

JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY



KOSHER KOALA

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AJGS
L'dor V'dor

The statue of Medieval Jewish businesswoman Licoricia of Winchester was unveiled in Winchester, England in February 2022.

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FEATURES

DOJR - THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

HELEN GARDNER (AJGS-VIC)

Dr Helen Gardner is a member of the AJGS (Vic) committee and was the initiator of the society's involvement in the DoJR project.



WHAT IS THE DOJR?

The Documentation of Jewish Records Worldwide (DoJR) is a project of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS). The goal is to create an online catalogue of all surviving records of our Jewish ancestors. The catalogue, JCat, will be a global reference for all records that document individuals, inform their life stories, and enable the building of family and community histories, preserving Jewish history and heritage.

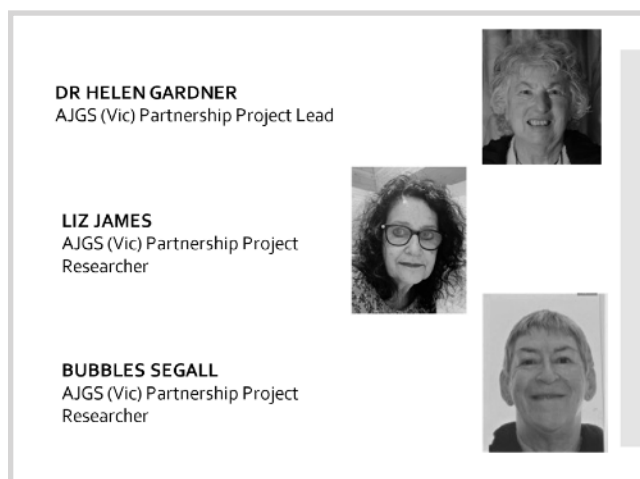
At the IAJGS conference in 2020, the DoJR project was announced with the premise that a large percentage of Jewish records all over the world were uncatalogued and virtually unknown. It was immediately apparent that genealogical information we hold here in Australia was a prime example of these uncatalogued and unknown records.

Yes, some of our data is on JOWBR, and some of it is available at USHMM, and some of it is on the Australian Jewish Historical Society website, but much more of it is all over the place: in boxes, on CDs and in cupboards. The idea that a catalogue of all our record sets could be gathered in one place, under the auspices of IAJGS, specified as Australian data, was immediately attractive, and our AJGS (Vic) committee thought it was an exciting and innovative project. As we were the first group to volunteer to be part of the project, we have been privileged to work with the US team on the development of record types, and our data has been used to help develop a data base which other JGSs will be able to use for future data entry.

Substantial evidence, based on an extensive pilot study, indicates that as much as 85% of Jewish records worldwide remain to be discovered and catalogued. The catalogue, to be known as JCat, aims to capture every source of Jewish genealogical

information throughout the world. JCat data consists of a one-line entry per record set which contains details of what information is available and where to find it, as well as what media it is stored on, its condition (good or fragile), and its general availability. The base data, that is, the collection of individual records which make up the record set, will not be held in the catalogue. This is a long-term, visionary program which will serve future genealogists long after those of us who began it have passed on.

Our team consists of Liz James, Bubbles Segall and myself. When we are not in lockdown, we meet weekly for two hours. We also have weekly Zoom sessions with Marlis Humphrey and Helen Stein in the US, who assist us with queries and navigating data entry into the excel template. We would like to express our immense gratitude to Marlis and Helen, for their patience, perseverance and help in guiding us through the process.



Our first decision was that we would concentrate on Victorian records, enter data from the AJHS website and from other states where we have it, and encourage other Australian JGSs to enter their data when the data base is operational.

First, we entered the data we have from the AJHS (Vic), held in the State Library of Victoria, which is the largest collection. That gave us over 4,500 Australian records previously known only to a few of us. We are now entering the data held by the AJGS (Vic) and also data on Jewish communal organisations, which hold many records of genealogical interest, and potentially hold record sets we are unaware of. We expect that this part of the project will involve negotiating with communal organisations over their available records: which ones might be open access by providing a clickable link, which records a researcher would need to contact a designated person to ask about, and which records, if any, will not be available to the public at present.

Once that's done, we'll look at data from non-Jewish organisations that have data on Jewish people, such as school and university alumni associations, newspapers, both major and local, professional organisations, The Australian National Archives, etc.

Birth

- ☐ Birth Announcements
- ☐ Birth Notices
- ☐ Birth Certificates
- ☐ Legal Birth Extract Records
- ☐ Birth Registers
- ☐ Delayed Birth Records
- ☐ Birth Protocol Sworn Records
- ☐ Mohel Books
- ☐ Circumcision Registers

Marriage

- ☐ Ketubot
- ☐ Ketubahs
- ☐ Marriage Announcements
- ☐ Wedding Announcements
- ☐ Marriage Banns
- ☐ Marriage Certificates
- ☐ Marriage Licenses
- ☐ Notary Prenuptial Agreements
- ☐ Prenuptial Agreements
- ☐ Anniversary Announcements
- ☐ Civil Marriages
- ☐ Civil Weddings
- ☐ Marriage Authorisation Records

Divorce

- ☐ Divorce Announcements
- ☐ Divorce Certificates
- ☐ Marriage Dissolution Certificates
- ☐ Gets
- ☐ Jewish Divorce Records

Death

- ☐ Burial Records
- ☐ Burial Authorisations
- ☐ Burial Transit Record
- ☐ Transport for Burial
- ☐ Cemetery Stones
- ☐ Death Certificates
- ☐ Kodes
- ☐ Member Deaths
- ☐ Obituaries
- ☐ Wills
- ☐ Yahrzeit Records
- ☐ Yahrzeit Plaques
- ☐ Death Announcements
- ☐ Death Notices

Other Vital Records

- ☐ Adoption Records
- ☐ Church Records
- ☐ Civil Registrations

In addition to our digitised vital records, we also have data on:

- paperwork from 10,000 Jews living in the USSR applying for entry into Australia in the 1990's (currently being digitised)
- family tree data on prominent Jewish families living in Australia – with 67,000 names (digitised)
- a List of 500 books with data of Australian genealogical interest in our Jewish Library (digitised)
- Synagogue marriage records and ketubot from 1832 up to 1940 (digitised)
- the Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society from 1939 to present, which contains many articles detailing urban and regional Jewish life in early colonial times, including the history of towns from regional Victoria such as Bendigo, Ballarat, Shepparton and Geelong (digitised)
- Audio tapes, newspapers, publications, photographs, maps, artefacts and archives (index digitised) – and much more.

These records were sourced from the Lamm Jewish Library in Victoria, the genealogical resource room within that Library, the State Library of Victoria and the Australian Jewish Historical Society website managed by the AJHS in New South Wales.

We found some surprises. There were some collections that we had forgotten about, and some collections that would be very good to digitise and make more readily accessible. One of the undiscovered gems we found was a collection of applications for gravestone inscriptions at the Melbourne General Cemetery submitted by members of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation. This was an especially important discovery as these records, dating from 1860 onwards, are still intact, whereas the condition of the graves themselves has deteriorated with many now smashed or completely unreadable.

We also rediscovered the very first Minute Book of the Melbourne Jewish Philanthropic Society which began in 1848, and the Punishment Book of the Melbourne Hebrew School – 1876, which lists the date, pupil, 'crime', number of lashings and who administered them. Students were punished for bringing cigarettes

to school and smoking them, as well as enticing others to smoke; biting the girls, singing in class, laughing in class and other such misdemeanours.

