CZ- 411 55 Terezin

They have a small museum in the former Magdeburg Barracks and bookshop and some archives in the small fortress. I had a lot of help from Eva Nemcova who works there. Her email is [nemcova@pamatnik-terezin.cz](mailto:nemcova@pamatnik-terezin.cz)

The **Terezin Initiative** Institute attempts to document the names and fates of all prisoners of the Terezin ghetto and of other victims of the "Final Solution of the Jewish

Question" in the Czech Lands and to use this data in order to assist commemoration and promote Holocaust education. The information gathered in the framework of this documentation project is made available for survivors, family members, but also to the public, to historians and for schools.

Terezin Initiative Institute, Jáchymova 3, 110 00 Praha 1, Czech Republic

Tel:+420 222 317 013

Email:[database@terezinstudies.cz](mailto:database@terezinstudies.cz)

## JEWISH CEMETERIES IN PRAGUE

The **New Jewish Cemetery** is at Zizkov. You can catch the underground to get there easily. The entrance to the cemetery is right opposite the metro station Zelivskeho on the A line. Address is: Zidovsky hrbitov, Praha 3, Izraelska 1. The manager is Mr Ivan Berkovic and his email address is [iber@volny.cz](mailto:iber@volny.cz). Mr Berkovic has a computerised database where he can find the grave position by name. He can also arrange for repairs and renovation of graves.

Or you can approach Mr Mojmir Maly, whose company Matana a.s. is responsible for the management and upkeep of Jewish cemeteries and real estate owned by the Jewish Community in Prague and by the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic.

Tel: +420 272 734 004, fax: +420 272 734 609

Email : [sbh@cmail.cz](mailto:sbh@cmail.cz)

Matana a.s., Mala Stupartska 1, 110 00 Prague 1

## Zizkov cemetery

[//freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~erichl/prague\\_zizkov/prague.htm](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~erichl/prague_zizkov/prague.htm)

## BRNO JEWISH CEMETERY

### Jewish Community of Brno

Their website has links to the Brno Jewish Cemetery which is large and well cared for and also has an online searchable database. [www.zob.cz/index\\_en.html](http://www.zob.cz/index_en.html)

You will find contacts for other Jewish Communities in Bohemia and Moravia on the federation's website given earlier.

Uhersky Brod in Moravia has a caretaker Gerry Prokop who will for a small fee send you photos of the gravestone of your relative. Email: [miriam@c-box.cz](mailto:miriam@c-box.cz).

## PROFESSIONAL LOCAL AUSTRALIAN TRANSLATORS

Highly qualified Czech and German translator Ms Katarina Steiner is in Sydney. [ksteiner@ozemail.com.au](mailto:ksteiner@ozemail.com.au) mobile: 0417 360 496 or (02) 9436 0496

The Czech Embassy in **Canberra** has a list of translators on its webpage; Vlasta Travnickova in **Sydney** is one of them. She also teaches Czech at the WEA and privately. Tel: (02) 9907 6659

## SLOVAK NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Ministerstvo vnútra SR, Štátny archív v Bratislave Križkova 7, 811 04 Bratislava.

Email: [archiv.soba@mvsr.vs.sk](mailto:archiv.soba@mvsr.vs.sk) Application form in English for family history research is available.

**Note that the accents on Czech characters have been omitted.**



David Laufer  
& Miriam Shifreen



Kim Phillips' Presentation of  
'SPIRITS OF GALLIPOLI'  
NAJEX Rememberance Day Service,  
2007  
Montefiore Home, Randwick



Michael & Sunny Gold and Peter Nash

Nigel Meinrath & Kim Phillips





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## THE KNOWLES COLLECTION

By W. Todd Knowles AG

In August of 2007, a new resource for Jewish genealogists tracing their English ancestry was released. Found at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), that resource is The "Knowles Collection". Which brings us to the question, what is the Knowles Collection?

The Knowles Collection builds upon the foundation laid by the work of the late Isobel Mordy, who collected genealogical information on the Jews of the British Isles. The records that made up the Mordy Collection, were kept on individual pieces of paper that were microfilmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah in 1984. Those films were then made available to researchers throughout the world, who could access those films through their local family History centers. Her records include birth, marriage and death records, probate records, 1841-1871 census records, biographical and other records. The Mordy Collection, is comprised of four individual sections which can help the researcher learn more about their families. The collection includes about 160 pedigrees and a little over 6000 individuals.

