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## **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

### **The history of the Jewish diaspora in Wales**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the history of Jewish communities and individuals in Wales. It is the first study of its kind to offer a comprehensive history of Welsh Jewry, from the foundation of the first Hebrew congregation in Swansea in 1768 to the current position of the principality's Jewish communities in the early twenty-first century. Unlike previous studies, this thesis examines the history of Welsh Jewry as a geographical whole, and brings the neglected histories of Wales' smaller Jewish communities, particularly in north Wales, to our attention for the first time. This thesis is also unique because it is the first historical study of Welsh Jewry to draw extensively on oral history, a source which permits us to explore the everyday experiences and histories of ordinary Jews in Wales, as well as the official histories of synagogue functionaries and leaders.

The history of Welsh Jewry has long been linked and synonymised with the Tredegar Riots of 1911. This is because Jewish-owned properties were damaged during the week-long riots, which has subsequently led a number of scholars to make wider claims of a long tradition of anti-Semitism in Wales. This argument has since been challenged by others, who have described the incident as 'exceptional' to prop up arguments about widespread philo-Semitism in the principality. Nevertheless, with so much attention paid to Tredegar, this brief event in Welsh history has come to erroneously represent the history of Jewish and non-Jewish relations in Wales more generally. This thesis points out that there is more to discover of this relationship, and by examining how non-Jews in the principality reacted to the presence of Jews in a broader context, it seeks to contribute to the ever growing scholarly literature which challenges perceptions of Wales as an inherently tolerant nation.

Additionally, this thesis brings our attention to the powerful role played by 'place' in shaping the Welsh-Jewish experience and how particular aspects of Jewish life in Wales differed from other parts of the United Kingdom. In so doing, it is hoped that scholars of British-Jewish history, long referred to as 'Anglo-Jewish' history, will begin to appreciate the diverse make up of Jewish life in Britain, and understand that Jewish history in Wales was not simply a mirror-image of the Jewish experience in England.

It is hoped that the following pages will enlighten the reader, for them to realise that Jewish life existed and continues to exist in Britain beyond Golders Green and Stamford Hill, even beyond Manchester and Leeds. It existed and *continues* to exist in early twenty-first-century Wales in such outposts of British Jewry as Bangor, Cardiff, Llandudno, Newport, and rural, isolated villages and towns such as Carmarthen and Welshpool. This thesis serves as a contribution to the field of both British Jewry and Welsh social and religious history, and hopes to inspire future research into this under examined, yet important, field.

## **Acknowledgements**

A number of people have helped me as I have spent over three years exploring the history of the Jewish Diaspora in Wales. In Bangor, I am especially grateful for the support of my supervisors, Professor Nathan Abrams and Dr. Andrew Edwards. It was Nathan, with the support and backing of the late Professor Duncan Tanner, who originally came up with the research project and succeeded to win Bangor University's first ever Arts and Humanities Research Council Collaborative Doctoral Award. Without him this project would never have existed, and I am extremely thankful for his enthusiasm. I am also grateful to Nathan for introducing me to Geoffrey Munn, Managing Director of Wartski's of Llandudno; for involving me in both his Beacon Trust funded exhibition on north Wales Jewry, and a bilingual BBC Radio Documentary to commemorate the centenary of the Tredegar Riots of 1911. As my second supervisor, Andrew has been a constant source of encouragement and advice. I am grateful to both for their constructive feedback, and invaluable comments and suggestions.

The collaborative nature of this project has enabled me to work closely with the Cardiff Reform Synagogue, where I have been involved in their Heritage Lottery funded exhibition project called, 'Hineni'. The exhibition explores the life histories of both members and individuals associated with the Cardiff Reform Synagogue, and opened at the Cardiff Story Museum in August 2012. I am thankful for the support and advice given by my external supervisor, Colin Heyman, and for inviting me to events at the Reform synagogue. I also owe a particular debt of gratitude to Diana Soffa, who introduced me to a number of members of the Reform and Orthodox congregations in Cardiff, and Jewish families and individuals throughout Wales and the United Kingdom. Diana's husband, Stanley, has also been a great help in finding out specific bits of information relating to the history of Cardiff Jewry. I am extremely grateful to both for their dedication and enthusiasm.

Many individuals have shared their expertise, insights and materials with me and have offered encouragement. I especially wish to thank David Morris, Einion Thomas, Grahame Davies, Esther Roberts, Meic Birtwistle and Jasmine Donahaye, as well as the assistance of archival staff. In Wales: the West Glamorgan Archives, the Glamorgan Archives, the Caernarfon Record Office, Gwent Archives, the National Library of Wales, Wrexham Archives, BBC Wales Archive, the Archives at Bangor University and the Sound Archive at St Fagans National History Museum. In England: the London Metropolitan Archives, The Wiener Library, the Imperial War Museum, the Hartley Library at Southampton University, and the British Library. In the United States: the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City.

Periods of travel to archives and conferences in both the United Kingdom and the United States were made possible by research grants from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Royal Historical Society, and Bangor University's Duncan Tanner Prize. I am grateful to all bodies for their vision and generosity in funding academic research.

Although much of this thesis is based on archival research, an invaluable source of information has been the testimony gleaned from a number of Welsh-Jews from around the world through personal interview, telephone, and e-mail correspondence. It would be impossible to name all participants, but I thank them all. I met many wonderful people, and had the chance to hear a number of fascinating stories. Unfortunately, personal, first hand memories disappear when people do, and it was following the deaths of some participants that the importance of oral testimony became clear to me. I was fortunate enough to record the life stories of the late Alan Schwartz MBE, who passed away in early 2012; and the late Paul Sugarman of Rhyl, who died in February 2013; but sadly missed out on others. It was a pleasure to meet the late Bernard Blank of Llandudno in June 2011, but he died before I had the opportunity to interview him.

I would also like to thank BBC Wales and S4C for taking an interest in this topic, and allowing me to share my research with a wider non-academic audience. In June 2011, I worked as a Historical Consultant for a bilingual BBC Radio Documentary commemorating the centenary of the 1911 Tredegar Riots, while in 2012, I appeared as a ‘Talking Head’ for the programme ‘Welsh Towns’, where I discussed the history of the Wartski family of Bangor. I also provided historical advice for two BBC One Wales documentaries: ‘The Kosher Comedian’ and ‘Coming Home’, and appeared as a ‘Talking Head’ for S4C’s ‘Gwreiddiau: Yr Iddewes’.

I have also enjoyed being part of the academic community at Bangor and thankful for the friendship of fellow postgraduate students Jennifer Krase and Marco Guidici, as well as Sociologist, Dr. Sally Baker. In 2010, I worked with Sally on the Beacon Trust funded exhibition on north Wales Jewry, while Marco and I organised a conference in April 2012 at Bangor University entitled, ‘Migration, Ethnicity and Identity: Perspectives from the Celtic Nations’. Between 2012 and 2013 I worked as a first year undergraduate seminar tutor at Bangor, and would like to thank my unit co-ordinators, Dr. Mari Wiliam and Dr. Lowri Rees for their support.

My final thanks are due to my friends for their generous hospitality as I travelled to various archives and libraries throughout the United Kingdom. In particular, I am very grateful to Evelyn Albrow, Daneal Bassiouni, Jeremy Davies, Nicola Dennison, Joanna Dias, Rowena Hillel, Gabrielle Melvin, Rachael White and Tim Wong in London; and Mike Mantin in Swansea. I am also thankful to members of my immediate family—Dad, Catrin, Beca and Nain—for taking an interest in my research, their willingness to listen to my ideas, and for their endless support for the last three years. *Diolch am bopeth* (Thanks for everything).

I dedicate this thesis to the Jewish population of Wales, both past and present, and also to the memory of my late mother, Meryl Elizabeth Parry-Jones (1953-1996), who I know would have been behind me all the way.

### **List of Abbreviations**

AA: Anglesey Archives.

AAC: Academic Assistance Council.

AJR: Association of Jewish Refugees.

BHAC: Butetown History & Arts Centre.

BMA: British Medical Association.

British Society: British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews.

BUA: Bangor University Archives.

BUF: British Union of Fascists.

*CAJEX*: Magazine of the Cardiff Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women.

CNS: Cardiff New Synagogue.

CRO: Caernarfon Record Office.

CUS: Cardiff United Synagogue.

GA: Glamorgan Archives.

HLUS: Hartley Library, University of Southampton.

IWM: Imperial War Museum.

*JC*: *Jewish Chronicle*.

*JYB*: *Jewish Year Book*.

LMA: London Metropolitan Archives.

London Society: London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews.

NA: National Archives.

NLW: National Library of Wales.

RCM: Refugee Children's Movement.

SFNHM: St Fagans National History Museum.

SHC: Swansea Hebrew Congregation.

SPSL: Society for the Protection of Science and Learning.

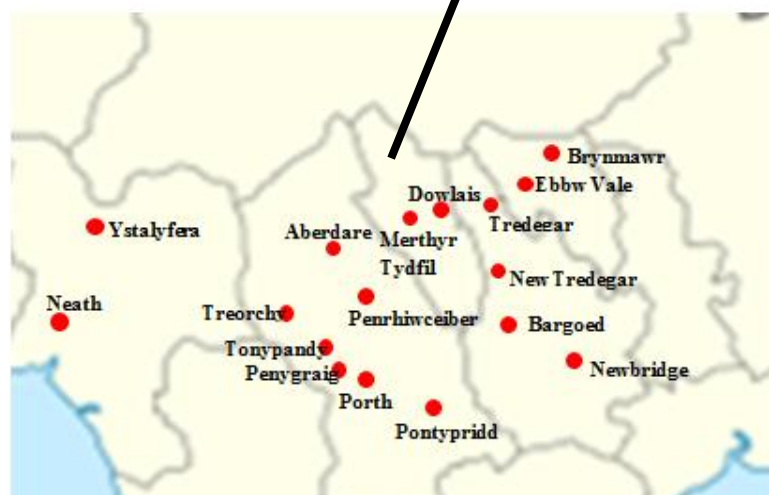
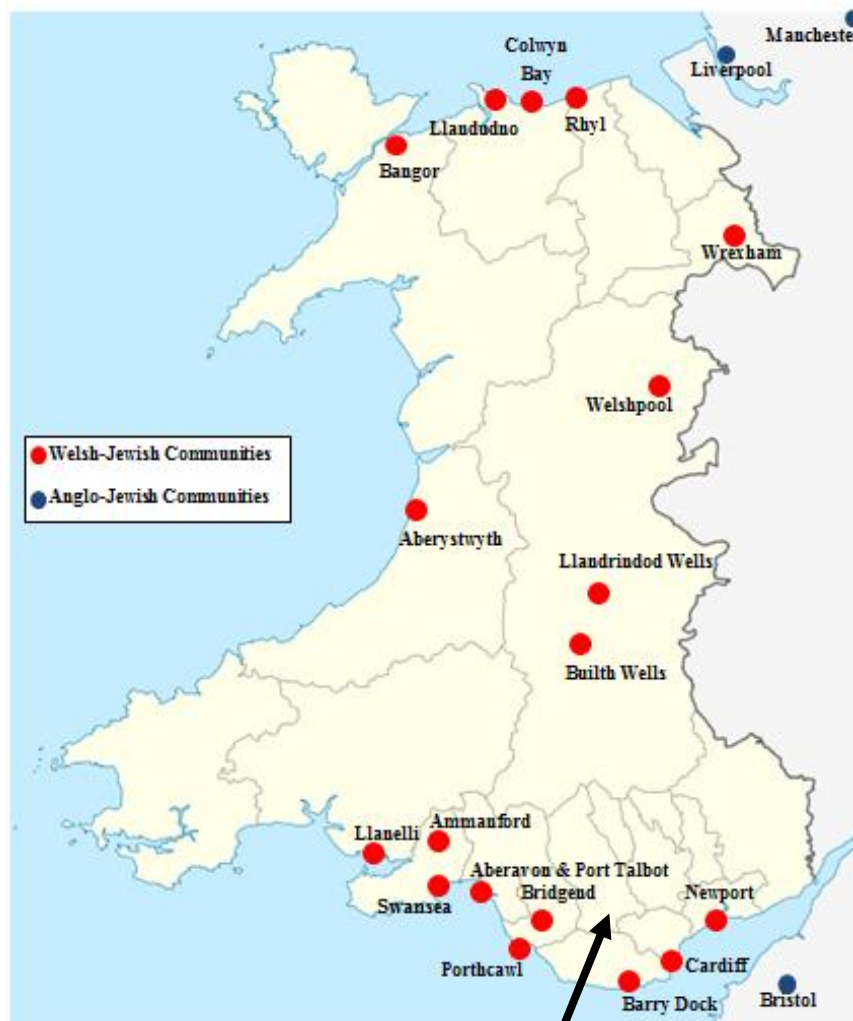
SWCJE: South Wales Council for Jewish Evacuees.

WGA: West Glamorgan Archives.

WL: Wiener Library.

YMCA: Young Men's Christian Association.

**Map of Jewish communities established in Wales between 1768 and 1996.**





## **Introduction**

This thesis is about the history of the Jewish Diaspora in Wales.<sup>1</sup> It differs fundamentally from previous historical works on the topic as it is the first study to examine the social history of Welsh Jewry as a geographical whole. Although a small number of monographs and articles have been published on the subject, none have so far provided a comprehensive history of Welsh Jewry, nor have they attempted to supply an in-depth historical narrative covering the experiences of Welsh-Jewish communities from their foundations in the eighteenth century to their current position in the early twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup> This thesis is intended to fill that gap, and by doing so it hopes to contribute to a better understanding of Welsh and British-Jewish history, as well as Welsh and British history as a whole.

## **‘Welsh-Jewish’ History?**

A question one may ask is why have we waited until now to write the first comprehensive study of the history of Welsh Jewry? This can be explained by the fact that Welsh historians have traditionally associated religious belief and practice in Wales with Nonconformity (and Anglicanism to a lesser extent) and have thus tended to ignore the historical experiences of other religious minority groups in the principality such as the Jews.<sup>3</sup> This neglect should surprise no one, as for most of its history Wales has not been known as a nation of diverse faiths, however multid denominational its Christianity. The religious census of 1851, for instance, revealed that seventy-eight per cent of worshippers in Wales attended a Nonconformist chapel, and the predominance of Nonconformity up until the mid-twentieth century has led a number of scholars to brand Wales as a ‘Nonconformist nation’ or the

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<sup>1</sup> The term *Diaspora*—derived from the Greek root for the verb ‘to scatter’—is defined here as a Jewish community and/or population outside of Israel, but its deeper meaning reflects victimisation and *galut* (exile). For more on this, see, Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Bialystok and its Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1-18; Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, *Africans of the Diaspora: the Evolution of African Consciousness and Leadership in the Americas (from Slavery to the 1920s)* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2000), 223-267; Howard Wettstein, ed., *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1-17.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Grahame Davies, *The Chosen People: Wales and the Jews* (Bridgend: Seren, 2002); Jasmine Donahaye, *Whose People? : Wales, Israel and Palestine* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012); Ursula R.Q. Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales: Historical Studies* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Ebenezer T. Davies, *Religion in the Industrial Revolution in South Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1965); Glanmor Williams, *Religion, Language and Nationality in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979); Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh and their Religion: Historical Essays* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991); Gareth E. Jones, *Modern Wales: A Concise History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Welsh as a ‘Nonconformist people.’<sup>4</sup> But as Paul Chambers and Andrew Thompson once noted, the story of Welsh religious history is ‘not merely about Christian institutions.’<sup>5</sup> Indeed, it is not, but the historical presence of Jews and other religious minorities in Wales has been overlooked by most historians of Welsh religious history. Their small numbers make it difficult to fit them into conventional models and frameworks, and they have therefore been seemingly placed outside the dominant ways of thinking about the Welsh religious landscape.

If most Welsh historians have viewed the Jewish experience in Wales as peripheral or irrelevant to major trends in their field, the same is even more true in regard to historians of British Jewry. Indeed, up until recently, Anglo-Jewish historiography, as it is most commonly referred to, has had little, if any, desire to pay attention to the histories of Jews in British nations outside of England. As the discipline’s name, ‘Anglo-Jewry’, suggests, historians of British Jewry have primarily focused on the experience of Jews living in England. The terms ‘Britain’ and ‘England’ are often used synonymously by British-Jewish historians, as in Sidney Salamon’s work, *The Jews of Britain*, where, despite its title, offers an account of Jews in England.<sup>6</sup> Another good example is John Cannon’s entry on Jews in his *A Dictionary of British History*, which begins with the words, ‘Though there must have been individual Jews in Anglo-Saxon England, there is no evidence of settled communities.’<sup>7</sup> In one instance,

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<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Matthew Cragore, *Culture, Politics, and National Identity in Wales, 1832-1886* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 64; David Melding, *Will Britain Survive Beyond 2020?* (Cardiff: Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2009), 63; Prys Morgan and David Thomas, *Wales: the Shaping of a Nation* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1984), 160; Gwyn A. Williams, *When was Wales?* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1979), 15.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Chambers and Andrew Thompson ‘Coming to Terms with the Past: Religion and Identity in Wales’, *Social Compass*, 52, 3 (2005), 340. Indeed, it is only recently that alternative readings of Welsh social and religious history have highlighted a rather more diverse religious landscape in Wales. See, for instance, in Richard C. Allen and David C. Jones, eds., *The Religious History of Wales: a Survey of Religious Life and Practice from 17th Century to Present Day* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, forthcoming); Paul Chambers, ‘Religious Diversity in Wales’ in Charlotte Williams, Neil Evans and Paul O’Leary, eds., *A Tolerant Nation? Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Wales* (Cardiff: University Wales Press, 2003), 125-138; Grahame Davies, *The Dragon and the Crescent: Nine Centuries of Welsh Contact with Islam* (Bridgend: Seren, 2011); Robert Pope, ed., *Religion and National Identity: Wales and Scotland c. 1700-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Sidney Salamon, *The Jews of Britain* (London: Jarrolds, 1938). Despite claiming to be ‘the first book-length study of contemporary British Jewry’, Keith Kahn-Harris’ and Ben Gidley’s *Turbulent Times: The British Jewish Community Today*, focuses primarily on Jewish institutions and their leaders in London. See Keith Kahn-Harris and Ben Gidley *Turbulent Times: The British Jewish Community Today* (London: Continuum, 2010), blurb.

<sup>7</sup> John Cannon, *A Dictionary of British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 362; Nathan Abrams also brings our attention to Miri J. Freud-Kandel’s book, *Orthodox Judaism in Britain Since 1913: an Ideology Forsaken* (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006) where despite the title, begins with the words,

the terms ‘Wales’ and ‘England’ have been used synonymously, as in Landman and Cohen’s, *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, where an entry on ‘Wales’ informs readers to see the section on ‘England’, a twenty paged article which fails to include anything on the history of Welsh Jewry.<sup>8</sup> It is also of concern that British Jews themselves continue to use both ‘British’ and ‘English’ simultaneously. To take one example: a brief section of the *Jewish Year Book* (henceforth *JYB*) entitled, ‘Historical Note on British Jewry’, only discusses the history of English Jewry. This becomes apparent from the section’s first sentence which begins with, ‘There were probably individual Jews in England in Roman and (though less likely) in Anglo-Saxon times, but the historical records of any organised settlement here start after the Norman Conquest of 1066.’<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, given the high degree of geographical concentration of British Jews in England it is unsurprising that historians have primarily published monographs, articles and studies on its larger Jewish centres such as London, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and Liverpool.<sup>10</sup> Originally, British-Jewish historiography primarily focused on the experiences of London Jewry, the largest Jewish centre in Britain.<sup>11</sup> It was not until 1950 when Cecil Roth published,

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‘The Jewish community in England...’. See, Nathan Abrams, *Caledonian Jews: a Study of Seven Small Communities in Scotland* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2009), xi.

<sup>8</sup> Isaac Landman and Simon Cohen, eds., *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (New Jersey: The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, inc., 1948). An entry on Wales is included in the tenth volume p. 178, but tells the reader to see the entry on England in the fourth volume, pp. 78-98.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the *Jewish Year Book*, 2000 (henceforth, *JYB*).

<sup>10</sup> A by no means comprehensive list includes Geoffrey Alderman, *London Jewry and London Politics 1889-1986* (Routledge: London, 1989); Gerry Black, *Living up West: Jewish Life in London’s West End* (London: London Museum of Jewish Life, 1994); Murray Freedman, *Leeds Jewry: The First Hundred Years* (York: Jewish Historical Society of England, Leeds Branch, 1992); Nikos Kokosalakis, *Ethnic Identity and Religion: Tradition and Change in Liverpool Jewry* (Washington: University of America Press, 1982); Rosalyn Livshin, ‘Acculturation of the Children of Immigrant Jews in Manchester, 1890–1930’, in Cesarani, *The Making of Modern*, 79-96; Aubrey Newman, *Birmingham Jewry, Vol.1, 1749-1914* (Leicester: University of Leicester Press, 1980); Ernest Schlesinger, *Creating Community and Accumulating Social Capital : Jews Associating with other Jews in Manchester* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2003); Stanley Waterman, *The Jews of Leeds in 2001: Portrait of a Community* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2003). An exception, of course, is the Scottish city of Glasgow, ‘the Second City of the British Empire’, which was home to a large number of Jews in the twentieth century— approximately 5,000 Jews in 1901 and 10,000 by 1939. For examples of works on Glasgow Jewry, see Ben Braber, *Jews in Glasgow, 1870-1939: Immigration and Integration* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007); Kenneth E. Collins, *Glasgow Jewry: a Guide to the History and Community of the Jews of Glasgow* (Glasgow: Scottish Jewish Archives Committee, 1993); Kenneth E. Collins, *Second City Jewry: The Jews of Glasgow in the Age of Expansion 1790-1919* (Glasgow: Scottish Jewish Archives, 1990); Harvey L. Kaplan, *The Gorbals Jewish Community in 1901* (Glasgow: Scottish Jewish Archives, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Albert M. Hyamson, *A History of the Jews in England* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1908); James Parkes, *Jews in Britain: Origin and Growth of Anglo-Jewry* (London: Council of Christians and Jews, 1943); Sidney Salomon, *The Deputies: a Short Historical Survey* (London, 1937); Wilfred S. Samuel, *Some Notes on 17th Century London Jews* (London: Purnell, 1937); Cecil Roth, *History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941); Cecil Roth, *The Great Synagogue, London, 1690-1940* (London: Edward Goldston, 1950).

*The Rise of Provincial Jewry*, that the subject of Jewish settlement outside London was first tackled.<sup>12</sup> Speaking to members of the Jewish Historical Society of England in 1962, Vivian Lipman called for further analysis of communities in the British provinces, and in 1975 a conference was organised at University College London ‘to discuss the pattern of provincial Jewish life.’<sup>13</sup> A year later Bill Williams published his *The Making of Manchester Jewry, 1740-1875*, the first monograph devoted entirely to the history of a single provincial British Jewish community.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently there have been published works of other ‘provincial’ Jewish communities in the United Kingdom, and the approach continues to grow.<sup>15</sup>

In the introduction to his book, *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, David Cesarani argues that Anglo-Jewish history and culture, until relatively recently, has been one of the most neglected areas in the study of modern Jewish life: ‘Sandwiched between the rich heritage of Eastern and Central European Jewry before World War II and the massive Jewish presence in North America, Anglo-Jewry has appeared numerically insignificant and overshadowed...’<sup>16</sup> The same can be said for ‘British-Jewish’ history however, which has been neglected by historians in favour of the ‘Anglo-Jewish’ experience. Undoubtedly this will continue to be the case until more studies such as this are written, and when ‘British-Jewish’ rather than ‘Anglo-Jewish’ becomes the preferred term used by historians.<sup>17</sup> To help make this a reality, the main body of this thesis will use the terms ‘British-Jewish’ and

<sup>12</sup> Cecil Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry: the Early History of the Jewish Community in the English Countryside, 1740-1840* (Oxford: Jewish Monthly, 1950).

<sup>13</sup> Aubrey Newman, ‘The Historiography of Anglo-Jewry, 1892-1992’, *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 33 (1995), 223; Aubrey Newman, *Provincial Jewry in Victorian Britain: papers for a conference at University College London convened by the Jewish Historical Society of England* (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1975).

<sup>14</sup> Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry 1740-1875* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> A by no means comprehensive list includes Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*; Tony Kushner, *Anglo-Jewry since 1066: place, locality and memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Rosalyn D. Livshin, *The History of the Harrogate Jewish Community* (Leeds: Leeds University Press, 1995); Lewis Olsover, *The Jewish Communities of North-East England 1755-1980* (Gateshead: Ashley Mark Publishing, 1980); Judith Samuel, *Jews in Bristol: The History of the Jewish Community in Bristol from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Bristol: Redcliffe, 1997); Bernard Susser, *The Jews of South-west England: the Rise and Decline of their Medieval and Modern Communities* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> David Cesarani, ed., *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Although Tony Kushner and Hannah Ewence’s recently edited volume *Whatever Happened to British Jewish Studies* refers to the historical examination of Jews in Great Britain as ‘British Jewish Studies’, the monograph continues to slip into the usage of ‘Anglo-Jewish’ as the all-encompassing term. Unsurprisingly, the volume focuses on the English Jewish experience, with no references made to either the historiography or Jewish communities of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Of course, the one exception is Karen Robson’s chapter, ‘The Anglo-Jewish Community and Its Archives’ (pp.347-348), which includes a brief reference to the Scottish Jewish archives centre in Glasgow, and the efforts made by individuals and institutions in Wales ‘to locate surviving material across the country’. See, Tony Kushner and Hannah Ewence, eds., *Whatever Happened to British Jewish Studies?* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2012).

‘Welsh-Jewish’, but it does not intend to use both terms synonymously. Rather, it sees ‘Welsh Jewry’ as making up a quarter, although not in quantitative terms, of ‘British Jewry’- the others being ‘Scottish, Anglo and Irish Jewry.’<sup>18</sup>

Regrettably, a number of historians are reluctant to change the terminology. Todd Endelman, for instance, is resistant to discard the term ‘Anglo-Jewish’ because:

it is conventional to use the term ‘Anglo-Jewish’ to refer to Jews in Britain as a whole, including Jews in Scotland and Wales, even though they were not, in a strict sense, ‘English’ Jews. This usage is too well established to be dropped. Moreover, since the number of Jews who lived in Wales and Scotland was never large, folding them into ‘Anglo-Jewry’ does not distort the overall picture.<sup>19</sup>

However, while folding Scottish and Welsh Jewry into ‘Anglo-Jewry’ may not distort the overall picture of ‘Anglo-Jewry’ it certainly distorts the picture of ‘Scottish-Jewry’ and ‘Welsh Jewry.’ As Endelman clearly points out Scottish and Welsh Jews are not ‘English’ Jews. The importance of context and setting of Jewish communities in Britain is expressed by Kenneth Collins in the introduction to his edited pamphlet *Scotland’s Jews: a Guide to the History and Community of the Jews in Scotland*. A section on Scottish-Jewish identity, for instance, discusses the similarities between the Jews and the Scottish people, and the adoption of cultural traditions by Scottish-Jewry such as the celebration of Burns’ Night by those who have migrated to Israel.<sup>20</sup> This Scottish dimension to British-Jewish history would simply have been lost if historians took Endelman’s advice. In a similar vein to Collins, Harold Pollins notes the importance of looking at the history of British Jews in their national context: ‘I am aware that the Jewish Lads’ Brigade in Glasgow has a kilted, pipe band.’<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, despite this awareness, and ‘references in [his] book to virtually the whole of the British isles’, Pollins’ study is, and continues, to be called *Economic History of the Jews in England*.<sup>22</sup> An explanation is offered by Pollins in his introduction: ‘Where precision is necessary I have used the appropriate term: United Kingdom, Great Britain, England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland etc. But to avoid such clumsy terms as “Jews of the British isles” I

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<sup>18</sup> This approach has been adopted by a number of British historians more generally, including Brian Harrison. See, Brian Harrison, *Finding a Role?: The United Kingdom 1970-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), xv-xvi.

<sup>19</sup> Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 12.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth E. Collins, *Scotland’s Jews: a Guide to the History and Community of the Jews in Scotland* (Glasgow: Scottish Jewish Archives, 1999), 23.

<sup>21</sup> Harold Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews in England* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982), 10.

<sup>22</sup> Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews*, 9.

have sometimes loosely referred to “Anglo-Jewry.”<sup>23</sup> But he is at least ‘conscious that this is a dangerous step.’<sup>24</sup> As Abrams reminds us, William D. Rubinstein uses the term ‘Anglo’, but in its linguistic sense, as the title of his work demonstrates: *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain*. The term is acceptable in this instance, for it is mostly accurate, (there are examples of Welsh-speaking Jews), but is an approach not widely shared by historians.<sup>25</sup>

More recently a number of historians who write on British Jewry have been influenced by the school of ‘New British History’ which offers an account of Jewish history from all nations of the United Kingdom. The school of ‘New British History’ emerged in response to J. G. A. Pocock’s seminal article ‘British History: a Plea for a New Subject’ (1974).<sup>26</sup> Written against the backdrop of British decolonisation, Pocock urged historians of the British Isles to move away from the whiggish histories of Britain concerned with the celebration of the English nation state, and reinvest ‘it with meaning.’<sup>27</sup> Advocating a pluralist approach to the study of the British Isles, Pocock’s ‘New British History’ was something substantially different from ‘English history.’ It called for an equal treatment of the histories of all four nations of the United Kingdom without jeopardising their separate histories and identities.<sup>28</sup>

A number of historians adopted this approach in the late 1980s and early 1990s such as Hugh Kearney and David Cannadine, and there has been a growing interest in historical difference within the nations of the United Kingdom since the establishment of the Welsh National Assembly and other devolved structures in both Northern Ireland and Scotland in the last years of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> A good example of this approach in Modern British-

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<sup>23</sup> Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 9; William D. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews in the English-speaking World: Great Britain* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> John G. A. Pocock, ‘British History: a Plea for a New Subject’, *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (1975), 601-28.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 624.

<sup>28</sup> Pocock’s argument for a ‘new British history’ covered not only the four nations of the United Kingdom, but also the commonwealth.

<sup>29</sup> For examples of the historiography employing a ‘British’ perspective, see David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (London: Penguin, 2000); Glenn Burgess, ed., *The New British History: Founding a Modern State 1603-1715* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1999); Hugh F. Kearney, *The British Isles: a History of Four Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, eds., *Uniting the Kingdom?: the Making of British History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995); Arthur Marwick, *A History of the Modern British Isles, 1914-1999: Circumstances, Events, and Outcomes* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000); Malcolm Pearce and

Jewish historiography is John Campbell's chapter on 'The Jewish Community in Britain' in Sheridan Gilley and William Sheils' *History of Religion in Britain*.<sup>30</sup> Split into three sub-sections, an overview of Jewish history in England, Scotland and Wales is provided. Although a sub-section on Jews in Northern Ireland is missing and would have been useful, the approach still demonstrates an attempt to move away from the 'Anglocentricity' of Modern British-Jewish historiography.<sup>31</sup> Others have followed in Campbell's footsteps such as Raphael Langham, whose *Jews in Britain: a Chronology*, refers to 'events in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland (to 1922) and Northern Ireland (from 1922)'.<sup>32</sup> But, unlike Campbell's work, an equal weighting is not given to the history of Jews from British nations outside of England. English Jewry dominates, and has led some to mistakenly refer to the book as *Jews in England* rather than *Jews in Britain*.<sup>33</sup> Langham, however, is not the only historian guilty of attempting to write a comprehensive history of British Jewry which focuses predominantly on the English experience. Other works include Pamela Fletcher-Jones' *The Jews of Britain: a Thousand Years of History* and Geoffrey Alderman's *Modern British Jewry*.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, England and its major Jewish centres will continue to be the centre of historical enquiry, for the historiographical attitude is summed up by Endelman, who maintains: 'What happened elsewhere, however piquant or arresting in human terms, reveals little about the main currents of Anglo-Jewish history.'<sup>35</sup>

Fortunately, not everyone shares Endelman's viewpoint, and a number have published articles, books and studies addressing the histories of Jewish communities in British nations outside of England. The field of Scottish-Jewish history is growing with most studies focusing on the histories of its two largest Jewish centres, Glasgow and Edinburgh.<sup>36</sup> Both

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Geoffrey Stewart, eds., *British Political History, 1867-2001: Democracy and Decline* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> John Campbell, 'Jewish Community in Britain', in Sheridan Gilley and William J. Sheils, eds., *History of Religion in Britain : Practice and Belief from Pre-Roman Times to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 62-85.

<sup>31</sup> The absence of Northern Ireland Jewry in Campbell's chapter may be down to the editors themselves, who note in the introduction to their volume that 'This book is the first one volume history of religious belief and practice in England, Wales and Scotland'. See, Gilley and Sheils, *History of Religion in Britain*, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Raphael Langham, *The Jews in Britain: a Chronology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3.

<sup>33</sup> See David M.R. Shulman and David Gompertz's bibliography on the website of the JCR-UK: [http://www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/Community/local\\_research.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/Community/local_research.htm) (last accessed 16/07/2013).

<sup>34</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Although Alderman has written a number of articles on Welsh-Jewry, the focus of this monograph is on the English-Jewish experience; Pamela Fletcher Jones, *The Jews of Britain: a Thousand Years of History* (Gloucestershire: Windrush, 1990).

<sup>35</sup> Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, 130.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Kenneth E. Collins, *Go and Learn: The International Story of Jews and Medicine in Scotland 1739-1945* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988); Collins, *Scotland's Jews*; Kenneth E.

Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have also generated a body of research in the social history of its Jews.<sup>37</sup> In Wales, historians, writers and the media have all begun to pay sustained attention to the Jewish experience. Many fictional works and poems on Jews in Wales have been published by both Welsh-Jewish and non-Jewish Welsh authors. Welsh-Jewish novelist, Lily Tobias (1887-1984), for instance, wrote widely and many of her novels such as *The Nationalists and Other Goluth Studies* (1921) feature Welsh-Jewish protagonists, while her nephew, the poet, Dannie Abse, has published an array of works on his Jewish childhood in 1920s and 1930s Cardiff, including his autobiographical fictional accounts, *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve* and *There Was a Young Man from Cardiff*.<sup>38</sup> Autobiographical works include Ellen Davis' *Kerry's Children*, which offers an account of the author's experiences as a Kindertransport child growing up in wartime Swansea, and Channah Hirsch's, *My Llanelli: The Gateshead of Wales*, a memoir of the author's childhood in early twentieth-century Llanelli.<sup>39</sup> The history of Welsh Jewry has also grabbed the attention of the Welsh media, and a number of radio and television documentaries have been produced on the

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Collins, ed., *Aspects of Scottish Jewry* (Glasgow: Glasgow Jewish Representative Counsel, 1987); Collins, *Second City Jewry*; Kaplan, *The Gorbals*; Abel Phillips, *A History of the Origins of the First Jewish Community in Scotland - Edinburgh, 1816* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979). To date, the only monograph which examines the history of Scotland's Jewish communities beyond Glasgow and Edinburgh is Abrams' *Caledonian Jews*.