Custodial Organization Name - carried over from the Custodial Organization tab			Archive	Major divisions of the Archive
1.a.i. Name (in native language) - Name in native language of the Custodial Organization	1.a.ii. Name (translated to English if native language is not English) - If native language is not English, put the English translated version of the Custodial Organization's name here NOTE: if the native language is English, enter the text, NA	1.a.iii. Native Language - input the your native language	2.a.i. Archive Branch Identifier - The branch identifier (number or name); for large Custodial organizations, there can be several archive branches, each that have Holdings. This field may have no relevance for smaller Custodial organizations, in which case enter "NA".	2.b.i. Title (in native language) - Title of the Archival Group in native language
Lamm Jewish Library of Australia	NA	English		first Minute Book of the Melbourne Jewish Philanthropic Society
Lamm Jewish Library of Australia	NA	English		Applications for gravestone inscriptions at the Melbourne General Cemetery

Detail of the DoJR Excel template

It's been a challenging task.

The Excel template for data entry was confusing, complex, and frustrating. But, as the initial response team, our task has been to figure out what different types of records we have, and what sorts of data you can collect from them, thus enabling Helen Stein to build a database that will make it easy for other JGSs to enter their data.

One of the main challenges has been the question of who the custodial organisation is. For us, it's complicated because we have data owned by organisations, managed by the Historical Society and stored in the State Library of Victoria. After much discussion, the decision was that the custodian is determined by where the data is stored. Thus, the State Library is the custodial organisation for those records stored there. The decision also clarifies the custodial organisation for other record sets we hold, and for other JGSs as they enter their data.

I would encourage the NSW JGS to consider adding their data to the project. JCat is a truly international project, and eventually the Australian contribution to it should be truly national. Although the proposed data base is not yet operational, some of the preparation can be done now.

I'd start with brainstorming what records might be available in your community, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Think about what sorts of data you have for different

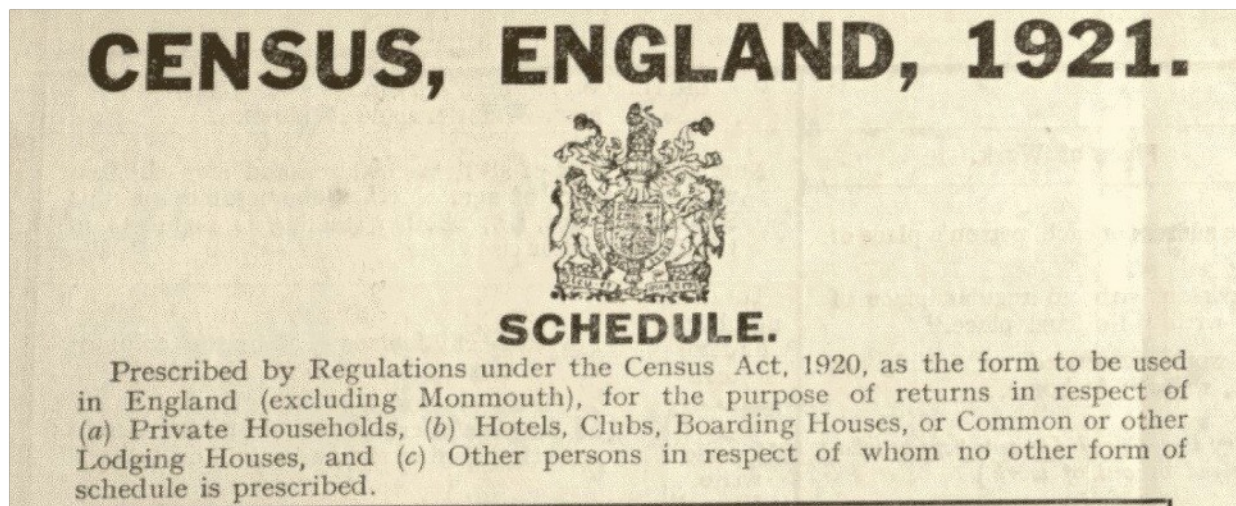
Through participation in this project, we will wind up with a documented understanding of what records are available for our community and where to find them. This should be of use to people, both internationally and in Australia, who are searching for Australian data. Knowing what is where and the richness of collections will also help prioritise future digitisation and indexing projects for our society.

TAXONOMY: noun - a structure used for classifying materials into a hierarchy of categories and subcategories.

Click image to view taxonomy chart in detail at the DOJR website

	INSTITUTION RECORDS	INSTITUTION RECORDS (CONT.)	HISTORICAL EVENTS	EDUCATION / EMIGRATION	POPULATION AND RESIDENCY	GOVERNMENT	GOVERNMENT (CONT.)	PERSONAL	MEDIA	COMPILED SOURCES	REFERENCE TOOLS
Birth	Language	School	Immigration	Travel	Residency	Court	National and Municipal	Self-Authorized	Publications	Registers	Instructions
Birth Announcements	Kaddish	Tomb Records	Funerary Records	Border Crossing Records	City Directories	Court-Birth Records	Local Law Records	Recorded Testimonies	Newspapers	Survivor / Town Registers	Finding Aids
Birth Announcements (Cont.)	Kaddish	Tomb Records	Funerary Records	Border Crossing Records	City Directories	Court-Birth Records	Local Law Records	Recorded Testimonies	Newspapers	Survivor / Town Registers	Finding Aids
Birth Announcements (Cont.)	Kaddish	Tomb Records	Funerary Records	Border Crossing Records	City Directories	Court-Birth Records	Local Law Records	Recorded Testimonies	Newspapers	Survivor / Town Registers	Finding Aids
Birth Announcements (Cont.)	Kaddish	Tomb Records	Funerary Records	Border Crossing Records	City Directories	Court-Birth Records	Local Law Records				

A census is a population wide survey used to develop government policy and inform planning decisions. Historical census records have subsequently proved to be one of the most critical record sets available to genealogists, and can be used to trace and track the movement of ancestors across time. Census are carried out every 5 to 10 years and the full records are released approximately 100 years after collection.



The 1921 UK Census records were finally released online on 6th January 2022. Recognising that it did not have the budget or resources to digitise and index the 1921 Census on its own, *The National Archives* (UK) awarded the digitisation contract and exclusive access rights to UK subscription site [Find My Past](#).



Find My Past invested a considerable sum into the three year project to make digitised images and census data pertaining to around 38 million people available online. On the Find My Past platform the census records are also connected to other records in their collection including previous census entries, military records and historic maps.

While you can search the index for free, Find My Past charge a fee of AU\$4.80 (£2.50) to access the detailed transcript and AU\$6.60 (£3.50) for access to the original census sheet. This option also gives you access to the linked records. A discount is offered to annual Find My Past subscription holders.

Free access is available on-site at the National Archives in Kew, London and in partner locations at Manchester Central Library and the National Library of Wales, where you can access the records via the FindMyPast website, but without the charges - although this is not much use to those of us in the antipodes.

In order to allow users to narrow down the most likely census record before purchasing, the advanced index search shows other household members, occupations and other biographical details captured in the census forms. The results pages shows names of individuals, their year and place of birth, and the registration district in which they were located when the census was taken. A 'hover-over' preview indicates the names of a couple of other members of the same household.

Wedged between two world wars, in the wake of a global pandemic, during a period of increased economic turmoil and migration from the UK, and with considerable social change as women won the right to vote, the 1921 census took place at a significant moment in history.

In a [detailed article](#) just before its release, Alex Cox from Find My Past told *Who Do You Think You Are?* magazine that the 1921 census...