The first section of the Mordy Collection is the index to Pedigree Slips. This section is arranged alphabetically by surname. It lists the Pedigree Code, and the personal reference number for each person listed in the index. For example, the pedigree Code for the family of Rabbi Davis, the Chief Rabbi of Pumbersfelton, Bavaria is "D".

The second section is the pedigree slips indexed in section 1. A slip exists for everyone listed in the index. This information gives the personal reference number for each person. It is through these numbers that family links are made. The number has the family pedigree code followed by 3 numbers. The first number is the father's place in his generation, the second number is the individual's own generation number and the third number is the person's place within his own generation. If the person listed is the earliest ancestor, then the number for the father is left out. In order to make family links, the researcher needs to chart each person within the family pedigree, which can be very time consuming.

The third section in the Mordy collection is called the Miscellaneous Data Index. This section is comprised entirely of individual records of the Jews of the British Isles. Some of the papers refer to people listed in the pedigree slips, however most do not, and it is simply a collection of miscellaneous records from many sources. Whether your

ancestors were some of the Jews who left England for Jamaica or the cigar makers from Amsterdam who came to London, they could be listed here.

The fourth and final section of the Mordy Collection is the Locality Indexes. In these indexes, every address mentioned within the collection has been indexed by locality. For example, the indexes to London have been indexed by street name and show everyone in the collection in order by house number. It is a great way to find the neighbors and friends of our ancestors, which could help us find our ancestors.

While the work done by Isobel Mordy was incredible, there are 2 main drawbacks for researchers. First, the family codes can be quite complex and in larger pedigrees there can be over 50 individuals per generation. This can lead to a lot of time spent and frustration in compiling family trees. Also, some families can have as many as a dozen other pedigrees merge into their own, further complicating matters.

The second problem for those using the Mordy Collection, is that Ms. Mordy passed away before computers had become a part of our daily lives as they are today. Because of this, the Mordy Collection is only available on microfilm and is not searchable in any electronic format.

It is because of these two issues that the Knowles Collection came to be. As a member of the British Reference unit at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, I have a great interest in English records and as the Great Grandson of Polish Jews, I have a great interest in Jewish records. For many years the Mordy Collection has been the main source for Jews of the British Isles and many have found their ancestors in those records. In fact, as the records were kept well into the 1980's many researchers have found themselves with the collection. The Knowles Collection has taken all of the individual records compiled by Isobel Mordy and linked them electronically into a completely searchable database. All of the records compiled by Ms. Mordy have been saved and is truly the foundation of the collection. The collection continues to grow and now includes records from all censuses, as well as many records unavailable to Ms. Mordy.

Even though the Knowles Collection is based upon the Mordy Collection, there are a few differences. First, Ms. Mordy compiled records until her death and therefore records exist well into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, In the Knowles Collection, due to privacy reasons, the majority of records are from the time of the 1901 census and before.

The second and perhaps best difference is the fact  
(continued on page 15)

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## THE TRUTH

### ***Oral History and Perception OR Verification and Facts.***

**By Sheila Helprin**

*The truth - everyone knows the real story  
- so 'they' say.*

*The truth - you will be the main person  
- interested in the research.*

*The truth - why bother re-inventing the wheel  
- although everyone will want a copy.*

*The truth - those who say they know nothing  
- usually know something*

***A cynical introduction.*** A huge task awaits you. It all sounds so exciting but it will require patience, an enquiring mind and detective work as well as the ability to cope with generations of the 'real story' which is mostly oral history and perception, being overturned. It took me almost 15 years of collating and serious research before I felt it was time to send my book *Our Family – Your Ancestors* to the printer. Even though I distributed extracts for proofing and comment before printing, currently I am preparing an *Addendum* of corrections, omissions and additions which will include several stories previously not given to me.

### **INITIALLY**

***Purchase a reputable genealogical programme*** capable of recording your family tree, facts and stories. I found *Family Tree Maker* satisfactory and the actual story and graphics were keyed into my faithful PC.