<sup>37</sup>See, for instance, Cormac Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland in the Age of Joyce: Socioeconomic History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006); Cormac Ó Gráda, *Dublin Jewish Demography a Century Ago* (Dublin: University College Dublin, Department of Economics, 2006); Nick Harris, *Dublin's Little Jerusalem* (Dublin: A & A Farman, 2002); Louis Hyman, *The Jews of Ireland from Earliest Times to the Year 1910* (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1972); Dermot Keogh, *The Jews of Twentieth-century Ireland. Refugees, Anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998); Pamela McIlveen and William Roulston, 'Researching Belfast Jewish Families c.1850 -c.1930', *FAMILIA: Ulster Genealogical Review*, 20 (2004), 1-15; Gerry Moore, 'Socio-Economic Aspects of Anti-Semitism in Ireland, 1889-1905', *The Economic and Social Review*, 12, 3 (1981), 187-201; David D. Warm, 'The Jews of Northern Ireland' in Paul Hainsworth, ed., *Divided Society: Ethnic Minorities and Racism in Northern Ireland* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 222-239.

<sup>38</sup>Lily Tobias, *The Nationalists and Other Goluth Studies* (London: C. W. Daniel Ltd., 1921). Other works by Lily Tobias include *Eunice Fleet* (Aberystwyth: Honno, 2004), first published in 1933; *My Mother's House: a Novel* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1931); and *The Samaritan: an Anglo-Palestinian Novel* (Kent: R. Hale Publishers, 1939). Dannie Abse, *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2006), first published in 1954; Dannie Abse, *There Was a Young Man from Cardiff* (Bridgend: Seren, 2001), first published in 1991. Other works of Abse include *Welsh Retrospective* (Bridgend: Seren, 2008), and *The Strange Case of Dr. Simmonds and Dr. Glas* (London: Robson, 2005). There are other examples of Jewish authors from and/or living in Wales such as Bernice Rubens and Jasmine Donahaye. See, for instance, Bernice Rubens, *Brothers: a Novel* (London: Abacus, 1983), and Jasmine Donahaye, *Misappropriations* (Ceredigion: Parthian, 2007). A good collection and discussion of the works of both Welsh-Jewish and Welsh authors and poets can be found in Grahame Davies' literary anthology, *The Chosen People*, and Jasmine Donahaye's doctoral thesis, 'Jewish Writing in Wales' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Swansea, 2004).

<sup>39</sup>Ellen Davis, *Kerry's Children: a Jewish childhood in Nazi Germany and growing up in South Wales* (Bridgend: Seren, 2004); Channah Hirsch, *My Llanelli: The Gateshead of Wales* (London: Privately Published, 2009). Other autobiographical works include Dannie Abse, *Goodbye, Twentieth Century: an Autobiography* (London: Pimlico, 2001); Simon Joseph, *My Formative Years: a Jewish Boy's Childhood in South Wales in the Early 1900s* (London: Multifarious Publications, 1993); Leonard Minkes, 'A Jewish boyhood in Cardiff', *Planet: The Welsh Internationalist*, 164 (April / May 2004), 23-26; and Cynthia Kahn, *Wild Water Lilies: The Wartime Diary of a Young Girl* (Surrey: Beack Publications, 2005).



subject. In March 1992, for instance, a radio documentary entitled, ‘The Last Jew in Merthyr’, was broadcast on BBC Radio Wales and looked at the rise and decline of the Jewish community in Merthyr Tydfil, while in December 2010, a documentary on S4C—‘Y Daith: Ein Dinas Sanctaidd’ (‘The Journey: Our Holy City’)—followed both a Welsh Jew and a Welsh Muslim’s journey to Jerusalem.<sup>40</sup>

A number of amateur historians have written brief articles on Welsh Jewry. For example, several issues of *CAJEX* (Magazine of the Cardiff Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women) include short essays on the history of Cardiff Jewry and other communities of south Wales, while two issues of *Bimah* (*CAJEX*’s successor) from 2000, feature a two-part article entitled, ‘Jews in Wales’, by David and Hal Weitzman.<sup>41</sup> More recently, in October 2009, the *Jewish Renaissance* magazine dedicated an entire issue to the subject of Welsh Jewry, and featured extracts from articles written by amateur historians and journalists from publications such as *CAJEX* and the *Jewish Chronicle* (henceforth *JC*).<sup>42</sup>

Among academic historians, the first to write on the histories of Jewish communities in Wales was Geoffrey Alderman with three essays on Welsh Jewry published in the 1970s. In a paper published in 1975 Alderman explores the growth of Welsh Jewry in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and sees the increase as a direct consequence of the expanding

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<sup>40</sup> Other examples include, ‘People of the Book’, BBC Wales, 1997, a television documentary which explores the history of Jewish communities in south Wales; ‘Y Byd ar Bedwar’, S4C, 2001, which follows Welsh-born Jew Olivia Simove on her visit to Israel; ‘O Flaen dy Lygaid: I Wlad yr Addewid’, S4C, 2007, a television documentary which explores the story of three Welsh-speaking Jewish siblings from Cardiff who emigrated to Israel; and ‘The Tredegar Riots/Terfysg Tredegar’, BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Cymru, August 2011, a bilingual radio documentary which commemorates the centenary of the alleged anti-Jewish riots of Tredegar in 1911. Copies of all documentary programmes can be obtained from the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, and BBC Wales Archive, Llandaf, Cardiff.

<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, Maurice Dennis, ‘The Cardiff Jewish Community: Part I’, *CAJEX*, 1, 3 (1951), 28-32; Maurice Dennis, ‘The Cardiff Jewish Community: Part II’, *CAJEX*, 1, 4 (1951), 36-40; Maurice Dennis, ‘The Cardiff Jewish Community: Part III’, *CAJEX*, 2, 2 (1952), 27-31; Maurice Dennis, ‘The Cardiff Jewish Community: Part XVI’, *CAJEX*, 22, 1 (1972), 31-36; Hermann H. Roskin, ‘The Jewish Communities of South Wales II-The Brynmawr Community’, *CAJEX*, 8, 3 (1958), 61-64; Maurice Dennis, ‘1859-Newport Hebrew Congregation-1959: Centenary Celebrations’, *CAJEX*, 9, 2(1959), 26-33; H. E. Samuel, ‘A Short History of the Aberdare Jewish Community’, *CAJEX*, 9, 2 (1959) 88-89; Isaac Factor, ‘The Jewish Community of South Wales: Port Talbot’, *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), pp.65-67; A. Hyams ‘Newport Reminiscences’, *CAJEX*, 8, 3 (1958), 31-34; David Weitzman and Hal. Weitzman, ‘Jews in Wales Part I and II’, *Bimah*, 24 and 25 (September and December 2000), 6-12. Weitzman and Weitzman’s article also featured in 2000 edition of the *JYB*. See *JYB* (2000).

<sup>42</sup> *Jewish Renaissance: Quarterly Magazine of Jewish Culture*, 9, 1 (October 2009). *Shemot*, the journal of the Jewish genealogical society of Great Britain, published a special edition on the history of Welsh Jews in August 2013. It features brief articles written by both academic and amateur historians. See *Shemot: The Journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain*, 21, 2 (August 2013).

Welsh coal, iron and tinplate industries.<sup>43</sup> It was the development of these industries and the rapid urbanisation they produced, which provided the commercial niches which immigrants were able to exploit, and Jewish pedlars, traders, shopkeepers and, eventually, landlords established themselves in the coal-mining communities of south Wales. As well as examining the growth of Welsh Jewry up to the opening of the First World War, he also wrote a detailed piece on the troubled relationship between Jews and non-Jews in south Wales at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>44</sup> Specifically, it focuses on the history of Jews as scapegoats for economic ills and industrial unrest in the south Wales valleys, which eventually climaxed in what he describes as the ‘anti-Jewish riots’ of Tredegar in 1911. Although both articles are essential reading for those researching Welsh-Jewish history, it is Alderman’s third article, ‘The Anti-Jewish riots of August 1911 in South Wales’, which has attracted most attention from scholars.<sup>45</sup>

In his unpublished thesis on the history of Welsh Jewry from the 1750s to the 1990s, David Morris labelled Alderman as ‘the first historian to tackle the subject of the riots’.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, it appears that the first published work on the event can be traced to an article written by Abraham Weiner in the *Menorah Journal* in 1951.<sup>47</sup> Written twenty-one years prior to Alderman’s study, Weiner narrates the history of the riots and suggests that they were partly caused by the backwash of social unrest in the country at the time, and not by any deep-seated or widespread anti-Semitism, as Alderman later argues. Despite the existence of this article, Morris is right to stress the link between Alderman and the riots because it is his interpretation of the events which sparked an academic debate on the topic. Essentially, Alderman argues that the riots of August 1911 were a premeditated attack on the Jewish community of the Monmouthshire valleys, and the result of xenophobic feeling that was circulating the mining towns at the time. In his view, the riots were triggered by the industrial crisis which gripped the coalfield in 1911, a factor which increased working class insecurity, and brought the housing shortage into stark relief. Alderman also drew attention to the

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<sup>43</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, ‘Into the Vortex: South Wales Jewry before 1914’ in Aubrey Newman, *Provincial Jewry in Victorian Britain*, 45.

<sup>44</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat? The Settlement and Reception of Jews in South Wales before 1914’ *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, XXVI (1974-8), 62-70.

<sup>45</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, ‘The Anti-Jewish Riots of August 1911 in South Wales’, *Welsh History Review*, 6 (1972), 190-200.

<sup>46</sup> David Morris, ‘The History of the Welsh Jewish Communities: 1750-Present’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1999), 5.

<sup>47</sup> Abraham Wiener, ‘An Episode in South Wales: How Dr. Moses Hyamson Lost the British Chief Rabbinate’, *The Menorah Journal* (Autumn, 1951), 134-150.

alleged anti-Semitic nature of Welsh Nonconformity and the long tradition of ethnic conflict which existed in the region such as the riots against the Irish in Tredegar in 1882.<sup>48</sup>

A decade later, Colin Holmes published an article on the Tredegar riots in the *Welsh History Review*, using previously unpublished Home Office files and Magistrate records to shed new light on the disturbances.<sup>49</sup> His analysis mostly confirms Alderman's earlier findings that the riots were rooted in the discontent generated by the rent increases put through by Jews in the area. In his interpretation of the events, Anthony Glaser sees the riots as a further manifestation of the labour unrest or 'lawlessness' which swept Wales and the United Kingdom in 1911. In a similar vein to Alderman and Holmes, Glaser maintains that the riots were principally anti-Jewish, premeditated, and the latest outburst in a long tradition of ethnic violence in south Wales. Although he concludes that the riots were an 'enigma', unlike his predecessors, Glaser puts far greater emphasis on what he believes was the strong strain of anti-Semitism running through both Welsh Nonconformity and the British Labour Movement during the early twentieth century.<sup>50</sup>

A number of historians have long disputed the anti-Semitic nature of the riots pushed forward by Alderman, Colins and Glaser. In his classic work *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858*, the late Vivian Lipman argues that the reasons behind the riots are 'complex', but 'probably caused by the Cambrian Strike and the consequent unemployment' rather than anti-Semitism.<sup>51</sup> But, the greatest contestation came from William D. Rubinstein in his re-examination of Alderman's findings and conclusions in the 1972 article, 'The Anti-Jewish riots of August 1911.'<sup>52</sup> In his opinion the riots were not premeditated or anti-Jewish, but simply the consequence of social and economic unrest. He suggests that the anti-Semitic element to the attacks was over exaggerated by both the leaders of Anglo-Jewry in London and by the press to create a 'press sensation.' The non-Jewish Welsh, in his eyes, were

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<sup>48</sup> Alderman, 'The Anti-Jewish Riots of August 1911', 198-199.

<sup>49</sup> Colin Holmes, 'The Tredegar Riots of 1911: Anti-Jewish Disturbances in South Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 11 (1982), pp.214-25.

<sup>50</sup> Anthony Glaser, 'The Tredegar Riots of August 1911', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 151-176.

<sup>51</sup> Vivian D. Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990), 87

<sup>52</sup> William D. Rubinstein, 'The anti-Jewish riots of 1911 in south Wales: a re-examination', *Welsh History Review*, 18 (1997), 667-99.

incapable of such anti-Semitism since ‘*philo-Semitism* (admiration and support for Jews by gentiles) was virtually ubiquitous in Edwardian Wales.’<sup>53</sup>

Alderman responded to the arguments put forward by Rubinstein. He questioned Rubinstein’s findings by stressing the validity of the evidence he had included in his original article from 1972. Alderman continued to stress that the riots were pre-planned, and accused Rubinstein of carefully selecting and manipulating evidence to support his argument that Welsh society, and British society more generally, was characterised by philo-Semitism.<sup>54</sup> Written in 2001, Alderman’s response to Rubinstein is the last published article on the Tredegar Riots to this day, and as yet, no consensus has emerged as to its origins.

As well as sparking an academic debate, the Tredegar riots of 1911 have become synonymous with the history of Welsh Jewry more generally, and as the late Leo Abse once noted, is ‘a well-worn tale.’<sup>55</sup> Indeed, most, if not all, Welsh history books that refer to Jews are drawn to the riots. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, it stands as the only major attack involving Jews in Britain between their readmission in the mid-seventeenth century and the rise of fascism in the 1930s. Secondly, the cause and factors leading up to the attacks, whether driven by economic circumstances or anti-Semitism, have, as has been discussed, continuously been disputed by historians. Dai Smith’s *Wales: a Question for History*, for example, devotes a sentence on Jews which mentions that ‘in 1911 in Tredegar, a fourteen year old Aneurin Bevan witnessed the shop-smashing that had, in part, an anti-Jewish element attached to its violence’, while Morgan’s *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* limits the Welsh-Jewish experience to ‘Jewish landlords and shopkeepers were a popular target for working-class anger in August 1911.’<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Jenkins’ *A Concise History of Wales* notes that ‘In 1911 Jewish shopkeepers became the objects of visceral hatred because they were thought to have rack rented tenants and overpriced goods’, while the only reference made to Jews in David Ross’ *Wales: History of a Nation* can be found on page 221: ‘Riots

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<sup>53</sup> Rubinstein, ‘The anti-Jewish riots of 1911’, 669. Rubinstein’s argument was part of a broader argument that he and his wife have constructed of the English-speaking world being characterised as ‘philo-Semitic’. See William D. Rubinstein and Hilary L. Rubinstein, *Philosemitism: Admiration and Support in the English-speaking World for Jews, 1840-1939* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, ‘The anti-Jewish riots of August 1911 in south Wales: a response’, *Welsh History Review*, 20 (2001), 564–71.

<sup>55</sup> Leo Abse, ‘A Tale of Collaboration not Conflict with the “People of the Book”’, *The New Welsh Review* (autumn 1993), 19.

<sup>56</sup> Dai Smith, *Wales: a Question for History* (Bridgend: Seren, 1999), 98; Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 148.

broke out in Ebbw Vale and Tredegar, their targets mainly Jewish shopkeepers and property owners.<sup>57</sup>

The riots have also grabbed the attention of Anglo-Jewish film director, Paul Morrison. In 1999, for instance, Morrison released his Oscar nominated film, *Solomon & Gaenor*, a Romeo and Juliet-esque love story between a Jewish pedlar and a nonconformist Welsh woman, which climaxes in the Tredegar Riots and Solomon's death.<sup>58</sup> In fact, death and decline have become familiar themes in the historical writings of the Jews in Wales. As well as describing the Tredegar Riots as 'a manifestation of Welsh anti-Semitism' Davies' *A History of Wales*, notes that 'The Jewish population in the towns of the coalfield declined after the attacks, and within a generation it was only at Cardiff that there was a substantial community of Welsh Jews.'<sup>59</sup> The same can be said for a later entry on Jews in his co-edited, *The Welsh Academy: Encyclopedia of Wales*.<sup>60</sup> A similar tragic story appears in a short entry on Wales in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. We are told in three paragraphs of the rise of communities in Wales, of 'disorder in south Wales' i.e. the 'anti-Jewish riots' of Tredegar, and finally, the considerable decline of the Jewish population of Wales.<sup>61</sup>

Welsh Jewry has thus been referred to with an unfortunate and overwhelming sense of pessimism and negativity, as if 'they were inexorably doomed from their very beginning.'<sup>62</sup> They have been victimised, depersonalised and make up a sad chapter in Welsh history. But is this the whole story of the Jewish experience in Wales? Indeed, it is not, and this thesis argues that there is more to the history of the Jewish Diaspora in Wales than simply a history of suffering, persecution, decline and difficulties. Whilst in no way adopting a purely 'apologetic', 'uncritical' and 'whiggish' interpretation of Welsh-Jewish history, an approach most commonly found in the works of historians writing in the 'Roth Mould', it aims to

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<sup>57</sup> Geraint H. Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 268; David Ross, *Wales: History of a Nation* (Bridlington: Geddes & Grosset Ltd., 2005), 221.

<sup>58</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the film, see Paul O'Leary, 'Film, History and Anti-Semitism: *Solomon & Gaenor* (1999) and the Representations of the Past', *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, 7 (2012), 38-52.

<sup>59</sup> John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin, 2007), 479.

<sup>60</sup> John Davies, Nigel Jenkins, Menna Baines, and Peredur I. Lynch, eds., *The Welsh Academy: Encyclopaedia of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), 859.

<sup>61</sup> Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, eds., *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Israel: Macmillan Reference USA in association with the Keter Publishing House, 2007), 606-607. See also Cecil Roth, *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* (Israel: Massadah, 1978), 1885.

<sup>62</sup> Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 11. Abrams notes that there has been a sense of pessimism and negativity with regards to the histories of the small Jewish communities in Scotland, and the same can be said for the history of Welsh Jewry.

discuss the successes of Welsh Jewry in addition to the difficulties.<sup>63</sup> Writing in 1975 Alderman stated that ‘too much [Jewish] communal history has been concerned with growth and achievement, not enough with difficulties and shortcomings.’<sup>64</sup> In the twenty-first-century it appears that the reverse is true with regards to Welsh Jewry. Too much concern has been made by historians with the difficulties and shortcomings of Jews in Wales, and not enough with their growth and achievement.

Although studies on the Tredegar riots of 1911 are still predominant, the volume and variety of Welsh-Jewish historiography has greatly increased over the years. An area of study which has attracted a great deal of interest from historians is the history of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation. This Jewish community has attracted much attention because it was the first to be established in the principality and its synagogue records remain largely intact.<sup>65</sup> In 1950, Cecil Roth wrote a sub-chapter on the Swansea Jewish community which he describes as ‘the only one in Wales of any antiquity’, while in 1975 Bernard Goldblum wrote a paper on Swansea Jewry for a conference on provincial Jewry at the University College London.<sup>66</sup> But it was Neville Saunders’ pamphlet entitled, *Swansea Hebrew Congregation, 1730-1980*, which became the first full-length work to be published on this community.<sup>67</sup> Released in 1980 to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Jewish settlement in the city, Saunders offers a chronological narrative of the Swansea community stretching from the 1730s to the twentieth-century. Leonard Mars has published three articles on the subject, all of which use the history of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation (SHC) as a case study through which to examine the nature of synagogue life in the ‘provinces’, the political and social control exercised by the leading families, and the conflict which arose when their authority was challenged by the influx of immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe.<sup>68</sup> More recently, Janet

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<sup>63</sup> Historians such as David Cesarani, Geoffrey Alderman and Todd Endelman have argued that the earlier works of British-Jewish history such as that written by Cecil Roth and Vivian Lipman were ‘whiggish’ and ‘apologetic’ in tone, focusing primarily on the progression and successes of Jews in Britain. See, for instance, Roth, *History of the Jews*; Vivian D. Lipman, *A Century of Social Service: The Jewish Board of Guardians, 1859-1959* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1959). For discussions on the ‘whiggish’ approach to British-Jewish history see, Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat?’, 63-64; Cesarani, *The Making of Modern*, introduction; Endelman, *the Jews of Britain*, 4-6.

<sup>64</sup> Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat?’, 64.

<sup>65</sup> The records of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation are kept by the West Glamorgan Archives in Swansea.

<sup>66</sup> Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*, 145; Bernard Goldblum, ‘Swansea’, in A. Newman, *Provincial Jewry in Victorian Britain*, 55.

<sup>67</sup> Neville H. Saunders, *Swansea Hebrew Congregation, 1730-1980* (Swansea: Swansea City Council, 1980).

<sup>68</sup> See Leonard Mars, ‘The Ministry of the Reverend Simone Fyne in Swansea, 1899-1906’, in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 111-130; Leonard Mars, ‘Cooperation and Conflict between Veteran and Immigrant Jews in Swansea, 1895-1915’, in Peter Gee and John Fulton, eds., *Religion and Power, Decline and Growth*:

Neilson published an article on ‘The History and Influence of Swansea’s Jewish Community, 1730-2006’ to celebrate the 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the SHC. Written as a follow up to Saunders’ pamphlet, Neilson focuses on the financial and social contributions made by Swansea Jewry to the city. She also adopts a gendered approach, exploring the influence of both Jewish men and women in the city.<sup>69</sup> The latest contribution is Harold Pollins’ ‘The Swansea-Jewish Community – The First Century’, a brief article which explores the history of Jews in the city between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century by drawing on overlooked sources such as the *Cambrian* newspaper.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to Swansea Jewry, other aspects of Welsh-Jewish history have been examined by scholars. Paul Wendling, for instance, wrote a chapter on the history of the admission of Jewish refugee medical students at the Welsh National School of Medicine in Cardiff between 1933 and 1945, while despite its title, Sharman Kadish’s *Jewish Heritage in England: an Architectural Guide* offers a brief chapter on notable Jewish sites and buildings around Wales.<sup>71</sup> One of the buildings to feature in Kadish’s work is the synagogue of the Cardiff Reform community, a Hebrew congregation which became the focus of enquiry for both Alan Liss’ unpublished thesis in 1977, and a 2012 Heritage Lottery funded exhibition entitled, ‘Hineni’.<sup>72</sup> The histories of many of south Wales’ Jewish communities are also

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*Sociological Analyses of Religion in Britain, Poland and the Americas* (London: BSA Sociology of Religion Group, 1991), 102-125; Leonard Mars, ‘Immigration and Anglicization: Religious Education as an Issue in the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, 1894-1910’ *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 39, 1-2 (1997), 76-86.

<sup>69</sup> Janet M. Neilson, ‘The History and Influence of Swansea’s Jewish Community, 1730-2006’, *Minerva: The Journal of Swansea History*, XIV (2006), 22-32.

<sup>70</sup> Harold Pollins, ‘The Swansea Jewish Community-The First Century’, *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 1, 2 (2009), 35-39.

<sup>71</sup> Paul Wendling, ‘The Jewish Medical Refugee Crisis and Wales, 1933-1945’ in Pamela Michael and Charles Webster, eds., *Health and Society in Twentieth-Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 196; Sharman Kadish, *Jewish Heritage in England: an Architectural Guide* (Berwick-upon-Tweed: English Heritage, 2006), 65-70. Kadish has also published a chapter on the history of Jewish architecture in Wales. See Sharman Kadish, ‘The Jewish Presence in Wales: Image and Material Reality,’ in Martin O’Kane and John Morgan-Guy, eds., *Biblical Art from Wales* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 272-291.

<sup>72</sup> Alan S. Liss, ‘A Short History of Reform Judaism in South Wales, 1947-1970’ (Unpublished thesis presented to the University of Wales for the certificate of education, 1977). Featuring fifty-nine edited life stories and photographic portraits from the Cardiff Reform Jewish community, the ‘Hineni’ exhibition opened at the Cardiff Story Museum in August 2012. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the exhibition is a collaborative project between the Cardiff Reform Synagogue and the Butetown History & Arts Centre. For further information, see Glenn Jordan, Colin Heyman, Eve Lavine, Cai Parry-Jones, Diana Soffa, and Chris Weedon, eds., *Hineni: Life Portraits from a Jewish Community* (Cardiff: Butetown History & Arts Centre, 2012).

gathering momentum, with a number of studies having been published on Valley communities such as Merthyr Tydfil and Brynmawr.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, scholars have explored the history of Welsh-Jews in the context of other minorities in nineteenth and twentieth century Wales. Some of the principality's smaller ethnic communities, including the Chinese, the Italians and the Irish have become the subject of academic enquiry and their histories and experiences have been compared with the Jews. Colin Hughes' work on Italian communities in south Wales, *Lime, Lemon, & Sarsaparilla*, compares the Tonypandy riot of 1910 where 'Italians suffered from spontaneous actions' and the riots 'aimed specifically at Jews' at Tredegar in 1911 to conclude that the Welsh were more accepting of Italians than other migrant groups.<sup>74</sup> In his 'Comparing Immigrant Histories', Neil Evans examines the riots against Chinese and Blacks in Cardiff in 1911 and 1919 alongside the Tredegar Riots of 1911 to conclude that there was no selective targeting of Jews by the rioters. As stated by Evans, 'Jews were not the only victims, whereas only Chinese or Black people were attacked in the other two examples.'<sup>75</sup> Paul O'Leary's work on the Irish in Wales discusses the maltreatment of Jews by integrated Irish migrants at the turn of the twentieth century by drawing on a Jewish assault in Dowlais in 1903 as an example. The occupations of Welsh immigrants are also compared, and it is suggested that the Irish could be found in a variety of occupations and industries, while the Jews and the Italians were to be found overwhelmingly in small businesses such as cafés, peddling and pawnbroking.<sup>76</sup>

A number of articles and works discussing the Jewish experience in Wales have thus been published, but books on the topic are not extensive. Three books by authors Grahame Davies, Jasmine Donahaye and Ursula Henriques stand out as the distinctive published scholarly contributions in the field. Edited by a journalist who, academically, has been trained as a literary critic, Davies' *The Chosen People* is not a historical account of Welsh-Jews, but

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<sup>73</sup> Harold Pollins, 'The Jewish Community of Brynmawr, Wales', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, L, 1-2 (2008), 5-32; Wendy Bellany, 'A Vanished Community', *Merthyr Historian*, 16 (2001), 38-47.

<sup>74</sup> Colin Hughes, *Lime, Lemon, & Sarsaparilla: the Italian Community in South Wales, 1881-1945* (Bridgend: Seren, 1991), 121-122.

<sup>75</sup> Neil Evans 'Comparing Immigrant Histories: The Irish and Others in Modern Wales', in Paul O'Leary, *Irish Migrants in Modern Wales* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 164.

<sup>76</sup> Paul O'Leary, *Immigration and integration: the Irish in Wales, 1798-1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), 157. For further information on Jews and pawnbroking in south Wales, see Melanie Tebbutt, *Making ends Meet: Pawnbroking and Working-class Credit* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984), 94-95; Henriques, *The Jews of South Wales*, 19-81.



rather a literary anthology. This is made clear by Davies in his introduction where he defines his work ‘as a literary anthology, taking in material from all genres, with the only criteria being that the writing is of a creative kind, using heightened expression for effect, and that it is not simple reportage, reminiscence or historiography.’<sup>77</sup> Drawing on extracts from genres such as poetry, dramas, novels, short stories, memoirs and screen-plays by both Welsh and Welsh-Jewish authors, Davies addresses a variety of Welsh and Jewish encounters and responses throughout the centuries, stretching from as early as the sixth century to the present day, and covering subjects such as anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, the experiences of Jews in Wales and Welsh religious attitudes towards Jews.

Published in 2012, Jasmine Donahaye’s *Whose People?: Wales, Israel, Palestine* examines the representations of Welsh and Jewish culture and identity in both Jewish and non-Jewish literatures from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In particular, Donahaye explores the deep roots of non-Jewish Welsh interest and attitudes to Jews, Zionism, and the Israel-Palestine situation, and identifies a complex and unique relationship that challenges received wisdoms about Welsh tolerance and a so-called ‘tradition’ of Welsh identification with Jews. In a similar vein to Grahame Davies, Donahaye admits that her monograph ‘is not...a historical study.’<sup>78</sup> Rather, it is an examination of the ‘imaging and discussion of Jews in writing in both languages of Wales [English and Welsh], across a very wide spectrum of publications.’<sup>79</sup>

In fact, the only published work on the history of Welsh Jewry to date is Ursula Henriques’ *The Jews of South Wales*. First published in 1993, *The Jews of South Wales* is an edited volume of eight case studies, which cover an array of subjects, including the history of the Jewish communities of Cardiff and the south Wales coalfield in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the notorious Jewess abduction case of 1869; and the already well discussed Tredegar riots of August 1911.<sup>80</sup> As Alderman wrote in 1994, Henriques ‘performed a useful service in bringing together in one volume a selection of eight essays

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<sup>77</sup> Davies, *The Chosen People*, 4.

<sup>78</sup> Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 2.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> A second edition was published in 2013 with a foreword by Paul O’Leary. It was re-published in 2013 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the first edition. See Ursula R.Q. Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013).

which form a thematic as well as a geographical whole.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the volume tells us of the histories of many of Wales' Jewish communities, but certainly not all of them. Henriques acknowledges that the essays she has presented are not a comprehensive history of Jews in Wales, and she is correct to note in her preface that 'there is more to be discovered yet of the history of these people.'<sup>82</sup> In the late 1990s David Morris attempted to fill this historiographical gap in his unpublished doctoral thesis 'The History of the Welsh Jewish Communities: 1750-Present', but despite its all-encompassing title, the work predominantly focuses on the history of Jews in south Wales.<sup>83</sup>

Indeed, although Jews were and *are* to be found throughout Wales, the histories of those who lived outside south Wales have attracted little, if any, attention from scholars. The small field of Welsh-Jewish history is itself prone to the metropolitan bias expressed by Endelman, for much of it, as it has become clear, primarily focuses on the experiences of south Walian Jews—in particular, Cardiff, the largest Jewish community in Wales, Swansea, the oldest and second largest, Tredegar, the scene of the alleged anti-Jewish riots of August 1911, and to a lesser extent, Valley communities such as Merthyr Tydfil and Brynmawr.<sup>84</sup> Historical studies on Jews living away from established Jewish centres are non-existent and published works that refer to the smaller communities of north Wales are largely factual and limited to a few sentences and paragraphs. For instance, the only work that discusses the history of Wrexham Jewry is Williams' *The Encyclopaedia of Wrexham*, which devotes a mere half a page to this small community.<sup>85</sup> The life and histories of Wales' numerous Jewish communities have thus been neglected by historians of British Jewry. As Abrams reminds

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<sup>81</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, 'Reviewed work(s): *The Divided Elite: Economics, Politics and Anglo-Jewry 1882-1917* by Daniel Gutwein. *The Jews of South Wales: Historical Studies* by Ursula R. Q. Henriques', *Victorian Studies*, 37, 3 (Spring, 1994), 504.

<sup>82</sup> Henriques, *The Jews of South Wales*, ix.

<sup>83</sup> Morris, 'The History of the Welsh Jewish Communities'.

<sup>84</sup> Nathan Abrams makes a similar claim for Scottish Jewry, which, in his view, has primarily been 'a tale of two cities'. He argues that most historians have focused their attention on the history of Scotland's two largest Jewish settlements, which are to be found in the country's two largest cities—Edinburgh and Glasgow. See Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 14.

<sup>85</sup> William A Williams, *Encyclopedia of Wrexham* (Wrexham: Bridge, 2001), 183. Lavinia Cohn- Sherbok's chapter on Judaism in Wales briefly mentions the existence of Jewish communities in north Wales, but focuses on the history of Jews in south Wales. The same can be said for Campbell's section on Welsh-Jews in his chapter on Jews in Britain. See Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok, 'Judaism,' in Allen and Jones, *The Religious History of Wales*, 238-253; Campbell 'The Jewish Community in Britain,' in Gilley and Sheils, *History of Religion in Britain*, 427-48. Both an undergraduate dissertation and an MPhil thesis have explored the history of Jewish communities in north Wales, but are unpublished. See Michael J. Thomas, 'Jewish Communities in North Wales c. 1890- c.1940' (unpublished Bachelor of Arts dissertation, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1999); Jennifer Krase, 'A Comparative History of the Bangor and Llandudno Jewish Communities from the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day' (unpublished MPhil thesis, Bangor University, forthcoming).

us, 'it is an unfortunate irony, then, that we probably know more about the far-flung communities of the world than we do about those in our own islands.'<sup>86</sup> And, until a study of all of Wales' Jewish communities is written, the history of Welsh Jewry especially, and British Jewry more generally, will remain incomplete.

This thesis therefore explores and discusses what Henriques' and other historians of Welsh Jewry do not. Whilst most, if not all, studies of Welsh Jewry have focused on the history of the Jews of south Wales only, this thesis draws on the lives and histories of Jewish communities and individuals across the principality, where such information is available. It serves as a reminder that there has been, and continues to be, a Jewish presence throughout the principality. Furthermore, most research on Welsh Jewry has concentrated on the period between the great migration of Jews from Eastern Europe during the late nineteenth century and the opening of the First World War. There are examples of studies which look at the history of Welsh-Jews beyond this period, but they are limited in numbers and scope.<sup>87</sup> This thesis endeavours to remedy these imbalances by exploring the history of the Welsh-Jewish Diaspora from its humble origins to its current position in the early twenty-first century.

### **Sources and Methodology**

Sources on Welsh Jewry are not extensive. At present, the fullest records are those of the Orthodox Hebrew congregations in Cardiff and Swansea, and even those of the former are incomplete, as many of the United Synagogue's records were destroyed by a flood in 1981. As for the rest of the communities, the records are patchy and consist of the odd documents located in research libraries and archives throughout Britain and the United States. To help make up for the lack of archival sources this thesis also draws on local newspapers specific to each community, and British-Jewish periodicals such as the London-based *JC* and the Manchester-based *Jewish Telegraph*. Newspaper articles are also accompanied by a wide-range of published and unpublished sources, including memoirs, diaries, and letters of correspondence.

Such a shortage of sources is not unique to Welsh Jewry. Much material of the Jewish community in Manchester, for instance, has disappeared, and the work of the Jewish History

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<sup>86</sup> Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 10.

<sup>87</sup> See, for instance, Morris, 'The History of the Welsh Jewish Communities'; Saunders, *Swansea Hebrew Congregation*; Neilson, 'The History and Influence of Swansea's Jewish Community'.