...provides greater detail than any previously published. In addition to the questions asked in 1911, the 1921 returns also required respondents to reveal their place of employment, what materials they worked with and their employer's name. Those aged 15 and older had to provide information about their marital status, including whether they were divorced, while for those under 15 the census recorded whether both parents were alive, or if either or both had died.

It's unclear when the next UK census release will occur as the 1931 census records were destroyed in a fire and the 1941 census was cancelled because of World War II. The 1951 census is due for release in 2051.

The screenshot shows the Find My Past website with a dark blue header. The navigation bar includes links for Family tree, Search, 1921 Census, My records, Help & more, and a Subscribe button. The main banner features the text "THE 1921 CENSUS IS HERE" in large white and red letters, with "in association with THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES" to the right. Below the banner, there are two tabs: "Find an ancestor in the 1921 Census" (selected) and "Find an address in the 1921 Census". The search form is titled "Search the 1921 Census of England & Wales" and includes fields for "Who" (First name, Last name), "Birth year" (Year), and "Where" (Location). A green "Search" button is on the right. Below the form, there is a link to "or try an advanced search". The background of the banner includes a photograph of a family and a portrait of a woman.

Find my past

Family tree Search 1921 Census My records Help & more Subscribe

THE 1921 CENSUS IS HERE

in association with THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Find an ancestor in the 1921 Census Find an address in the 1921 Census

Search the 1921 Census of England & Wales

Who Birth year Where

First name Last name Year Location Search

or try an advanced search

HOW TO ACCESS THE 1921 UK CENSUS

Go to the [1921 Census page](#) at the Find My Past website

Find my past Family tree Search 1921 Census Subscribe

THE 1921 CENSUS IS HERE in association with THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Find an ancestor in the 1921 Census Find an address in the 1921 Census

Search the 1921 Census of England & Wales

Who Birth year Where

Aaron Kaufman 1908 Location

View 1 result

or try an advanced search

Enter search parameters into simple search - the number of results available will show in the green button on the right. You can also elect to do an advanced search.

Click on the green button to view the search results.

Find my past Family tree Search 1921 Census Subscribe

21 ways to make the most of THE 1921 CENSUS in association with THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES Try these tips

Results for 1921 Census Of England & Wales All record sets

Your search Clear All

First name(s) Aaron

Include name variants

Last name Kaufman

Include name variants

Birth year Give or take 1908 ± 2yrs

1 result

First name(s)	Last name	Birth year	Birth place	Parish	Registration district	County
Aaron	Kaufman	1908	Stepney, London, England	Mile End Old Town	Mile End Old Town	London, Middlesex

Find my past Family tree Search 1921 Census Subscribe

Find my past Who lived in your house 100 years ago? Find out with the 1921 Census

Results for 1921 Census Of England & Wales

Your search Clear All

First name(s)
Aaron

☒ Include name variants

Last name
Kaufman

☐ Include name variants

Birth year
1908

Give or take
± 2yrs

Parish

1 result

First name(s)	Last name	Birth year	Birth place
Aaron	Kaufman	1908	Stepney, London England

Record transcript

Aaron, Lewis, Annie and 4 others are on this record

EXAMPLE

- ✓ A legible translation of the original record
- ✓ Shows every occupant's age, family role and where available, profession
- ✓ Contains a map showing the local area at the time

Record image

Aaron, Lewis, Annie and 4 others are on this record

EXAMPLE

- ✓ A scan of the original record
- ✓ The first source of truth
- ✓ A piece of history to save and share

Support

If you ascertain this is a record you want, select between purchasing a record transcript or a record image.

21 ways to make the most of THE 1921 CENSUS

Results for 1921 Census Of England & Wales

You're buying:

1921 Census Of England & Wales image

Aaron, Lewis, Annie and 4 others are on this record

EXAMPLE

- ✓ A scan of the original record
- ✓ The first source of truth
- ✓ A piece of history to save and share

Total: £3.50

Choose payment method

☐ Credit or debit card

☐ PayPal

By purchasing this record, you agree to Findmypast's Terms and Conditions

When you click to purchase a pay screen will appear on the right hand side.

Select your preferred payment method and follow the prompts. Be aware that some institutions may charge a foreign transaction fee.

As soon as the purchase has been processed you will be able to access the records. This typically takes just a few minutes.

In this case, I purchased the full image for the family of Aaron Kaufman, born 1908 in Mile End, London. There are two pages available to view: one is the cover page with instructions, the other is the data for the family.

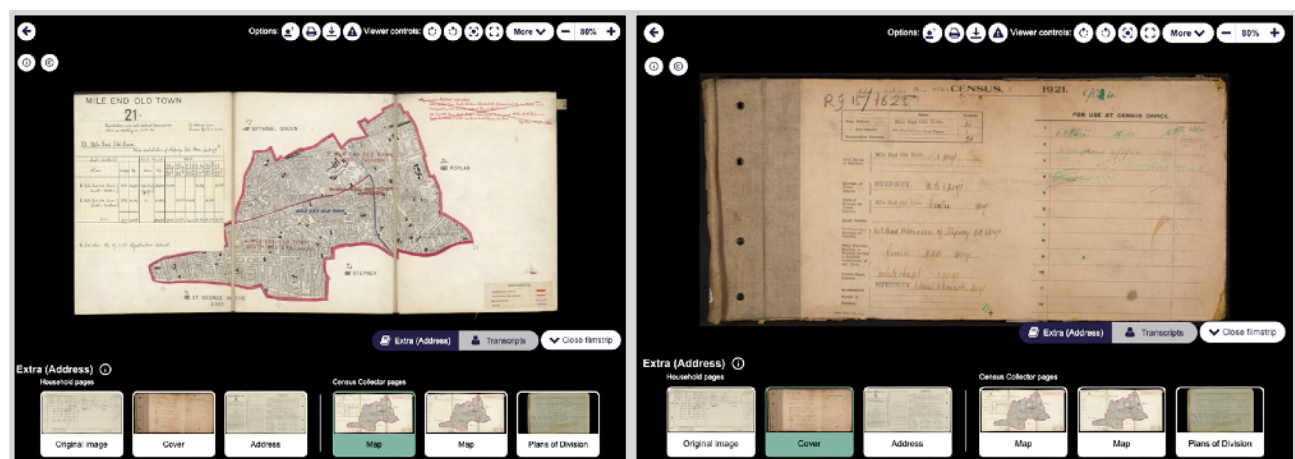
Options: [Icons] Viewer controls: [Icons] More ▾ 80% +

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Please read the Instructions and Examples shown on the back, and then fill up the Schedule carefully and in ink.

NAME AND RESIDENCE	AGE	SEX	RELATIONSHIP	EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION	RELIGION	Place of Birth	Place of Birth (Country)
Aaron Kaufman Head	41.2	m	Head	London		London	England
Annie Kaufman	35.2	f	Wife	London		London	England
Aaron Kaufman	12.1	m	Son	London		London	England
Charles Kaufman	12.1	m	Son	London		London	England
William Kaufman	5.4	m	Son	London		London	England
Emily Kaufman	3.6	f	Daughter	London		London	England

Thumbnails [Icons] Extra (Address) Transcripts Close filmstrip



As I did not purchase the transcripts I cannot access them. I can, however, access the extra documents linked to this record. In this case it included the cover of the census volume and a map of Mile End Town district.

There is a comprehensive help menu available on the website should you have any issues.

Many books have been written about Kings Cross, but I have never come across an account of the contribution that Jewish people, especially European immigrants, made to the evolving character of this Sydney suburban icon.