### ***Decide why and who you are researching.***

In the beginning, I wrote for the family but soon realized that our grandchildren and their descendants must know not only our roots but also understand the background and times in which the family lived. Who will be able to tell them? I felt that only recording names and dates would be meaningless without the accompanying social, political and historical knowledge. Genealogy should not be only about the past. Today, your own life may seem uninteresting but remember, today will soon change into yesterday – yesterday is your history.

### ***What are your parameters?***

This is important as your family tree can easily list hundreds of names. As our story was a history for our grandchildren and future generations, I decided to research the maternal and paternal side of myself, my husband and our respective parents and grandparents. So far, I have traced seven generations. Because my life was so closely intertwined with my cousins – their stories became very relevant and their family memories and stories were an important element. In addition, I was

fortunate to be in close contact with two branches of my great-great-grandparents' descendants from Ukraine and Poland so we were able to compare and swap many stories which were then included.

***Personal resources*** were my starting point, sorting into individual family files all the documents, photos, invitations certificates etc. Meeting family interstate and overseas usually meant I came home with numerous copies of documents and photos. Our travel diaries contained a wealth of information.

### **RESEARCHING**

#### ***Record Everything***

I listed every single fact I had, no matter how small, even if it was only a first name or year or a colour of a hat in a photo. Fragments of information when placed in context with other scraps created larger pieces eventually weaving a fascinating tapestry of our family. This was easy with my software programme and when printed, created a time line. I discovered there were second marriages; some siblings were really cousins or from a first marriage and how a relative married his mother's niece (or was it her grand-daughter!!)

#### ***Check all resources on hand.***

Scan all photos and documents. On the reverse side of photos were notations such as dates, names, venues or photographer. Zoom into scanned photos to locate medals or insignias – then research origin. Sorting out photos into similar groups, you might notice code numbers on the back which means they were developed at the same time – you are now creating a story of people; 'unrelated' photos have similar backgrounds, same clothes, tints etc and you realize they were taken at the same time. I zoomed in on my mother's proudly displayed left hand in one group of photos to note she was wearing an engagement ring while sitting on the beach outside a hotel – another date and another place to add to the story. We had a giggle when we discovered a wealthy relative wearing the same dress at two of her children's weddings. It took me 65 years to realize that I wore the same flower girl outfit at two weddings several weeks apart and then to be told that the ermine cape was a favourite dressing up outfit for my sister. Little anecdotes that make us part of the family.

#### ***Government Archives***

We thought we 'knew' the story of my in-laws' arrival in Australia from Palestine in the 1920s. Early in my research, my husband and I went to Canberra to access the National Archives of Australia. This opened up a Pandora's box. The Archives held all the original documents relating to naturalization, forms, letters and passports of

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various members of the family. We now had dates of birth, arrivals, boats, places of birth, residences and family background. Most of the material was either different from what we knew or was never known to us in the first place; some information differed from document to document. Because of the translation from Hebrew to English, relevant dates and name spellings were different. Hebrew dates used in Palestine/Israel must be adjusted to the Roman calendar. Dates often relate to a Festival eg 'I was born the 3rd day of Chanukah.' Unless the year is shown, there could be discrepancies on Anglicized documents. Even after accessing Safed databases, I don't think we will ever have a perfect record but at least we have adjusted the oral history to contain more facts.

### **State Library Archives**

One story was told of a great-uncle who had fled the pogroms in Ukraine. He became a successful and respected London businessman dealing with the Royal Court until meeting an untimely death. Initially, the family knew of the incident when seen on newspaper billboard and in daily newspaper headlines. I decided to search the London newspapers for a full report. I found the name, albeit with a slightly different spelling, and an earlier unexpected article of a lady falling into the River Thames in the early hours of the morning, a man in his pajamas being chased along the banks of the River Thames by a private detective and another woman's husband followed by charges of assault. I trailed the story over several months of reporting in various newspapers including the London Financial Times and the UK Jewish Chronicle until my relative's dramatic demise. It is difficult to describe my mixed feelings while sitting alone in the middle of the State Library printing out microfiche reports of previously unknown but dramatic events. Can you imagine the family's reaction to this incredibly convoluted and fascinating story? Once again, the truth in black and white overtook our oral history.