Unit at the Manchester Polytechnic from the 1970s to the early 1990s to ‘salvage the physical and documentary heritage of Manchester Jewry’ has ensured that a number of records have survived.<sup>88</sup> To make up for the lack of written sources an enormous oral history project was established in Manchester so that the life histories of various members of the city’s Jewish community, including immigrants; their offspring; and refugees from Nazi occupied Europe, were recorded. By 1984 the Unit had put together a collection of over 400 taped interviews which are now housed at Manchester’s Jewish Museum in Cheetham Hill.<sup>89</sup>

Although the sound archive at the St Fagans National History Museum, Cardiff, includes a number of interviews with Jews from Wales, the collection is mostly of Jews in the south Wales valleys and is not extensive (a mere ten recordings).<sup>90</sup> In addition to archival institutions, little, if any, attempt has been made by historians to interview Jews (and non-Jews) in Wales for their publications. A good example is Ursula Henriques’ *The Jews of South Wales*. Despite the editor’s acknowledgement that ‘Most (*although not all*) of the families of the original Jewish immigrants have dispersed, taking their memories with them’, the voices of the remaining living Jews are mute throughout the volume.<sup>91</sup> There is no clear answer as to why Henriques chose not to include testimonies of everyday Jews in her work—indeed, we will never know, as she passed away in 2008, taking her reasons with her—but it would have been most helpful if she had consulted the remaining living Jews of south Wales from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for future research. Nevertheless, this opportunity has sadly passed and their voices and memories have since disappeared. The one exception in this volume is Glaser’s essay on the 1911 Tredegar riots which makes use of oral testimony. He quotes a Fred Hopkins, a miner and eyewitness to the riots, to support the view that the violence against the Jews was premeditated.<sup>92</sup> Irrespective of this one example, Henriques’ volume provides its readers with a social history of Jewish communities in south Wales without the voices of its people. As Kushner notes in a review of *The Jews in South*

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<sup>88</sup> Bill Williams, ‘Heritage and Community: The Rescue of Manchester’s Jewish Past’ in Tony Kushner, ed., *The Jewish heritage in British history: Englishness and Jewishness* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), 128.

<sup>89</sup> Williams, ‘Heritage and Community’, in Kushner, *The Jewish Heritage*, 141.

<sup>90</sup> The interviews were conducted by David Jacobs in the late 1970s.

<sup>91</sup> Henriques, *The Jews of South Wales*, vii. My emphasis.

<sup>92</sup> Glaser, ‘The Tredegar Riots of August 1911’, 166. In a review of Henriques’ volume, Tony Kushner claims Fred Hopkins was a butcher’s salesman, but Henriques notes in her preface that he was a miner. See Tony Kushner, ‘Reviewed work(s): *The Jews of South Wales: Historical Studies* by Ursula R. Q. Henriques’ *Albion: a Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 25, 4 (Winter, 1993), 747; Henriques, *The Jews of South Wales*, ix.

Wales: ‘After reading these essays I felt no closer to understanding what it was like to be a Jew in the growing South Wales cities of Cardiff and Swansea.’<sup>93</sup>

This thesis will rectify this issue by supplementing the written record with the voices of forty-two Jewish individuals who were interviewed by both the author and volunteers of the already mentioned ‘Hineni’ exhibition project between March 2010 and January 2013. The thesis also draws upon sixteen archived interviews from various institutions, including the Imperial War Museum and the British Library in London. By doing so, it seeks to both include and examine the experiences of everyday Jews in Wales as well as the small numbers of personalities, intellectuals, and synagogue functionaries. The history of Welsh Jewry will undoubtedly be illuminated by the recollection of its people. Their voices will reveal what it was and *is* like to be a Jew in Wales, and will also throw some light upon the peculiar idiosyncrasies of Jewish life in the principality. Indeed, as Shaul Esh and Geoffrey Wigoder wrote in 1962, all of these ‘various aspects of communal life over the past decades...will be lost if the initiative is not taken to record them.’<sup>94</sup>

### **Oral History**

As Paul Thompson notes ‘oral history is as old as history itself’, but ‘the extensive modern use of the term’ did not appear until the 1960s during the rise of social history, an approach which began to challenge the predominant history of the élite by offering the everyday person a place in history.<sup>95</sup> Its potential application to the history of modern British Jewry was raised by Esh and Wigoder in a paper delivered at a conference at University College London in 1962.<sup>96</sup> Since then a number of historians of modern British Jewry have used oral sources in their work, including Jerry White in his study of life in the Rothschild tenement building in London’s East End; and Rosalyn Livshin in her research on the acculturation of Jewish immigrant children in Manchester at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>97</sup> Writing in 1980,

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<sup>93</sup> Kushner, ‘Reviewed work(s)’, 747.

<sup>94</sup> Shaul Esh and Geoffrey Wigoder, ‘Oral History and its Potential Application’, in Julius Gould and Shaul Esh, eds., *Jewish life in modern Britain: papers and proceedings of a conference held at University College London on 1st and 2nd April 1962, by the Institute of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, under the auspices of the Board of Deputies of British Jews* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), 145.

<sup>95</sup> Paul Thompson, *Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-155.

<sup>97</sup> Jerry White, *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End Tenement Block, 1887-1920*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1980); Livshin, ‘The Acculturation of the Children’, 79-96.

White considered his study to 'be primarily a work of oral history.'<sup>98</sup> In his words, 'To have written *Rothschild Buildings* using only (written) documents, would have revealed insights but no answers, led up many blind alleys and left every other paragraph ending in a question-mark.' Without oral history 'all the people would be missing.'<sup>99</sup> To Livshin, the inclusion of oral sources in her work was 'indispensable' as the voices of the immigrant children 'provided the material through which the effects of Anglicization could be examined.'<sup>100</sup>

Despite the enthusiasm of many historians, oral history has, and continues to be, regarded with scepticism and suspicion by certain scholars. Although he supports oral testimony for giving historians 'access to information about the recent past' that cannot be found in written documents, Arthur Marwick once wrote that oral accounts are 'severely limited to historians' because they 'are particularly subject to the fallibility of the human memory'.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, this problem exists not just for oral history, but for many written documents, which are usually produced after the event to which they refer.<sup>102</sup> These include memoirs and autobiographies, which may be as distant from some aspects of an event as oral history interviews. But as Richard Van Emden and Steve Humphries found in their work on oral history of life in Britain during the First World War, 'In the ageing process, long-term memory is one of the last things to go...we have often been amazed at the recall of detail stretching back over almost a hundred years.'<sup>103</sup> If a problem does occur, certain aids are used by oral historians to help retrigger memories such as photos and documents. If the interviewee's memory of dates and/or events is also questionable, their testimonies can be checked against contemporary documents. A good example of this approach is Mark Roseman's *A Past in Hiding*, which recalls the story of his work with a Holocaust survivor, Marianne Strauss-Ellenbogen.<sup>104</sup> Initially based on oral history interviews, Roseman went on after Marianne's death to work on her papers and contacted some of those who knew her to follow through the threads which the interviews and sources raised. It became apparent that

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<sup>98</sup> White, *Rothschild Buildings*, xiii.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>100</sup> Livshin, 'The Acculturation of the Children', 80.

<sup>101</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (Chicago: Lyceum Books, 2001), 136.

<sup>102</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York: SUNY Press, 1991), 52.

<sup>103</sup> Richard.V. Emden and Steve E. Humphries, *All Quiet on the Home Front: an Oral History of Life in Britain during the First World War* (London: Headline, 2004), xii.

<sup>104</sup> Mark Roseman, *A Past in Hiding: Memory and Survival in Nazi Germany* (New York: Picador USA, 2002).

Marianne's account was not simply a reflection of her own experiences but she had also absorbed parts of stories of others.

Inconsistencies between interviews and other evidence point to the inherently subjective and personal nature of oral history. This aspect of oral history was subjected to severe criticism by a number of scholars, particularly during the discipline's infancy in the 1970s and 1980s, who claimed that oral testimonies presented too individual a picture of the past and 'unlike' the written record were also subject to alteration.<sup>105</sup> Advocates of oral history, however, responded noting that to criticise oral history as 'subjective' risked discarding one of its great strengths—the insight it offers into subjective experience. To cite an oft-quoted phrase of Alessandro Portelli, 'oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did... Subjectivity is as much the business of history as the more visible 'facts'...' <sup>106</sup> Indeed, as well as providing us information or 'more history' about groups whose written history is either missing or distorted, oral testimonies are important in telling us about personal historical experiences, that is the daily life and material culture of these people and groups. These are not specific to oral sources, however. Letters, diaries and memoirs, for instance, contain information regarding personal historical experiences, but are simply written.

As well as the subjective voice of the informant, it is important to note that oral history is intersubjective, and includes the subjectivities of the interviewer or enquirer themselves. Portelli writes that 'far from disappearing in the objectivity of the sources, the historian remains important as a partner in the dialogue, often as a "stage director" of the interview or as an "organizer" of the testimony. Instead of discovering sources, oral

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<sup>105</sup> In the early 1970s, for instance, the British historian Alan J.P. Taylor dismissed oral history as little more than 'old men drooling over their youth', while in the early 1980s, the Australian historian Patrick O'Farrell wrote that oral history was moving 'into the world of image, selective memory, later overlays and utter subjectivity...And where will it lead us? Not into history, but into myth'. See Brian Harrison, 'Oral History and Recent Political History' *Oral History*, 1, 3 (1972), 46; Patrick O'Farrell, 'Oral History: Facts and Fiction', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, 5 (1982-1983), 3-9 (reprinted from *Quadrant*, November 1979). Paul Thompson asserts that the early opposition to oral history was as much founded on feeling as on principle. The older generation of historians who held the chairs and the purse-strings of universities being instinctively apprehensive about the advent of a new historical source. See Thompson, *Voice of the Past*, 25-82.

<sup>106</sup> Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 67. More recently, Lynn Abrams wrote that 'The oral historian is not just looking for "facts"...but is looking to detect the emotional responses, the political views and the very subjectivity of human existence. We go looking for the personal experience...Subjectivity...is the bread and butter of oral history. See Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 22.

historians partly create them.’<sup>107</sup> Of course, it is the historian who selects interviewees for their project, and the interviews are mostly driven by the questions asked, and then placed within what is considered to be an appropriate narrative framework. By interviewing a number of Jews throughout Wales I have tried to recapture the everyday history of Welsh Jewry, but, inevitably, both the oral and written sources in this thesis have been shaped in a way which reflects my concerns as a historian. While I had every intention of allowing my interviewees to speak of their own perceptions, in the course of writing up I selected parts of the interview that was of interest to this thesis and used their voices to construct a historical argument. As Gaynor Kavanagh points out, oral testimonies are a ‘*product*, a source of information which can be stored, interpreted, returned to and employed’ and used ‘within some system of explanation.’<sup>108</sup>

In addition, the issue of ‘insider-outsider’ interviewing has been a concern in this study because of my non-Jewish background. The advantages and disadvantages of the ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ approaches to interviewing have provided volumes of debate between academics of numerous disciplines. Belinda Bozzoli’s chapter in Perks and Thomson’s *The Oral History Reader* on the Women of Phokeng, for instance, explores ‘insider interviewing’ and argues that her colleague Mmantho Nkotshe’s successful interviewing was down to her ‘insider’ status as a local, black female, speaking the same dialect as her interviewees and from the same social background.<sup>109</sup> However, according to Mary A. Larson, an ‘outsider’ ‘may be viewed by interviewees as being more objective, and since the interviewer will not be staying in the community, he or she may be given information that someone remaining in the community would not be able to elicit.’<sup>110</sup>

On the one hand supporters of the ‘insider’ perspective argue that group membership provides special insight into matters based on one’s knowledge of the language and one’s instinctive sensitivity and empathy and understanding of the culture and its people. On the other, proponents for the ‘outsider’ perspective believe that access to authentic knowledge is more obtainable because of the objectivity and detachment with which the interviewer can

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<sup>107</sup> Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, 72.

<sup>108</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000), 3.

<sup>109</sup> Belinda Bozzoli, ‘Interviewing the Women of Phokeng’, in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, 145-156.

<sup>110</sup> Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers and Rebecca Sharpless, eds., *Handbook of Oral History* (Plymouth: Altamira Press, 2006), 122.



approach their investigation as a non-member of the group. The extent to which my interviewees would only have spoken openly to me if I was an ‘insider’ is difficult to measure. Nonetheless, as an ‘outsider’ I often found that interviewees assumed that I did not know about past events or certain Jewish words or cultural traditions and needed to be informed.

In writing a comprehensive history of Jewish communities in Wales, one of the main concerns of this thesis was to achieve a fairly even geographical distribution of interviewees. Interview participants were selected using the so-called ‘snowball method’, where a list of interviewees from initial contacts led to an ever widening circle of potential respondents.<sup>111</sup> An additional methodological issue faced when looking for interviewees was their identity—‘Who is Jewish?’ Defining ‘Jewish identity’ is complex and contested. It can be divided into ethno-cultural-historical or *halachic* (Jewish according to Jewish religious law, where a child born to a Jewish mother or a mother who has converted to Judaism under the auspices of an Orthodox court of Jewish law (*beth din*) is considered a Jew), although even the latter definition is under challenge as the primacy of matrilineal descent is being undermined by the recognition of patrilineality by the Reform, Liberal and Progressive movements within contemporary Judaism. Furthermore, although one can become Jewish ‘by choice’, that is through a process of rabbinic conversion, this is also subject to contestation by different groups within Judaism who refuse to recognise and sanction certain conversions.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, scholars such as György Konrád have argued that the only genuinely common Jewish characteristic is the propensity for a ‘Jewish’ person to self-identify as such, that is, ‘what makes a person a Jew is saying they are one.’<sup>113</sup> Following Konrád’s approach, this thesis

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<sup>111</sup> For more on the ‘snowball method’, see Earle R. Babbie, *The Basics of Social Research*, 5th ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2009), 208.

<sup>112</sup> The controversy over the Jews’ Free School (JFS) case in London between 2006 and 2009 is a good example of this. In October 2006, a Jewish father applied for his son to be admitted to JFS for the 2007 academic year. Despite being a practising Jew, the school denied the boy a place because it had twice as many applicants as it could take and prioritised children whose mothers were recognised as Jewish by the then Orthodox Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks. As the boy’s mother had converted to Judaism through the Masorti movement, a non-Orthodox authority, he was not recognised as Jewish by the Chief Rabbi and was refused entry. The boy’s father took the school to court, claiming racial discrimination. In June 2009, the Court of Appeal ruled in his favour, declaring that JFS, under the Race Relations Act 1976, had illegally discriminated against the child on racial grounds. They ruled that the mother’s religious status, and thus her child’s religious status, had been determined using a racial criterion rather than a religious criterion. The school subsequently issued a revised admission criteria based on religious practice, including synagogue attendance, formal Jewish education and volunteering. JFS and the Orthodox United Synagogue appealed to the Supreme Court, with the support of the Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. In December 2009, the UK Supreme Court upheld the Court of Appeal’s ruling. For further information see *Guardian*, 16 December 2009; *Daily Telegraph*, 16 December 2009.

<sup>113</sup> György Konrád, ‘Aphorisms on the Durability of Jews’, *Partisan Review*, 65, 4 (1998), 548.

defines 'Jewishness' in the broadest possible fashion to include all individuals who self-identify as a Jew, regardless of their *halachic* or legal status. This thesis also adopts Alderman's definition of a Jew, as one 'who was or is so regarded by his [or her] contemporaries.'<sup>114</sup>

The difficulty of identifying Jews was also apparent when researching archival material. While names that appear on synagogue membership lists, in marriage registers, burial books and on headstones in Jewish cemeteries are more than likely to be Jewish, those that appear in non-Jewish literature and sources such as local newspapers and Census returns are more difficult to identify.<sup>115</sup> Individuals with traditional Jewish surnames such as Cohen, Epstein and Rubinstein are more than likely to be Jewish, but there are many individuals whose Jewishness has been disguised by assimilation. Indeed, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many Jewish immigrants had their names changed and/or adopted popular local surnames as a means of fitting into British society. While Russian-born Philip Polliakoff allegedly had the spelling of his surname changed to 'Pollecoff' by an immigration official unable to understand and/or spell his original name, others such as Russian-born Morris Volinski of Wrexham (Morris Volins on naturalisation in 1918), requested a spelling or name change, as a symbol of a new beginning in a new society.<sup>116</sup> During the First and Second World Wars many Jewish families of German origin adopted common British surnames to avoid any immediate identification with the German enemy. In the mid-1910s, for instance, Polish-born Harris Himmelstein of Dowlais changed his Germanic surname to Hamilton to avoid any anti-German feeling, while in 1948 Leslie Bernstein of Merthyr Tydfil changed his German-Jewish surname to the English name 'Burns' as he felt that 'people in [Britain didn't] like foreign names' at the time.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), vii.

<sup>115</sup> In the preface of *The Jews of South Wales*, Ursula Henriques confidently wrote that one can be certain that individuals whose names appear in official Jewish sources such as synagogue membership lists and marriage registers were Jews. However, recent studies such as Abrams' *Caledonian Jews* have pointed out that such sources need to be treated with caution when determining whether an individual was/is in fact Jewish. This is because the names of non-Jews can also appear in official Jewish records. The records of the Aberdeen Hebrew Congregation from May 1896, for instance, note an unusual incident where two non-Jewish boys were circumcised at the synagogue. See Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 177; Henriques, *The Jews of South Wales*, vii.

<sup>116</sup> Eve Pollecoff, interview with author, London, 10 November 2011; Nationality and Naturalisation: Morris Volinski, Certificate 3,393 issued 4 October 1918, HO 144/1501/367928, National Archives (henceforth NA).

<sup>117</sup> Ben Hamilton, interview with David Jacobs, 5 November 1978, 5957/1, Sound Archive, SFNHM; Lena and Leslie Burns, interview with David Jacobs, 25 May 1978, 6014/2, Sound Archive, SFNHM.

To add to the confusion many names were common in both Jewish and non-Jewish Welsh communities. During the evangelical revival of the first half of the nineteenth century many Welsh families adopted Old Testament names, including Isaac, Samuel and Abraham which were also used by Jews. Thus there were and *are* a number of non-Jews in Wales with Jewish-sounding names, including the Welsh language campaigner and author, Norah Isaac (1915-2003). But as Roth has pointed out, ‘Biblical names in the singular tend to be Welsh, and in the plural Jewish.’<sup>118</sup> This is because Jewish surnames were traditionally patronymic rather than hereditary, and the suffix ‘-s’ was often added to the father’s given name to denote that *x* was the ‘son of’ or ‘daughter of’ *y*. For example, if Samuel had a son named Abraham, that son would be named Abraham Samuels, but if Abraham had a son named Isaac, he would be called Isaac Abrahams.<sup>119</sup> While fixed surnames gained popularity among Sephardic Jews in Iberia as early as the tenth and eleventh centuries, most Ashkenazi Jews did not acquire hereditary surnames until the early nineteenth century when they were forced upon them through a series of edicts by Eastern European governments.<sup>120</sup> Jews typically chose occupational names such as ‘Silver’ for a silversmith and ‘Glass’ for a glazier; the names of their place of residence such as ‘Krakowski’, after the city of Kraków in southern Poland; or kept to patronymics.

### Statistics

The difficulty of identifying Jews in Wales—or of Jews in the Diaspora as a whole—poses problems of population numbers. The figures for this thesis are mostly taken from the *JYB*, an almanac for Jews in the United Kingdom, between 1896 and 2013 (see appendix C). However, they are not entirely reliable for a number of reasons. First, the *Jewish Year Book* relies on obtaining its figures not from official data but by writing to individuals in the Jewish communities themselves. In 1936, for example, the Cardiff correspondent, Henry Samuels, received a letter from the joint editors of the *JYB* which stated ‘I will be much obliged if you

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<sup>118</sup> Cecil Roth, ‘Historian Amusingly Describes Efforts to Provide Jewish Social and Cultural Contact for Jewish Students at Oxford’, in *The National Jewish Monthly*, 61 (Cincinnati, Ohio: B’nai B’rith 1946), 198.

<sup>119</sup> Genealogist Dan Rottenberg has also pointed out that a Jewish second name sometimes derived from the name of a mother or another female member of the family. The seventeenth-century Polish rabbi, Samuel Edels, for instance, took his surname from his wealthy mother-in-law, Edel, whose generosity enabled him to open a *Yeshiva*. See, Dan Rottenberg, *Finding our Fathers: a Guidebook to Jewish Genealogy* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Com, 1995), 53.

<sup>120</sup> Jo David, *How to Trace Your Jewish Roots* (New Jersey: Carol Publishing Group, 2000), 169. Fixed surnames in parts of Eastern Europe were not required among Jews until a 1787 Hapsburg decree and an 1845 Russian edict. On the adoption of surnames by Ashkenazi Jews in Eastern Europe, see Barbara Krasner-Khait, *Discovering your Jewish Ancestors* (North Salt Lake, Utah: Heritage Quest, 2001), 108.

will let me know as accurately as possible the number of Jews in your city...If you are unable to inform us of the exact number, we will be much obliged for as close an estimate as possible.'<sup>121</sup> As Henriques notes, 'The figures for Jews rest on the *Jewish Year Books*-that is, largely on guesswork.'<sup>122</sup> Second, the statistics are complicated by conflicting and confusing figures. Between 1965 and 1968, for instance, with regards to the Cardiff community, the *JYB* notes how the city's Jewish population almost doubled from 3,000 in 1965 to 5,000 in 1966, but then suddenly declined between 1967 and 1968 to 3,500. To add to the confusion population numbers can also be stated as seat holders, families and individuals. For instance, the number of Jews in Aberdare was recorded as 20 families in the 1906 edition.<sup>123</sup> Finally, gaps and repetition appear in the statistics. Between 1941 and 1944, for instance, no figures are provided 'due...to war exigencies', while the 'figures given' between 1929 and 1935 were 'approximately correct to 1929.'<sup>124</sup> It must also be remembered that Jews who lived away from organised Jewish communities are not included in the *JYB*.

Statistics collected from Censuses are complex and are not fully accurate either. In 2001, for the first time in the history of the official Census of England and Wales and the parallel Census in Scotland, a voluntary question on religion was included.<sup>125</sup> From a Jewish perspective, a question on religion was an innovation that had the potential to release an enormous quantity of new data. That said, within the confines of these particular Censuses, there is a very strong case to suggest that a number of individuals, who would be considered Jewish in most practical circumstances, were not enumerated as such. Both the 2001 and 2011 Census chose to define 'Jewish' in strictly religious terms, but Jewish demographic scholarship has generally acknowledged that for many being Jewish also has an ethnic dimension.<sup>126</sup> Indeed, for some people the ethnic dimension is the only one and, for many

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<sup>121</sup> Letter from the Joint Editors of the *JC* to Henry Samuels, 1936, D/D JR 1/1/6 36/34, Glamorgan Archives (hereafter GA).

<sup>122</sup> Ursula R.Q. Henriques, 'The Jewish Community of Cardiff, 1813-1914', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 14.

<sup>123</sup> *JYB*, 1906.

<sup>124</sup> *JYB*, 1945-1946, 19; *JYB*, 1935, 635.

<sup>125</sup> Although a census on religion was conducted by the government in England, Wales and Scotland in 1851, it was separate to the 1851 United Kingdom Census. Popularly called the '1851 Religious Census', this demographic census was a census of 'Accommodation and Attendance at Worship' rather than of worshippers themselves. For more on this, see Ieuan Gwynedd Jones and David Williams, eds., *The Religious Census of 1851: a Calendar of the Returns Relating to Wales, Vol. 1: South Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976).

<sup>126</sup> Louis Rosenberg and Morton Weinfeld, eds., *Canada's Jews: a Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1993); Calvin Goldscheider, 'Ethnic categorizations in censuses: comparative observations between Israel, Canada, and the United States' in David I. Kertzer and

contemporary British Jews, belonging to a cultural or ethnic group is a more appropriate way of identifying as a Jew than expressing adherence to religious beliefs or customs. The Census seemingly gave Jews the opportunity to identify as both Jews by religion and ethnicity. However, because the question on ethnicity was limited to nationality and skin colour it may have occurred to most that writing in 'Jewish' was not an appropriate answer. Indeed, an overwhelming proportion, (96.8 per cent) of 'Jews by religion' in the 2001 Census, for instance, described their ethnicity as 'White.'<sup>127</sup> The fact that at least 3.2 per cent were aware of the possibility of writing in 'Jewish' on the ethnicity question suggests that the inclusion of a Jewish category would change the nature of the Jewish response to the Census.

Another point to bear in mind has been raised by Kenneth Collins in his work on Jewish identity in Scotland. The question on religion in the 2001 Census was a voluntary one, which made the risk of non-response greater than any other question. As Collins notes, 'It is probably that the Scottish Census of 2001 underestimated the number of Jews in Scotland. Jews, and especially older members of the community, have a strong reluctance about volunteering their identity to any government list. The thought of a fascist government rounding up the Jews of Scotland would seem far-fetched, indeed paranoid, but the Jewish people have long memories and the precedent of the twentieth century is not a good one.'<sup>128</sup> Consequently, 'there is no such thing as a 'true' number when it comes to counting Jews.'<sup>129</sup> All such figures are simply estimates and it must be remembered that the statistics included in this thesis from sources such as the *JYB* and Censuses serve as an estimate only.

### **A Jewish Community in Wales?**

There *is* or *was* not one Jewish community in Wales, but many; located primarily in the industrial cities and towns of the south such as Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and Swansea, followed by the smaller coastal towns of Bangor, Colwyn Bay, Llandudno and Rhyl in north Wales. This thesis accepts the analysis of Israel Finestein, that to speak of one community is misleading. Writing in 1999, Finestein notes that 'The Jewish community is sometimes

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Dominique Arel, eds., *Census and identity: the politics of race, ethnicity, and language in national census* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 71-91.

<sup>127</sup> David Graham, Marlena Schmool and Stanley Waterman, 'Jews in Britain: a Snapshot of the 2001 Census', *Institute for Jewish Policy Research*, 1 (2007), 5.

<sup>128</sup> Kenneth E. Collins, 'Maintaining a Jewish Identity in Scotland' in John Beech, Owen Hand, Mark Mulhern and Jeremy Weston, eds., *Scottish Life and Society: The Individual and Community Life, a Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*, 9 (Edinburgh: John Donald Ltd., 2005), 490.

<sup>129</sup> Graham, Schmool and Waterman, 'Jews in Britain', 15.

perceived from the outside as a cohesive body; by some, even as a kind of unitary organism. In truth it is more a community of communities...Ideology, personality, geography, organizational interests, local concerns, and the habits of history, give the whole a fissiparous, not to say at times an apparently 'fissile' character.'<sup>130</sup> Others who have written on the history of Jews in Wales have referred to Welsh Jewry as being made up of communities in the plural sense or a 'community of communities', including Ursula Henriques and David and Hal Weitzman.<sup>131</sup>

Nevertheless, what is meant here by a 'Jewish community'? While the term is problematic and has traditionally been defined in Jewish culture as a *kehillah*, a 'Jewish community' is defined in this thesis as a self-conscious and unified entity whose members interact in religious worship and/or communal activities. This thesis also wishes to point out that a 'Jewish community' is not necessarily defined by a geographical location or boundary, for, as we shall see, most, if not all, of Wales' Jewish communities served Jewish families and individuals who lived away from their population or spiritual centres.

Compared with other nations of the Jewish Diaspora, the geography of Wales is comparatively compact, but one explanation for the development of numerous Jewish communities in Wales is the makeup of the Welsh landscape itself. The topography of Wales, with its mountainous core has essentially divided the principality into two distinct parts, the north and the south. Indeed, communications links in Wales historically ran, and continue to run, from west to east, and although by the middle of the twentieth century a complex network of railways had emerged; in the early twenty-first century, with the exception of the A470 main road and a passenger plane that departs daily from Cardiff International Airport to Anglesey, there is still no direct and immediate route from north to south.

Not only were, and are, poor communication links between north and south Wales Jewry affected by issues of access, they are also affected by geographical distance. Indeed, the small Jewish communities of north Wales were all situated some hundred and fifty miles from their nearest Jewish centres in south Wales, and as we shall see, they had more contact with their closer, metropolitan, and English Jewish neighbours in Liverpool and Manchester.

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<sup>130</sup> Israel Finestien, 'The Changing Governance of Anglo-Jewry 1950-2000' in Selwyn I. Troen, ed.. *Jewish Centres and Peripheries: Europe between America and Israel Fifty years after World War II* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 155.

<sup>131</sup> Henriques, *The Jews of South Wales*, viii; Weitzman and Weitzman, 'The Jews in Wales', 25.

The same can be said for the Jewish communities of south Wales, who appear to have enjoyed close relations with each other and with nearby Jewish centres in England such as Bristol. For instance, every issue of the short-lived periodical, the *South Wales Jewish Review* (published in 1904), included articles on Bristol Jewry, while the Cardiff-based *Bimah* magazine (first published in 1994), often features announcements and sections relating to Jews living in Bristol.<sup>132</sup>

This thesis refers to a number of Wales' Jewish centres as 'small Jewish communities.' But what is meant here by a 'small Jewish community', and how 'small' is 'small'? According to Lee Shai Weissbach, there is 'no previously developed and widely accepted definition of what constitutes a small Jewish community.'<sup>133</sup> In its absence, he identifies 'small Jewish communities' as 'those with triple-digit populations' with 'reported Jewish populations of at least 100 but fewer than 1,000 individuals.'<sup>134</sup> This is because 'settlements of fewer than 100 Jews were unlikely to have attained the critical mass necessary to constitute full-fledged communities.'<sup>135</sup> Although Weissbach was specifically referring to small Jewish communities in the United States, the same criteria cannot be used in identifying Wales' small Jewish communities. In terms of their overall history, the size of the communities ranged from twelve at their smallest to 3,500 at their greatest, and thus a number of Jewish communities in Wales do not fit Weissbach's 'triple-digit' model of a small Jewish community. Yet, although approximately fifteen Jewish communities in Wales numbered less than a hundred Jews at their peak (see appendix A), each one of these communities were of sufficient size to form congregations with functioning synagogues, and its members pursued to live a Jewish way of life against all odds. Thus, this thesis defines 'small Jewish communities' as 'those with double or triple-digit populations.' Moreover, it is important to note that the size of a Jewish community fluctuates and it is never static. Therefore, a 'large' Jewish community may become a 'small' Jewish community. This was

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<sup>132</sup> The first issue of the *South Wales Jewish Review* (January 1904) described the periodical as 'a monthly record of the Social and General Topics of the South Wales and West of England Jewish Communities'. See, the *South Wales Jewish Review* (January-December 1904), D/D SHC 22/1-12, West Glamorgan Archives (henceforth WGA). See, for instance, *Bimah* 3 (July 1995), 18; 13 (January 1998), 25; 15 (July 1998), 46; 17 (December 1998), 13; 19 (May 1999), 5; 42 (April 2005), 28; 46 (April 2006), 47.

<sup>133</sup> Lee S. Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-town America: a History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 28

<sup>134</sup> Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 28.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

particularly true for Swansea Jewry from around 1939 onwards, and Cardiff Jewry from around 2004.<sup>136</sup>

As well as communities, it is important to note that there were, and *are*, examples of ‘isolated Jews’ in Wales. That is Jews, who, for various reasons, are to be found living away from established Jewish centres. Indeed, Jews are to be found throughout the principality in regions without established Hebrew congregations such as Ceredigion and Anglesey. Jewish writer, Jasmine Donahaye, for example, works as a creative writing lecturer at Swansea University, but lives in a village in Ceredigion which is situated some one hundred miles from the nearest Jewish community. Other examples include Liverpool-born Devra Applebaum, who works as a school teacher in Llanelli, but resides with her family in Carmarthen. This is not a unique phenomenon to Welsh Jewry, however, but is a common feature of many Jewish Diasporas. Abrams’ *Caledonian Jews*, for instance, looks at what he terms the ‘remote Jews’ of the Scottish Highlands— Jews who choose to live away from a Jewish community and Jewish practice—while Freedman and Parkes speak of ‘outsider’ Jews, ‘individuals who are not connected with any such (Jewish) body.’<sup>137</sup> With exceptions to these studies, the existing literature on British Jewry gives little attention to the historical experiences of rural and ‘isolated’ Jews. The opposite can be said of literature on American Jewry, where studies on ‘small-town Jews’ is growing. Most notable are the works of Michael Hoberman Amy Hill Shevitz, Ewa Morawska and Lee Shai Weissbach.<sup>138</sup> Although these Jews are described as ‘small-town’ or belonging to ‘small communities’, their isolation and distance from major American Jewish centres are significant factors to these studies. In his *Jewish life in Small-Town America*, Weissbach notes that ‘Small communities have always been fundamental features in the American Jewish landscape’ and adds ‘It would be a mistake to think that the full story of the American Jewish experience can be told without considering the history of small-town Jewish life.’<sup>139</sup> The same can be said for the history of Welsh Jewry. Welsh Jews, and British Jews as a whole, have predominantly been industrial and urban dwellers, attracted by the economic opportunities offered by towns and cities, but a

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<sup>136</sup> *JYB*, 1939 and 2004.

<sup>137</sup> Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 11; Maurice Freedman and James. W. Parkes, eds., *A Minority in Britain: Social Studies of the Anglo-Jewish Community* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1955), 64.

<sup>138</sup> Michael Hoberman, *How Strange it Seems: the Cultural Life of Jews in Small-town New England* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008) ; Ewa Morawska, *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890-1940* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999); Amy H. Shevitz, *Jewish Communities on the Ohio River: a History* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2007); Weissbach, *Jewish Life*.

<sup>139</sup> Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 4-5.



significant minority lived, and continue to live, in rural parts. It is important to include these Jews in this thesis therefore, and not only focus on the histories of Jews living in established Jewish centres. Their histories are critical for a fuller understanding of the Jewish experience in Wales.

The chapters that follow are, in general, thematic rather than chronological or narrative in structure. Chapter One outlines the history of Jewish settlement in Wales from the presence of individual Jews in the Medieval era to the establishment of Jewish communities between the mid-eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. The chapter examines both how and why Jews came to Wales, and also explores the reasons behind their decision to settle in certain towns and regions of the principality. In addition, this chapter examines the early occupational patterns of Jewish immigrant males in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Wales.

Between the mid-eighteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries, all Jewish communities established in the principality were Orthodox in practice. Chapter Two explores the particular patterns of religious and communal life in these communities. It argues that Wales' smaller Jewish communities were not simply microcosms of its larger Jewish centres, and that the way Jewish life unfolded in these communities, both religiously and socially, depended heavily on demographic, financial and geographical factors. Indeed, understanding how Jewish life in Wales' smaller Jewish communities both resembled and diverged from the Jewish experiences in the principality's larger Jewish centres can help us appreciate both the complex character of Welsh Jewry, and British Jewry as a whole.