Kings Cross in the 1930s - RAHS-Osborne Collection, Wikimedia Commons

Over the years, I have encountered people in Sydney’s Jewish community who have their own memories of Kings Cross from their earlier years. In some cases, it might be memories of stories passed down from parents or grandparents. It might relate to having lived and/or worked there. In many cases, it might be a part of their social life, meeting friends at the many late-night cafes and other entertainment venues.

In my case, it was all the above. My parents emigrated to Sydney from Europe in early 1939. Like many other Jewish refugees, they found inexpensive accommodation in Kings Cross, then Elizabeth Bay and eventually in Rose Bay. My father operated his Hairdressing Salon in Bayswater Road, Kings Cross until he retired in 1967. As both my parents worked in the Salon, my sister and I spent a great deal of time in Kings Cross. During my late teens, Kings Cross was a great attraction for me and my friends due to its nightclubs, shows and cafes.



Kings Cross in the 1950s - RAHS-Osborne Collection, Wikimedia Commons

I would like to compile a book of writings from you and others who would like to share their own life experiences or family stories in relation to Kings Cross during the 1930s, 40s and 50s.

For this book, I am extending the boundaries of Kings Cross to include the larger area including William Street, along Darlinghurst Road to Macleay Street and in the other direction towards St Vincent’s Hospital, down Bayswater Road to Rushcutters Bay, Elizabeth Bay and along Victoria Street into the edges of Potts Point.

If you have a family story you would like to be considered for inclusion in *An Anthology of Kings Cross in the Collective Jewish Memory*, please [email Evelyn directly](#) with an expression of interest, or any questions you may have.

NEWS & VIEWS

JEWISHGEN & MY HERITAGE ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP



While some JewishGen records have been available in MyHeritage search for a while now, the two companies have just announced a major partnership.



On 22nd February, MyHeritage published 5.8 million records from JewishGen on their platform. The 28 collections represent the initial implementation of a licensing agreement that will eventually make almost all JewishGen records accessible via MyHeritage. This first instalment spans from the 18th century to the 21st and consists primarily of vital records from Eastern European countries including

Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, and Germany. There are also some Holocaust records and voter list indexes.

This partnership will not affect access to JewishGen indexes online; the platform will remain a free and accessible resource for researchers. The partnership will now allow researchers on MyHeritage to benefit from their technologies, which automatically match historical records with the 83 million family trees on MyHeritage. JewishGen records will also be able to be connected to your online MyHeritage tree.

Additionally, MyHeritage also has the capacity to match records in non-Roman scripts such as Hebrew, Russian and Greek, opening up matching opportunities for researchers with ancestors in these localities.

DNA DATA CLASS ACTION FILED AGAINST ANCESTRY



When you buy a genetic DNA test who owns your DNA data? What are they allowed to do with it? And what happens if the company is subsequently sold to a private equity firm?

Many people have legitimate concerns about the privacy of their DNA data and a recently filed class action in the US state of Illinois could set a precedent for DNA data and genetic genealogy companies.

The class action, filed in October 2021, alleges that Ancestry has violated the Illinois Genetic Information Privacy Act (GIPA), by disclosing genetic information to an unauthorised third party, namely Blackstone Inc, the private equity firm that acquired Ancestry last year for US\$4.7 Billion.

The filing alleges that:

Following Blackstone's acquisition of [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), defendant disclosed on its website that plaintiff and the Class' genetic information would be released and/or disclosed to Blackstone for its use. However, defendant failed to identify any method by which plaintiff and the class could prevent such disclosure of their genetic information to Blackstone or any other party.

The principal plaintiff, a minor known only by the initials A.K., and his guardian used a DIY DNA test kit from [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). AK, through his guardian, said he would not have provided genetic material if he knew it would be disclosed without his consent to third parties such as Blackstone. Lawyers are seeking an injunction requiring [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) to comply with GIPA, as well as an award of damages to the Class Members, together with costs and legal fees.

This action may go some way to clarifying the responsibilities of commercial DNA service providers in relation to how far privacy extends when one entity is sold to another. This is certainly one to watch.

RECLAIM THE RECORDS RELEASE THE *KRAKEN*



Can genealogists be radical activists? You bet!!

On Valentine's Day 2022, [Reclaim The Records](https://reclaimtherecords.org) filed a New York State Freedom of Information lawsuit, also known as an Article 78 Petition, against the New York City Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS), which is the parent organisation of the New York City Municipal Archives.

They dubbed their suit "[Release The Kraken](https://reclaimtherecords.org)", and in it they are requesting:

ALL already digitised New York City historical records and their associated text metadata. (Yes, all.)

Describing itself as "...not your grandmother's genealogy group", Reclaim The Records, established by Brooke Schreier Ganz in 2015, is a volunteer run, not-for-

profit activist group made up of genealogists, historians, and academics. Many of their law suits are supported by pro-bono legal teams.

[Their website](#) describes their motivation, mission and tactics:

We're tired of begging archivists, librarians, city clerks, and state Departments of Health for access to our own records, paid for with our taxes. Those days are done. We pick our targets, carefully study the vital records laws and the state Sunshine Laws, craft our records requests, and if we don't get an appropriate answer, we sue. And then we ask for attorneys' fees, and even fines, if possible.

Their novel use of FOI laws has led to the release of millions of datasets, indexes and records held by public institutions.

The laws are on our side, and we're not afraid to use them.

As of November 2018, our organisation has so far launched eight separate Freedom of Information lawsuits, both state and federal. Three of these have been successfully settled, ... and two of those also awarded us our attorneys' fees. Five of our lawsuits are still in progress. And we're about to launch many more cases, against all kinds of government agencies: from municipal archives, to city and county clerks' offices, to city and state departments of health, and all the way up to major federal agencies. Anyone who wrongfully withholds archival material is fair game.

[ABOUT](#) ▾[OUR "TO-DO" LIST](#)[RECORDS SURVEY](#)[RECORDS REQUESTS](#) ▾[DONATE](#)

WE WANT OUR RECORDS BACK.

And we get them! More than thirty million records reclaimed so far

We're **Reclaim The Records**, a new not-for-profit activist group of genealogists, historians, researchers, and open government advocates. We identify important genealogical records sets that ought to be in the public domain but which are being wrongly restricted by government archives, libraries, and agencies. **We file Freedom of Information and Open Data requests** to get that public data released back to the public. And if the government doesn't comply, **we take them to court**.

Then we digitize everything we win and put it all online for free, without any paywalls or usage restrictions, so that it can never be locked up again. [Learn more](#) about our work and [sign up for our newsletter](#).

Help us reclaim even more.

[MAKE A DONATION ONLINE](#)

We started our work in New York City in 2015, expanded to three new vital records jurisdictions in 2016, and became a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit in 2017. Your support helps us continue the fight for open records nationwide.

Once they have access to the records, they digitise everything and put it online for free, without any paywalls or usage restrictions, so that it can never be locked up again. A good example of this is the [New York City marriage license index and database](#), where you can search an index of records from 1950-2017. At the bottom of the page are links to other datasets for different time periods.

And it's not just about the records themselves; RTR are also fighting for changes in policy and against backroom deals and preferential treatment for corporations. They are a founding member and Strategic Partner of the [New York Adoptee Rights Coalition](#) (NYARC), and support legislation that would allow all adult adoptees and their descendants full and open access to their own Original Birth Certificates (OBC's), without any restrictions. And they continue to actively lobby against any proposed restrictions to public records by government departments, making written and oral submissions to government bodies.

While subscription sites give us access to billions of records for a price, public records are just that, public, and so should be in the public domain and freely available to all researchers. Reclaim The Records are taking on the gatekeepers and winning.