### **Names**

Hebrew names were very informative. I discovered the name of my Polish great-grandfather on my grandfather's gravestone in London. Recently while in Canberra, I learned my English-born uncle had the full Hebrew name of my great-grandfather. Question – why didn't his two elder brothers have this Hebrew name? Assumption – my great-grandfather must have passed away in Poland just before my uncle was born. Eureka – more information and another approximate date to add to my database. If you know the Hebrew name e.g. Yosef ben Avram, you know the father is Avram

(Abraham) so you have automatically created an earlier generation.

It took a while to realize that Shapsa, Shalnan, Shepsel, and Simon was my Ukrainian born grandfather – his secular, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Anglicised first name. My travels through the UK National Archives 1901 Census gave me names of a great-grandparent's family of ten, together with their ages and country of birth as well as that of the maid and another relation. The Safed, Israel, database combined with other known facts suggests that my father-in-law could have been Sephardi not Ashkenazi as we all thought.

### **Municipal Archives**

Quite by accident I came across a photographic archive of the streets and buildings where my grandparents and other relatives lived, worked and prayed during the early 1900s after escaping the pogroms. It cost two English pounds to release the copyright on the photos so I requested an English cousin to be my 'banker'.

### **Traditional or Genetic (DNA) Genealogy**

This is an area that has recently been drawn to my attention. World wide gene genealogy research projects are currently being undertaken and I hope the AJGS will be pursuing this topic.

My family tree is a traditional record showing one's position in the extended family. I did not mention personal details such as miscarriages, stillborn children, or disabilities. The relevance of adoptions, step-children or 'partners' to your lineage may also need to be addressed.

*My stories and family tree go back to 1850 and is far from complete. Be proud of your heritage – your story is neverending.*

Sheila Helprin

[helprin@optusnet.com.au](mailto:helprin@optusnet.com.au)

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### **THE KNOWLES COLLECTION**

(continued from page 13)

that anyone with a computer can have free access to the Knowles Collection. At the website [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) there are two downloadable files. One is the PAF version of the collection, and the second is a GEDCOM version which can be downloaded into any software program used to hold genealogy. Once downloaded, the databases can be searched at home. The database currently includes almost 13000 individuals, over twice the Mordy Collection. That number will continue to grow as the database is added to almost daily.

*W. Todd Knowles is a reference consultant in the British unit of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. He is an Accredited Genealogist specializing in British Isles and Jewish research.*



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## **A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE LATE ALEXANDER CHARLSON**

**By Alec Charlson**

Alexander Charlson migrated from Shavli in Russia (now Siauliai in Lithuania) to South Africa during the 1890s. In all probability, his reason for leaving Russia was that he did not want to serve in the army of the Tsar. We do not have any information about Alexander's early years in South Africa. But in 1914 he was living in Boxburg, a small gold mining town about 15 miles from Johannesburg. At that time Alexander was 36 years old and single. He was employed as a barman at the Boxburg North Hotel.

In 1914 the Foster gang was terrorising people in South Africa. They were responsible for the murder of ten people including three policemen. In some respects the Foster gang was similar to the Kelly gang in Victoria, Australia. However not many people in South Africa in recent years have heard of the Foster gang.

On 17 July 1914 the Foster gang attempted to rob the Boxburg North Branch of the Standard Bank. While breaking into the bank they disturbed a clerk who slept on the premises. The clerk attacked the robbers and a struggle ensued. He then ran to the Boxburg North Hotel to get help. Alex Charlson tried to intercede but was shot in the chest and died soon afterwards.

For a full account of Alexander's death, see:  
[www.africrime-mystery.co.za/books/fsac/chp2.htm](http://www.africrime-mystery.co.za/books/fsac/chp2.htm)

In 1998 I contacted the Johannesburg Library to get further information about the murder of Alexander Charlson. Carol Leigh of the Library found a report of the murder in the Rand Daily Mail of 18 July 1914. In addition she found a report of the funeral in the Rand Daily Mail of 20 July 1914. The Rand Daily Mail was the main English morning newspaper in Johannesburg and would be the equivalent of the Sydney Morning Herald. We also obtained the Death Notice for Alexander and the First and Last Liquid Distribution Account in the Estate of Alexander Charlson.