Chapter Three examines the impact that Jewish persecution in 1930s Nazi Germany and the Second World War that followed had on Jewish communities in Wales, and Wales more generally, between 1933 and 1945. This period witnessed the last large-scale immigration of Jews to Wales, and comprised both European Jewish refugees who were fleeing Nazi anti-Semitism, and English Jews who evacuated to the principality during the war years to escape the threat of air raids in major English cities such as Liverpool, Manchester, and London.

Chapter Four explores the relationship between non-Jews and Jews in Wales during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a topic that has remained largely unexplored by

scholars. In fact, non-Jewish and Jewish relations in Wales have long been summarised by the Tredegar riots of 1911, an event which has been used by historians such as Alderman and Rubinstein to make wider claims of Wales as either an ‘anti-Semitic’ or a ‘philo-Semitic’ nation. The purpose of this chapter is to look beyond the events of 1911 and examine how non-Jews in Wales reacted to the presence of Jews in a broader context. It offers a balanced and comprehensive view of the relationship between non-Jews and Jews in the principality, by exploring examples of both tolerance and prejudice. In doing so, it hopes to contribute to the ever growing scholarly literature which challenges traditional perceptions of Wales as an inherently tolerant nation.<sup>140</sup>

Chapter Five focuses on the importance of context and ‘place’ in history, by examining the interaction between Jews and their Welsh surroundings. It explores how Jews have engaged with Welsh culture, both Anglophone and Welsh-language, and how elements of Welshness have been incorporated into Jewish cultural traditions. The chapter also focuses on Jewish responses to Welsh identity and asks whether the principality’s Jewish population, with their ancestral heritage and religious culture originating from elsewhere, has ever felt an affinity and a sense of belonging to Wales. By doing so, it is hoped that historians will begin to appreciate the diverse make-up of British Jewry and avoid wide-sweeping generalisations that the Welsh-Jewish experience simply mirrored the ‘Anglo-Jewish’ experience.

As mentioned above, Welsh-Jewish history in the twentieth century has long been a story of demographic decline. Chapter Six will therefore examine both how and why Wales’ Jewish population declined so dramatically throughout the twentieth century, but also wishes to point out the endurance of many of the principality’s Jewish communities in the late twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries. The conclusion provides a summary of the core arguments made in both the introduction and the main-body of the thesis.

This thesis hopes to provide as comprehensive a picture of the history of Jewish communities in Wales, as well as those Jewish individuals and their families scattered across the principality, as is currently possible from the available records. It also aims to dispel some

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<sup>140</sup> See, for example, Donahaye, *Whose People?*; Evans, O’Leary and Williams, *A Tolerant Nation?*; Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, memory and identity: Italians and nation-building in Wales, 1940–2010’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Bangor University, 2012); Glenn Jordan, “‘We never really noticed you were coloured’: post-colonialist reflections on immigrants and minorities in Wales”, in Jane Aaron and Chris Williams, eds., *Postcolonial Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 55-81.

of the myths and conjecture of Welsh Jewry, and also to counterbalance the overwhelming negativity with which this topic has been treated in the past. A historical study of Welsh Jewry will undoubtedly deepen our knowledge of the history of Wales and its people, and will also shed new light on the picture of Welsh and British Jewish history more generally.

## 1. The Growth and Development of Welsh Jewry

The first documented Jewish settlers in Britain arrived in England in the wake of the Norman Conquest in 1066.<sup>1</sup> However, when Jews first made contact with Wales is more of a mystery since there appear to have been no settled communities prior to the eighteenth century. Jews in England resided first in London, but began to establish communities elsewhere in the country throughout the twelfth century. Significant Jewish settlements were founded in a number of English towns that lay close to the Welsh Marches such as Hereford and Bristol, but most scholars have seen such settlements as the furthest limits of Jewish westward penetration on the British Isles during this time. In 1992, for instance, John Gillingham wrote that ‘there were no Jewish settlements anywhere in Scotland, Wales, or Ireland’, but they were found in England since ‘English society had shared to the full in that fundamental socio-economic and cultural transformation of Europe. By contrast, Celtic society had not—or hardly at all.’<sup>2</sup> Patricia Skinner adds that ‘had English rule spread faster to Wales, Scotland and Ireland, then the remit of the Jewish Exchequer might well have extended to those territories too’ but notes that ‘there is some fragmentary evidence for a Welsh and Irish presence or involvement by Jews before their departure...’.<sup>3</sup>

This ‘fragmentary evidence’ of a Jewish presence in twelfth-century Wales is explored by Joe Hillaby, who speaks not of ‘communities’, but individual Jews who were found in the marcher lands of south Wales in the thirteenth century, and paid an annual fee to the local lord for protection and residence. He mentions the presence of five Jews, including Isaac, a Jew in Abergavenny who paid 5 marks, £3 6s 8d in 1256-57 for an annual licence, Vives son of Vives who was present in Abergavenny in 1277, and a Jew named David who died at Caerleon in 1278.<sup>4</sup> He also notes an unnamed Jew at Chepstow in 1270/71 and Peter the Jew in the same town in 1283.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pollins, *Economic History*, 15. No decisive evidence has been adduced to show the presence of Jewish settlers in Britain before the eleventh century, but there is some varied evidence worthy of consideration indicative of the presence of Jews in Roman Britain. For more on this, see Shimon Applebaum, ‘Were there Jews in Roman Britain?’, *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 17 (1951-52), 189-205.

<sup>2</sup> John Gillingham, ‘Conquering the Barbarians: War and Chivalry in Twelfth-Century Britain’, *The Haskins Society Journal*, 4 (1992), 83.

<sup>3</sup> Patricia Skinner, ed., *The Jews in Medieval Britain* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Joe Hillaby, ‘Jewish Colonisation in the Twelfth Century’, in Skinner, *The Jews*, 39.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Writing in 1903, Edward A. Lewis noted that the ‘garrison towns’ of the marcher lands of south Wales were ‘inhabited and visited by Norse, Fleming, French, and English merchants with an occasional Jew’ between 1081 and 1282.<sup>6</sup> Although Lewis adds in his footnotes that ‘there were not many Jews in Wales beyond those radiating from the Jewries of Hereford and Bristol in the Marcher towns’, his attempts to discover examples of a Jewish presence in other parts of medieval Wales have remained at best unconvincing.<sup>7</sup> His evidence of a Jewish presence in north Wales during the middle ages, for instance, stems from ‘the typical charter of the North Welsh boroughs’, which ‘includes the clause prohibiting the residence of Jews within their liberties’.<sup>8</sup> Charters of such Edwardian boroughs as Caernarfon, Conwy, Criccieth, Flint and Rhuddlan of 1284, of Harlech in 1285 and even Bala in 1324 provide ‘that Jews shall not at any time dwell in the said Borough’.<sup>9</sup> But as David Stephenson rightfully points out, ‘these clauses represent common-form exclusions rather than expulsions’.<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Campbell adds that Jews ‘are alluded to in the definitions of the privileges of some newly formed boroughs in north Wales during the thirteenth century, but only inasmuch as such boroughs had the right to exclude Jewish persons from their borders’.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, these charters are merely suggestive of previous Jewish settlement in the regions in which the newly created Edwardian boroughs were planted. However, Lewis is not the only one to cite the charters as evidence of Jewish colonisation in pre-expulsion north

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<sup>6</sup> Edward A. Lewis, ‘The Development of Industry and Commerce in Wales during the Middle Ages’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 17 (1903), 101.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, ‘The Development of Industry’, 103.

<sup>9</sup> Extract from Edward I’s charter to the town of Caernarfon (1284), XM/5564/63, Caernarfon Record Office (henceforth CRO). On 18 July 1290, Edward I issued an edict expelling Jews from England and English Crown Lands. All Jews had to leave by 1 November 1290 (All Saint’s Day). The exact causes of the expulsion are complex. After the Norman conquest of 1066, Jews were permitted to settle in London and other large towns of medieval England exclusively to work as royal tax collectors and moneylenders, activities forbidden to Catholics. On his accession to the throne in 1272, Edward I found the Jews so impoverished that their economic importance to the treasury had become negligible. By the *Statutum de Judaismo of 1275*, the king endeavoured to effect a radical change in the occupations and mode of life of his Jewish subjects. Jews were forbidden to practice usury and all Jews had to live in towns under direct royal authority. A few of the wealthier Jews were engaged in commercial activities, but others continued to practice usury clandestinely. This led in 1278 to widespread arrests and hangings. Edward may have contemplated a relaxation of the situation by permitting a resumption of usury but for a variety of economic and political reasons, and from sheer rapacity, he eventually banished all Jews from England and English Crown Lands in Wales. Jews were allowed to take all their money and personal belongings with them, but their bonds and real estate reverted to the Crown. For more on this, see Robin R. Mundill, *England’s Jewish Solution. Experiment and Expulsion, 1262-1290* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> David Stephenson, ‘Jewish Presence in, and Absence from, Wales in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries’, *Jewish Historical Studies*, 43 (2011), 8.

<sup>11</sup> Campbell, ‘Jewish Community in Britain’, in Gilley and Sheils, *History of Religion in Britain*, 72.

Wales. Dan Cohn-Sherbok's key to a map of European Jewish expulsion in his *Atlas of Jewish History* suggests that Jewish communities were found in north Wales at this time, and a timeline of Welsh Jewry featured in the *Jewish Renaissance* magazine notes that 'Charters for newly created boroughs in north Wales permit the exclusion of Jews, testifying to their presence'.<sup>12</sup> Pamela Fletcher Jones too suggests that 'Jews were banished from all the seven towns in north Wales in which they had previously resided' because of the charters.<sup>13</sup> She adds that a few Jewish families lived in areas such as Beaumaris and Newborough on Anglesey during the middle ages, but fails to include any evidence to support her claims.<sup>14</sup> It is likely that she obtained this information from Albert M. Hyamson's earlier study on the history of Jews in England, which states: 'other towns that sheltered Jews during the two centuries preceding the expulsion were....Beaumaris...Newborough...'.<sup>15</sup> Yet, he provides no evidence for this assertion.

Furthermore, Lewis added that 'Jewish merchants and artisans hailing from south Wales are to be found among the free citizens of Dublin early in the thirteenth century. We find Solomon of Cardiff, Abram the son of Bernard of Cardigan, Adam of Newport and Adam of South Wales'.<sup>16</sup> But an examination of the sources on which Lewis based his findings reveal that not once are the men described as Jews or distinguished as such from other Dublin citizens between 1236 and 1237.<sup>17</sup> Although Lewis must have felt that Solomon, Abram and Adam were all Jewish-sounding names, Stephenson adds they are names that might well have been adopted by Christians and 'the likelihood is therefore that Lewis's Welsh Jews living in Ireland are an illusion'.<sup>18</sup>

More than a century after the publication of Lewis' paper, Stephenson draws our attention to thirteenth-century Caerleon, where he expands on Michael Adler's findings in 1939 that there existed a significant Jewish dynasty in the town. In a chapter on 'Jews of Medieval Bristol', Adler noted the existence of seven Jews with a connection to 'a wealthy family who

<sup>12</sup> Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Atlas of Jewish History* (London: Routledge, 1994), 91.

<sup>13</sup> Fletcher Jones, *The Jews of Britain*, 36.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Hyamson, *A History of the Jews*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis, 'The Development of Industry', 129.

<sup>17</sup> John T. Gilbert, ed., *Historic and Municipal Documents of Ireland, 1172-1320: from the Archives of the City of Dublin* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1870), 2-48 and 136-40.

<sup>18</sup> Stephenson, 'Jewish Presence', 9; There are examples of other names similar to the Jewish sounding names picked by Lewis in *Historic and Municipal Documents of Ireland, 1172-1320*, including Adam de Cardigan, but this name is ignored in Lewis' findings. See page 5.

had migrated from Caerleon in South Wales to Bristol' during the middle of the thirteenth century.<sup>19</sup> The family's patriarch is suggested to have been Josce of Caerleon, who had two sons, Isaac, a Bristol chirographer from the 1250s to c.1274, and Aaron. Isaac of Caerleon had three sons Cresse, Samuel, and Abraham.<sup>20</sup> There is also mention of David the Jew who died at Caerleon in 1278, who Adler suggests may have been a son or grandson of Josce, but there is no clear evidence for that surmise.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to examples of Jewish 'residence' in pre-expulsion Wales, Stephenson explores 'a few indications of Jewish financial activity in or pertaining to Wales' during this time.<sup>22</sup> As evidence, he refers to contemporary Pipe Rolls, a collection of financial records maintained by the English Exchequer. We are told of the 1130-31 Pipe Roll which records Richard, son of Gilbert fitz Richard, whose forces had occupied much of Ceredigion in the second decade of the twelfth century, as a significant debtor to the Jews, and the Pipe Rolls from the 1190s that record the bishops of Bangor owing some £45 of the debts due on the account of Aaron of Lincoln, who was believed to be the richest member of the Jewish community in England.<sup>23</sup> Stephenson adds that the debt:

may relate to a continuation of the building campaign at the cathedral that had begun in the first half of the century. Yet there is no evidence that Aaron had actually visited Wales, or indeed had been resident there. The money might have been borrowed through an intermediary, or the bishop may have encountered Aaron or one of his agents while in England.<sup>24</sup>

Another example is the debts owed by the abbot of Margam to a Jew during the 1250s. In 1255 it was noted that two debts were to be acquitted on the abbot's behalf: two and a half marks to 'Cress son of Mill', and two marks to 'Sampson son of Mauger'.<sup>25</sup> Whilst Sampson's patronymic is unlike any known Anglo-Jewish name, a 'Cresse son of Milo'

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Adler, *Jews of Medieval England* (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1939), 219.

<sup>20</sup> For references to Isaac of Caerleon see Zefira E. Rokéah, 'An Anglo-Jewish Assembly or "Mini-Parliament" in 1287', in Michael Prestwich, Richard Britnell and Robin Frame, eds., *Thirteenth Century England VIII: Proceedings of the Durham Conference 1999* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2001), 83-5; Hilary Jenkinson, ed., *Calendar of the Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews, III* (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1929), 133.

<sup>21</sup> Adler, *Jews of Medieval*, 219.

<sup>22</sup> Stephenson, 'Jewish presence', 11.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> Godfrey L. Clark, *Cartae et alia munimenta quae ad dominium de Glamorgancia pertinent, II* (Cardiff: William Lewis, 1910), 613, no. 586, quoted in Stephenson, 'Jewish presence', 12.

appears in the mid-thirteenth century amongst the prominent Jews of Bristol.<sup>26</sup> He was one of the Bristol chirographers in 1253, but there is no evidence to suggest that he took up residence in Wales. Furthermore, Martin Gilbert notes that the legend of the Wandering Jew had reached Carmarthen and Glamorgan in the Middle Ages and it is said that he visited these two areas at this time.<sup>27</sup> We are thus left with a fragmentary picture of a Jewish presence in medieval Wales. Though it is not yet possible, if ever will be, to construct a complete image of pre-expulsion Welsh Jewry it is at least clear that a number of individual Jews and one significant family group were present there.

After the expulsion in 1290, it appears that some Jews remained in remoter areas of England and Wales, where the control of the English crown was tenuous or even non-existent. Drawing on contemporary ministers' accounts, William Rees finds an extraordinary reference made to an unnamed Jew in the Carmarthenshire commote court of Maenor Deilo in 1386-7, a century after the expulsion.<sup>28</sup> For the next 350 years Jews officially ceased to exist in England and English crown lands in Wales. It was not until 1656 that Jews were allowed to remain in England and Wales, and because of this 1656 is officially marked as the year of readmission. But as Geoffrey Alderman reminds us, 'The "Readmission" was not a readmission at all'.<sup>29</sup>

Oliver Cromwell is often credited in officially readmitting the Jews, and as a consequence, is 'known in Jewish history for his religious tolerance and his friendship for the Jews'.<sup>30</sup> Yet, despite favouring readmission, neither he nor the monarchs that succeeded him ever voided Edward I's edict of expulsion or formally invited Jews to settle in England and Wales.<sup>31</sup> In 1655, a Dutch Rabbi named Menasseh ben Israel arrived in London with a petition for Cromwell, *The Humble Addresses*. It asked for Jews to be allowed to live in the Kingdom of England as citizens and their religion be tolerated. The Council of State referred the matter to a sub-committee to consider, and in December 1655 a conference on the

<sup>26</sup> Adler, *Jews of Medieval*, 213-9.

<sup>27</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Routledge Atlas of Jewish History*, 8th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 66.

<sup>28</sup> William Rees, *South Wales and the March, 1284-1415: a Social and Agrarian Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), 222.

<sup>29</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *The Communal Gadfly: Jews, British Jews and the Jewish state: Asking the Subversive Questions* (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2009), 15.

<sup>30</sup> David Bridger and Samuel Wolk, eds., *The New Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Behrman, 1976), 101. Cromwell was not only motivated by religious tolerance. He also believed that Jewish tradesmen and financiers would be of economic benefit to English trade. See Barry Coward, *Oliver Cromwell* (Harlow: Longman, 1991), 137.

<sup>31</sup> Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 26.



question of Jewish readmission was held at Whitehall. Although the conference's outcome was inconclusive and no official statement was made, jurists expressed that no legal hindrance existed. In 1656, ben Israel and a number of London Jews responded by petitioning to the Lord Protector, requesting that Jews be tolerated. Jews living in the boundaries of the Kingdom of England could henceforth worship openly and bury their dead in public Jewish cemeteries.<sup>32</sup> This situation lasted uninterrupted until 1664, when the Conventicle Act forbade religious services outside the auspices of the Church of England. In August that year, the Privy Council responded stating that Jews were exempt from the act, and were able to continue to live and trade as before, so long as they did so peacefully and obeyed the government and the law of the land.<sup>33</sup> Thus Jews were now safe to live in England and Wales openly, but readmission, as such, had not been officially sanctioned.

When the first openly-practising Jew emerged in Wales after the mid-seventeenth century is difficult to ascertain. However, the earliest mention of a Jew in Wales that we can find during this period is in Llandysul in the 1720s. In his book *Hanes Plwyf Llandyssul* (1896), Rev. William J. Davies mentioned that an Edward Jones of Builth Wells was appointed a vicar in Llandysul in 1716, and 'married a wealthy Jewess, and had 24 children, twelve of whom were born and raised in their home, Dol-llan'.<sup>34</sup> How a Jewish woman married a vicar and came to live in Llandysul at this time is a mystery, but we do know that her name was Anne, and one of her children, Isabella, was christened in Llandysul in 1722.<sup>35</sup> Edward Jones died in 1744 and was 'buried alongside his wife in the church's chancel', revealing that Anne had passed away before the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Neville Samuels notes that a list of lodge members at the Nag's Head and Star, Carmarthen, from 1725, 'contains the names of several Jewish freemasons, among them William Samuel, a glover by trade', but we cannot be certain that these men were indeed Jews.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan, and Richard H. Popkin, eds., *Menasseh Ben Israel and his World* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 162.

<sup>33</sup> Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 28.

<sup>34</sup> William J. Davies, *Hanes Plwyf Llandyssul* (Llandysul: J. D. Lewis, 1896), 154; 'Priododd â boneddiges o Iuddewes gyfoethog, a bu iddynt 24 o blant, deuddeg o ba rhai y darfu iddynt fagu yn Nol-llan, eu cartref'. Translated from Welsh by author. I am grateful to Meic Birtwistle for pointing this source out to me.

<sup>35</sup> Davies, *Hanes Plwyf*, 154.

<sup>36</sup> Davies, *Hanes Plwyf*, 154; 'Bu farw yn 1744, a chladdwyd ef gyda'i wraig yng Nghangell yr Eglwys'. Translated from Welsh by author.

<sup>37</sup> Saunders, *Swansea Hebrew Congregation*, 29.

## Establishing Communities

The modern history of Welsh Jewry begins with the town of Swansea in the mid-eighteenth century, since it was here where the first Jewish community in the principality was established. However, its origins are ‘a matter of tradition rather than of definitive answer.’<sup>38</sup> The *Jewish Encyclopedia* records the birth of a Lazarus David in Swansea in 1734, who was later to become ‘one of the most active organisers of the earliest Canadian-Jewish community’ in Montreal.<sup>39</sup> Another early settler is said to be Solomon Lyons who established a business in Swansea in 1731.<sup>40</sup> It is these two names which led Neville Saunders to write in 1980 that the Swansea Hebrew Congregation could trace its origins back to 1730.<sup>41</sup> However, as Harold Pollins has recently pointed out this ‘is mere conjecture’ since the findings are based on oral tradition.<sup>42</sup> More reliable evidence can be found in a manuscript from 1859, which became the basis of an article that appeared in the *Herald of Wales* in 1933.<sup>43</sup> In 1950, Cecil Roth used the article in his monograph, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*, to write: ‘the first Jewish settler was David Michael, who came over from Germany as a refugee and settled in Swansea in 1741, together with Nathaniel Phillips, later a “banker” at Haverfordwest. Many years later, they were joined by two other Jews named respectively Cohen and Joseph.’<sup>44</sup>

In 1768, Wales’ first Jewish cemetery opened in the Town Hill area of Swansea, when a burial plot for Jews was granted to David Michael under a 99-year lease from the Swansea Corporation.<sup>45</sup> The creation of a separate cemetery marked the formal beginnings of a permanent Jewish community in Swansea. When Swansea Jewry first formed a *minyan* is uncertain, but by the 1770s Wales’ first synagogue was established in David Michael’s House in Wind Street. It was situated ‘at the back of his usual sitting-room’, and ‘was capable of containing thirty or forty persons’.<sup>46</sup> In 1789, the congregation moved to a room in the

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<sup>38</sup> Pollins, ‘The Swansea Jewish Community’, 35.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Lazarus David’ in *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1906), available online at: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4925-david> (last accessed 18/07/2013).

<sup>40</sup> Pollins, ‘The Swansea Jewish Community’, 35.

<sup>41</sup> Saunders, *Swansea Hebrew Congregation*, 29.

<sup>42</sup> Pollins, ‘The Swansea Jewish Community’, 35.

<sup>43</sup> *Herald of Wales*, 12 August 1933.

<sup>44</sup> Cecil Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*, 134.

<sup>45</sup> Transcription of the 1768 Counterpart Lease relating to the acquisition of a plot of land on Town Hill from the Burgesses of Swansea to David Michael, D/D SHC 26/1, WGA. Jonathan Campbell in his ‘Jewish Community of Britain’ wrongly wrote that ‘in 1780 the modest community was granted a piece of land to be used as a cemetery’, 437.

<sup>46</sup> *Herald of Wales*, 12 August 1933.

Strand, and by 1818 the community, now numbering over 100 Jews, was large enough to build a purpose-built synagogue, ‘the first....one ever raised in the Principality’.<sup>47</sup> According to the 1851 Religious Census of Wales and England it was located in Waterloo Street.<sup>48</sup> It served the Swansea Hebrew Congregation until 1859 when a bigger synagogue, large enough to accommodate 228 people, was erected in Goat Street (see appendix A1).<sup>49</sup>

The first mention of Jewish settlers in Cardiff that we can find are father and son Levi and Michael Marks, who arrived c. 1813 in what was then a small market town.<sup>50</sup> Levi’s origins are unknown, but we do know that he voluntarily enrolled as a soldier after the French invasion of Fishguard in 1796 and was stationed in Neath. Michael was born in 1791, but his place of birth is also unknown.<sup>51</sup> What we do know for certain, however, is that Michael’s younger siblings Rosetta (b. 1803); Mark (b.1798); and Solomon (b.1801), were all born in Neath.<sup>52</sup> In 1822 Levi Marks was recorded as a pawnbroker in Cardiff’s St. Mary’s Street, and in 1827 was listed alongside his son, Solomon, as a watchmaker and jeweller in the town.<sup>53</sup> Their successful establishment may have attracted other Jews to Cardiff. By 1841 there were enough Jews in the town that the second Marquis of Bute donated land at Highfield for use as a Jewish cemetery. Its establishment formally marked the foundation of an independent Jewish community in Cardiff.<sup>54</sup> The exact location of the first synagogue is a mystery, but the *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* reveals that in 1846 a room at the Cavalry Barracks in Union Street was donated to the congregation ‘free of all expense’ by Charles

<sup>47</sup> *Cambrian*, 23 May 1818.

<sup>48</sup> Gwynedd Jones and Williams, *The Religious Census of 1851*, 261.

<sup>49</sup> *JC*, 7 October 1859.

<sup>50</sup> Michael and Levi Marks are listed in a local trade directory from 1813, the former as a ‘watch maker’ and the latter as a ‘slop seller’. See *A Complete Directory and Guide to the Towns and Castles of Cardiff and Caerphilly, the City and Cathedral of Llandaff* (Cardiff: Thomas Ridd, 1813). Maurice Dennis once wrote that Michael and Levi Marks were ‘possibly brothers’, but Levi died in Cardiff in 1828 aged 74, and at that time Michael was 37-years-old. The age difference means that they were more likely father and son. See *CAJEX*, 1, 3 (1951), 29; *Cambrian*, 20 September 1828.

<sup>51</sup> The 1841 census notes that Michael Marks, then living in Swansea, was born in 1791, but no place of birth is given. The 1851 census was the first to include place of birth, but Michael Marks died in an omnibus accident between Newport and Bridgend in 1845. See *Cambrian*, 21 November 1845.

<sup>52</sup> See 1851 census. Henriques states that both Mark and Solomon Marks were the sons of Michael, but provides no evidence to substantiate her claim. It is likely that Henriques was simply repeating the information provided by Maurice Dennis in his first instalment of the history of the Cardiff Jewish community. However, a *JC* article written by Mark Marks in 1858 reveals that Michael Marks was his ‘late brother’ and Solomon Marks was also his brother. According to the *Cambrian*, Rosetta, ‘the only daughter of the late Mr. Levy Marks of Cardiff’ married a Samuel Marks of London in a Jewish ceremony at Michael Mark’s Cardiff home in 1830. See Henriques, ‘The Jewish Community of Cardiff’, in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 11; *CAJEX*, 1, 3 (1951), 29; *JC*, 25 June 1858; *Cambrian*, 17 July 1830.

<sup>53</sup> *Pigot’s Directory of South Wales* (1822); *The Law Advertiser*, 5 (1827), 94.

<sup>54</sup> A stone plaque on the cemetery wall reads: ‘This Ground was given for Jews Cemetery by the Most Noble Marquess of Bute A.D. 1841 A.M. 5602’.

Vachell, 'a liberal-minded townsman'.<sup>55</sup> In 1853, religious services were 'held in a large room in Trinity Street', and by 1855, the synagogue relocated to a 'room in Bute Street'.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the frequent change of synagogue premises was a typical feature of an infant Hebrew congregation, and reflected the growing number of congregants and the inadequacy of the accommodation in terms of size. The congregation continued to grow during the 1850s and by 1858 there were enough Jews in Cardiff that a purpose-built synagogue opened in East Terrace.<sup>57</sup> With accommodation for up to 100 worshippers, the synagogue served the Cardiff Jewish community until it closed in 1897, when a larger house of worship was consecrated in Cathedral Road, at the heart of where the Jewish community was then clustered (see appendix A2).<sup>58</sup>

Jews settled in nearby Newport from the 1840s onwards. Possibly the first Jew to move to Newport was Samuel Polak, a clothes dealer and outfitter, listed in *Hunt & Co.'s Directory* in 1848.<sup>59</sup> By 1852 he and his family were joined by Jacob Druiff (b.1809), a pawnbroker from Rotterdam, and his English-born wife, Sarah, and their children.<sup>60</sup> Another Jew living in Newport at that time was Abraham Isaacs, a Polish travelling salesman, who became the first president of the town's Hebrew Congregation.<sup>61</sup> The exact date of the congregation's formation is unknown, but a report in the *JC* from 1859 indicates that a small congregation was already in existence.<sup>62</sup> According to Geoffrey Alderman 'a synagogue was not opened at Newport till 1869'.<sup>63</sup> However, items in the *JC* suggest that a synagogue was in existence by 1862. In that year, the daughter of the community's first minister, Rev. A. Harfeld, married Abraham Freedman 'at the Jewish Synagogue, Newport.'<sup>64</sup> The synagogue moved to Llanarth Street in 1865, but by 1869 this 'temporary room' was 'totally inadequate' to

<sup>55</sup> *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian, Glamorgan, Monmouth, and Brecon Gazette*, 3 October 1846 (henceforth, *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*).

<sup>56</sup> James H. Clark, *Cardiff and its Neighbourhood* (Cardiff, 1853), 46. Clark also notes that services were held 'three times on Saturdays'. *Ewen's Guide and Directory for the Town of Cardiff and its Environs* (1855).

<sup>57</sup> *JC*, 11 June 1858. Confusingly, Michael Jolles and William and Hilary Rubinstein, have previously stated that between 1853 and 1858, Jews in Cardiff worshipped in a purpose-built synagogue in East Terrace, Bute Street. However, East Terrace was located approximately one mile north of Bute Street, and the *JC* clearly indicates that the East Terrace synagogue opened in 1858. Further confusing matters, Gwenfair Parry and Mari A. Williams once wrote that Cardiff's synagogue was 'established at East Terrace in 1854 with room for 300 people'. See, Jolles, Rubinstein and Rubinstein, *The Palgrave Dictionary*, 140; Gwenfair Parry and Mari A. Williams, *The Welsh Language and the 1891 Census* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 72.

<sup>58</sup> *JC*, 14 May 1897.

<sup>59</sup> *Hunt & Co.'s City of Bristol, Newport & Welch Towns Directory* (London, 1848).

<sup>60</sup> *JC*, 27 February 1852.

<sup>61</sup> *JC*, 15 April 1859.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Alderman, *Controversy and Crisis*, 57.

<sup>64</sup> *JC*, 24 January 1862.

accommodate 'the large and increasing number of coreligionists in the town'.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, a larger purpose-built place of worship was erected between Lewis Street and Francis Street, Pillgwenlly, and opened in March 1871 with accommodation for about 180 persons (see appendix A3).<sup>66</sup>

It was the economic development of these towns and the commercial opportunities they provided which accounted for the presence of Jews in Swansea, Cardiff and Newport during the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, from 1717 onwards, Swansea witnessed an influx in population in consequence of the growth of the copper industry. By 1800 the town became the copper-smelting centre of Britain and was the largest urban centre in Wales with over 10,000 inhabitants, according to the 1801 census.<sup>67</sup> At this time, Cardiff had a population of 1,870 making it only the twenty first largest town in Wales.<sup>68</sup> The opening of the Glamorganshire Canal in 1794 linked the town with the expanding iron industry in Merthyr, but it was the completion of the Bute West Dock in 1839 and the opening of the Taff Vale Railway in 1841, linking the docks with the developing collieries in the south Wales coalfield, which led to the town's growth and development. In 1841, its population had reached just over 10,000, but twenty years later this number had trebled to 33,000.<sup>69</sup> However, it was not for some years that Cardiff developed as a coal exporting port in any way comparable to that of Newport. The opening of the Monmouthshire Canal in 1799, linking Newport to the coal mining operations and ironworks in the eastern valleys, was vital in the town's development as a port. Newport's coal trade was exempt from the duty charged elsewhere on water-borne coal, resulting in the town becoming the chief coal port of south Wales by 1830. The growth in coal export led to the opening of a dock in 1842, which played an important part in the town's growth by the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, the developments created a situation in which there would be opportunities for Jewish merchants to make a living.

The first synagogue established in the south Wales valleys was at Merthyr Tydfil in 1848, but there were Jews residing in the town as early as the 1820s. One example is Polish-born Leah Bloom who had a daughter, Sophia, in Merthyr Tydfil in 1826. Her eldest

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<sup>65</sup> *JC*, 27 January 1865; *JC*, 4 June 1869.

<sup>66</sup> *Western Mail*, 24 March 1871.

<sup>67</sup> Jones, *Modern Wales*, 22.

<sup>68</sup> Harold Carter, *Against the Odds: The Survival of Welsh Identity* (Cardiff: Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2010), 120.

<sup>69</sup> Marcus Tanner, *Last of the Celts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 196.

daughter, Ann, born in Poland in 1811, was also living in Merthyr at that time and married an Austrian-born pawnbroker named Ephraim Harris. Furthermore, the 1841 census lists several Jewish families already resident in the town. Joseph Barnett (50) from Russia was a pawnbroker living with his wife, Hannah Leah, and his three children, all born in Swansea. Jacob Isaac (48) from Poland was a jewellery hawker living with his wife, Lydia, and their three children. Benjamin Samuel (38), an unmarried jeweller from Poland was living with the Lyons family, as was twenty-five-year-old Michael Rosenbloom, a watchmaker from Poland. The usual date given for the foundation of the Merthyr Hebrew Congregation is 1848, although there is no evidence for such a claim.<sup>70</sup> Rather unusually, the *JC* did not report on the foundation of the Merthyr Hebrew Congregation, which was often the case when a new congregation was established.<sup>71</sup> However, a synagogue was erected in Victoria Street in 1848, but little is known about this place of worship.<sup>72</sup> By 1852 the number of Jewish families in Merthyr Tydfil had grown to twenty, and congregants were ‘in want of a proper Place of Worship.’<sup>73</sup> A site at the rear of the newly erected Temperance Hall in John Street was purchased, and the foundation stone was laid on 20 May 1852 by the congregation’s president, Joseph Barnett.<sup>74</sup> The community continued to grow and by 1874 there were ‘upwards of sixty Jewish families’ attending the synagogue.<sup>75</sup> As a result, a larger place of worship was required, and in 1877 a more substantial synagogue opened in Church Street, accommodating up to 280 worshippers (see appendix A4).<sup>76</sup>

A synagogue was founded in Pontypridd in 1867, but there were Jews in the town as early as the 1840s. Two Polish-born brothers, David and Charles Goodman, the former a watchmaker and jeweller and the latter a pawnbroker and clothier, were the earliest Jewish settlers in Pontypridd. David may have arrived first as his eldest daughter, Theresa, was born in the town in 1847, but both brothers were listed as living in Pontypridd in the 1851 census. Initially Pontypridd’s Jewish inhabitants went to Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil for religious services, but owing to the expense and inconvenience of travelling to these congregations it

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<sup>70</sup> See, for instance, Alderman, *Controversy and Crisis*, 56; Davies, Jenkins, Baines and Lynch, *The Welsh Academy*, 551; Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*, 1950.

<sup>71</sup> Abrams, *Caledonian Jews.*, 42.

<sup>72</sup> Jones and Williams, *The Religious Census*, 175.

<sup>73</sup> *JC*, 27 February 1852.

<sup>74</sup> *JC*, 28 May 1852.

<sup>75</sup> *JC*, 21 August 1874.