EXPLORE MOROCCAN & ALGERIAN JEWISH HERITAGE



An article at [Avotaynu Online](#) notes that there is a new genealogical society dedicated to Moroccan and Algerian Jews. Established by founding members Raquel Levy-Toledano, Jean-Marc Benhamou, Nathaniel Farouz & Jacob Marrache, the organisation is called NAJMA – Nos Ancêtres Juifs Marocains et Algériens (Our Moroccan and Algerian Jewish Ancestors).

Jews have lived in North Africa since at least the 2nd Century CE. The expulsion of Jews from Spain led to an influx of Sephardi Jews. Communities were mobile, following trading opportunities or escaping from continued persecution.

The Avotaynu article describes the evolution of the Moroccan and Algerian communities:

As they wandered and intermarried,
their differences of origin progressively
turned into social differences



Jewish Wedding in Morocco
Eugène Delacroix, 1839, Louvre, Paris

influenced by the colonial powers. They were also very connected to the other major Sephardic capitals: Amsterdam, Livorno, and London. Satellite communities developed in Gibraltar and Lisbon. ... As a result of the massive post-war [*Ed note: WWII*] exodus of North African Jews, ever fewer people were able to pass on their first-hand memories of their history, culture, and family ties.

To counter this loss of cultural memory NAJMA's stated objective is to:

collect sources and connect people, to preserve and enhance their memory!

The society aims to:

- Gather people interested in our history, and share memories and documents.
- Carry out research projects, especially on our ancestral origins, our history, the migrations over time, and the rites and customs of our ancestors.
- Promote and enrich the genealogy of Moroccan and Algerian Jews, by moderating Facebook groups, publishing articles and books, and collaborating with other genealogical societies.
- Participate in genealogical conferences and contribute to projects carried out by other organisations.



Jews of Algeria near writing on wall in Hebrew script.
Postcard; Wikimedia Commons

NAJMA has a Private Facebook group – [*Généalogie des Juifs Marocains*](#) – with almost 6,000 members sharing documents and stories (please note that French is the primary language used and you must have at least one family member from the region to join). There is an interconnected family tree with over 35,000 entries [available in Geni](#) and a [Y-Chromosome genetic study](#) is currently underway in partnership with Avotaynu.

You can [Email NAJMA directly](#) for more information and to join the society.

MAPPING MIZRAHI HERITAGE



It's hard enough finding well preserved historical Jewish sites in Europe where our ancestors may have lived. But it's even more challenging in countries where geopolitical tensions make it impossible for anyone, let alone people with Jewish heritage, to travel.

Diarna (דיארנא ד״ארנא “Our homes” in Judeo-Arabic): The Geo-Museum of North African and Middle Eastern Jewish Life is working to digitally preserve the physical remnants of Jewish history throughout the non-European areas such as the Arabian Peninsula, Africa, India and even Indonesia and Singapore.

The team at Diarna describe their mission as:

...a race against time to capture site data and record place-based oral histories before even the memories of these communities are lost. Diarna pioneers the synthesis of digital mapping technology, traditional scholarship, and field research, as well as a trove of multimedia documentation. All of these combine to lend a virtual presence and guarantee untrammelled access to Jewish historical sites lest they be forgotten or erased.

Formerly known as: *Diarna: Mapping Mizrahi Heritage*, the website now hosts an interactive map and a series of exhibitions relating to specific locations such as The Gulf countries, Urmia in Iran and Azerbaijan.



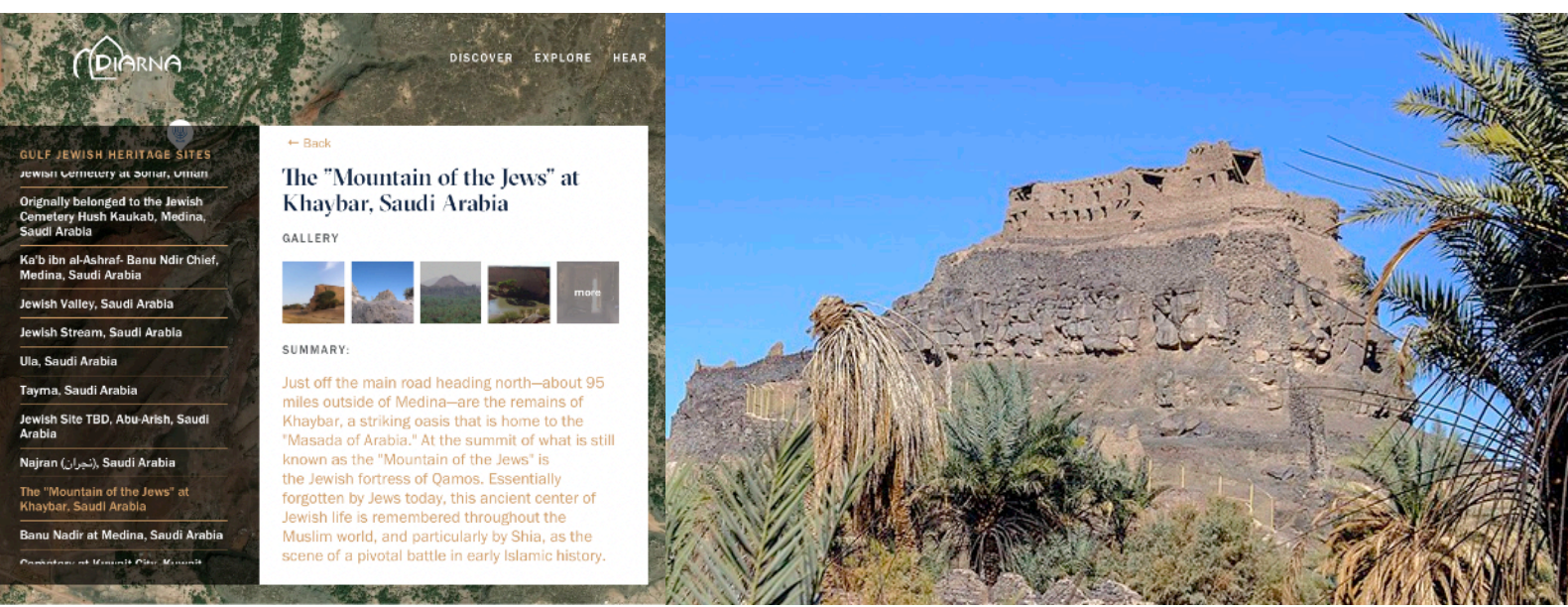
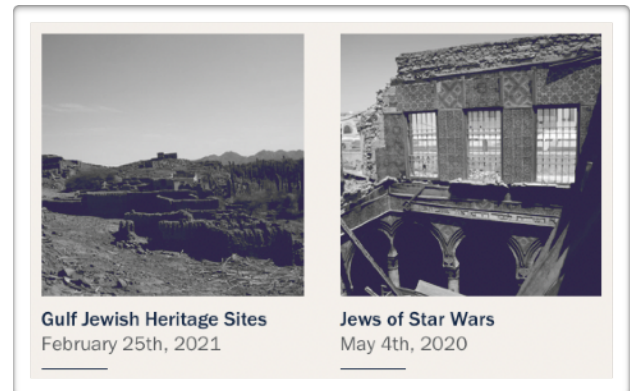
One of my favourite exhibitions is *The Jews of Star Wars*... a mini-exhibition launched on May the 4th, 2020, showcasing the Jewish remnants of Tataouine in Tunisia, the town that inspired the planet of Tatooine, Luke Skywalker's home, in the Star Wars saga. Like its fictional residents, the Berber residents of Tataouine lived in underground dwellings. In 1946 there were 770 Jewish residents of Tataouine. Twenty years later not a single Jew remained.