It was difficult to find Alexander's last resting place. Eventually my friend Jack Harington who lives in Johannesburg discovered from the Boxburg's cemetery records that the grave site was at No 25 E section of the cemetery. There was no headstone and no kerbstone, only some bricks surrounding the grave.

After I received the information from the Rand Daily Mail, I wrote to the chairman of the Boxburg Historical Association to see if he could get any

further information. I included copies from the Rand Daily Mail. His reply was polite, but he did not seem to be really interested. On 29 November 2007 I was very surprised to get an email from Peter Wood of the same Boxburg Historical Association. He said that he had found the fax which I had sent to George Mills, their chairman in 1998. George Mills is now living in the United Kingdom. Peter Wood told me that he had traced another obituary of Alexander Charlson which appeared in the local East Rand weekly newspaper. This obituary, unlike the one in the Rand Daily Mail, contained a photograph of Alexander Charlson. The photo has been placed on the Boxburg Historical Association website:  
[www.geocities.com/boxburghistorical](http://www.geocities.com/boxburghistorical)

Peter Wood was excited to find the photograph of Alexander Charlson, because it was missed by May and Hamilton when they wrote "*The Foster Gang*" in 1966, as well as other researchers who delved into the Foster Gang saga. The photograph is unfortunately not of wonderful quality, even though it was printed on glossy paper, because the block used was the typical course grid type for newspaper illustrations at that time.

Through an enquiry from nine years ago, we are pleased to at last have this photo of Alexander Charlson as we did not have any photographs of our uncle.

*Alec and his wife, Gwenda, joined the Society in October, 1998 and have been enthusiastic and successful researchers ever since.*

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## **A 1901 UK CENSUS PUZZLE**

**By Rieke Nash**

Ever since the release of the 1901 UK Census, I have been unsuccessful in finding the entry for my grandparents, Morris and Esther Isenberg in St George in the East, London. I know that they were living there as I had the Birth certificates for their ten children. I eventually stumbled across Morris's brother, Israel Isenberg, under the entry, Isaac Isenberg, but no matter what combination of search criteria I used, I failed to find my family.

Recently, using Isaac's address as a starting point, I searched for the home addresses that I knew from the birth certificates of my uncles. Eventually the records for the house appeared but my family were not listed on it. Instead there was an unknown couple with two young children aged four and one, born in London. What caught my eye were the names of these children, Morris and Esther! There were no records for the birth of children with that name on the UK BMD site.

*Is this another example of the census collector confusing the information being given?*

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## FROM NU? WHAT'S NEW? THE E-ZINE OF JEWISH GENEALOGY FROM AVOTAYNU

**Gary Mokotoff, Editor**

### **USHMM To Have Public Access to ITS Records This Month**

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) plans to accept inquiries regarding the collection of Holocaust-related records of the International Tracing Service (ITS) this month, perhaps as early as December 3. What USHMM currently has is part of the record collection of ITS plus the entire Central Names Index (CNI) of 50 million digitized index cards providing information about 17 million people. These cards place an individual in a specific place at a specific time. The balance of the record collection will be given to USHMM and other repositories, such as Yad Vashem, over the next two years.

In most cases, genealogists will find the information contained on the Central Names Index to be adequate and the actual document from which it is derived to be more of historical interest. This is because most of the information on the source document about a specific individual was transcribed onto the index card. I have placed on the Internet sample index cards at [www.avotaynu.com/arolsen.htm](http://www.avotaynu.com/arolsen.htm).

They include sample cards of deportations, deaths, refugees, inquiries (T/D file), etc.

People will be requested to fill out a form that will be available at the USHMM website and other means. In theory, USHMM will be willing to make any reasonable search, and if there are results, they will provide the inquirer with copies of the original source documents. This may be a long-term goal, because it is guaranteed that USHMM will be swamped with requests in the short term.

The Museum will allow people to come to their facility in Washington, DC, and do searches of the Central Names Index by themselves. This may be necessary for those who want to browse the index to do searches that are unreasonable requests (for example, would occupy too much time of a member of the USHMM staff), generic searches (all persons named "Mokotow") or do not want to wait for a response from the Museum.