<sup>76</sup> *JC*, 6 April 1977; 1 June 1877.

was decided to establish a place of worship in the town.<sup>77</sup> According to Ursula Henriques, ‘the issue of a synagogue was raised as early as 1867’, but ‘nothing happened’ and a synagogue was not obtained until 1895.<sup>78</sup> However, an article from the *Cardiff Times* reveals that a place of worship was established by Pontypridd Jewry in June 1867, when a school-room was converted into a ‘cozy little synagogue’ with accommodation for up to fifty worshippers.<sup>79</sup> The synagogue’s address is a mystery, other than the *JC* mentions of ‘a small building...behind the old local board offices’ and ‘near Penuel Chapel’, revealing that it stood near the centre of the town.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, Henriques is correct to note that ‘in 1879 there were barely enough Jews in the town to form a *minyan*’ since the congregation had ‘dwindled down to only three families’, according to the *JC*.<sup>81</sup> Despite the decline, *minyanim* continued owing to the attendance of Jews ‘from the surrounding neighbourhood’.<sup>82</sup>

According to David Morris, Pontypridd was the last valley community to establish a synagogue before the 1880s.<sup>83</sup> However, an article in the *JC* reveals that a place of worship was consecrated at Pontypool in the Monmouthshire valley in 1867. It stated:

...a similar congregation now exists in Pontypool, south Wales. The congregation is very small, consisting, in fact, of three families only, with sufficient males to form a ‘*minyan*.’ Yet I am proud to say they consecrated a place of worship for themselves last week, and have engage the services of the Rev. D. Rosenthal....consecration of the synagogue on the 10th inst.<sup>84</sup>

Little is known about the synagogue, owing to a lack of congregational records. We do not, for example, have its address, as one was never listed in the *JC*, *JYB* or local trade directories. But the *Monmouthshire Merlin* reveals that it was ‘a very neat and beautiful little synagogue’ and situated in Pontypool’s Wainfelin district.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, because of its small size, we can assume that the community was unable to afford a purpose-built *shul*. Rather, it is more likely that congregants met in a room of a house or a building that was adapted for use as a

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<sup>77</sup> *JC*, 26 July 1867.

<sup>78</sup> Anthony Glaser and Ursula R.Q. Henriques, ‘The Valleys Communities’, in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 57; Strangely, Henriques notes earlier on page 47 that ‘Pontypridd opened its synagogue in 1867’.

<sup>79</sup> *Cardiff Times*, 8 June 1867; *JC*, 26 July 1867. The synagogue opened on 4th July 1867. See *Cardiff Times*, 22 June 1867.

<sup>80</sup> *JC*, 25 October 1895.

<sup>81</sup> *JC*, 3 October 1879.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Morris, ‘The History of the Welsh Jewish Communities’, 16.

<sup>84</sup> *JC*, 1 March 1867. See also, *County Observer and Monmouthshire Central Advertiser*, 16 February 1867.

<sup>85</sup> *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 16 February 1867.

synagogue. Individuals who formed the nucleus of the Pontypool Jewish community during the 1860s include Wolfe Ansell from Prussia, a clothing and furniture broker, and his wife Phoebe; and Polish-born Solomon and Leah Bloom, pawnbrokers, who formerly resided in Merthyr Tydfil.

Neath was another town in south Wales to establish a synagogue before the 1880s. It has already been mentioned that Jews resided in Neath in the nineteenth century, and among them was Polish watchmaker Lazarus Samuel, who was a member of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation in the 1860s.<sup>86</sup> However, because Neath was situated some eight miles away he decided in 1868 to build a 'little synagogue' for his family and Jews residing in the town.<sup>87</sup> The synagogue was used only once a year for *Rosh Hashanah* services, and continued to be used up until the 1880s. An Ordnance Survey Plan of Neath from 1878 reveals that the synagogue could seat thirty people and was situated behind Samuel's Buildings and in front of the ruins of Neath castle.<sup>88</sup>

A Hebrew congregation comprising of a dozen families was established in Tredegar in January 1873.<sup>89</sup> Lewis Lyons, a pawnbroker from Poland, was elected president, and a portion of his house was adapted for use as a synagogue.<sup>90</sup> By June 1873, this 'temporary synagogue' became 'inadequate' as 'a consequence of the continual increase of members'.<sup>91</sup> However, it would be another eleven years until a purpose-built *shul* opened in the town.<sup>92</sup>

What brought these few Jews to the south Wales valleys? Up until the last decades of the eighteenth century, the upland valleys of south Wales had been a rural and thinly populated area, dominated by an agricultural economy. Nevertheless, from the 1780s onwards, the region underwent industrialisation, resulting in an influx in population. In particular, the development of the iron industry in Merthyr Tydfil attracted a large number of workmen and their families, initially from neighbouring parishes but then from further afield. In 1801, for instance, Merthyr Tydfil became one of the largest towns in the principality, with

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<sup>86</sup> *JC*, 30 April 1869.

<sup>87</sup> *JC*, 17 September 1880.

<sup>88</sup> Ordnance Plan of the Parish of Neath (Southampton, 1878), O.S., British Library (henceforth BL).

<sup>89</sup> *JC*, 3 January 1873.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *JC*, 27 June 1873.

<sup>92</sup> *JC*, 2 May 1884.



7705 inhabitants.<sup>93</sup> By 1851, its population had grown to 46,378, and the town became the world's chief centre of iron-making.<sup>94</sup> At the same time, Pontypool developed as a manufacturing centre for tin and also possessed its own iron works, which offered 'employment to a large population' whose 'numbers [were]...rapidly increasing'.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the 1868 edition of *Slater's Directory* noted that Tredegar owed its development to 'the immense iron works of the Tredegar Iron Company'.<sup>96</sup> As a result, there was a demand for various commercial services to supply the expanding population, and such an area would have been attractive to Jewish migrants wishing to gain a foothold in the British economy. Although Pontypridd did not become heavily industrialised during this period, remaining a market town, the opening of a station on the Taff Vale Railway from Cardiff to Merthyr in 1841 certainly helped guide some early Jewish settlers to the town as they ventured into the south Wales valleys looking for economic opportunities.

Beyond these communities, a number of early Jewish settlers and their families lived in isolation in various towns and villages in south Wales. The 1841 census lists Wolfe Isaac (57) from Poland as a railway proprietor (an usual profession for a Jew), living in Abergavenny with his English-born wife, Anne (62), and their two sons, Isaac (30) and David (28), the former a pawnbroker and clothier, while the 1861 census lists traveller Barnet Harris (60), from Poland, living in Kenfig Hill. Alderman once wrote that 'there is no record of Jews in Llanelli before the 1880s', but the 1851 census lists an Aaron Moses (55) from Prussia as a 'traveller in jewellery' living in Llanelli, while Abraham Rapport (27), from Poland, worked as a Glazier in the town in 1861, where he lived with his wife, Sarah, and their two sons. Business partners Jacob Lazarus and Samuel Wolf were present in Carmarthen as early as the 1820s. It is not known where they were from, but their jewellery and pawnbroking business in the town had dissolved in 1824.<sup>97</sup>

As for north Wales, there is no known record of Jews making contact until the first decades of the nineteenth century. The earliest Jews whose names are known are Michael Hyman and his younger brother, Joseph, who were jewellery hawkers from 'foreign parts' in

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<sup>93</sup> Davies, Jenkins, Baines and Lynch, *Welsh Academy*, 551.

<sup>94</sup> Davies, Jenkins, Baines and Lynch, *Welsh Academy*, 552.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Slater's Directory: Western* (1868).

<sup>97</sup> *The Law Advertiser*, 29 January 1824.

north Wales in the 1820s.<sup>98</sup> By 1828 Joseph was listed in a trade directory as a watch and clock maker in Bangor.<sup>99</sup> His name, however, vanishes in subsequent directories suggesting that his business and presence in Bangor was short-lived. Others include John Aronson and his brother Solomon, from Prussia, who worked as jewellery pedlars throughout Wales during the 1820s, and set up a permanent watch and jewellery business in Bangor by 1828, 'in consequence of increased patronage' from 'the Nobility, Gentry, and the Public of North Wales'.<sup>100</sup> By 1836 Solomon left for Liverpool, while Joseph continued the business in Bangor, raising eight children with his wife, Maria, and became one of 'the most respectable residents of the neighbourhood'.<sup>101</sup> In 1940, Joseph's granddaughter E. Aronson wrote to the *North Wales Chronicle* stating that her grandfather 'was the first Jew to settle in north Wales'.<sup>102</sup>

What, then, attracted these early Jewish settlers to north Wales? Since Jews had primarily been living in Eastern European towns and restricted to certain trades such as finance, tobacco and clothing, Jewish immigrants to Britain tended to migrate towards urban rather than rural areas.<sup>103</sup> But it was the rural setting of north Wales which made it appealing to Jewish pedlars. They earned their living in north Wales, but their communal and religious affiliations were in Liverpool and Manchester. The Hyman brothers, for instance, were members of synagogues in Liverpool and Manchester, while the Aronsons had connections with Liverpool, which at the time, were places of significant Jewish settlement.<sup>104</sup> These young Jewish men began a process of moving outward, abandoning these places where over-competition had made it impossible for them to get started with their lives in Britain. North Wales was close enough to Liverpool and Manchester (within a hundred miles) that Jewish travellers used these cities as bases for travelling out to towns in north Wales and the surrounding countryside during the week to sell their wares and return home for the Sabbath. The introduction of the steam-packets between Bangor and Liverpool made travelling to and from north-west Wales easier, and was often used by Jewish pedlars. As early as 1830, for instance, the *North Wales Chronicle* reported that 'the steam-packets which go from here to

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<sup>98</sup> Williams, *The Making of Manchester*, 32; The 1841 census lists Joseph Hyman as a 65 year old hawker, 'from foreign parts', and living in Liverpool with his wife and seven children.

<sup>99</sup> Pigot's *Directory of North Wales and South Wales*, 1828-1829.

<sup>100</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 3 July 1828; 17 March 1831.

<sup>101</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 26 August 1854.

<sup>102</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 10 November 1939.

<sup>103</sup> Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 168.

<sup>104</sup> Williams, *The Making of Manchester*, 32.

Liverpool and back again...bring all the ladies and gentleman, and Jew pedlars'.<sup>105</sup> But nearly every other rural region of the United Kingdom, at one time or another, witnessed the presence of Jewish pedlars, and a weekly work pattern was fairly common. In Scotland, for instance, Kenneth Collins has noted how Jewish pedlars would travel to Ayrshire from Glasgow, selling goods, and returning home for the Sabbath.<sup>106</sup>

As in the larger Jewish communities of Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century, in Wales most of the early settlers were natives of Central Europe. Most came from the Netherlands and Posen, a region of Poland under Prussian rule, and featured as part of a more general migration to Britain during this period. Many were merchants and traders, who were attracted to Britain because of its unequalled commercial and industrial prominence.<sup>107</sup> Up until the 1870s, the Jewish population of Wales numbered no more than a few hundred individuals, but Jewish life had been established in the principality, and was primarily concentrated in the southern coastal towns of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea.<sup>108</sup> From the 1880s onwards the population of Welsh Jewry, and British Jewry as a whole, increased rapidly as Jews began to arrive in great numbers from the Russian Pale of Settlement.

### **The Era of Mass Migration: 1881-1914**

The significance of Eastern European immigration to the development of British Jewry has long been recognised by historians. Drawing on the *JYB*, David Englander estimates that the population of Jews in the United Kingdom rose from 101,189 in 1891 to 257,000 in 1916, while Vivian D. Lipman once wrote that 'the addition of a generation of 150,000 Eastern European immigrants....produced marked...changes in the demographic profile of British Jewry'.<sup>109</sup>

Contrary to popular myth, the pogroms that swept Russia following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 did not commence Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe to Britain. As Geoffrey Alderman wrote 'The famine in north-east Russia in 1869-70 had

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<sup>105</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 10 June 1830.

<sup>106</sup> Collins, *Go and Learn*, 75.

<sup>107</sup> Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 80.

<sup>108</sup> Based on the 1851 census, Vivian Lipman estimated that there were between 250 to 350 Jews living in south Wales in 1850. See, Lipman, *Social History*, 187; Vivian D. Lipman, 'A Survey of Anglo-Jewry in 1851', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 17 (1953), 171-88.

<sup>109</sup> David Englander, ed., *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants in Britain 1840-1920* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994), 15; Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain*, 49.

brought some migrants to Britain', while Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox pointed out that 'Jews from Eastern Europe were no strangers to Britain before 1881' since 'the movement of large numbers of Jews from the Russian Empire began in the 1840s'.<sup>110</sup> As we have seen, a small number of Russian Jews had arrived in Wales prior to 1881, but it was not until the last two decades of the nineteenth century that the extent of the migration of Jews from Russia began to have an impact on Welsh Jewry, and British Jewry more generally. The vast influx of Russian Jews to Britain during this period can be explained by several interrelated factors. Persecution and the fear of persecution certainly prompted a number of Jews to emigrate from Russia. Although the pogroms that hit southern and south-western Russia following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 have traditionally been cited as the main push factor to Britain and elsewhere, mass emigration was not caused primarily by violent bursts of anti-Semitism. As Todd Endelman discovered, the first waves of Jewish immigrants to Britain came disproportionately from northern districts in the Pale, which were hardly touched by the pogroms of 1881.<sup>111</sup> Kushner and Knox also state that Jewish migration from Russia was far more pronounced in the 1890s than in the 1880s, revealing that the situation was far more complex than is often assumed.<sup>112</sup> Undoubtedly, the numerous pogroms that swept Russia from the 1880s up until the First World War forced a number of Jews to migrate, but it is important to note that the pressures experienced by Russian Jews were multifarious and extended beyond extreme anti-Semitic violence. As Lloyd P. Gartner once wrote 'emigration did not begin on account of pogroms and would certainly have attained its massive dimensions even without the official anti-Semitism of the Russian Government'.<sup>113</sup>

Indeed, emigration was motivated largely, though not exclusively, by the deteriorating economic position of Russian Jewry. From 1791 until 1917, Jews were only permitted to live in the westernmost provinces of Russia which became known as the Pale of Settlement. Its foundation was laid by Catherine the Great, who barred Jewish merchants from working outside the Pale territories and in 1794 defined where Jews could live and work.<sup>114</sup> Between 1818 and 1881, some of these rules were relaxed by Alexander II who permitted certain

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<sup>110</sup> Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 112; Tony Kushner and Katherine Knox, eds., *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives during the Twentieth century* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 19.

<sup>111</sup> Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 129.

<sup>112</sup> Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, 20.

<sup>113</sup> Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914*, 3rd ed. (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001), 41.

<sup>114</sup> Sarah E. Karesh and Mitchell M. Hurvit, eds., *Encyclopedia of Judaism* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006), 373.

privileged merchants, skilled artisans, university graduates and their families to reside outside the Pale.<sup>115</sup> Nonetheless, in response to Alexander's assassination in 1881, his successor Alexander III propagated the most restrictive and discriminative laws on Jews in May 1882. The basis of Jewish life in the Pale was the *shtetl*, but the new laws prohibited Jews from engaging in agriculture in rural areas and residing in towns or villages of fewer than ten thousand people. Jews were also forbidden from owning real estate, to work as lawyers or in government, and were concentrated in the Pale's overcrowded cities such as Warsaw and Minsk. Their situation was exacerbated by the rapid increase of the Jewish population in Russia which, according to Gartner, rose 'from approximately 1,250,000 in 1800 to over 5,189,000 in 1897'.<sup>116</sup> As the Jewish population of these cities increased Jewish merchants and workers had to compete for a limited number of jobs, which led to most living in poverty. As a consequence, a vast number made the decision to emigrate to seek economic betterment elsewhere.

Adding to this were those Jews who escaped military conscription and deserted the Tsarist army. In 1874 universal conscription of Russian Jews replaced the old Cantonist system introduced by Nicholas I between 1827 and 1856.<sup>117</sup> It required one son from each family to serve in the army, and although it was less stringent than previous conscription laws, the prospect of serving in the Tsarist army for two years encouraged thousands of young men to emigrate from Russia. Hyman Factor, for instance, was born in the province of Kovno, Russia in 1878, eventually settling in Aberavon in 1906 where he was naturalised in March 1921. His application for naturalisation suggests that he left Russia to avoid military service. It reads:

The applicant states that he was born at Salant, Russia on the 6 March 1878...He bears an excellent character in the neighbourhood of Aberavon, but he admits that he is regarded as a deserter from the Russian army...<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Olga Litvak, *Conscription and the Search for Modern Russian Jewry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>116</sup> Lloyd P. Gartner, *American and British Jews in the Age of the Great Migration* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2009), 2.

<sup>117</sup> Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *Jews in the Russian Army, 1827-1917: Drafted into Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 135; for further information on the Cantonist system see Larry Domnitch, *The Cantonists: the Jewish Children's Army of the Tsar* (New York: Devora Publishing, 2003).

<sup>118</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Hyman Factor, Certificate 7,774 issued 4 March 1921, HO 144/1659/262957, NA.

Other examples include Russian-born Solomon Krupp, a traveller in clothing residing in Llandudno in 1910, who left 'Russia before he reached the age for military service',<sup>119</sup> and Abraham Leckerman of Brynmawr, whose naturalisation file from 1920 states that he was from Lodisian, Ukraine, and that he had:

...served 4 years in the Russian Field Artillery, from which he was discharged into the army reserve sometime during 1905...Some two months after his discharge he was recalled to the colours. He however did not respond, but migrated to this country, came to Brynmawr...<sup>120</sup>

Such was the condition of Russian Jews between 1881 and 1914. Discriminated against, persecuted, and victims of economic hardship and extreme violence, they increasingly sought to leave their home country for other nations, taking advantage of cheap steerage tickets on steamships. It is estimated that 1.98 million Jews left Russia during this period, of which 120,000 to 150,000 settled in Britain.<sup>121</sup>

Between the 1830s and 1914, Britain was the principal transmigration route for northern European migrants, Jewish and non-Jewish, en route to America.<sup>122</sup> This is because intense competition on Atlantic emigrant routes made it cheaper at times to sail from Northern Europe to Britain than to make the trip directly.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Nicholas J. Evans argues that this indirect route was favoured by Jewish migrants since it allowed them to stock up on kosher food for the transatlantic crossing, a voyage which traditionally lacked in kosher provisions other than bread and herrings.<sup>124</sup> Although a number of Jewish migrants made the onward journey from British ports to America, some never left, and consequently a myth has developed that British Jewry, in the words of Harold Pollins, 'was built up of those who did not get to America'.<sup>125</sup> As Peter Braham once noted 'England was a land of *transmigration* for Jewish emigrants en route to the USA...For some this transmigration merely meant

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<sup>119</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Solomon Krupp, Certificate 19118 issued 3 June 1910, HO 144/1054/187985, NA.

<sup>120</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Abraham Leckerman, Certificate B 293 issued 12 February 1920, HO 144/1599/388656, NA.

<sup>121</sup> Oleg Budnitskii, *Russian Jews Between the Reds and the Whites, 1917-1920* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 18; Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 127.

<sup>122</sup> See Nicholas J. Evans. 'Indirect Passage from Europe: Transmigration via the UK, 1836-1914', *Journal for Maritime Research* (2001), 70-84.

<sup>123</sup> Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 128.

<sup>124</sup> Evans, 'Indirect Passage', 71.

<sup>125</sup> Harold Pollins, *Hopeful Travellers: Jewish Migrants and Settlers in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London: London Museum of Jewish Life, 1989), 25.

disembarking at one British port before embarking at another...but for others, perhaps because of lack of means, plans to travel to the USA were never realized and they settled in England'.<sup>126</sup> Moreover, Daphne and Leon Gerlis once wrote that 'it was often by default, a mixture of poverty, ill-health, ignorance and deception, that they remained in England', while Ernest Krausz has written 'very often immigrants whose aim was to reach the United States via Britain, remained in this country [Britain], being unable to complete their journey for lack of funds'.<sup>127</sup>

Yet, there is no existing evidence to suggest that large numbers of Jewish migrants remained in Britain involuntarily due to lack of funds. As Hasia Diner suggests, many eastern European Jews made their transmigration journey 'in steps', spending time in Britain working as pedlars before continuing further West.<sup>128</sup> David Cesarani agrees stating that 'it was economically rational to travel first to Britain and work to earn the rest of the money for the onward journey',<sup>129</sup> while Gartner points us to a testimony from the Hebrew-language newspaper from Russia, *HaYom*, in 1886, which reads:

their goal is America, and they stop en route in London. Sometimes they spend all they have..., and have no means to travel further. Hence they remain here a short while until they learn a trade and save enough money to journey to the land of their choice.<sup>130</sup>

It is unknown how many Jews did their journey 'in steps', but the journey of Russian-born Joseph Policovsky is a case in point. Arriving in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century, he was listed in the 1901 census as a pedlar lodging in Llanelli. Five years later he married Sarah Berlovitz, and they had three children in the town. Eventually, Joseph became a picture frame dealer, and the Policovsky family left south Wales for the United States in 1913.<sup>131</sup> They settled in Boston, where Joseph remained a salesman up until 1920. He later became a

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<sup>126</sup> Peter Braham, "Swirls and Currents" of Migration: Jewish Emigrants from Eastern Europe, 1881-1914' in W. T. R. Pryce, ed., *From Family History to Community History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 79.

<sup>127</sup> Daphne Gerlis and Leon Gerlis, *The Story of the Grimsby Jewish Community* (Hull: Humberside Leisure Services, 1986), 6; Ernest Krausz, *Leeds Jewry: its History and Social Structure* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1964), 4.

<sup>128</sup> Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654- 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 81.

<sup>129</sup> David Cesarani, 'Social Memory, History, and British Jewish Identity', in Glenda Abramson, ed., *Modern Jewish mythologies* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>130</sup> *HaYom*, 24 August 1886, quoted in Gartner, *American and British Jews*, 5.

<sup>131</sup> 'U.S, Boston Arrivals of Jewish Immigrants from HIAS Records, 1882-1929', reveals that the Policovsky family arrived in Boston on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1913. See, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) for further details.

teacher and was naturalised in 1941.<sup>132</sup> It is not known why the Policovskys relocated to the United States, but this example demonstrates that some Jewish migrants spent a number of years in Britain before continuing their journey to America.

Some historians have also claimed that a number of Jewish migrants did not proceed to America because they were tricked in believing that they had arrived in New York when their ship docked in Britain. Lloyd P. Gartner, for example, wrote, ‘one...hears of tickets sold to the wrong destination by unscrupulous agents’, while Daphne and Leon Gerlis, drawing on Gartner’s statement, noted that, ‘it was not unknown for them to be swindled...deceived into believing that their tickets would carry them to America...Many believed the Royal Dock [in Grimsby] to be the gateway to the *Goldeneh Medina*-America; too late they learned that their tickets would carry them no further’.<sup>133</sup> Vivian D. Lipman also states that ‘there are many stories of ticket agents cheating migrants by selling them tickets for England when the fare had been paid to America’, while Kenneth Collins points out that a number of Jewish migrants came to Scotland because they ‘were tricked into believing on their arrival in Leith or Dundee, that they had already reached America!’<sup>134</sup> Similarly, Renee Woolf recalls that when her grandparents ‘came to Llanelli, the captain told them they had come to America’, but admits that the story may have been exaggerated.<sup>135</sup>

Indeed, as Nathan Abrams reminds us, ‘The story of being deceived by unscrupulous agents or captains is a common one told among immigrant Jewish families, but one for which there is *no actual evidence*’.<sup>136</sup> But why has this folklore emerged? David Cesarani suggests that it was used as an ‘alibi for opportunistic migration’, to counteract ‘the characterisation of the Jewish immigrant...as ‘homo economicus’’, which was ‘felt by some sections of the labour movement which accused the Jews of undercutting English labour’, while Abrams suspects that ‘it is used as a cover for those who were simply sick of traveling on what must have been a horrendous journey’.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, the conditions of steerage passengers who travelled to Britain across the North Sea aroused much adverse comment. The *JC*, for instance, wrote in 1906 ‘that our unfortunate coreligionists arrive in this country after a long

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<sup>132</sup> United States Federal Census, 1920; Joseph Policovsky’s naturalisation file: U.S. Naturalization Records Indexes, 1794-1995.

<sup>133</sup> Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, 34; Gerlis and Gerlis, *The Story of the Grimsby*, 6.

<sup>134</sup> Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain*, 47; Collins, *Second City*, 71.

<sup>135</sup> Renee Woolf, interview with author, Cardiff, 27 January 2012.

<sup>136</sup> Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 124. My emphasis.

<sup>137</sup> Cesarani, ‘Social Memory’, 26; Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 124.



and exacting journey...A voyage as a steerage passenger across the North Sea in these conditions is a sufficiently cheerless and tiring experience'.<sup>138</sup> However, despite these unpleasant conditions, it is important to note that Jewish migrants who settled in Britain were not always individuals 'who were simply sick of travelling'. For an estimated 120,000 to 150,000 Jews, Britain was the destination of choice. As Geoffrey Alderman has pointed out the fact that there was an established Jewish community in Britain, which was able to make its way in a non-Jewish environment, must have proved attractive to emigrants.<sup>139</sup> Britain was also attractive because, unlike Russia, Jews were offered religious, civil and political rights, but most importantly economic opportunities. This is suggested by the naturalisation file of Max Sefstone, who left his native Russia in 1891, eventually settling in Swansea. It states:

I came to this country in the year 1891 in order to obtain a living, during the last 8 years I have managed to build up a business which I found it impossible to accomplish in Russia owing to the conditions of living in that country.<sup>140</sup>

Chain migration was also responsible for the movement of Jews to Britain, and there is ample evidence of Jews joining relatives in Wales. Between 1903 and 1904, for example, Lithuanian-born Dora Lipsett arrived in Merthyr Tydfil with her family to join her uncle, Herman Gittelsohn, who was a pawnbroker there.<sup>141</sup> Morris Colpstein emigrated from Russia in 1912, and ended up in Newport because his uncle Charles offered him a job as a tailor.<sup>142</sup> Benjamin Moses, who had been born in Russia in 1859, came to the Rhondda valley in the early 1890s to join his cousin, Benjamin Love, who had established himself as a furniture dealer in the region.<sup>143</sup> At about the same time, Jack Silver arrived in Cardiff from his native Brizendine, Poland, because his brother had opened a men's outfitters store there.<sup>144</sup> Russian-born Raphael Fox ended up in Holyhead around 1911 because his cousin Solomon Pollecoff had established himself a drapery business in the town.<sup>145</sup> Few Jewish families had the means to travel together, and it was typical for the husband to migrate first to save money to send for

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<sup>138</sup> *JC*, 5 January 1906.

<sup>139</sup> Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 115.

<sup>140</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Max Sefstone, Certificate 14264 issued 22 March 1904, HO 144/740/114669, NA.

<sup>141</sup> Dora Lipsett, interview with David Jacobs, 21 May 1978, 6012/1, Sound Archive, SFNHM.

<sup>142</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Mache Colpstein (known as Morris Colpstein), Certificate 6,663 issued 17 June 1920, HO 144/1609/393321.

<sup>143</sup> Wales Census, 1891.

<sup>144</sup> Ron Silver, interview with author, 7 February 2011, Hineni Project, Bute Town History & Arts Centre (hereafter BHAC).

<sup>145</sup> Wales Census, 1911.

his wife and children. In an interview with *CAJEX* in 1977, for instance, Bessie Latner (née Samuel), recalled that her ‘father...came over to this country seventy-five years ago, to Ystalyfera...and he left [her] mother in Rumania with three children, and she came over after twelve months’.<sup>146</sup>

Connections with places of origin in Russia may have channelled Jewish migrants to specific towns in Wales. Aberavon in south Wales, for example, had five Jews from the Russian town of Salant, while seven Jews living in Swansea between 1908 and 1920 came from the town of Polangen.<sup>147</sup> Cardiff-born, Jacqueline Magrill records that her father, Morris Leron, ‘went to New Tredegar [in 1907] where he knew’ a Barnett Janner ‘from Russia that had already gone there’.<sup>148</sup> He later moved to Cardiff, and over the years he was able to convince his siblings from Russia to settle in his adopted hometown.

Furthermore, Renee Woolf’s story implies that her grandparents disembarked in Llanelli, which is echoed by Channah Hirsch who dedicates her memoir ‘to the memory of the first wave of Jewish immigrants who landed, or got stranded, on the shores of Llanelli in the early 1900s’.<sup>149</sup> However, this would have been an unusual route since south Wales was not on the main migration route to Britain. In fact, the most common routes of Jewish migration to Britain from northern Europe were from the Baltic ports, or German ports such as Hamburg and Bremen. As Evans discovered, the vast majority of Jewish migrants would have entered Britain via the eastern ports of Harwich, Hull, Grimsby, Leith, London, Newcastle and West Hartlepool. He found that of the five million European migrants who arrived in Britain between 1836 and 1914, over three million (or sixty per cent), did so via the ports of Hull and Grimsby.<sup>150</sup> Both ports handled the majority of transmigrants travelling via Britain during this period since the route to Liverpool, which could be done by train, was the

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<sup>146</sup> *CAJEX*, 27, 1, (1977), 74.

<sup>147</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Benjamin and Jossel Aronovitch, Certificate 6, 059 and 6,060 issued 15 April 1920, HO 144/1612/394249; Hyman Factor, Certificate 7,774 issued 4 March 1921, HO 144/1659/262957; Aaron Factor, Certificate A20430 issued 20 July 1911, HO 144/1133/206693; Raphael Levi, Certificate 21454 issued 18 November 1911, HO 144/1170/214848; Harry Goodman, Certificate 18792 issued 9 February 1910, HO 144/555/186705; Israel Goodman, Certificate 17514 issued 6 August 1908, HO 144/885/168024; Moses Goodman, Certificate 18789 issued 9 February 1910, HO 144/555/186706; Sidney Goodman, Certificate 19631 issued 22 October 1910, HO 144/1095/196794; Joseph Clompus, Certificate 2,483 issued 16 January 1917, HO 144/1378/266267; Samuel Solomon, Certificate 7,102 issued 21 September 1920, HO 144/ 1566/261484, NA.

<sup>148</sup> Jacqueline Magrill, interview with Sue Mansell, 13 September 2011, Hineni Project, BHAC.

<sup>149</sup> Hirsch, *My Llanelli*, xi.

<sup>150</sup> Evans, ‘Indirect Passage’, 71.

most efficient in terms of time and distance.<sup>151</sup> The majority of settlers went to live in existing Jewish communities such as Leeds, Liverpool, London and Manchester, and often came to Wales after spending months or years in these cities.

Although it is impossible to map the journeys of all those who eventually settled in Wales, it appears that a large number of Jews had resided elsewhere in Britain and had travelled varied and complex routes to their final destinations. Israel Garlick, born in Straszow, Poland, in 1894, for instance, arrived in Hull with his parents in 1903 and spent seven years in Leeds, where he worked as a tailor's apprentice. In 1912 he moved to Cardiff, where he worked as a pedlar selling incandescent gas mantles.<sup>152</sup> Barnet Harris was born in Lybeu, Russia, in 1864. Between 1890 and 1892, according to the 1901 census, he settled in Liverpool with his Russian-born wife and two children (as six of their ten children were born in the city), before they relocated to Wrexham, where Harris opened a drapery store in the Central Arcade. We know the family moved to Wrexham sometime between 1902 and 1904 because their daughter, Amelia, the last of the children born in Liverpool, was born in 1902, whilst their other daughter, Elsie, was born in Wrexham in 1904.

Similar journeys undertaken by Eastern European immigrants form a part of the history of most, if not all, of Wales' Jewish communities. Jacob Levy, for example, was born near Warsaw, Russia, in 1880. Upon arrival in England, he went first to Manchester to work as a Stationary Engineman. It was there where he and his wife Mary started a family since all five of their children were born in Manchester. Only in about 1917 did the family move to Rhyl, where Jacob worked as a raincoat merchant.<sup>153</sup> Around the early 1890s, Louis Snipper and his wife left Russia and landed in London, where they had three children between 1894 and 1897. From there they went to Derby, where they had another child. Only in 1899 did the family move to Swansea, where Louis found work as a tailor.<sup>154</sup> He remained there until his death in 1940.

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Israel Garlick, Certificate 8,558 issued 6 December 1921, HO 144/1705/420320, NA.

<sup>153</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Jacob Levy, Certificate 5,485 issued 27 January 1920, HO 144/1575/297488, NA.

<sup>154</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Louis Snipper, Certificate 13336 issued 31 March 1903, HO 144/696/105168, NA.

## Settlement and Growth

The arrival of Eastern European Jews transformed the Jewish population in Wales, and Britain more generally. As stated previously, the population of Welsh Jewry before the 1880s numbered no more than a few hundred individuals, but by 1918, according to the *JYB*, it had risen to an estimated 6,000 individuals. With this rise in numbers came the growth of existing congregations and the establishment of new Jewish communities.

Like earlier Jewish migrants, most of the Eastern European Jews settled in south Wales, and the existing Jewish communities at Cardiff, Newport and Swansea witnessed a considerable increase in numbers. Between 1904 and 1914, for example, Cardiff's Jewish population rose from an estimated 1,250 individuals to 2,025, and that of Swansea jumped from 400 to 1,000 in the same period.<sup>155</sup> The Jewish population of Newport climbed from 120 in 1904 to 250 eight years later.<sup>156</sup> But why were Jewish migrants attracted to these towns? Long a point of arrival for newcomers, all three towns offered the infrastructure necessary to lead a traditional Jewish lifestyle. In 1881, Cardiff had a purpose-built synagogue in East Terrace, but by 1904, the town boasted two synagogues in Cathedral Road and Edward Place and a *Beth Hamedrash* and *Talmud Torah* in Clare Road, a Hebrew Board of Guardians and a Jewish Literary Society.<sup>157</sup> At that time, Newport was home to a purpose-built synagogue and various charitable institutions, including a Jewish Board of Guardians, a Branch of Orphan Aid Society, a Jewish Ladies' Benevolent Society and a Jewish Literary and Social Institute.<sup>158</sup> Similarly, Swansea had a purpose-built *shul*, Hebrew classes and a Benevolent Association.<sup>159</sup>

Ultimately, of course, like most Jews who arrived in the first half of the nineteenth century, what most East European Jews were seeking in these towns was economic success. The growth of Cardiff's Jewish community, for example, was related to the town's development as the largest coal export port in south Wales, and the world, in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Although Swansea and Newport's coal exports were far smaller, both towns continued to flourish as export centres. By 1887, Swansea became the

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<sup>155</sup> *JYB*, 1904; *JYB*, 1914.

<sup>156</sup> *JYB*, 1904; *JYB*, 1912.