The most recent exhibition pertains to Jewish communities of the Gulf States and was created to honour the creation of the Association of Jewish Communities of the Gulf. At this stage it is still in a preliminary phase but the sites highlighted are some of the most ancient.

As the exhibition notes explain:

The oldest Jewish community in the GCC is in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where there are sites that pre-date the advent of Islam and where Jews openly lived into the 1950s. ... Of the other countries: the Kingdom of Bahrain, Kuwait, and the Sultanate of Oman all have Jewish sites; Qatar has none. ... Bahrain's historic Jewish community has maintained its synagogue and public life continuously throughout recent history. The UAE is home to the newest Jewish community in the world and the 1st new Jewish community in an Arab or Muslim country in centuries.

Unfortunately, as is often the case with these countries, records specific to individuals are hard to come by. But if you have traces of Mizrahi DNA in your ethnicity profile this is a beautiful way to explore your deep history and heritage.



STATUE OF LICORICIA OF WINCHESTER UNVEILED IN ENGLAND



As many Jewish researchers have discovered it's often a challenge to find records beyond the last few hundred years unless you are descended from royalty or rabbis. It's even harder to trace women through the historical records. Finding the stories of Jewish women in antiquity, particularly the Middle Ages is particularly challenging.

In February, 2022 it was heartening to see a statue to a remarkable Jewish woman who lived in 13th Century Winchester, England, unveiled by HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, Nigel Atkinson Esq, on behalf of HRH Prince Charles (who had unfortunately been diagnosed with Covid the day before the ceremony).



The maquette of the sculpture of Licoricia of Winchester

The statue, designed by renowned English sculptor Ian Rank-Broadly, depicts Licoricia of Winchester striding through the street holding the hand of her young son. In her other hand she holds a demand from the authorities for the community to pay a special tax (or tallage). On the plinth is an inscription with a quote from Leviticus: "Love thy neighbour as yourself", written in both English and Hebrew.

There are no known illustrations of Licoricia, so the sculptor used as his inspiration his own daughter and grandson, both of whom are Jewish. Licoricia is dressed in the clothes worn by a wealthy woman of her time, her outfit carefully researched, with input from the V&A, the British Museum, and the Jewish Museum in London. However, Licoricia is not wearing a tabula -- a badge shaped like the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, made from a different cloth to the clothes to make it stand

out. All Jews were required to wear this at the time, but wealthy Jews could pay a fine for the privilege not to.

Licoricia of Winchester first entered the historical record in 1234, as a young widow. When her first husband, Abraham of Kent, died he left her to support three sons, Cokerel, Benedict and Lumbard, and a daughter, Belia; and a financial services business to run. She went on to become extremely influential, lending money to local landholders and regional gentry.

In 1242 David of Oxford, one of the wealthiest Jews in England, sensationally divorced his wife Muriel to marry Licoricia. They had a son, Asher. Whether it was true love or a canny business merger we will never know. But as a result of David's death a mere 2 years later, Licoricia, who was detained in the Tower of London as issues surrounding her husband's estate were sorted out, became an extremely wealthy woman. Licoricia paid King Henry III 5,000 marks (£3,500) from David's estate and a further £2,500 in inheritance tax. She subsequently formed a close working relationship with the King and his wife, Queen Eleanor.

Unfortunately, civil unrest and the deterioration of the position of Jews in the kingdom led to tragic outcomes for Licoricia. Early one Spring morning in 1277, Licoricia and her devoted Christian maid were found brutally murdered in her home on Jewry Street. Both women had been stabbed in the chest, locks were broken off coffers and strongboxes, and goods were missing, making the crime appear to be a violent robbery. While three men were eventually tried for her murder, none were convicted and the crime remains unsolved to this day.

Not much is known of Licoricia's descendants. Benedict gained some success, becoming the only Jewish guildsman in England. But a year after his mother's death, Benedict was accused of "coin clipping" – shaving off the edges of coins to reduce their actual value but



The statue of Licoricia of Winchester unveiled in February 2022.
Images: ©Licoricia of Winchester Appeal - used with permission

maintain their face value. Found guilty alongside 300 other Jewish men, he was executed and his assets seized.

Licoricia's youngest son Asher may have acted as her agent on some occasions, but as the lives of England's Jews became increasingly restricted, he was forced to move from one town to another. In 1287 Asher was imprisoned in Winchester Castle. He etched a message in Hebrew on the wall of his cell:

On Friday, eve of the Sabbath in which the portion Emor is read, all the Jews of the land of the isle were imprisoned. I, Asher, inscribed this.

It seems likely that Licoricia's children and grandchildren were finally forced to leave the country when the entire Jewish community of England were expelled by King Edward I in 1290. Where they went is lost to history, but it is feasible that Licoricia has thousands of descendants living around the world today.

The Licoricia of Winchester Appeal raised funds for the statue and an associated educational program to open up the world of Medieval Jewry to everyone.

At the dedication, Maggie Carver, Chairman of the Licoricia appeal, said:

The statue of Licoricia of Winchester marks the historic importance of the medieval Jewish community in Winchester's royal (sic) and the continuing importance of strong inter-faith understanding. ...The Chief Rabbi's blessing in the company of leading representatives of all the major faiths of England celebrated the challenging history of Jews in England across a thousand years, and embodied the continuing need to educate citizens of today about the relevance of their shared heritage in creating a better society.



EXPLORING A COMPLICATED FAMILY RELATIONSHIP



Sydney born artist Ella Dreyfus has produced and directed a 30 minute documentary, which was commissioned by the German Government as part of the [*1700 Years of Jewish Life Festival 2021*](#).

Dreyfus Drei is a poetic exploration of her family's complicated relationship with Germany, her father's birthplace. Richard Dreyfus was born in Wuppertal and lived in Berlin as a child, before he and his brother were put on a Kindertransport to Australia.

Ella grew up knowing little of her father's wartime experiences but she absorbed his antipathy and dread regarding all things German. Her Uncle George, conversely, returned to Berlin barely 10 years after the end of WWII to pursue a musical education. Now 93 years old, George Dreyfus rose to fame in Australia as a composer of film and concert music. He also composed the score for *Defies Drei*. George's son, Jonathan – Ella's cousin – is also a musician. He now lives in Berlin and arranged his father's score for the film.



Filmmaker Ella Dreyfus with her cousin Jonathan. Image: © Ella Dreyfus



The Dreyfus Family

Through interviews with her Uncle George and cousin Jonathan, Ella explores the brother's different responses to the childhood trauma of war, displacement and exile, and how they shaped the attitudes of the next generations of Dreyfus families.

Ella also travels to Germany herself, to seek out her father and uncle's homes in Wuppertal and Berlin and finds evidence of her great-grandparents' lives in Wiesbaden. She also creates a series of public art installations, declaring her family's names and their Jewish identities in the streets. Ella is currently entering the film in festivals around the world.

Dreyfus Drei is a collaborative partnership between the Goethe-Institut, Australia, Sevenpeaks Films, Berlin and Ella Dreyfus. The film was commissioned by the 1700 Years of Jewish Life in Germany Festival 2021 and funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM).

IZMIR'S JEWISH HERITAGE RESTORED



Izmir, known in antiquity as Smyrna, sits on the edge of the Aegean, on the coast of Turkey. The city was home to a thriving Jewish community for over 2000 years.