### **USHMM Now Has Online Inventory of ITS Collection**

A list of the complete inventory of ITS is on the USHMM website at <http://resources.ushmm.org/itsinventory>

It is in German and English. This is merely a list of the more than 21,000 separate collections of historical documentation. It consists of the name of the record group and a brief description. A full-word search engine will locate record groups of interest. I personally do not see the value to family historians of knowing these record groups, because all the names from the documents were extracted and are in the Central Names Index with a reference to the original source. For example, a Page of Testimony submitted by the brother of Bronka Mokotow says she died in Mauthausen. This seemed unreasonable to me since she was in the Warsaw ghetto, and the Jews of the ghetto were deported to their deaths at Treblinka. Searching the ITS inventory online shows there are 420 record groups that reference Mauthausen. There is no need to search all these groups; the CNI would have included her name if she was on any list.

### **T/D Files at ITS: What Are They?**

There has been much fuss about the T/D record collection at the International Tracing Service. (T/D stands for "Tracing/Documents.") This is the collection of all inquiries made to ITS since their inception about 60 years ago. It is felt these letters will be a boon to genealogists, because inquirers may have described their families by name and perhaps included birth dates and places. Every inquiry went into the Central Names Index, catalogued under the name of the person sought. The index card includes the name and address of the inquirer. Unfortunately, the only examples I have of T/D file records in the Mokotow history are requests for information about one person. I do not know, at this time, if a person inquired about an entire family and named all members of the family, whether an index card was created for each family member, including children. Examples of T/D index cards are at the Avotaynu website [www.avotaynu.com/arolsen.htm](http://www.avotaynu.com/arolsen.htm).

*Thank you, Gary, for this update.*

*For up-to-date news on Jewish genealogy, register for a free subscription to this valuable site on [www.avotaynu.com](http://www.avotaynu.com)*

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### **A FAMILY'S STORY**

*Escape to Les Vignes, A childhood in Nazi-occupied France* by Annita Sharpe was recently published in Melbourne by the Makor Jewish Community Library for their *Write Your Story* Collection. Well illustrated and documented, the book is a fascinating account of the war time experiences of a French Jewish family. Annita, the wife of Lionel Sharpe who is Secretary of the AJGS (Vic), also discusses the post-war effects of being a Child Survivor.

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## **GROUP TRIP TO LITHUANIA AND SURROUNDING AREA**

Howard Margol and I are organizing another group trip to Lithuania - June 24 to July 4, 2008.

The June 2007 group trip was great with over 40 participants. If you are interested in tracing your roots in Lithuania, Latvia, Eastern Poland close to Lithuania, or Belarus, now is the time to sign up because this year we will be limiting the group size to 25.

Included are visits to the various Archives, synagogues, ghettos, Holocaust sites, meetings with Jewish leaders, sight-seeing, guides and interpreters, and two days to visit and spend time in your shtetl, or shtetlach of interest. All meals are included (except for one dinner and two lunches), the finest hotels (new and modern), modern bus with on-board toilet, and much more. Howard and I are very familiar with the Archives, the archivists, Lithuania and the main places of Jewish interest.

**IMPORTANT:** This trip is sponsored by the American Fund For Lithuanian-Latvian Jews, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit. If there is a profit from the trip, the entire profit will go to support the Jewish community in Vilnius. It is NOT sponsored by IAJGS or any JGS.

Our previous trip participants can be contacted if references are desired.

For details and a full itinerary of the trip, contact Howard Margol or Peggy Freedman,  
E-mail: litvaktrip@gmail.com

Peggy Mosinger Freedman  
Howard Margol

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## **SPECIAL LIBRARY ARRANGEMENTS**

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain has extended the opening hours of its Library and Resource Centre. The Library is located in the West End of London and is easily accessible. It is open two or three times a month at scheduled times (see the programme at

[www.jgsgb.org.uk/program1.shtml](http://www.jgsgb.org.uk/program1.shtml)

for the scheduled opening times each month).