<sup>157</sup> *JYB*, 1904.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

international centre for trade in tinsplate following the opening of the Metal Exchange, while Newport's docks continued to grow and were completed in 1892.<sup>160</sup>

The development of ports in south Wales during this period often went hand in hand with the creation of Jewish communities. From the turn of the twentieth century, a small number of Jews were drawn to the coastal town of Barry, which underwent an economic upswing in the 1890s following the opening of Barry Docks in 1889. High Holyday services 'were attended by the Jewish sailors on board the vessels lying in the docks' for the first time in 1904, even though it was not until 1909 that a congregation was established.<sup>161</sup> Despite the presence of 'Jewish sailors', and an English-born Jew named Robert Groskop who worked in the shipping docks as a boilermaker, most Jews residing in Barry were engaged in retail, providing goods to a burgeoning working-class population.<sup>162</sup> The congregation's president, Joseph Janner, for instance, worked as a Wholesale Dealer in Fancy Goods, while an Abraham Hauser worked as a Clothier and Outfitter and did 'a large shipping trade'.<sup>163</sup> The congregation was small, numbering no more than eight families in 1916.<sup>164</sup> It was also one of the most short-lived, owing to its close proximity to the larger Jewish community in Cardiff. By 1917, it appears that the congregation relocated to Richmond Road in Cardiff, and congregants eventually decided to join one of the two larger synagogues in the town.<sup>165</sup>

Although a small number of Jews resided in Llanelli before the 1880s, the Jewish presence in the coastal town grew in the last decades of the nineteenth century. By 1904 the Jewish population numbered around 70 individuals, and they came to take advantage of the newly created consumer market there following Llanelli's development as a principal centre for the manufacturing and exportation of tin.<sup>166</sup> Llanelli was also in close proximity to the larger Jewish community of Swansea, and thus became economically attractive to Swansea Jewish retailers who were on the lookout for a location to conduct business with less competition. Among these was Hyman Silverstone, who settled in Swansea in 1901 before moving to

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<sup>160</sup> Davies, Jenkins, Baines, and Lynch, *Welsh Academy*, 612 and 841.

<sup>161</sup> *The South Wales Jewish Review*, 10 (October 1904), 147.

<sup>162</sup> Wales Census, 1911; *Western Mail*, 17 November 2012.

<sup>163</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Joseph Janner, Certificate 23598 issued 10 June 1913, HO 144/1261/236323, NA; Nationality and Naturalisation: Abraham Hauser, Certificate 24047 issued 19 September 1913, HO 144/1281/241028, NA.

<sup>164</sup> *JYB*, 1916.

<sup>165</sup> *JYB*, 1917.

<sup>166</sup> *JYB*, 1904; Smith, *Wales*, 61.

Llanelli in 1907 where he opened a drapery business.<sup>167</sup> By 1902, there were enough Jews in Llanelli that arrangements were made to hold High Holydays services.<sup>168</sup> In 1909, a purpose-built synagogue was erected in Victoria Road with room for up to 200 worshippers (see appendix A5).<sup>169</sup>

The construction of docks was also significant in the history of the Jewish community of Aberavon. Described as ‘a small village’ in 1844, Aberavon saw the coming of a railway station on the Swansea to Cardiff line in 1850, and became a thriving port by the 1890s owing to the establishment of the Port Talbot Railway and Docks Company in 1894.<sup>170</sup> By 1898 three new railway lines were constructed to transport coal from the western central valleys and the existing docks were enlarged to handle the increase in exports. From the 1860s onwards, Aberavon also developed into a centre for the manufacturing and exportation of tin, steel and copper, becoming the principal industrial centre on the Welsh coastline between Cardiff and Swansea. Such a destination would have proved attractive to Jewish retailers from Cardiff and Swansea. Probably the first Jewish resident of Aberavon was Warsaw-born Hyman Freedman. He is listed in the 1861 census as a pawnbroker in Cardiff, but he relocated his business to Aberavon by the late 1860s. As business grew Freedman opened other stores in both Swansea and Neath, and moved to Swansea in the early 1880s, possibly to be nearer to an established Jewish community. In 1890, Jacob Kahn, a Russian-born furniture dealer, settled in Aberavon, to be followed by Russian draper, Raphael Levi (known as Levi Raphael), who arrived via Swansea in 1893.<sup>171</sup> A congregation, made up of seven families, was formed in 1904.<sup>172</sup>

The link between economic opportunity and Jewish migration was perhaps most readily apparent in the south Wales valleys. As we have seen, Hebrew congregations were established in Merthyr Tydfil, Pontypool, Pontypridd and Tredegar before the 1880s, but Jews began settling in the valleys in greater numbers from the last quarter of the nineteenth

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<sup>167</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Chyam Saul Press (known as Hyman Silverstone), Certificate 18249 issued 28 July 1909, HO 144/907/177037, NA.

<sup>168</sup> *JC*, 22 August 1902.

<sup>169</sup> *JC*, 21 May 1909.

<sup>170</sup> *Pigot Directory of South Wales* (1844); Sally Robert Jones, *The History of Port Talbot with Photographs* (John Penry Press: Swansea, 1991), 61.

<sup>171</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Jacob Kahn, Certificate A9893 issued 20 October 1897, HO 144/414/B25059, NA; Nationality and Naturalisation: Raphael Levi, Certificate 21454 issued 18 November 1911, HO 144/1170/214848, NA.

<sup>172</sup> *JC*, 28 September 1923.

century. From the 1850s up until the 1920s the south Wales valleys witnessed a second phase of industrialisation when the declining iron industry was replaced by the booming coal industry. The Rhondda and Cynon valleys were its epicentres and by 1913 there were fifty-three large collieries in the two valleys producing 56.8 million tons of coal per annum.<sup>173</sup> In the mid-1870s, Merthyr Tydfil also achieved further prosperity following the sinking of deep mining shafts in areas south of the town.<sup>174</sup> The enlargement of the coal industry brought workers from all parts of Wales, but growing numbers of them came from the west of England and further afield.<sup>175</sup> As a result, the region witnessed a considerable growth in population. The Rhondda valley's population, for instance, rose from 1,998 in 1851 to 152,781 in 1911, and by 1914 the south Wales coalfield employed approximately 223,000 miners.<sup>176</sup> Such a rapid rise in population created the need for housing and row upon row of modest terraces were constructed to house colliery workers. By the late nineteenth century the south Wales valleys were transformed from a quiet rural region into a booming industrial centre.

This time period, of course, coincided with the arrival of East European Jews to Britain, and such a region would have been economically attractive to Jewish immigrants. As Henriques once wrote, 'the opportunities for making a living in the fastest growing industrial area in Britain were too good to miss.'<sup>177</sup> A number may have considered moving to the area after coming across announcements in the Jewish press. In 1875, for instance, a 'Tred' wrote to the *JC* stating:

I refer to South Wales...I can be borne out in my statements by anyone knowing the neighbourhood that there is room for no less than 500 Jewish families, for each and all to carry on a comfortable and prosperous living...Merthyr, Aberdare, Tredegar, Rhymney and Rhondda Valleys, the centres of extensive coal and iron operations, afford the most ample scope for the struggling of our working community.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *The World We Have Won* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2007), 24; Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales*, 229.

<sup>174</sup> Davies, Jenkins, Baines and Lynch, *Welsh Academy*, 553.

<sup>175</sup> Evan D. Lewis, 'Population Changes and Social Life 1860 to 1914', in Kenneth S. Hopkins, ed., *Rhondda Past and Future* (Rhondda: Rhondda Borough Council, 1980), 113-114.

<sup>176</sup> David Egan, *Coal Society: a History of the South Wales Mining Valleys 1840-1980* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1987), 4.

<sup>177</sup> Glaser and Henriques, 'The Valleys Communities', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 48.

<sup>178</sup> *JC*, 4 June 1875.

However, unlike most other newcomers to the region, the vast majority of Jews did not seek work in the coal industry. Rather, like a large number of early Jewish settlers in the valleys, and other regions of Wales and Britain more generally, they started out as pedlars.<sup>179</sup> In the south Wales valleys, they served a working-class clientele, who lacked ready access to major commercial centres. They often sold on credit, making it affordable for working-class households to purchase consumer goods which varied from basic necessities such as clothing, hardware and furniture to mildly luxurious products such as jewellery. Most pedlars travelled on foot, which limited both the quantity and types of goods they could sell, but a number carried larger and heavier goods by horse and cart. For example, when Israel Levy arrived in Newbridge from Russia at the turn of the twentieth century, 'he sold haberdashery and cloth from his horse and cart to miners' families in the valleys'.<sup>180</sup> Other examples of Jewish pedlars include Lewis Gordon from Russia who arrived in the Rhondda in the late 1880s and began his working life as a traveller in general furniture; Russian-born Hyman Cohen and his son Samuel, who are listed in the 1891 census as jewellery travellers living in Merthyr Tydfil; and Polish-born Enoch Hermann, who worked as a travelling draper in Tredegar and the surrounding area in 1891.

The reasons why a large number of Jews in Wales started life as pedlars and traders is multifaceted. First, peddling was an occupation that required little capital to get started and little training. Second, it offered both occupation and geographic mobility to the Jewish migrant, who perhaps wanted to assess the economic situation of an area before settling down. Third, being economically independent gave Jews flexibility which would have been attractive for the strictly observant who sought trades in which they might retain their religious practices intact, particularly Sabbath observance. Despite Saturday being the most important day of the week for business, Channah Hirsch recalls that her mother always closed her drapery business in the front room of their house in Llanelli for the Sabbath:

...the main shopping day was Saturday because people received their pay packets on Friday when they finished their shift. This was around five o'clock and of course in the winter our shop closed at 3.30 p.m. on a Friday because of *Shabbos*. So we would all be sitting around our table...and customers would come and bang and bang on the front door until the banging could no longer be ignored. 'Chanele, go out and tell them it's

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<sup>179</sup> However, they were not the only ethnic group to occupy a particular economic niche. Italian migrants, for example, opened restaurants and coffee shops in the area to cater for miners and their families. See Hughes, *Lime, Lemon, & Sarsaparilla*.

<sup>180</sup> *JC*, 1 October 2004.



our Sabbath and we can't open the door for them and can they please come back Monday.'...Mamma wept, but we kept *Shabbos*!<sup>181</sup>

However, this is not to suggest that *all* Jewish migrants chose to be self-employed so that they could keep the Sabbath. After all, Saturday was the major shopping day in towns across Wales, and even those who wanted to be observant found that they had to work or keep their businesses open on the Sabbath to make ends meet. As the then Chief Rabbi, Hermann Adler, noted in 1897 'this disregard [for the Sabbath] is due not so much for the relaxation of religious sentiment as to the fierce struggle for existence which now prevails, and the keen competition that pervades every walk of life'.<sup>182</sup> Indeed, it was not unusual to find articles in the *JC* that deplored Jews for trading on the Sabbath. In 1887, for example, it was reported that Jews in Dowlais neglected *Shabbat*, and 'although the shops of these Jews are shut, the door is open and business is transacted'.<sup>183</sup> Finally, the concentration of Jews in peddling and trading was, as Bill Williams suggests, 'a reflection of the economic pattern of Jewish life in Eastern Europe'.<sup>184</sup> Indeed, Eastern European Jews entering Britain were not rustic peasants but urbanites with a background in commerce and manufacturing. As we have seen, this occupational structure emerged by economic restrictions imposed on Jews, who were forced to rely on trading by being excluded from the ownership of land. While not all Jews were traders, a large number worked as pedlars, merchants and skilled traders such as tailors and cabinet makers.<sup>185</sup> Some guidance is provided by Gartner, who found that out of 9,047 newly-arrived Jews lodging at London's Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter between 1895 and 1908, 6,349 worked in trade and commerce before migrating.<sup>186</sup> Unfortunately, evidence of occupational continuity is difficult to come by since British migration records do not provide information on the pre-migration occupations of Jewish immigrants. Thus, it is nearly impossible to know whether Jews transferred their occupations to Britain.

In the lore of British-Jewish history, peddling has been seen as the route whereby poor Jewish migrants moved into small or large business. Commenting on the Scottish Jewish experience, Abrams once wrote that 'typically, once enough capital had been accumulated,

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<sup>181</sup> Hirsch, *My Llanelli*, 15.

<sup>182</sup> Letter from the Chief Rabbi to 'My Brethren', June 1898, ARC 3, 1/20, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

<sup>183</sup> *JC*, 14 September 1877.

<sup>184</sup> Bill Williams, 'The Jewish Immigrant in Manchester: The Contribution of Oral History', *Oral History* 7 (1979), 47.

<sup>185</sup> Pollins, *Economic History*, 133.

<sup>186</sup> Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, 57.

then the Jewish pedlar would invest in permanent premises', while Pollins noted that 'for many, peddling was a preliminary to a more settled way of life and the typical career was from peddling into shopkeeping'.<sup>187</sup> Many of the pedlars in the south Wales valleys opened small stores. One was Russian-born Harris Himmelstein, who began life in Wales as a travelling draper in Dowlais. By 1911, he had saved enough money that he opened a watchmaking and jewellery store at 47 North Street, Dowlais. Another example is Russian-born Solomon Curitz who was thirty-years-old in 1901 and worked as a travelling draper in the Rhondda valley. By the 1911 census he was listed as a shop keeper of clothing and a pawnbroker in Treherbert, and set up a furniture dealers at 23 Dunraven Street, Treherbert, in 1912.<sup>188</sup> In some instances, relatives would provide the capital needed to get started. The establishment of Solomon Zeidman's shop in Pontypool circa 1911 is a good example. His daughter, Judy Hornung notes how her father:

opened a shop in Pontypool when he was seventeen, borrowed £100 from his father and paid it back within a year...He was selling mainly working clothes, like boiler suits, flat caps; he even had hanging in the window the miners' lamps. And that was his shop there until 1923 when he and his brother moved to Cowbridge Road East, opened Zeidmans Limited, a big store which was there until my father died in 1965.<sup>189</sup>

The pawnbroking business was another trade which became associated with Jews in south Wales, despite a statement made by a letter to the editor of the *JC* in 1911 which claimed that 'there are far more non-Jewish money-lenders and pawn-brokers in Wales than Jewish'.<sup>190</sup> Indeed, contemporary trade directories reveal the dominance of Jews in the pawnbroking trade in south Wales. In the 1914 edition of *Cardiff, Newport & District Trades Directory*, for instance, two pawnbrokers were listed in Brynmawr, both of whom were Jewish, while Dowlais had four which were all Jewish owned. That same year six out of seven pawnbrokers in Merthyr Tydfil were owned by Jews, while two out of three in Aberdare were Jewish. In Cardiff 22 out of 26 pawnbrokers can be identified as Jewish and in Pontypridd both pawnbrokers listed were Jews. Some of the names of Jewish pawnbrokers in south Wales at

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<sup>187</sup> Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 99; Pollins, *Economic History*, 80.

<sup>188</sup> *Wales Trades Directory* (1912).

<sup>189</sup> Judy Hornung, interview with Diana Soffa, March 2010, Hineni Project, BHAC.

<sup>190</sup> *JC*, 1 September 1911.

the time include Mrs. J. Freedman and R. Freedman of Tonypandy, B. Roskin of Abercarn, H. Roskin of Cwm, and Goodman Weiner of Nantyglo.<sup>191</sup>

There are a number of reasons accounting for the near control of pawnbroking by south Wales Jewry. It was an occupation that had traditionally been linked with Jews since the Middle Ages, when they were marked out in most of medieval Europe by commercial legislation which restricted them to certain trades such as finance and moneylending.<sup>192</sup> In addition, pawnbrokers were traditionally known as the ‘poor man’s banker’, and with a rapidly expanding working-class population, south Wales initially proved a rich feeding ground for the pawnbroker trade, and would have attracted Jewish migrants with previous experience in the business or those in search of economic improvement.<sup>193</sup> But the paradigm tells only part of the story, because not every Jew who came to the south Wales valleys, or Wales more generally, were pedlars or pawnbrokers, and not every Jew moved vertically up the economic ladder from petty merchants to shopkeepers.

Although Cecil Roth was incorrect to state that the Tredegar Riots of 1911 were directed against ‘Polish Jewish miners’, he was correct in pointing out the existence of a small number of Jewish colliery workers and labourers in the south Wales valleys during this time.<sup>194</sup> Several Jewish miners and ironworkers were listed in the 1911 census. These included Russian-born Hyman Jacobs (25), a Colliery Labourer (Underground), who lived in Cwmaman with his wife and three daughters; and Abraham Barsky (31) from Russia, who worked as a labourer for Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds Ironworks in Dowlais. In 1903, the *JC* reported of ‘Jewish workmen employed at the Dowlais Ironworks’, but it is not known how many worked there.<sup>195</sup> According to Alderman, ‘Jews working in the coalmines in South Wales before the Great War...were merely taking on unskilled duties, such as looking after pit ponies or working as night-shift labourers...they were not colliers—hewers of coal’.<sup>196</sup> However, the 1911 census reveals that some Jews did work as colliers. David Jaffe (24) from Russia, for instance, gave his occupation as ‘Coal Miner Hewer’ and lodged in Ynyshir,

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<sup>191</sup> *Cardiff, Newport & District Trades Directory* (1914).

<sup>192</sup> Robert Michael, *A Concise History of American Antisemitism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 27.

<sup>193</sup> Dawn Burton, *Credit and Consumer Society* (Oxford: Routledge, 2012), 16.

<sup>194</sup> Cecil Roth, ‘The Anglo-Jewish Community in the context of World Jewry’, in Gould and Esh, *Jewish life in modern Britain*, 99.

<sup>195</sup> *JC*, 18 September 1903.

<sup>196</sup> Alderman, *Controversy and Crisis*, 62.

while Joseph Abebach (46) and Morris Scoblove (29) of Russia, were both listed as Colliers and living in Abertysswg. The coal industry was a hazardous form of employment, and some Jewish miners were involved in accidents at the workplace and died as a result of their injuries. In 1910, for instance, nineteen-year-old Barnet Cohen of Treallaw ‘met with a fatal accident...while working the underground trams’, while in 1902 a Russian Jew named Max Resmon was ‘knocked down and accidentally killed in South Pit, Plymouth, Merthyr Tydfil’.<sup>197</sup>

That there were Jews working in the mining industry is also attested by Harry Cohen of Pontypridd who recalls that his uncle Barnett was employed ‘under the ground as a timberman’ at Hopkinstown colliery.<sup>198</sup> Born in Russia in 1878, he installed timber props underground ‘for about twenty years’ and then worked as a hawker in fancy goods.<sup>199</sup> It was probably true, as Alderman wrote, that a number of Jews worked in the mining industry temporarily, possibly ‘to earn enough money to set themselves up in business or help survive a period of financial stringency’.<sup>200</sup> One was Flintshire-born Joseph Cohen, who is listed in the 1891 census as a miner in Pontypridd, but by the 1901 census was working as a hawker in Swansea. Other examples included Ukrainian-born Sam Kraisman who ‘was employed as a miner in South Wales’ at the age of twelve in 1908, before emigrating to Canada in the 1910s; Walter Sendell of Trehafod who worked down the mines for twelve months c. 1929 before moving to London for work; and Israel Kramsky of ‘south Wales’ who worked as ‘a miner, steelworker, and fireman’.<sup>201</sup>

However, some Jews had somewhat lengthy careers in the mines. Harris Bravo of Russia, for instance, worked as an underground workman in Gilfach in 1901, and continued to be listed as a labourer underground in the 1911 census. Both Harris Horne (50) and his son Henry (also known as Harry) (16), from Russia, worked underground in Pontlottyn in 1911, the former a Timberman (below ground) and the latter a collier boy. Harry’s naturalisation papers from 1919 reveal that he still worked as a miner.<sup>202</sup> Similarly, Moses Moses of

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<sup>197</sup> *JC*, 24th June 1910; *Merthyr Express*, 15 March 1902; *JC*, 14 March 1902.

<sup>198</sup> Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs, 12 January 1978, 6009/1, Sound Archive, SFNHM.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> Alderman, *Controversy and Crisis*, 62.

<sup>201</sup> *JC*, 25 February 1944; 26 March 1976; Walter Sendell, interview with Conrad Wood, 7 August 1992, 12614, Imperial War Museum (henceforth IWM).

<sup>202</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Henry Horne, Certificate 3,833 issued 17 April 1919, HO 144/1510/374984, NA.

Tonypandy was listed as a collier in 1911 and was recorded as a collier when naturalised in 1920.<sup>203</sup> Myer Cohen (45) worked as a travelling draper around Pontypridd in 1901, but by 1911 was listed as an underground labourer. He died aged 68 in 1924 and his death certificate gave his occupation as colliery labourer (below ground).<sup>204</sup>

The arrival of East European Jews to the south Wales valleys led to a notable growth in some of the established communities of the region. The Jewish population of Merthyr Tydfil, for instance, increased from 300 in 1904 to 400 in 1920, while Pontypridd Jewry was of sufficient size by 1895 that a purpose-built synagogue, capable of accommodating nearly two hundred worshippers, opened in Cliff Terrace (see appendix A6).<sup>205</sup> Tredegar's Jewish population rose from between 60 to 70 worshippers in 1884 to 160 in 1912.<sup>206</sup> Although Pontypool's small Jewish community did not experience dramatic growth, the 1891 census reveals that a small number of Eastern European Jews settled in the town, including Russian-born Reuben Fine (40), a pawnbroker and clothier, and his wife and four children; and picture framer Samuel Jacob Dawson (34), also from Russia, and his wife, four children and grandmother.

With the growth of the Jewish population came the development of new Jewish communities in the south Wales coalfield. Unfortunately, it is difficult to precisely date the establishment of many Hebrew congregations since the records of most have been lost, and in many instances their formation was not announced in the *JC* or listed in the *JYB*. Jews such as Cornish-born Abraham Freedman and John Cohen, from London, settled in Aberdare from the 1860s, but a synagogue was not consecrated in the town until c. 1887.<sup>207</sup> Hebrew congregations also sprung up in Brynmawr (1888), Porth (c.1890), Tonypandy (c.1894), Penygraig (c.1900), New Tredegar (1903), Abertillery (c.1904), Penrhiwceiber (1904), Ebbw Vale (c.1906), Bargoed (c.1915), and Newbridge (c.1915), while High Holyday services were held, possibly for the first time, in Treorchy in October 1897.<sup>208</sup> Contrary to the claim made

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<sup>203</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation: Mosheh Mosheh (known as Moses Moses), Certificate 7,242 issued 15 October 1920, HO 144/1622/398903, NA.

<sup>204</sup> *Bimah*, 68 (May 2012), 27.

<sup>205</sup> *JYB*, 1904; *JYB*, 1920; *Western Mail*, 17 October 1895.

<sup>206</sup> *JC*, 2 May 1884; *JYB*, 1912.

<sup>207</sup> The *JC* from 1902 reveals that Jews in Aberdare had been meeting for divine service at the synagogue at 19A, Seymour Street, for nearly fifteen years. See *JC*, 27 June 1902.

<sup>208</sup> *JC*, 5 October 1888; 17 October 1890; 5 October 1894; 15 October 1897; 7 December 1900; 15 January 1904; 16 November 1906; 5 February 1915; 8 October 1915; *The South Wales Jewish Review*, 10 (October

by Alderman, no Jewish community was formally established in Rhymney.<sup>209</sup> Rather, it was home to one Jewish family, the Fines, and a few individuals such as Hyman French and Samuel Wallen, all of whom were associated with Tredegar's Jewish activities.<sup>210</sup>

A striking feature of Jewish life in the south Wales coalfield was the number of communities established, considering that the amount of Jews in most towns of the region was very small and that synagogues were located only a few miles apart. The Tredegar Hebrew Congregation, for instance, numbered an average of 120 congregants during this period, and was situated only two miles away from the Ebbw Vale Hebrew Congregation which had only 80 members. Aberdare's Jewish community numbered no more than 90 individuals and was situated less than four miles away from the much larger Hebrew congregation in Merthyr Tydfil, which had an estimated 300 members. But why were so many small Jewish communities established in this region of south-East Wales? The answer may lie in the topography of the valleys. As John Davies once wrote, 'the south Wales coalfield is the only mountainous coalfield in Britain', a feature which likely made it difficult for Jews living in nearby towns to reach one another and organise themselves into a Jewish community.<sup>211</sup> Thus, while Ebbw Vale and Tredegar are two miles apart, the Jewish residents of both towns were situated in different valleys and separated from each other by a steep mountain. The difficulties faced by Jews travelling to a synagogue in a nearby valley town during the early twentieth century is strikingly illustrated by Mordecai Boone, who grew up in Rhymney in the 1920s. He notes:

...were the only Jewish family there, completely isolated. I can recollect my father getting us to go to *Shool* on the Sabbath but we had to walk four or five or six miles, I don't know, over mountain tops and bogs and crossing streams, we used to be completely drenched when we got to Tredegar *Shool*.<sup>212</sup>

Although some made the arduous journey to *shul*, it must have been too difficult and tiring for most, and thus the population of the Jewish communities of the south Wales coalfield remained small and scattered.

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1904), 147. High Holyday services were held in Ferndale in 1904, but there is no record of any formal Hebrew congregation;- see, *The South Wales Jewish Review*, 10 (October 1904), 147.

<sup>209</sup> Alderman, 'The anti-Jewish riots', 191.

<sup>210</sup> *JC*, 2 February 1894; 31 March 1905; 29 November 1907.

<sup>211</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, 321.

<sup>212</sup> *CAJEX*, 27, 1, (1977), 78.

Smaller groups of Jews could be found in other parts of south Wales. Jews gathered in Bridgend from the 1890s onwards as a result of its position on the Swansea-London railway line. According to the *JYB*, a congregation was founded in 1907 with Rev. L. Wolfe serving as minister until 1910. However, items in the *JC* suggest that the congregation had dissolved by 1913, possibly due to the absence of a minister. In that year Rev. H.J. Sandheim visited the town ‘with the view to re-establishing the congregation’, but ‘suitable accommodation for a synagogue and classrooms’ was not obtained until 1927.<sup>213</sup> Moreover, the pages of the *JC* and *JYB* indicate that a Hebrew congregation, numbering no more than about three families, existed in Ammanford between 1915 and 1921. There is no mention of a synagogue, but communal functions were held at M. Cohen’s residence, the congregation’s president.<sup>214</sup> Similarly, despite claims made by a variety of sources, there was no synagogue established in Ystalyfera. Henriques, for instance, once wrote that ‘By 1914...Llanelli and Aberavon, along with Ystalyfera, had established their own synagogues’, while the JCR-UK website notes that a synagogue was established ‘prior to 1910’.<sup>215</sup> Yet, there is no verifying evidence for any of these assertions. The foundation of a synagogue was not reported in the *JC*, and no entry is made in the *JYB*. Rather, it appears that Jews living in Ystalyfera were ‘country’ members of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation. They included Romanian-born Samuel Samuel, and Tobias Shepherd, a Polish-born *yeshiva* student, who lived in Swansea in the late 1880s before setting up as a furniture dealer in Ystalyfera around 1890.<sup>216</sup> Since the distance between Swansea and Ystalyfera (approximately thirteen miles) meant it was impractical to regularly travel to Swansea for synagogue services, a *minyan* was often formed at Shepherd’s Ystalyfera home by Jewish men living in the village and those scattered across the Swansea Valley such as Israel Neft of Neath.<sup>217</sup>

Though individual Jews had been in north Wales previously, Jews did not migrate to the region in significant numbers until the last decades of the nineteenth century. Like their predecessors, north Wales proved attractive to Jewish immigrants because it was underexploited, and word may have spread that Jews such as the Aronsons of Bangor were successful in the area. By the latter half of the nineteenth century the region had also

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<sup>213</sup> *JC*, 11 July 1913; *JC*, 21 January 1927.

<sup>214</sup> *JC*, 17 December 1915.

<sup>215</sup> Glaser and Henriques, ‘The Valleys Communities’, in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 55.

<sup>216</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 1909-1932, 288; D/D SHC 1/2, WGA.

<sup>217</sup> Joseph Shepherd, interview with David Jacobs, 8 November 1976, 6010 and 6011, Sound Archive, SFNHM. I am grateful to Jasmine Donahaye for pointing this source out to me.

prospered both economically and demographically. North Wales' coastal towns such as Colwyn Bay, Llandudno and Rhyl with their beaches and clean air made them popular holiday destinations, facilitated by the construction of the London and North Western line from Chester to Holyhead between 1844 and 1850, and the founding of the Liverpool and North Wales Steamship Company in 1890. In Bangor, shipbuilding became an important industry and the opening of slate quarries in nearby Bethesda accelerated its growth and development. In 1850, over thirteen hundred houses were recorded in the city and Bangor was 'considered one of the most flourishing and improving towns in North Wales', eventually becoming a centre of higher education following the establishment of the University College of North Wales in 1884.<sup>218</sup> Industrial expansion in the coal, metallurgical and pottery industries also led to the growth of Wrexham in the nineteenth century. As in the south Wales, the development and growth of these towns created a demand for goods and services, which would have provided economic opportunities to the mainly poor, newly-arrived Jewish immigrants.

The first Jewish community in north Wales was formed on an informal basis in Wrexham. According to the *JYB* it was established in 1890, but unusually, there is no mention of this in the *JC*.<sup>219</sup> It is not until 1892 that Wrexham Jewry first appears in the paper, which reports of 'a meeting held...at the residence of Mr. S. Rosenthal' where 'it was decided to hold services on the coming Holydays in temporary premises, Manly Road.'<sup>220</sup> However, a congregation was not formally established until September 1894.<sup>221</sup> By 1898, it appears that the community divided to form two rival congregations with the *JC* reporting of 'a new Hebrew congregation' formed in Bradley Road.<sup>222</sup> It is likely that the congregation split over personal differences and disorganisation, evidenced by the number of alterations made to the synagogue committee between 1896 and 1898.<sup>223</sup> The 'two congregations....became united' in 1899 and met in Bradley Road, as it was deemed impracticable to have 'two congregations where it is difficult to support one.'<sup>224</sup> Wrexham's close proximity to Chester meant that

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<sup>218</sup> *Slater's Directory*, 1850.

<sup>219</sup> *JYB*, 1897.

<sup>220</sup> *JC*, 23 September 1892.

<sup>221</sup> *JC*, 7 September 1894.

<sup>222</sup> *JC*, 16 December 1898.

<sup>223</sup> *JC*, 8 May 1896; *JYB*, 1897; *JYB*, 1898.

<sup>224</sup> *JC*, 11 August 1899.



their Jewish communities had a close relationship. The two congregations had affiliated in 1912, and began sharing ministers and communal facilities.<sup>225</sup>

The next Jewish community established in north Wales was at Bangor. It was formally consecrated five months prior to the Wrexham Hebrew Congregation, and because of this was described by the *JC* as being ‘the first congregation in North Wales.’<sup>226</sup> A synagogue was consecrated in High Street in May 1894, and by 1900 the Jewish population was listed in the *JYB* as one hundred.<sup>227</sup> The founder of the congregation was Morris Wartski from Turek, Poland, who arrived in Bangor in the early 1880s after living ‘for a time in Liverpool.’<sup>228</sup> He began life in Bangor as a jewellery and drapery hawker, before opening a watchmakers, jewellery and drapery store at 21 High Street around 1895.

In 1908 Wartski expanded his business to the nearby fashionable seaside resort of Llandudno. A year later he formed a Hebrew congregation in the town, and served as its first president. The *JYB* from 1945 onwards claims the congregation was established in 1905. However, the first mention of Llandudno does not appear until its 1910 edition. The *JC* reports confidently in May 1909 that ‘a congregation has been formed at Llandudno’, revealing that it was in fact founded in 1909 rather than 1905.<sup>229</sup> Nevertheless, Jews were present in Llandudno prior to 1909. The resort was a popular destination of the Liverpool and Manchester communities, and as early as 1871 a Joseph Aarons of Liverpool opened an establishment at Llandudno to cater for his Jewish community.<sup>230</sup> The popularity of Llandudno as a holiday destination for Jews increased in the first decade of the twentieth century, leading to the establishment of several kosher guesthouses, including Libau Villa, ‘Trevennel’, ‘Bodlondeb’, ‘The Hague’, and ‘Mazl House’, later ‘the Laurels’.<sup>231</sup> Although *Ashkenazi* Jews from Eastern Europe formed the majority of Llandudno Jewry, and British Jewry in general, there was also a small number of Sephardic Jews living in the town. Among them was Yousif Murab (also known as Joseph) Gubay, who came from Iraq shortly after the end of the First World War with his wife Lulu, and their children, to take over ‘The Oriental

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<sup>225</sup> *JC*, 13 December 1912.

<sup>226</sup> *JC*, 4 May 1894.

<sup>227</sup> *JYB*, 1900.

<sup>228</sup> *JC*, 6 April 1945. This article, celebrating Morris Wartski’s ninetieth birthday, mentions that he came to the United Kingdom from Poland about 65 years ago.

<sup>229</sup> *JC*, 21 May 1909.

<sup>230</sup> *JC*, 28 April 1871.

<sup>231</sup> *JC*, 28 May 1905; 25 May 1906; 1 July 1910; 12 June 1914; 19 May 1924.

Stores' on Mostyn street from his brothers-in-law who 'entered the textile business in Manchester'.<sup>232</sup>

Jewish holidaymakers from Liverpool and Manchester were also attracted to the seaside town of Rhyl, and by 1898 three kosher boarding houses were in operation.<sup>233</sup> A congregation was formed two years earlier in September 1896, when '20 gentlemen and several ladies' in the town attended a service conducted by both Morris Brodie of Market Street and a Rev. Speiro in a room in Tudor Place.<sup>234</sup> According to the 1933 edition of the *JYB*, the Rhyl Congregation was still in existence with the synagogue based in the Queen Chambers.<sup>235</sup> However, the 1935 edition states that the congregation ceased to exist about 1906.<sup>236</sup> Scanning the pages of the *JC* it becomes apparent that from 1907, the Rhyl Hebrew Congregation had dissolved, likely because of 'a great fire' which destroyed the building that housed the synagogue.<sup>237</sup> Without the funds to establish a new synagogue congregants moved elsewhere. To take one example: Morris Brodie, the congregation's founder, moved to Southport.<sup>238</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, who settled in Wales between the 1880s and the first decades of the twentieth century, dwarfed any previous Jewish settlement in the principality. Their presence not only increased the Jewish population of Wales dramatically, but also altered Welsh Jewry geographically by expanding the number of Jewish communities throughout Wales. Before 1880, seven Hebrew congregations were founded and located in south Wales, but by the end of the First World War there were approximately nineteen Hebrew congregations established all over the principality. The next chapter will examine particular patterns of communal and religious life within these Jewish communities.