When the Ottomans were in control of the region Izmir boasted a Jewish population of over 150,000 people. By 2010, there were barely 1000 Jews left.

While Istanbul is home to a Jewish museum, cultural icons and accessible synagogues, in Izmir many of the extant Jewish sites were crumbling and inaccessible to the public.

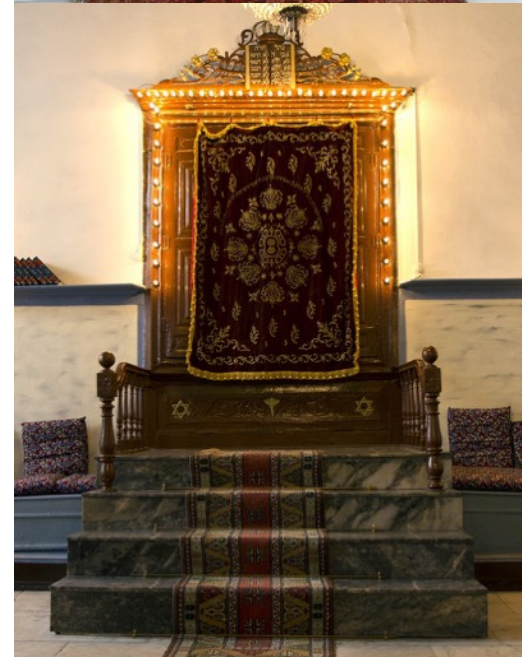
Now, a project to restore and revitalise the Jewish heritage of Izmir has finally come to fruition.

The Izmir Project, largely funded by grants from the EU, has restored nine historic synagogue buildings located in an area called Kemeralti, one of the largest market areas in Izmir. Together they will create a living museum of Jewish heritage.

Director of the heritage project, Nissem Bencoya, spoke to the Jewish Telegraph Agency about the project:

Six of the nine synagogues stand next to each other, practically wall to wall, surrounding a courtyard, while the other three are dispersed throughout the neighbourhood...

Once complete, the synagogues will serve as a living museum to Izmir's Jewish history, with exhibits on local customs as well as on the history of the individual synagogues and their congregants — such as the Algazi synagogue, which is named after the musical family of its rabbi, or the Portekiz synagogue, which was founded in the 16th century by North African Jews of Portuguese descent.



Synagogue arks in Izmir: from top: Señora Synagogue; Shalom Synagogue; Algaze Synagogue,



ALgaze Synagogue exterior and interior:
Images © Nissim Bencoya (used with permission); Dani Haski

66 year old Bencoya was born and raised in Izmir. He emigrated to Israel when he was 19, never expecting he would return. After hearing on the grapevine that the community was interested in conserving Izmir's Jewish sites, he was tapped to lead the project. He returned to his home town in 2010.

Bencoya has an ulterior motive: to fight antisemitism by boldly displaying the religious and secular aspects of his culture.

How will I fight antisemitism? Not with arms of course, but by showing myself with pride... I want people to notice us. ... That's what this project is about... People come and see, and it will bring into the city money, all of Izmir will profit, Jews and non-Jews. The more successful it is, the stronger it will make our community... we'll be here for another 100 years — at least another 100 years.

Those involved in the project expect it to attract far more non-Jewish than Jewish visitors, and to provide a space for cultural dialogue.

2022 IAJGS CONFERENCE BACK ONLINE



The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies has announced that its 2022 conference, scheduled for August in Philadelphia, will once again be delivered online.

In a statement, the committee wrote:

With consideration of concerns about travel and group meetings and the safety of our attendees, the IAJGS Board of Directors has decided that the 2022 IAJGS Conference will be an All Virtual Conference.

Registration details will be announced shortly.

Where We Lived
**42nd IAJGS Conference
on Jewish Genealogy**
iajgs2022.org



**Philadelphia
August 21-25
2022**



JIFF - JEWISH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Jewish International Festival Film

JIFF is back and this year there are films screening in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Canberra and Perth! The program covers the gamut of human experience and as usual there are several films that may pique the interest of family historians.

Blue Box (KUFGA KACHOLA)



In this personal and probing documentary, filmmaker Michal Weits turns the camera back on her family and herself as she grapples with the legacy left by her great-grandfather Joseph Weits, a key instigator of the Jewish National Fund's (JNF) purchase and forestation of land in early 20th century Palestine. The result is a painful and enlightening exploration of a nation's past.

Truus' Children

Before and during WWII, the little-known Dutch war hero Truus Wijsmuller saved the lives of thousands of Jewish children. She was a woman so convinced of her mission that she flew to Vienna to negotiate a deal with Adolf Eichmann to let 10,000 mostly Jewish children leave their birth countries and flee to England and the Netherlands. Featuring interviews with the surviving children, alongside an original recording of Truus Wijsmuller, *Truus' Children* is a moving documentary that pays tribute to the bravery of a single extraordinary woman.



Where But Into the Sea



Poetic and artistic, documentary *Where But Into The Sea* illuminates the under-reported facts about the asylum process for Jewish people in wartime Japan and Japanese occupied Shanghai, China. Many of them made Australia their home. This film paints an intimate portrait of refugees whose stories of displacement ring just as true today. The film delves into the asylum process through Polish

Holocaust survivors Maria Kamm and Marcel Weyland's own words: remembering what was, and embracing what will be – a new world, a new life, and a future free from persecution.

The short film program contains these two gems:

A Holy Duty

Melbourne-based filmmaker Sarah Marcuson takes an intimate look into the lives of the 'ChevraKadisha', or "SacredSociety"; a group of Jewish volunteers who spend years of their life preparing, sanctifying, and burying Jewish bodies.



The Schnoz



When Lydia's grandma gives her a cheque for a nose job for her 21st birthday, it feels like a dream come true. That is, until she finds herself face to face with the ghost of her great grandmother, whose nose she has inherited.

Check out the [JIFF website](#) for screening locations and session times in your area.

Film
Festival



Jewish
International

Perth / 23 Feb — 16 Mar
Gold Coast / 26 Mar — 2 Apr, Canberra / 10 — 20 Mar

Melbourne / 2 Mar — 3 Apr
Sydney / 3 Mar — 4 Apr, Brisbane / 10 — 20 Mar

SLEDGEHAMMER

THE TWO MINNIE DIAMONDS

DAVID WALLACE

Errors can compound in family history research. We often make assumptions based on the scant information we're able to find. For adoptees it can be even more difficult. AJGS member David Wallace, who was born Michael Diamond and adopted at birth, thought he had found his birth mother's family but then a DNA test turned his life upside down.



David Wallace (right) with his sister, Bev Rosenberg

Last year (2021) I received an email that turned my world upside down. I sat staring at the computer screen. I could not believe my eyes. A person named Bev Rosenberg, who had been given an Ancestry DNA test for her birthday, discovered that she and I were a very close match. In fact, it appeared she was my half-sister, that we shared the same mother. To say I was in shock was an understatement.

I had been born in Bristol – at the single women's hospital, nick-named 'The Naughty Hospital' – just after the war. I had always known I was adopted. In 1969 I travelled overland from England to Australia and finally settled down in Sydney.

Many years ago, when my son became ill, the doctor asked me if his condition ran in the family. Of course, I had no idea, so I decided it was time to look for my birth family. This was long before the days of the internet.

I joined the SAG, the Society of Australian Genealogists, and searched through the micro-fiche in their collection, which had births, deaths, and marriages from Somerset House in England. After many months I found my birth certificate, and with it, my mother's name: Minnie Diamond.