In addition, we have decided to operate a Special Appointments system, on a trial basis, for visitors who are unable to attend a scheduled session. We believe that this will be especially useful to those visiting London from overseas who may not be able to attend a scheduled session. We normally require a minimum of four weeks notice to book a Special Appointment. We try to book a time and date that is convenient to the visitor, although it must be recognised that with a limited number of volunteer

library staff this is not always possible. To request a special appointment please email

[librarybookings@jgsgb.org.uk](mailto:librarybookings@jgsgb.org.uk)

Library admission is free for Members of JGS Great Britain and five pounds for non-Members.

A description of the Library is at

[www.jgsgb.org.uk/library1.shtml](http://www.jgsgb.org.uk/library1.shtml)

and a partial library catalogue can be found at

[www.jgsgb.org.uk/download/LibraryList.pdf](http://www.jgsgb.org.uk/download/LibraryList.pdf)

We look forward to seeing you at our Library and Resource Centre.

Laurence Harris

Chairman,

Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain

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## **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

Dear Members

This being Chanukah and a time of giving gifts, I thought it might be appropriate for someone to mention the gift given to the members of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society by Peter and Rieke Nash. Their hard work and dedication assisting the members of the AJGS must very often go unrecognised and unappreciated. I've only been a member for a short period of time, but it didn't take long for me to recognise how much we all rely on them. Their enthusiasm and dedication to our successes knows no bounds, and I would like to, on behalf of all members, wish them a Happy Chanukah.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Harvey Kaplan in Glasgow for his support over a number of years, and wish him also a Happy Chanukah. Without his help, my recently rediscovered family and I would not have been able to continue the good work on our roots. In conclusion I would like to wish you all a Happy Chanukah and a Healthy, Happy and Prosperous 2008.

Maurice Goldstein

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## **SOME NEW RESOURCES IN OUR LIBRARY**

*Jewish Memorial (Yizkor) Books in the United Kingdom* by Cyril Fox and Saul Issroff, JGS of Great Britain, 2006. While documenting the holdings in the UK, this book is a useful reference to Yizkor books generally. Many of these books are available in Australia at the libraries of the Sydney Jewish Museum and the Melbourne Holocaust Museum.

*14 Years of The Galitzianer* is a CD published by the Geshet Galicia Group and contains most issues of their journal in a searchable PDF format from 1993.

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*Our aim is to encourage and assist those with  
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**SYDNEY WORKSHOPS**

All workshops are usually held at the Rev Katz Library,  
North Shore Synagogue, Treatts Road, Lindfield, once a  
month on Sunday mornings, from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30  
p.m. See front page for dates.

**WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

*New South Wales*

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Garry Glass

David Rosenwax  
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**IAJGS CONFERENCE DATES**

**2008 Chicago 17 - 22 August**

The Chicago Marriott Downtown, the Magnificent  
Mile Hotel, is the wonderful location of the 2008  
conference. The room rate will be single and double  
\$199 (excluding tax) and an additional person is  
\$30 (excluding taxes). For more details visit  
[www.chicago2008.org](http://www.chicago2008.org)

**2009 Philadelphia 2 – 7 August**

The Sheraton Philadelphia City Center Hotel will  
be the venue for the 2009 IAJGS Conference  
organised by the IAJGS and the JGS of Greater  
Philadelphia.

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The ACT Jewish Community,  
the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society, Sydney  
and the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society (Vic)  
are holding a  
National Conference in Canberra  
in October, 2008.

*Jewish Genealogy in the 21st Century*

will provide a varied programme combining a mixture of lectures, seminars and panel inputs, together with visits to National Institutions and genealogical resources. The opportunity to meet in person other enthusiastic researchers will be an occasion not to be missed.

**On Sunday 26 – Monday 27 October, 2008**

there will be lectures, presentations, panel discussions, Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings, a project planning session and the Conference Dinner.

The registration fee will be \$120 for these two days. This covers lunches, morning and afternoon teas and conference handouts.

The Dinner is optional and will cost \$80 per person. All food will be kosher.

**From Tuesday 28 October**

there will be a less formal programme with research activities and trips.

Accommodation options (not included in the registration fee) will be available.

To help with planning, please advise at [conf2008@ajgs.org.au](mailto:conf2008@ajgs.org.au) by the end of January if you think you might attend.

For further information visit

[www.ajgs.org.au](http://www.ajgs.org.au)