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<sup>232</sup> *Llandudno Advertiser and District Gazette*, 6 September 1968. This article, announcing the death of Lulu Gubay, notes that the family 'had resided in the town for close on 50 years'. Grahame Davies's claim that the Llandudno and Rhyl Jewish communities mainly consisted of Sephardi Jews is incorrect. Indeed, like other Jewish communities in Wales, Llandudno and Rhyl Jewry mainly consisted of Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe. See, Davies, *Chosen People*, 211.

<sup>233</sup> *JC*, 1 July 1898; *JC*, 15 July 1898.

<sup>234</sup> *Rhyl Journal*, 12 September 1896.

<sup>235</sup> *JYB*, 1933.

<sup>236</sup> *JYB*, 1935.

<sup>237</sup> *JC*, 29 November 1907.

<sup>238</sup> *JC*, 19 April 1929.

## **2. Patterns of Religious and Communal Life in Wales' Orthodox Jewish Communities**

This chapter examines patterns of religious and communal life in Wales' Jewish communities between the late eighteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. During this period, all of the principality's Jewish communities were organised upon Orthodox lines, and were of a sufficient size and wealth to form congregations with a functioning place of worship. As mentioned in the introduction, previous works on the history of Welsh Jewry have primarily focused on the experiences of Jews living in the larger centres of Cardiff and Swansea, and, with the exception of a few brief studies on Jews in the south Wales valleys, the particular experiences of Jews outside of these communities have either been overlooked or limited to a few brief sentences or paragraphs which are largely factual in content. One of the main purposes of this chapter therefore is to give a sense of texture to the history of Wales' Orthodox Jewish communities by exploring their peculiar idiosyncrasies. By doing so, this chapter demonstrates that despite being Orthodox in practice, the historical experiences of these communities were varied and multifaceted. As will be shown, the size, wealth, location and origins of these Orthodox congregations were all significant factors in determining how Jewish religious and communal life unfolded in these centres. Ultimately, by examining the similarities and differences in the make-up of the principality's Jewish communities, we will gain a greater understanding of the intricate character of Welsh Jewry, and British Jewry more generally.

### **Synagogues**

Typically, when Hebrew congregations first formed in Wales, congregants immediately stimulated interest in organising both a suitable and convenient place for worship. Of course, Jewish communities in Wales, and Britain more generally, were often initially too small in numbers and too poor to organise formal facilities for worship. Thus, as we have seen, it was common for early Jewish settlers to gather for prayers and services in very modest surroundings. In Bangor, for instance, Passover services were held in 1894 at the residence of Morris Wartski in High Street, while the first services in Llanelli were held in 1902 in the home of Harris Rubinstein.<sup>1</sup> In Port Talbot, services were initially held in a room in the home of Rev. Folegrest and a room over the shop premises of Jacob Finkelstein, while in

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<sup>1</sup> *JC*, 4 May 1894; 2 January 1903.

Brynmawr in 1889, ‘Barnett Isaacs, the president, generously placed one of his houses at the disposal of the members’ for services, which were later held in the Town Hall.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, as the population of these communities increased and congregants gained a sense of greater stability, it was common for Hebrew congregations to acquire a purpose-built house of worship or convert a suitable building into a fully-functioning synagogue. As Lee Shai Weissbach points out, it was important for Jewish communities to acquire adequate facilities of their own ‘because it symbolized the permanence of a congregation’.<sup>3</sup> This was stressed by the Chief Rabbi, particularly Hermann Adler (1839-1911), who often encouraged Jewish communities throughout the United Kingdom to build purpose-built synagogues because they symbolised confidence in a community’s longevity and helped reinforce the notion that Judaism was a visible part of the local religious landscape.<sup>4</sup> During his Pastoral tour in 1898, for instance, Hermann Adler visited Bangor where he ‘exhorted the congregation to build for themselves a suitable place of worship’, while during a tour of south Wales in 1899, he suggested that the Brynmawr Hebrew Congregation should ‘quit their present inadequate and comfortless abode and erect a permanent structure’.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, in a letter sent to the honorary secretary of the Tonypandy Hebrew Congregation in 1917, the then Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz wrote that ‘the fact that you have to be in part of a house for high holy service’ is ‘not very satisfactory’, and suggested that the congregation find ‘a more suitable place of worship’.<sup>6</sup> Thus, during the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of Wales’ Jewish communities erected purpose-built synagogues.<sup>7</sup>

As has been previously noted, Cardiff Jewry erected its first purpose-built synagogue in East Terrace in 1858, while Swansea’s second purpose-built synagogue opened in Goat Street in 1859.<sup>8</sup> Newport Jewry’s first purpose-built house of worship opened in 1871, while Merthyr Tydfil’s Hebrew Congregation consecrated its second purpose-built synagogue in

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<sup>2</sup> *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), 65-67; *JC*, 4 October 1889.

<sup>3</sup> Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 180.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the religious policies of Hermann Adler see Benjamin J. Elton, *Britain’s Chief Rabbis and the Religious Character of Anglo-Jewry, 1880-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 71- 163; Israel Finestein, *Anglo-Jewry in Changing Times: Studies in Diversity 1840-1914* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1999), 215-250; Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 167-169.

<sup>5</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 14 May 1898; *JC*, 12 May 1899.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from the Office of Chief Rabbi to C. Solomon, 11 December 1917, ACC/2805/04/02/124, London Metropolitan Archives (henceforth LMA).

<sup>7</sup> Many of the purpose-built synagogues in south Wales were built and designed by Nonconformist architects and are architecturally similar to their neighbouring Nonconformist chapels. For more on this, see Kadish ‘The Jewish Presence in Wales’, in O’Kane and Morgan-Guy, eds., *Biblical Art from Wales*, 272-291.

<sup>8</sup> *JC*, 11 June 1858; *JC*, 7 October 1859.

1877 to accommodate a growing community.<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere in south Wales, a purpose-built synagogue was erected in Morgan Street by the Tredegar Hebrew Congregation in 1884, and by 1901 the number of Jews in Brynmawr had increased ‘so rapidly’ that ‘a building for divine worship more suitable to their needs’ was erected in Bailey Street (see appendix A7 and A8).<sup>10</sup> Llanelli Jewry’s purpose-built synagogue opened in Victoria Street in May 1909, while in 1911 the Ebbw Vale Hebrew Congregation converted a vacant chapel into a synagogue building.<sup>11</sup> In 1921 a single-storey synagogue was erected by the Port Talbot Hebrew Congregation in Tŷdraw Place, when the community numbered about one hundred persons (see appendix A9).<sup>12</sup>

However, the erection of a purpose-built synagogue was a costly undertaking and financing its construction was often a struggle for many of Wales’ smaller Jewish communities. Indeed, in order to acquire their buildings, it was common for congregations to turn first to their own members for monetary donations and then to sources beyond their own communities. This was true when Merthyr Tydfil erected its first synagogue in the early 1850s. A plea for donations appeared in the *JC* in February 1852. Eighteen Jewish residents of Merthyr Tydfil had already contributed, and their donations were supplemented by contributions from local Jewish communities such as Pontypridd and Tredegar, as well as the then Chief Rabbi, Nathan Marcus Adler.<sup>13</sup> When the Jews of Brynmawr were raising funds for the construction of their synagogue in 1900, they wrote to the *JC*, soliciting a donation from other Hebrew congregations in the United Kingdom. They received financial contributions from co-religionists in Abertillery, London, and Southampton, among other places.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, when the foundation stone of Newport’s synagogue was laid in May 1870, the congregation made an appeal to co-religionists throughout the United Kingdom ‘for further [financial] aid’.<sup>15</sup> Reflecting on Jewish life in early twentieth-century Port Talbot, Isaac Factor recalled that:

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<sup>9</sup> *Western Mail*, 24 March 1871; *JC*, 1 June 1877. Kadish’s latest work on British synagogal architecture states that ‘Merthyr Synagogue’s [1877] architect has not been identified’. However, an article in the *Cardiff Times* from 1876 reveals that the architect was Charles Taylor of Merthyr Tydfil. See Sharman Kadish, *The Synagogues of Britain and Ireland: an Architectural and Social History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 203; *Cardiff Times*, 18 March 1876.

<sup>10</sup> *JC*, 9 May 1884; *JC*, 21 June 1901.

<sup>11</sup> *Llanelli Mercury*, 20 May 1909; *JC*, 29 March 1912.

<sup>12</sup> *JC*, 8 April 1921.

<sup>13</sup> *JC*, 27 February 1852.

<sup>14</sup> *JC*, 13 July 1900.

<sup>15</sup> *JC*, 27 May 1870.

The money for the [synagogue] Building Fund was raised by donations from members by dances and also by donations from Jewish families living in the valleys outside Port Talbot. It was quite customary in those days for the President and Treasurer to visit the neighbouring valleys on Sundays to call for donations.<sup>16</sup>

In a letter sent to the *JC* in February 1884, Mark J. S. Lyons of Ebbw Vale claimed that funds for the synagogue in Tredegar (then under construction) were raised not by ‘public appeal’, but solely by ‘the indefatigable exertions and sacrifices of this small congregation’.<sup>17</sup> However, this claim was later disputed by an anonymous donor from Cardiff, who stated that, ‘some of the leading members of the Tredegar Congregation, waited upon me and almost all the Jews resident in this town [Cardiff], soliciting pecuniary aid towards the erection of their synagogue’.<sup>18</sup>

The acquisition of a purpose-built or converted synagogue often burdened congregations with debt. For example, when a second purpose-built synagogue was erected in Merthyr Tydfil in 1877, only £400 was raised from voluntary donations, and thus a mortgage of £1,000 was taken out to cover additional construction costs.<sup>19</sup> A plea to free the congregation from a debt of £800 appeared in the *JC* in 1877, but by the early 1880s they took another mortgage out as a result of the economic recession of the late 1870s, which depressed trade and subsequently forced many of the congregation’s ‘wealthier members’ to leave Merthyr.<sup>20</sup> In August 1885, Hermann Harris of Brynmawr donated 10s. and 6d. to help pay off the congregation’s second mortgage, which then amounted to £420.<sup>21</sup> According to Ursula Henriques, mortgage repayments were continuing as late as 1918.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, despite the generous financial assistance of ‘many brethren in the Principality’, Llanelli Jewry faced a debt of £600 when their synagogue opened in 1909.<sup>23</sup> Four years later ‘an urgent appeal’ from the community appeared in the *JC* stating that ‘the bank has given a final notice of calling in the mortgage on the Synagogue’ and ‘unless a substantial reduction of the heavy debt of £576 is immediately forthcoming’ the synagogue ‘must be closed’.<sup>24</sup> To

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<sup>16</sup> *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), 66.

<sup>17</sup> *JC*, 16 February 1884.

<sup>18</sup> *JC*, 22 February 1884.

<sup>19</sup> *JC*, 1 March 1878.

<sup>20</sup> *JC*, 10 July 1885.

<sup>21</sup> *JC*, 28 August 1885.

<sup>22</sup> Glaser and Henriques, ‘The Valleys Communities’, in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 56.

<sup>23</sup> *Llanelli and County Guardian*, 20 May 1909.

<sup>24</sup> *JC*, 12 September 1913.

pay off the debt and increase revenue, it was decided to raise the weekly contributions of ‘the already heavily taxed members’, and terminate the services of the congregation’s minister, Rev. H. J. Sandheim.<sup>25</sup>

Some congregations also held fundraising events to help pay off the debt owing on their synagogues. In December 1907, for instance, the Brynmawr Hebrew Congregation held a ball at the local Drill Hall ‘for the purpose of liquidating the debt’ on the synagogue, while in February 1914, a Jewish ball was organised by the Ebbw Vale Hebrew Congregation ‘in aid of the Synagogue Mortgage Fund’. According to the *JC*, both balls were a ‘social and financial success’.<sup>26</sup>

Despite their ardent desire to construct their own synagogue, many of Wales’ smaller Hebrew congregations never did. Indeed, there were no purpose-built synagogues in north Wales, and the region’s small Jewish communities graduated from private residences to rented halls or rooms in commercial buildings. In this instance, the limited size of these congregations, which ranged from twelve at their smallest to eighty-five at their greatest, and their lack of financial resources were the main deciding factors. Indeed, the Bangor Hebrew Congregation was so poor and few in number in 1894 (around fourteen families) that they required financial support from co-religionists throughout the United Kingdom to help pay for a rented room they had ‘fitted up for synagogal purposes’.<sup>27</sup> Between 1894 and the early 1960s, Bangor’s Hebrew Congregation met for services on the first floor of the Arvonja Buildings, High Street (see appendix A10). Unfortunately, the building no longer exists, and little is known about the synagogue’s interior, other than a memoir of a wartime evacuee from Liverpool named Maurice Hesselberg, which provides a brief (and unhelpfully generic) description.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *JC*, 27 February 1914.

<sup>26</sup> *JC*, 13 December 1907; 13 February 1914.

<sup>27</sup> *JC*, 25 May 1913; 13 July 1913.

<sup>28</sup> Maurice I. Hesselberg, *Bangor 1939-1942: a Memoir* (unpublished, date unknown), XM 12325, CRO. Hesselberg describes the synagogue as ‘a very small *shul*...There were two rooms; one room which was the synagogue was divided by a tall wooden partition which separated the ladies section. ...The men’s section contained the Ark, basically a cupboard with a curtain in front...There was also a reading desk and seats....The Ark was on the window wall with a seat on either side. These were seats of honour for the president or any distinguished guest’. The contents of the Bangor synagogue were donated to the Manchester Jewish Museum in 1985, and returned to Bangor in 1991. The synagogue’s interior is now in possession of the Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery in Bangor where it is kept in storage.

After having met for prayer in the Arvonja Buildings for sixty years, Bangor Jewry moved into the porch of the local Tabernacle Chapel in Garth Road in 1964 (see appendix A11).<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the Llandudno Hebrew Congregation held services from 1909 in a room on the upper floor of the Masonic Hall in Mostyn Street, and in 1948 moved to a renovated house in Church Walks, which features a prayer room, communal hall and apartments (see appendix A12 and A13).<sup>30</sup> Between 1897 and 1907, it appears that the synagogue of the short-lived Rhyl Hebrew Congregation moved three times. From 1897 until 1900, congregants met for worship in rented rooms above the ‘Palace and Summer Gardens’ building in Wellington Road, and in 1900 met temporarily in the home of Rev M. Bogdanski when the former rooms were ‘no longer available’.<sup>31</sup> From November 1900 until November 1907, the congregation’s fifty-five members met for prayer in a room at the Magnet Buildings in High Street.<sup>32</sup> Throughout its existence, the Wrexham Hebrew Congregation’s synagogue consisted of no more than a rented room, and like the synagogue in Rhyl it moved around a great deal, demonstrating the inadequacy of the condition of these spaces. Congregants initially worshipped at 10 Hill Street, and moved in 1899 to a room above a shop at 84 Bradley Road.<sup>33</sup> Around 1919 the synagogue moved to a house at 12 Derby Road, and then another at 31 Smithfield Road between 1925 and 1929.<sup>34</sup> Wrexham Jewry’s last synagogue opened around 1930 and was situated above a shop at 37 Rhosddu Road (see appendix A14).<sup>35</sup>

A number of small Jewish communities in the south Wales valleys were also never able to occupy purpose-built synagogues, and throughout their existence their houses of worship were often located in terrace houses. The Aberdare Hebrew Congregation, for instance, began meeting for divine worship in a rented terrace house at 19A Seymour Street in 1887, which was eventually acquired in 1902 by the congregation’s then president, Morris Jacobs, and treasurer and secretary, Benjamin Hann (see appendix A15).<sup>36</sup> Although the Tonypandy Hebrew Congregation began a fundraising appeal in 1915 to construct a synagogue, a purpose-built structure was never erected.<sup>37</sup> A number of members opposed the scheme as they could ‘not see the possibility of upkeep’ of a purpose-built structure ‘with such small

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<sup>29</sup> *JC*, 18 December 1964.

<sup>30</sup> *JC*, 9 July 1948.

<sup>31</sup> *JC*, 29 October 1897; *JC*, 26 October 1900.

<sup>32</sup> *JC*, 23 November 1900; *JC*, 29 November 1907.

<sup>33</sup> *JYB*, 1897-1899.

<sup>34</sup> *JYB*, 1919-1929.

<sup>35</sup> *JYB*, 1930.

<sup>36</sup> *JC*, 27 June 1902.

<sup>37</sup> *JC*, 7 May 1915.



membership'.<sup>38</sup> Initially, services were often held 'in Public Houses', but between 1912 and 1926 congregants worshipped in a rented a house at 7, Holborn Terrace.<sup>39</sup> In late 1926, the synagogue moved to a terrace house at 38, Eleanor Street.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the foundation stone of a purpose-built synagogue at Abertillery was laid in November 1910, but the building was never constructed owing to a lack of funds.<sup>41</sup> Instead, the congregation established a synagogue in a room in a terraced house at 2, Newall Street around 1910/1911. According to Irene Morgan, a local non-Jewish resident, the house belonged to Harry Simons, a Welsh-born Jewish furniture dealer, and the synagogue was located at the back of the building.<sup>42</sup>

Other buildings were also used as synagogues by small Jewish communities in south Wales. Unfortunately, the address of Bridgend's first synagogue is unknown, but we do know that members of the town's Hebrew congregation met for worship in the former Bridgend Council Chambers in Adare Street from 1927.<sup>43</sup> 'A room in an old inn' served as a synagogue for the short-lived Newbridge Hebrew Congregation in the early decades of the twentieth century, and 'in fairness to the members' from 'the surrounding villages of Abercarn, Crumlin and Llanhilleth', High Holyday services were always held 'in a room rented in an inn, chapel vestry or a school' in 'the three villages in turn'.<sup>44</sup>

As well as serving as a place of religious worship, synagogues typically acted as the hub of Jewish social activity in a number of Wales' smaller Jewish communities. Whereas larger communities such as Cardiff and Swansea were, at one time or another, able to support communal buildings apart from synagogues, in most of Wales' smaller Jewish communities, the synagogue was the only public Jewish building in town. Thus, while Cardiff Jewry opened a Jewish Institute in Upper Station Terrace in 1910, and Swansea Jewry met for communal and cultural activities in Cornhill House, Christina Street, from 1916 until 1956, the synagogue in Bangor was nearly always the place where social gatherings and communal functions took place.<sup>45</sup> Among the societies and groups that met at the synagogue were the

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<sup>38</sup> Letter from Mr. Caller to Chief Rabbi, 30 September 1917, ACC/2805/04/02/124, LMA.

<sup>39</sup> Copy of letter sent to Tonypany congregants regarding the erection of a purpose-built synagogue, undated, ACC/2805/04/02/124, LMA; *JYB* 1912-1927.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Chief Rabbi to secretary of the Board of Deputies, 13 January 1927, ACC/2805/04/02/124, LMA.

<sup>41</sup> *JC*, 25 November 1910.

<sup>42</sup> Simon Eckley and Don Bearcroft, eds., *Voices of Abertillery, Aberbeeg and Llanhilleth* (Stroud: Chalford, 1996), 102.

<sup>43</sup> *JC*, 21 January 1927.

<sup>44</sup> *CAJEX*, 24, 4 (1974). 29.

<sup>45</sup> *JC*, 8 July 1910; *Western Mail's Cardiff Directory* (1911); Saunders, *Swansea Hebrew Congregation*, 53.

Jewish Friendly and Zionist societies, and the Local Study Circle.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, the local Zionist and Jewish Orphan Aid Societies met at Brynmawr's synagogue during the first decades of the twentieth century, while Llandudno's synagogue in Mostyn Street was also the scene of weekly Zionist meetings.<sup>47</sup>

The important role played by the synagogue in Jewish communal life was recognised by many of those who grew up in smaller Jewish communities in Wales during the first half of the twentieth century. For instance, Isaac Factor, a former resident of the Port Talbot Jewish community, observed succinctly 'that everything centred around the *Shool*', while Minnie Harris (b. 1897) recalled that Jewish communal life in Tredegar 'centred around the synagogue'.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Sidney Littlestone of Pontypridd recalled that during the 1920s and 1930s the town's synagogue served as the venue for all the communal functions of the local Jewish population. According to Sidney:

The Sunday night Whist Drives and Dances at the *Cheder* rooms [in the synagogue], where many a romance began and folk from other Communities came down to Ponty just for that evening— a 'must' on their calendar!<sup>49</sup>

### **Hebrew Congregations**

Throughout their existence most of Wales' Jewish communities were home to only one Hebrew congregation because there was simply not enough numbers or resources to sustain more than one synagogue. However, for a number of reasons, some Jewish communities did support multiple congregations at some point before the middle of the twentieth century. For example, despite numbering less than one hundred individuals, the Aberavon Hebrew Congregation split c.1907/1908 'as a result of a quarrel between members'.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, the lack of extant documentation means that the exact date and origin of the quarrel is unknown, but it may have been caused by a disagreement over rules regarding Sabbath observance. This is suggested by the late Isaac Factor of Port Talbot, who wrote in 1961 that:

...the community was split into two congregations, one under the presidency of Mr. Rosenberg and the other under the presidency of the late Mr. Aaron Factor...The latter

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<sup>46</sup> *JC*, 1 April 1898; *JC*, 4 February 1927; *JC*, 21 February 1941.

<sup>47</sup> *JC*, 1 August 1919; 24 January 1941.

<sup>48</sup> *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), 66; 34, 4 (1984), 26.

<sup>49</sup> *CAJEX*, 24, 4 (1974) 32.

<sup>50</sup> *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), 65

congregation called itself the Port Talbot Hebrew Congregation and comprised mainly of members who kept the *Shabbos*.<sup>51</sup>

The two small congregations co-existed peacefully ‘for several years’ until ‘a union was effected’ in July 1913, when it was realised that the community lacked the critical mass to sustain more than one congregation. A single congregation was formed under the name of The Aberavon and Port Talbot Hebrew Congregation, and Aaron Factor was elected its first president.<sup>52</sup>

The existence of a short-lived rival Hebrew congregation in Llanelli between 1915 and 1919 also resulted from a communal rift. According to the late Hyman Landy of Llanelli, the towns’ Hebrew congregation split into two following ‘a disagreement in the community as to who was the senior minister, Rev. Solomon or Rev. Jacover [*sic*]’.<sup>53</sup> Followers of the latter minister included brothers Abraham and Reuben Palto, and a break-away congregation was formed— appropriately named ‘The Llanelli New Hebrew Congregation’—which used a rented room in Castle Buildings, Murray Street, for its religious services.<sup>54</sup> How many congregants joined the rival congregation is unknown, but an article in the *JC* raised doubts on whether such a small community was capable in supporting two congregations:

According to the last edition of the ‘Jewish Year Book’ the total number of Jews in this Welsh town is seventy men, women, and children and these already had one synagogue. If we reckon the number of adult males as half, a very high figure, we shall get something like seventeen members per congregation. And yet we have still to go on asking for some scheme of communal re-organisation!<sup>55</sup>

The exact reason for the dissolution of the Llanelli New Hebrew Congregation is unknown, but it’s likely that leaders of both congregations realised that with such a small Jewish population in Llanelli they could not remain separate from one another indefinitely.

Similarly, the 1899 edition of the *JYB* lists two congregations in Wrexham—the Old Synagogue and the Wrexham New Congregation—revealing that the small community

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<sup>51</sup> *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), 65.

<sup>52</sup> *JC*, 25 July 1913

<sup>53</sup> *CAJEX*, 35, 2 (1985), 18. Spelled ‘Jackower’, see *JC*, 27 February 1914. Landy notes that the congregation split in 1916, but an entry from the Swansea Hebrew Congregation’s Minute Book reveals that the congregation split in December 1915. See Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 12 December 1915, D/D SHC 1/2, WGA.

<sup>54</sup> *CAJEX*, 35, 2 (1985), 18; *JC*, 25 February 1916; 10 March 1916.

<sup>55</sup> *JC*, 3 December 1915.

divided at some point in 1898.<sup>56</sup> It is not clear why Wrexham Jewry split into two congregations, but it may have been because of personal differences and internal disputes.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the Wrexham Hebrew Congregation appears to have been quite disorganised, evidenced by the number of alterations made to the synagogue committee between 1896 and 1898.<sup>58</sup> Members of the Old Synagogue met briefly for worship in a room in Queen Street, while the Wrexham New Congregation established a synagogue in Bradley Road. These arrangements were short-term, however, and by August 1899 the ‘two congregations....became united’, forming a single congregation which worshipped together in Bradley Road.<sup>59</sup> Following re-unification, the congregation’s minister, Rev. Lewis Smorgansky, delivered an address, in which he ‘exhorted members to work harmoniously for the welfare of the congregation’ and noted that ‘in a small community there should not exist two congregations where it was difficult to support one’.<sup>60</sup> The difficulties he mentions are unclear, but Rev. Smorgansky was likely referring to a lack of numbers since at this time Wrexham’s Jewish population was, according to the *JYB*, no more than sixty-six people.<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, the likeliness of a community supporting more than one congregation for a lengthy period of time was influenced by demographic factors. That is, those communities that were able to support multiple congregations tended to be somewhat larger. In Cardiff, for example, two Hebrew congregations co-existed in the town between the late 1880s and the early 1940s, serving a Jewish community which grew from 1,250 persons in 1904 to about 2,300 individuals by 1942, while Swansea Jewry was home to two synagogues between the early 1900s and the 1950s, serving a community numbering around 1,000 persons.<sup>62</sup>

In Cardiff, it appears that the East Terrace congregation split in the late 1880s because of internal disputes between honorary members. According to the wardens of the congregation, Louis Barnett and Isaac Samuel, ‘differences of opinion...in the management of communal affairs’ arose in the spring of 1887, which led a group of congregants to secede and form ‘a

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<sup>56</sup> *JYB*, 1899.

<sup>57</sup> As mentioned above, this was the case in Llanelli, but other Hebrew congregations in the United Kingdom split because of internal disputes. See, for instance, Abrams chapter on Dundee in *Caledonian Jews*, 65-94. The same is also true of Jewish communities in America. See Weissbach’s chapter on patterns of congregational organisation in *Jewish Life*, 156-176.

<sup>58</sup> *JYB*, 1896-1898; *JC*, 25 January 1895; *JC*, 9 April 1895; 12 September 1895; 8 May 1896; 14 August 1896.

<sup>59</sup> *JC*, 11 August 1899.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *JYB*, 1900.

<sup>62</sup> *JYB*, 1904-1942.

*minyan* in opposition'.<sup>63</sup> News of the division reached the Chief Rabbi's Office in London, and despite Hermann Adler's consent to 'hear and adjudicate upon the disputes between' both parties, members of the opposing *minyan* withdrew their membership from East Terrace.<sup>64</sup> The break-away *minyan* initially met for prayer in a rented room and in 1888 sought funds to purchase a house in Edward Place for conversion into a synagogue.<sup>65</sup> When the wardens of East Terrace became aware that donations were being solicited for the new synagogue, they wrote to the *JC* stating 'that the movement [was] in antagonism to the existing Synagogue' and was 'quite unnecessary as there [was] sufficient accommodation in the present building for the whole of the Jewish community'.<sup>66</sup> They also believed that 'the opposition...[would] crumble and disappear, and the members [would] re-join the congregation'.<sup>67</sup> However, the rival *minyan* did not crumble and the house at 5 Edward Place was established as a synagogue for the newly formed 'Cardiff New Hebrew Congregation' (see appendix A16). The congregation's first *chazzan* and *shochet* was Rev. Joseph B. Rittenberg, who had performed the same service for the East Terrace congregation but left after his *shochet* licence was withdrawn, and Rev. Elias Plaskowsky of Pontypridd was elected its first minister.<sup>68</sup>

Although the division appears to have been caused by the nature of synagogue government rather than disputes over religious matters, the rival synagogues did eventually differ, to some extent, in religious custom and practice. Circumcision, for instance, was carried out in the New Synagogue on *Yom Kippur* in 1890 'owing to the refusal of the Old Congregation to circumcise the child of a poor man in their *Shule*', while in *bar mitzvah* ceremonies at the New Synagogue, celebrants were required to read the entire *Sedrah* and recite a prayer suitable for the occasion, a custom that was not practised by the Old Congregation.<sup>69</sup> More significantly, by the early twentieth century the Old Hebrew Congregation became known colloquially as the 'English synagogue', while the new congregation was called the 'foreigner's synagogue'.<sup>70</sup> This is because membership of the latter synagogue was largely made up of newer, poorer, and less assimilated immigrants who arrived from Eastern Europe

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<sup>63</sup> *JC*, 30 November 1888.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *JC*, 1 November 1889.

<sup>66</sup> *JC*, 30 November 1888.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *JC*, 1 November 1889; 7 March 1890.

<sup>69</sup> *JC*, 9 January 1891; 24 October 1890.

<sup>70</sup> *CAJEX*, 1, 4 (1951), 29.

in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, while the former congregation was dominated by earlier immigrants, mainly of Polish or German origin, who had acculturated to British or 'English' society and had become part of the Cardiff Jewish establishment. As an indication of this, the president and treasurer of the Cardiff Old Synagogue in 1915, Barnett Jacobs and Jacob Lewis, were both Welsh-born, while the president and treasurer of the New Synagogue, Israel Cohen and Nathan Orman, were both Russian-born and came to Cardiff in the 1890s.<sup>71</sup>

When Colonel Albert E. W. Goldsmid, a descendant of the famous eighteenth-century Anglo-Jewish banking family, was appointed Colonel-in-Command, 41<sup>st</sup> Regional District in Cardiff, in 1894, he joined the East Terrace congregation and was a prime mover in the campaign to erect a new synagogue.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, by the mid-1890s, the Old Hebrew Congregation outgrew East Terrace, and as the Jewish community expanded into the districts of Riverside and Canton it was felt that the synagogue was rather inaccessible.<sup>73</sup> As the president of the synagogue building committee, Goldsmid secured a lease from the Marquis of Bute for a piece of land in Cathedral Road, and through donations largely from both congregants and co-religionists throughout the United Kingdom, a large and imposing synagogue was built and opened on 12 May 1897.<sup>74</sup> With accommodation for up to 399 worshippers, the Chief Rabbi stated that the congregation possessed 'a building, which by its beauty and size, is worthy of the large and prosperous community'.<sup>75</sup>

While the opening of the Cathedral Road synagogue celebrated a prosperous congregation, all was not harmonious. Although the majority of its members had lived in Britain for a lengthy period of time and were described as '*Anglicised* foreign Jews', a small number were more recent arrivals from Eastern Europe who brought with them different liturgical traditions and were determined to maintain their old world religious practices.<sup>76</sup> As noted above, Cathedral Road was referred to colloquially as the 'English' synagogue, and, although there is no existing evidence of how services were conducted, its customs were probably too acculturated and 'English' for the newcomers. Thus, to 'meet their requirements in religion

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<sup>71</sup> *JYB*, 1915; 1911 census returns.

<sup>72</sup> *JC*, 28 September 1894.

<sup>73</sup> *JC*, 28 February 1896.

<sup>74</sup> *JC*, 14 May 1897.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *JC*, 21 November 1902.

and other matters' a breakaway group established its own *Talmud Torah* in March 1899.<sup>77</sup> Under the chairmanship of Polish-born Charles Abrahamson, a loft near Tudor Road served as a makeshift *Talmud Torah* until a purpose-built synagogue opened in Merches Place in 1900 (see appendix A17). The final result was the creation of a new Orthodox congregation in Cardiff, the *Beth Hamedrash and Talmud Torah* Congregation, which was 'not in antagonism to any existing organisation, but was [established] for the purpose of promoting the study of the Holy Law'.<sup>78</sup> It operated independently until 1904, when a shortage of funds forced the congregation to amalgamate with Cathedral Road.<sup>79</sup> Both parties agreed that religious services could continue at Merches Place, but only on weekdays and Saturday afternoons, while Sabbath morning and High Holyday services were only permitted to take place at the Cathedral Road synagogue.<sup>80</sup> The ultimate fusion of the two congregations can be seen in 1906, when the former president of the *Beth Hamedrash and Talmud Torah*, Benjamin Shatz, was elected treasurer of the Cathedral Road congregation.<sup>81</sup>

In March 1918 the Cardiff New Hebrew Congregation moved its synagogue from Edward Place to larger premises in Windsor Place (see appendix A18), and the divide between the town's Old and New Hebrew congregations continued into the interwar period.<sup>82</sup> In April 1933, a delegation of honorary members from Windsor Place visited committee members of the Cathedral Road congregation to discuss the possibility of amalgamation. It was said that 'In a Community of the size of Cardiff, it was time that one united congregational effort should be made' and that both 'Congregations should pull together in a practical manner'.<sup>83</sup> Numerous discussions, debates and meetings took place throughout the 1930s, but by 1939 amalgamation had still not been achieved.<sup>84</sup> In January that year, Hermann H. Roskin, a member of the Windsor Place congregation, left Cardiff for London to take up an appointment as Senior Legal Assistant to the Coal Commission. In his farewell address to a large assembly at the Windsor Place synagogue, he stated:

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<sup>77</sup> *Western Mail*, 30 March 1899.

<sup>78</sup> *JC*, 27 April 1900.

<sup>79</sup> *CAJEX*, 2, 2 (1952), 30; *JC*, 17 June 1904.

<sup>80</sup> *CAJEX*, 2, 2 (1952). 30. Merches Place was also used for *cheder* lessons and Talmudic study until the building was sold in the late 1940s. See Cardiff United Synagogue Account Book, 281-385, DJR/6/76, GA.

<sup>81</sup> *JC*, 2 November 1900; *JYB*, 1906.

<sup>82</sup> *JC*, 15 March 1918.

<sup>83</sup> *JC*, 28 April 1933.

<sup>84</sup> See, for instance, *JC*, 2 November 1934; 29 March 1935; 23 June 1939.

For years I have pleaded the cause of the amalgamation of the two local synagogues. We have had propositions in favour of amalgamation but time after time the issue had been side-tracked and shelved. To-day we are living in time when it is imperative for Jewry to unite. The community has nothing to lose and everything to gain. I hope when I visit Cardiff at some future date, to find fulfilled that which I have so often pleaded.<sup>85</sup>

Disputations, however, dragged on for another two years. In response, the Chief Rabbi visited Cardiff on 20 July 1941 and asked that both congregations be amalgamated within a month.<sup>86</sup> Exactly a month later, representatives of the Cathedral Road synagogue council and the Windsor Place synagogue board of management ‘met, on neutral ground, at the Angel Hotel’ where it was ‘unanimously agreed to form a United Synagogue for Cardiff, covering religious education, *Shechita*, cemetery, and Synagogue affairs’.<sup>87</sup> The two communities were finally reconciled, forming a single congregation with two houses of prayer. In November 1941, Hermann H. Roskin, ‘an old advocate of amalgamation’, returned to Cardiff and was appropriately appointed the first president of the Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation.<sup>88</sup>

The Swansea Hebrew Congregation split in the last decade of the nineteenth century following a difference of opinion between long-established congregants and newly-arrived poor Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe.<sup>89</sup> The exact cause of a community schism was a row in 1895 over the provision of kosher meat to immigrants who had not subscribed to the congregation. It erupted into a major dispute that not only involved Swansea Jewry, but also spread to London. In December 1895, the Chief Rabbi wrote to the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, informing them that he had:

received several letters from poor foreign workmen in your congregation who complain that, as they are unable to afford the amount charged by your committee they are not allowed to obtain any kosher meat. They state that in consequence...they will not eat the meat of your community and they urgently ask me to send them a *shochet*.<sup>90</sup>

The then president of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, Solomon Lyons, purported that the complainants were not as impoverished as the Chief Rabbi believed, and replied stating:

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<sup>85</sup> *JC*, 6 January 1939.