To try and find out more I wrote 140 letters to as many Diamonds as I could find in London, many people replied. One evening I received a phone call from a man named Leslie Diamond, who told me his mother's name was Minnie Diamond. She had been born around the right time and lived in the East End of London. It all sounded perfectly plausible, especially when he informed me that another brother had been fostered out in Swansea.

I met up with members of this Diamond family and for many years happily accepted them as my biological family. They, in turn, readily welcomed me into their extended clan. I felt honoured and will always appreciate their generosity. The only problem was... I was wrong! This was not my family.

When Bev contacted me through Ancestry.com last year I discovered I had made a critical error – one too easily made by many researchers. Bev brought to my attention the existence of another Minnie Diamond born in London just a few years after Leslie Diamond's mother. What I had failed to notice in my initial research was that *Diamond* was the married name of Leslie's mother, Minnie, but the maiden name of this second Minnie, Bev's mother. This is where the confusion originated.

I dug out my birth certificate. My mother's registered address correlated with that of Bev's mother. It was our shared grandmother's house in London. So, as evidenced by the genetic connection with Bev and the documentary evidence, I confirmed this second Minnie Diamond was definitely my birth mother.

Bev had emigrated to Melbourne in the early 1960's with her parents and her brother, Howard, who now lived in Surfers Paradise.

Sadly, because of the Covid pandemic, Bev and I could not meet in person immediately, so our first meeting was via Zoom, where we were joined by Howard and Bev's husband, John. It went very well, and we exchanged a lot of information.



Meeting Bev for the first time, at Melbourne Airport, December 2021.



David's birth mother:
Minnie Diamond

A couple more zoom meetings followed with Bev's children, my son Simon and my partner Leah joining the call. My daughter, Shanta, will meet everyone in time. Simon and Howard have now met in person in Noosa and have stayed in contact with each other over the phone.

Finally, on the 21st of December, 2021, I was able to fly down to Melbourne and meet everyone face to face. We greeted each other at the airport and John took the first ever photograph of my sister and I together.

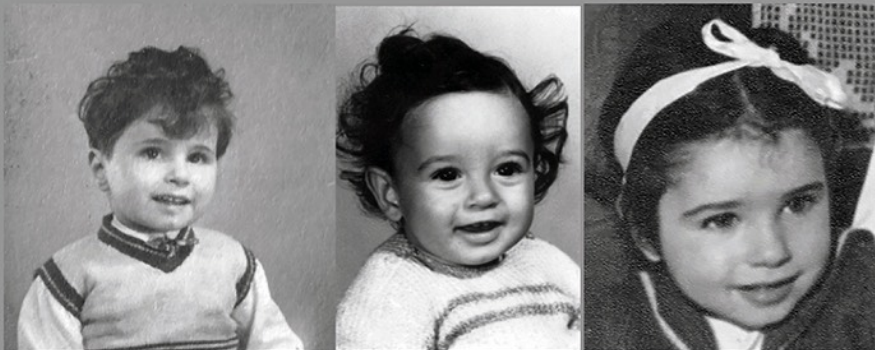
John was active in the Kehilat Nitzan Synagogue in Caulfield so on the following Saturday morning Bev and I were called up to the bimah; each of us gave a short talk about our experience. Many people commented on how alike we looked.

On the Synagogue wall there is a commemorative family tree for congregants. I purchased a silver leaf to commemorate this occasion and placed it on the tree.

Our ancestors had lived in Poland and Czechoslovakia before the war. Looking through the records on the Yad Vashem website I found many who had been murdered by the Germans.

Rieke and Peter Nash helped me with my research for many years. But if Bev had not been given a DNA kit as a gift, she and I never would have found each other and I may never have discovered my accurate ancestry.

Minnie Diamond's children



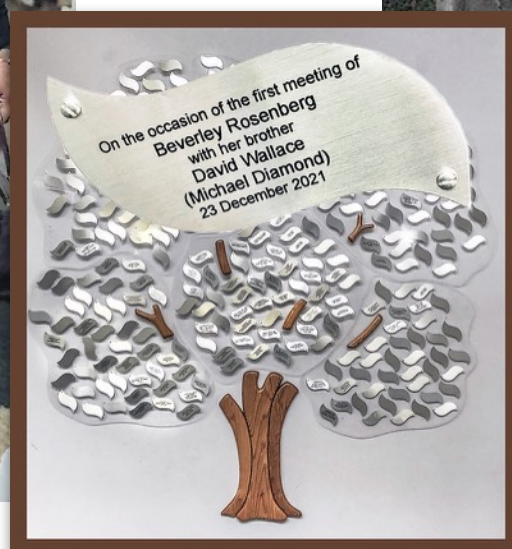
Howard

David

Beverley



Clockwise from top:
Minnie's three
children; Bev & David
at their mother's
grave; the silver leaf
at Kehilat Nitzan
Synagogue; Minnie
with her mother.



VALE GWENDA CHARLSON

AJGS was sorry to hear of the death of long time member, Gwenda Charlson.



Gwenda Joan Koppe was born in Toowong, Queensland in 1938, the first born of Henry Charles Koppe and Lorna Elma Lillian Smith. She attended Brisbane Girls Grammar School, where she fell in love with science. Furthering her education at University of Queensland, Gwenda studied zoology, chemistry, physics, anthropology and sociology, adding postgraduate studies in English “for the hell of it”. Gwenda went on to work for CSIRO and eventually became a senior biochemist at Ipswich Hospital.

Gwenda Koppe met South African born Alec Charlson while both were studying at UNSW, bonding over carbohydrate chemistry. Their courtship was a drawn out affair that traversed the NSW/ Queensland border. Eventually, after visiting the Barrier Reef together, Gwenda told Alec it was time they got married; Alex said he would “give it a go”. They wed in a low key ceremony at Burleigh Heads and had two daughters, Leah and Juliana. Gwenda shifted careers and worked as a teacher librarian in the NSW public school system.



Alec & Gwenda
on their wedding day

Gwenda and Alec joined AJGS in 1998 and have been loyal and active members ever since. They were regular fixtures at Sunday workshops, and enjoyed keeping up with the latest genealogical news in journals.

Past president Robyn Dryen noted:

I will miss Gwenda's wry smile as she picked up on something I was telling a new member, while she copiously took notes of the articles she was reading in the latest *Avotaynu* or *Shemot*.

Jeannette Tsoulos wrote:

Alec and Gwenda were such a devoted couple and our most loyal workshop attenders on a Sunday... It was always a pleasure to see them come in and settle down with the latest journals.

AJGS sends condolences to Alec, Leah and Juliana, and the extended family.



CONFERENCES, CLASSES & COURSES

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE & LIBRARY DAY - 3rd April, 2022.

With the ravages of Covid slowly lifting, AJGS is once more opening up access to our resources library and one-on-one assistance program.

Our next Research Assistance and Library Day is on **Sunday 3rd April** at North Shore Synagogue - Upper Victor Smith Hall.

You can peruse the library holdings via our website to see if there is a book that may help you with your research. We also hold an extensive collection of international journals such as *Avotaynu* and *Shemot*.

Registration is essential.

AJGS/ AJGS (Vic) Joint Event - 24th April, 2022

AJGS Sydney and Melbourne are joining forces to host Jeff Schneider, President of Hobart Synagogue and AJGS member, in a special online event live from Hobart.

As Hobart Synagogue celebrated its 175th Anniversary in the midst of the pandemic, Jeff managed a volunteer run transcription project that resulted in digitised minutes of Hobart Synagogue made available and searchable online.

Sunday 24th April 2022, Via Zoom

The zoom link will be sent in the April Newsletter.