<sup>86</sup> *JC*, 25 July 1941.

<sup>87</sup> *JC*, 22 August 1941.

<sup>88</sup> *JC*, 28 November 1941.

<sup>89</sup> Swansea’s case was not unique, however, and similar conflicts arose between ‘native’ and immigrant Jews in other Jewish communities in Britain during this period. See, for instance, Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*; Gerry Black, *Jewish London: an Illustrated History* (Derby: Breedon Books, 2003); Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*; Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England*; Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain*.

<sup>90</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 9 December 1895, D/D SHC 1/1, WGA. Italicised by author.



Your experience of this class is I am sure greater than mine and as you are aware they all plead poverty, they certainly cannot be in the low circumstances they would make you believe when I tell you that some of them pay from 1s to 2s 6d. per week for Hebrew education and will not avail themselves of the Hebrew school (which is free) provided by the congregation.<sup>91</sup>

The disputation continued, and in 1896 a rival *minyan* called ‘the Prince of Wales Road *Minyan*’ was founded by the complainants, first under the leadership of David Rutter, until he rejoined the Swansea Hebrew Congregation in October 1898, and then under the leadership of Tobias Shepherd.<sup>92</sup> In 1906 the break-away *minyan* was renamed the Swansea *Beth Hamedrash* and continued to meet in Prince of Wales Road in Greenhill. In November that year, several members donated bricks and stones to erect a purpose-built place of worship, and a synagogue opened in Prince of Wales Road in the autumn of 1907 (see appendix A19).<sup>93</sup>

Swansea Jewry was now home to two Hebrew congregations, but both were never completely divorced from one another. The Trust Deeds of the *Beth Hamedrash* from 1907, for example, read that the congregation would ‘work in harmony with the existing Hebrew Congregation’ and in 1909 the *Beth Hamedrash* began paying the Swansea Hebrew Congregation twenty pounds per annum for the services of their minister ‘on the occasion of any Births, Deaths or Marriages’ and the right of burial in the congregation’s cemetery in Townhill.<sup>94</sup> The readiness of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation to help the *Beth Hamedrash* was apparent in 1919 when its committee members offered the latter congregation their classrooms to hold services while the Prince of Wales Road synagogue was refurbished.<sup>95</sup>

Despite the Swansea Hebrew Congregation’s recognition of the *Beth Hamedrash* as a separate entity, there were nevertheless several attempts at amalgamation. In February 1921, for instance, the *Beth Hamedrash* received a letter ‘from Goat Street Synagogue re. amalgamation’, which was refused by the former because they wished to ‘remain an

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<sup>91</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 11 December 1895, D/D SHC 1/1, WGA.

<sup>92</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 11 October 1898, and 20 January 1899, D/D SHC 1/1, WGA; Ursula Henriques incorrectly writes ‘A. Shepherd’, see Ursula R.Q. Henriques, ‘The Conduct of a Synagogue: Swansea Hebrew Congregation, 1895-1914’, in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 101.

<sup>93</sup> *JC*, 9 November 1906; *JC*, 11 October 1907.

<sup>94</sup> Letter from I. R. Levi to Office of Chief Rabbi, 9 March 1923, ACC/2805/04/02/123, LMA; Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 10 July 1909, D/D SHC 1/2, WGA.

<sup>95</sup> *Beth Hamedrash* Minute Book, 22 May 1919, D/D SHC 1/7, WGA.

independent body'.<sup>96</sup> Yet, by the 1950s, members of the *Beth Hamedrash* eventually joined the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, and it appears that the simple matter of local geography was the main instigator. Though poor at first, over time the economic situation of the Beth Hamedrash's members gradually improved, and by the 1930s and '40s, many of them had migrated away from the poorer Greenhill area and relocated to the leafier and wealthier suburbs of Ffynone, Sketty and the Uplands (approximately two to three miles away), where the established members of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation already resided.<sup>97</sup> Since members of the *Beth Hamedrash* adhered to the prohibition against driving on the Sabbath, a more convenient place of worship was needed. In June 1951 plans were in place to erect a new *Beth Hamedrash* at Sketty, but it never materialised owing to the steady and continuous transfer of membership from the *Beth Hamedrash* to the Swansea Hebrew Congregation.<sup>98</sup> At this time plans for the building of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation's new synagogue in Ffynone Road were well underway (the Goat Street synagogue was destroyed during the Swansea blitz of 1941), and members of the *Beth Hamedrash* deemed it to be a 'more conveniently situated' place of worship.<sup>99</sup> Thus, with the opening of the Ffynone Road synagogue in April 1955, the *Beth Hamedrash* ceased to function (see appendix A19). In 1957 it was noted that the Prince of Wales Road synagogue had 'been unoccupied for many years and [was] deteriorating every day'.<sup>100</sup> The building was eventually sold in 1961 and its assets transferred to the *Bnei Akivah Yeshiva* in Israel.<sup>101</sup>

Such divisions that occurred in Cardiff and Swansea were not a feature of most of Wales' other Jewish communities. As has been seen, this was primarily because most communities were too few in numbers to sustain multiple congregations, but it was also because many of Wales' smaller Jewish communities were generally more financially and religiously homogenous. Indeed, unlike Swansea and Cardiff, most of Wales' Jewish communities (with the exception of Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Pontypridd and Pontypool) were established during the last decades of the nineteenth century, and composed entirely, or almost entirely, of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. They were the first to establish Hebrew congregations in their towns, and thus there was no need to contemplate the liturgical

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<sup>96</sup> Beth Hamedrash Minute Book, 26 February 1921, D/D SHC 1/7, WGA.

<sup>97</sup> *JC*, 6 February 1951; *JC*, 26 May 1961.

<sup>98</sup> *JC*, 22 June 1951.

<sup>99</sup> *JC*, 26 May 1961.

<sup>100</sup> Miscellaneous Papers Relating to the Beth Hamedrash c.1908-c.1960, D/D SHC 13/5, WGA.

<sup>101</sup> *JC*, 26 May 1961.

traditions and practices of earlier Jewish settlers. This resembles experiences in the United States, where ‘it was common...to find a single congregation’ in a community that ‘was based primarily on the coming of Eastern Europeans’.<sup>102</sup> However, as the incidences in Port Talbot, Wrexham and Llanelli demonstrate, congregations established by Eastern European migrants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not always free from conflict.<sup>103</sup>

### **Religious Leadership**

Moreover, just as Jewish communities in Wales endeavoured to erect their own synagogues and form Hebrew congregations, they also sought ministers to lead their congregations. Although the terms ‘minister’ and ‘rabbi’ are often used synonymously, very few of the ministers in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain were given the title ‘rabbi’. This is because the function of a rabbi was reserved for all of this period to the Chief Rabbi. Chief Rabbi Nathan Marcus Adler established this tradition to enhance his own authority, and was reluctant for any minister, no matter how qualified they were in rabbinical terms, to use the title of rabbi.<sup>104</sup> This principle was initially upheld by his son and successor, Hermann Adler, but began to fade out by the turn of the twentieth century following pressure from Eastern European Jewish migrants, and the council of Jews’ College.<sup>105</sup> From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, rabbinical functions were heavily centralised in Britain, and the majority of religious leaders who presided over Orthodox synagogues in Britain were appointed to congregations on the Chief Rabbi’s recommendation, and given the title ‘Reverend’ in imitation of the Anglican clergy.<sup>106</sup> Some were graduates of Jews’ College, the

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<sup>102</sup> Lee Shai Weissbach, ‘East European Immigrants and the Image of the Jews in the Small-Town South,’ *American Jewish History*, 85, 3 (1997), 243.

<sup>103</sup> Brynmawr’s Hebrew Congregation, also established by Eastern European immigrants in the late nineteenth century was also not free from internal disagreements in the early twentieth century, but the congregation never officially split. Rival *minyanim* were held, however. For more on this, see Pollins, ‘The Jewish Community of Brynmawr’, 19-23; *CAJEX*, 36, 4 (1976), 44-46; Brynmawr Hebrew Congregation: correspondence with Chief Rabbi’s Office in London concerning disputes, 1910, ACC/2805/03/02/038, LMA.

<sup>104</sup> Werner E. Mosse and Julius Carlebach, eds., *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German-speaking Jews in the United Kingdom* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), 407.

<sup>105</sup> In 1899, realising that his refusal to award *semicha* himself, or to recognise those awarded by others, was causing friction within British-Jewish society, Hermann Adler conferred *semicha* upon two Russian-born and Jews’ College educated Reverends, Asher Feldman and Moses Hyamson. In 1900 members of the council of Jews’ College considered the possibility of awarding the rabbinical diploma as a result of examination results from their students. Chief Rabbi Hermann Adler finally agreed in 1901, and in 1902 it was announced that four theology exams, taken over six and a half years, would constitute the curriculum leading to *semicha*. For more on this, see Derek Taylor, *British Chief Rabbis 1664-2006* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), 323.

<sup>106</sup> This is revealed by letters of correspondence between leading members of the Welsh Jewish communities and the Office of the Chief Rabbi in London. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most, if not all Jewish

Jewish seminary in London founded by Nathan Adler in 1855, which on its inception did not award *semicha*. Rather, graduates of Jews' College were non-ordained laymen, who could administer and preach within their congregations but were not authorities in *halakha*.<sup>107</sup> Those seeking *semicha* could only secure it by relocating to the continent or by official sanction by the Chief Rabbi.<sup>108</sup>

Traditionally, the religious staff of a well-organised Orthodox Jewish community includes a spiritual leader, a *mohel*, a *cheder* teacher, and a *shochet*; it is also desirable to have a *chazzan* and a *shammas*.<sup>109</sup> At the outset the Cardiff Jewish community was too few in numbers and resources to sustain an array of synagogue officials, and appointed ministers were thus required to perform multiple tasks. For example, the congregation's first spiritual leader, Rev. Nathan Jacobs from Poland, was elected around 1858 and acted not only as minister, but also as reader, *shochet* and Hebrew teacher until he left for Newport in 1872.<sup>110</sup> During the final quarter of the nineteenth century Cardiff Jewry's population, as we have seen, grew rapidly, and by the 1890s the community was both well-established and wealthy enough to employ a range of religious staff. In 1893, for instance, Rev. D. Wasserzug, a graduate of Jews' College, served as the Old Hebrew Congregation's minister and was assisted by the *chazzan* Rev. H. Caminitzki, and *shochet*, Rev. Harris Hamburg.<sup>111</sup> Born in Lithuania in 1867, Hamburg served the Cardiff Old Hebrew Congregation in various roles until his death in 1941.<sup>112</sup> Rev. Harris Jerevitch is another example of a Cardiff synagogue official with a long career. Born in Russia in 1881, Jerevitch served a brief tenure in Nottingham before acting as minister to the Cardiff Old Hebrew Congregation for forty-five years. He retired in 1953.<sup>113</sup> The Cardiff New Synagogue also had ministers who served long tenures, including Rev. Mendel Sheinfeld who served from 1911 until his death in 1936.<sup>114</sup>

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communities in the principality wrote to the Chief Rabbi for suitable ministers and synagogue functionaries such as a *shochet*. See the records of the Office of the Chief Rabbi, ACC/2805, LMA. The practice of giving spiritual leaders the title 'Reverend' was abandoned in the latter half of the twentieth century. See Rubinstein, Jolles and Rubinstein, *The Palgrave Dictionary*, 154.

<sup>107</sup> Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 92; for more on Jews' College see, Albert M. Hyamson, *Jews' College, London, 1855-1955* (London: Jews' College 1955).

<sup>108</sup> Mosse and Carlebach, eds., *Second Chance*, 407.

<sup>109</sup> Susser, *The Jews of South-West England*, 140.

<sup>110</sup> *JC*, 14 May 1858; 9 August 1872; *Glasgow Herald*, 31 July 1869.

<sup>111</sup> *JC*, 24 March 1893; 17 February 1893. The *JC* incorrectly notes 'J. Hamburg'.

<sup>112</sup> *JC*, 7 March 1941.

<sup>113</sup> *JC*, 27 March 1953.

<sup>114</sup> *JC*, 3 July 1936.

However, non-ordained officials constituted only part of the religious leadership of Cardiff Jewry. At the end of the First World War, the Cardiff Jewish community, then numbering around 2,000 individuals, was prosperous enough to appoint its first officially-recognised communal rabbi, *Rav*. Asher Grunis.<sup>115</sup> Born in Poland in 1877, Grunis was ordained a rabbi by the *Beth Din* of Kalisch, and served as ‘*Rav* of Wilezyn’ for twenty-five years.<sup>116</sup> He received a call to come to Cardiff and with his arrival the city’s Jewish community possessed a religious leader of importance whose status and *halachic* authority was widely recognised. Described as ‘a great Talmudist’, he served Cardiff Jewry until his death in 1937.<sup>117</sup> Two years later Moses E. Rogosnitzky, of Nalibok, Russia, was appointed rabbi to the Cardiff New Hebrew Congregation, where he served until his death in 1945.<sup>118</sup> That year, his son, Rabbi Ber Rogosnitzky of Newcastle, was appointed *Rav* of the recently formed Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation, while Rabbi Ernest Wiesenbergs of Kosice, Czechoslovakia, was appointed spiritual leader to the Windsor Place synagogue in 1946.<sup>119</sup> The latter left Cardiff in 1947 after accepting a pulpit in Sheffield, while the former served until his retirement in 1984.<sup>120</sup>

Cardiff Jewry was unique in this instance, since no other community in the history of Welsh Jewry ever experienced the novel sensation of having in its midst an officially-recognised ordained communal rabbi. This is in part because the chief rabbinate refused to recognise the rabbinical titles of a number of men occupying British pulpits during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also because smaller congregations in Wales, and in Britain more generally, were too few in number to afford the ‘luxury’ of a local rabbi. Indeed, it was financially more convenient for smaller Orthodox congregations to recognise the Chief Rabbi in London as their spiritual head and contribute annual donations to the Chief Rabbi’s Fund.<sup>121</sup> Despite the absence of officially-recognised resident *halachic* authorities beyond Cardiff, it should be stressed that the majority of ministers or ‘Reverends’ who served

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<sup>115</sup> *JYB*, 1918-1920.

<sup>116</sup> *CAJEX*, 3, 2 (1953), 46-48.

<sup>117</sup> *JC*, 23 July 1937.

<sup>118</sup> *JC*, 23 June 1939.

<sup>119</sup> *JC*, 25 May 1945; *JC*, 27 September 1946.

<sup>120</sup> *JC*, 9 May 1947; *CAJEX*, 34, 3 (1984), 17.

<sup>121</sup> In the 1920s, for instance, the Aberavon and Port Talbot Hebrew Congregation sent an annual donation of £1. 1. 0 to the fund, while the minute book of the Swansea *Beth Hamedrash* reveals that its members donated to the fund. In the late 1970s, the minute book of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation reveals that the community donated £40 per annum to the Chief Rabbi’s Fund. Letter from A. Factor, Aberavon, to J. H. Taylor, 14 September 1922, ACC/2805/4/2/1, LMA; Beth Hamedrash Minute Book, 21 January 1912, D/D SHC 1/7, WGA; Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 11 June 1979, D/D SHC 1/5, WGA.

Jewish communities in Wales were deeply religious, sincerely Orthodox and also very scholarly individuals.

Nevertheless, most ministers employed by Wales' smaller Jewish communities did not stay in their posts for lengthy periods. This was not a unique phenomenon to Welsh Jewry, however, but was also a feature of other smaller Jewish communities in Britain and the United States.<sup>122</sup> Between 1914 and 1942, for instance, the Aberavon and Port Talbot Hebrew Congregation was served by five ministers (there was no minister between 1924 and 1926), whose average length of service was five years.<sup>123</sup> The situation was repeated in other Jewish communities in Wales. The *JYB*, for instance, lists seven ministers serving the Brynmawr Hebrew Congregation between 1897 and 1940, while Aberdare Jewry had seven ministers between 1897 and 1925.<sup>124</sup> A list of ministers who served Llanelli Jewry between 1904 and 1927 runs to seven names.<sup>125</sup> In Bridgend, five men with the title 'Reverend' served the local Hebrew congregation between 1907 and 1928, while Pontypridd Jewry had ten different ministers between 1896 and 1926; on average, each stayed less than four years.<sup>126</sup> The Swansea Hebrew Congregation employed eight ministers between 1896 and 1930.<sup>127</sup> In the forty-nine years before 1943, fourteen ministers served the Bangor Hebrew Congregation, whose average length of service was three and a half years.<sup>128</sup> Wrexham Jewry had nine ministers between 1898 and 1921, while Rhyl had five ministers from 1898 until 1907.<sup>129</sup>

There were a number of reasons why many of Wales' smaller Jewish communities had trouble keeping their ministers for a lengthy-period of time. Some of these reasons were not unique to smaller communities, but others certainly were. With their limited numbers, small Hebrew congregations found it especially challenging to pay their ministers competitive salaries, and because they were unable to afford to appoint more than one synagogue official, ministers were often required to perform multiple roles. Thus, in 1901,

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<sup>122</sup> See, for instance, Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*; Weissbach, *Jewish Life*.

<sup>123</sup> *JYB*, 1914-1940; *JC*, 24 May 1996.

<sup>124</sup> *JYB*, 1897-1940.

<sup>125</sup> *JYB*, 1904-1927.

<sup>126</sup> *JYB*, 1896-1929.

<sup>127</sup> *JYB*, 1896-1931.

<sup>128</sup> *JC*, 12 May 1905; 6 October 1905; 27 January 1911; 12 May 1911; 22 October 1920; 10 March 1922; 14 April 1922; 17 August 1928; 8 August 1930; 8 September 1933; 25 December 1936; 15 October 1937; 23 January 1942; Letter from I. Wartski to A. Feldman, 12 August 1918, ACC/2805/4/02/002, LMA.

<sup>129</sup> *JYB*, 1898-1921.

for example, the Rhyl Hebrew Congregation advertised for a minister to act as *shochet*, reader and teacher with a salary of £52 per annum, while in 1903 the Aberdare Hebrew Congregation advertised for a similar post with an annual salary of £65 per annum.<sup>130</sup> This is compared to the Hammersmith Synagogue in London, which initially appointed a minister in 1904 at £200 per annum, but increased the salary to £250 as the former was considered ‘a small stipend’.<sup>131</sup> According to the late Harry Cohen of Pontypridd, the congregation’s ministers in the early twentieth century were ‘a jack of all trades’, they were ‘the *chazzan*, the teacher, the *shochet*, the *mohel*’ but weren’t ‘paid very much for doing all of this’.<sup>132</sup>

In Swansea, the Hebrew congregation was sometimes able to appoint more than one official to provide these various services, but for most of its history finances dictated that one individual provided for them all. Most ministers were simply unwilling to perform these multiple roles for low pay and left their pulpits for presumably better-paid ministerial positions elsewhere. Rev. M. Isaacs, for instance, left the Bridgend Hebrew Congregation for Wolverhampton in May 1928 ‘on account of the poor wage’ he received.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, Rev. M. Franks of Barrow-in-Furness was appointed minister of the Bangor Hebrew Congregation in early 1922, but left by April that year, presumably because it was ‘impossible for him to live’ in Bangor ‘on the salary’ the congregation offered him.<sup>134</sup>

The financial problems faced by ministers of small Hebrew congregations was acknowledged by the Chief Rabbi Hermann Adler, who in 1884 established the Provincial Minister’s Fund to assist small ‘provincial’ congregations in providing a sufficient income for their ministers.<sup>135</sup> In 1923, for instance, Rev. E. Nemet of New Tredegar received an annual subvention of £15, paid in two instalments, from the fund, while in 1926 Rev I. Chaitowitz of Pontypridd received £15 per annum in three equal instalments of £5.<sup>136</sup> Yet, for many ministers, the financial assistance the fund provided was insufficient. In 1926, for example, Rev. Hyman Goldman of Tredegar was awarded £16 5s., but asked ‘the council to increase

<sup>130</sup> *JC*, 18 January 1901; 23 October 1903;

<sup>131</sup> *JC*, 29 April 1904.

<sup>132</sup> Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs.

<sup>133</sup> Letter from M. Isaacs to unknown, 12 December 1927, ACC/2805/1/04/01, LMA.

<sup>134</sup> Letter from I. Livingstone to the Chief Rabbi, 1 March 1920, ACC/2805/04/05/032, LMA.

<sup>135</sup> For more on the Provincial Minister’s Fund see, Isaac Livingstone, *Fifty Years of Service: The Jubilee of the Provincial Jewish Ministers' Fund* (London, 1935).

<sup>136</sup> Provincial Jewish Ministers Fund and Keeling Jewish Clergy Endowment Fund account book, ACC/2712/07/224, LMA.

[his] grant to £30' as he found it 'really hard...to make a living with the small salary' he received from his congregation.<sup>137</sup>

Another reason some ministers left their pulpits was because they became involved in disputes with their congregants. Rev. L. Korn, for instance, was appointed minister to the Bangor Hebrew Congregation in 1933, but during his first months in office he reported to the Chief Rabbi that he was 'having some serious trouble with [his] congregation', caused, he claimed by 'old man Reuben' who had 'turned the whole congregation against [him]'.<sup>138</sup> A few months later, he reported the hypocritical attitude of Bangor's congregants in the *JC*, claiming that 'although there are fourteen male Jews in the town...there is never a *minyan* on Friday night or Saturday morning' but 'when any member has *Jahrzeit*, they all come running like wild bees to make up the *minyan*'.<sup>139</sup> The then president, A.M. Levy, refuted the allegation, and accused Korn of being an avaricious minister who was mainly concerned about his salary.<sup>140</sup> Not only was Korn 'seriously thinking of absconding...and leaving', he did so just before the 'coming High Festivals' in September 1933, taking items of religious value with him 'as an act of spite and in order to inconvenience the congregation'.<sup>141</sup>

In practice, few congregations ever dismissed an official, but sometimes the services of a minister had to be terminated as a result of a disagreement or a gross dereliction of duty. In Swansea, for example, Rev. Simon Fyne was dismissed in 1906 because some honorary members were dissatisfied with his *cheder* teaching, and he made false allegations against the president Hyam Goldberg.<sup>142</sup> Similarly, Fyne's successor, Rev. Herbert J. Sandheim, caused friction and disagreement within the congregation throughout his time in Swansea (in 1908, for instance, he incurred disapproval after asking to be exempt from reading the law in synagogue), and was forced to resign in November 1912 after it was discovered that he suffered from severe debt.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Letter from H. Goldman to I. Livingstone, 2 April 1926, ACC/2805/01/04, LMA.

<sup>138</sup> Letter from L. Korn to A. Feldman, dated 1933, ACC/2805/4/02/002, LMA.

<sup>139</sup> *JC*, 8 September 1933.

<sup>140</sup> *JC*, 29 September 1933.

<sup>141</sup> Letter from L. Korn to A. Feldman, dated 1933, ACC/2805/4/02/002, LMA; Letter from A. M. Levy to Mr. Shuter, 10 September 1933, ACC/2805/4/02/002, LMA.

<sup>142</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 5 October 1902, and 5 March 1905, D/D SHC 1/1, WGA; *JC*, 13 July 1906. For more on the ministry of Rev. S. Fyne see, Mars, 'The Ministry of the Reverend Simon Fyne' in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 111-130.

<sup>143</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, January 1908, D/D SHC 1/1, WGA.; Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 9 November 1913, D/D SHC 1/2, WGA.



Certainly, one of the main reasons accounting for a high-turnover of ministers in most of Wales' small Jewish communities was the desire to progress to what was perceived to be a more prestigious position in one of Britain's larger Jewish centres. Indeed, newly qualified, and recently immigrated ministers, were more or less expected to begin their careers in smaller communities and then use their experiences as stepping stones to appointments in larger congregations. So, for example, Jerusalem-born Rev. Gershon Grayewsky, served as minister for the Wrexham Hebrew Congregation from 1917 until 1918, and held a pulpit in Bangor for less than a year, before moving to the larger Cathedral Road congregation in Cardiff in 1919, where he served as a *shochet* and reader until his death in 1975.<sup>144</sup> Similarly, Russian-born Rev. Reuben Rabinowitz held pulpits in Whitley Bay, Brynmawr and Llanelli, before assuming a rabbinical position at the Central synagogue in Birmingham, and serving there from 1930 until his death in 1969.<sup>145</sup> Isaac Factor, who grew up in Port Talbot in the early twentieth century, recalled that 'many ministers...had their first positions with our community', including Rev. Nathan Sellas who moved on to Auckland in New Zealand, and Rev. Maurice Landy who left Port Talbot for London in 1942, eventually serving as rabbi for the Cricklewood Hebrew Congregation, where he remained for thirty-one years.<sup>146</sup>

However, some of Wales' smaller Hebrew congregations employed ministers who served long tenures and rose to prominence in their communities. In Llandudno, for instance, the Russian-born Rev. Emanuel Berry served from 1910 until his death in 1944.<sup>147</sup> He did not earn a good salary, often asking the Chief Rabbi for financial assistance, but he remained in Llandudno partly because he and his wife ran an Orthodox boarding house in the town, which brought in sufficient income.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, Rev. Eli Bloom, born in Russia and trained at the Manchester *Yeshiva*, arrived in Merthyr Tydfil around 1900 and remained there until his death in 1939. In his obituary in the *JC*, he was said to be 'respected for his sterling character and beloved for his geniality and modesty'. Rev. Harris Jerevitch of Cardiff added that Bloom 'was in every sense a true servant of the Lord' who 'by his piety, integrity and uprightness...gained the respect and admiration of both Jews and non-Jews in south Wales'.<sup>149</sup> Rev. Abraham Snadow arrived in Newport in 1910, after serving brief tenures in

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<sup>144</sup> *JC*, 18 January 1918; *JC*, 7 November 1975.

<sup>145</sup> *JC*, 13 June 1930; *JC*, 25 April 1969.

<sup>146</sup> *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), 67; *JC*, 24 May 1966.

<sup>147</sup> *JC*, 11 August 1944.

<sup>148</sup> *JC*, 12 June 1914.

<sup>149</sup> *JC*, 16 June 1939.

Wrexham and Abertillery, and remained minister of the town's Hebrew congregation until his retirement in 1964.<sup>150</sup> In 1960 Snadow celebrated fifty years of service to the Newport Jewish community and noted that 'the friendliness he first met' in the town 'which [had] been maintained by succeeding generations' is what 'really kept him there'. His congregants believed 'his own character...played a major role' and despite receiving a modest salary and being 'value for money', they appreciated that he 'had never had one eye on the *Jewish Chronicle* communal vacancies column'.<sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, despite these examples, it was unusual for smaller Jewish communities in Wales to employ long-serving ministers.

Given the scarcity of long-serving ministers, many of Wales' Jewish communities developed ways to function without resident religious leaders for some periods. For example, following Rev. Grayewsky's departure in November 1919, Bangor's Hebrew Congregation went without a minister for nearly a year, and relied on a lay member named Mr. Reuben to conduct 'services each Sabbath and throughout the Holy Days'.<sup>152</sup> Similarly, some communities had to rely on ministers from larger congregations in the region. In 1905, for instance, Rev. Simon Fyne of Swansea served as visiting minister to the Llanelli Hebrew Congregation, which was 'without any permanent minister' at the time.<sup>153</sup>

### **Education**

On his appointment as Chief Rabbi in 1845, Nathan Adler sent a questionnaire to all existing Hebrew Congregations in Britain and the Empire, seeking information on their numbers and religious facilities. It asked about the communities' educational facilities, and it appears that, with the exception of Birmingham, there was no formally organised Jewish education for children outside of London.<sup>154</sup> The Cardiff Congregation in its reply stated that 'there [was] no school' and that ten children were informally taught by laymen, but there were 'no returns entered' on behalf of the Swansea Congregation.<sup>155</sup> For the rest of his time in office, Adler sought to remedy a situation which he felt would lead to the breakdown of Jewish life outside of London, if left unattended.<sup>156</sup> His solution was to establish Jewish day schools in each

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<sup>150</sup> *JC*, 5 June 1964.

<sup>151</sup> *JC*, 20 May 1960.

<sup>152</sup> *JC*, 22 October 1920.

<sup>153</sup> *JC*, 25 February 1905.

<sup>154</sup> Bernard Susser, 'Statistical accounts of all the congregations in the British Empire 5606/1845' in Newman, *Provincial Jewry*, 16-24.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>156</sup> Susser, *The Jews of South-West England*, 248.

community, no matter how large or small, where children would be taught in both secular and religious subjects.

In Wales, Adler's efforts bore fruit in 1866 when a Jewish day school was reported to have opened in Merthyr Tydfil by the congregation's then president, Henry Barnett.<sup>157</sup> The school offered both religious and secular instruction, but appears to have been short-lived with no further mention in the *JC*. Unfortunately, a lack of surviving records means the precise reason for the school's closure is unknown, but it probably dissolved owing to a combination of a lack of funds and student enrolment. Indeed, it appears only twenty-three Jewish pupils attended the school, and to make up numbers 'a few children of Christian parents' were permitted to enrol.<sup>158</sup> It was a 'low state of...funds' which led to the closure of the Newport Jewish day school in 1873.<sup>159</sup> The school was housed in a purpose-built building next to the Francis Street synagogue (financed by voluntary donations) and 'open to all Jewish children, paying or not paying', but it operated for less than three months.<sup>160</sup> The school was re-established in January 1880 under the direction of Rev. Joseph Myers, but there is no further reference to the institution in the *JC* after 1881, suggesting that it closed in the early 1880s. Typically long-lasting Jewish day schools were located in centres with significant Jewish populations such as Birmingham and Manchester, where the supply of students, financial support, and demand for religious education was virtually continuous. However, with maximum populations of 250 and 400 persons throughout their histories, Newport and Merthyr's Jewish communities were simply too small to sustain full-time Jewish educational institutions.<sup>161</sup>

A co-educational Jewish day school opened in Cardiff in October 1866 on the initiative of the congregation's then minister Rev. N. Jacobs. Rev. H. D. Marks of London was appointed its first teacher and its curriculum included lessons in Hebrew, history, English grammar, geography and spelling.<sup>162</sup> Rev. H. J. Cohen of Jews' Free School, London, was appointed the school's first head-teacher in August 1870, and by December that year plans were

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<sup>157</sup> *JC*, 21 December 1866.

<sup>158</sup> *JC*, 21 December 1866. A Jewish collegiate school was established in Merthyr Tydfil in 1878 under the direction of Rev. Henry P. Levy, but it appears to have dissolved in 1880 following Levy's departure for Cardiff. See *Merthyr Telegraph and General Advertiser for the Iron Districts of South Wales*, 23 August 1878; 16 January 1880.

<sup>159</sup> *JC*, 7 November 1873.

<sup>160</sup> *JC*, 13 December 1872; 19 September 1873.

<sup>161</sup> *JYB*, 1912 and 1919.

<sup>162</sup> *JC*, 9 November 1866.

underway to erect purpose-built facilities.<sup>163</sup> Its success was short-lived, however, and by August 1871 the school was closed. The whole project collapsed following the departure of its headmaster Rev. H. J. Cohen, who resigned following ‘an unfortunate misunderstanding’.<sup>164</sup> It appears that many congregants resented the cost of the school, and ‘considerable opposition was manifested’ when the Chief Rabbi suggested in July 1871 that Cohen’s salary be augmented. Rather, Cohen’s pay was ‘reduced one fourth in amount’ and he left Cardiff to re-open a Jewish boarding school in Brighton.<sup>165</sup> During the early twentieth century, several attempts were made to re-establish a Jewish day school in Cardiff, but they never materialised.<sup>166</sup> The exact reasons are unknown, but the provision of state-financed and nondenominational education by local school boards after the Education Act of 1870 may have played a part. This is because a number of schools established by the Cardiff School Board became overwhelmingly Jewish in composition, and thus substituted as ‘Jewish schools’. For instance, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ‘a preponderance of Jewish children’ attended the Wood Street Board School in Riverside, so much so that the school timetable was adjusted to accommodate the Jewish Sabbath and festivals.<sup>167</sup>

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Jewish day school movement in Wales languished, and from then on the great majority of Welsh-Jewish children attended local non-Jewish schools, and received their religious and Hebrew education outside school-hours at their local Hebrew congregations’ *cheder*. *Cheder* classes were established in Tredegar and Swansea in 1888, for example, while in 1895 Hebrew classes were founded in both Bangor and Brynmawr.<sup>168</sup> The hours of tuition varied considerably between congregations and changed over time, but Jewish children in Wales typically received a couple of hours’ instruction per week at the very least. In the 1890s, for instance, *cheder* lessons at Bangor were held on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and also on various weeknights, while in the late 1920s, *cheder* classes in Bridgend were held for two-and-a-half-hours on Monday and Wednesday evenings, and for two hours on Saturday and Sundays.<sup>169</sup> During the inter-war period Cardiff’s Cathedral Road congregation held Hebrew classes each

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<sup>163</sup> *JC*, 5 August 1870; 9 December 1870.

<sup>164</sup> *JC*, 28 July 1871.

<sup>165</sup> *JC*, 11 August 1871; 17 May 1872.

<sup>166</sup> *JC*, 18 October 1912; 9 March 1917.

<sup>167</sup> *JC*, 1 January 1937.

<sup>168</sup> *JYB*, 1899; *JC*, 12 July 1895.

<sup>169</sup> *JC*, 12 July 1895; Bridgend Jewish Education Report, 1927, ACC/2805/01/04/002, LMA.

day of the week, with the exception of Friday night and Saturday.<sup>170</sup> According to the late Lena and Leslie Burns, Jewish children living in Merthyr Tydfil in the 1900s and 1910s, attended *cheder* ‘every night...straight from school’ and ‘had very little leisure time’ as a result.<sup>171</sup> This routine appears to have continued well into the 1950s. Lionel Bernstein, for instance, was born in Merthyr Tydfil in 1946 and remembers his weeks being quite busy as a child. As well as studying at the minister’s home on Saturday afternoons, Bernstein attended *cheder* classes three evenings a week after school for an hour and on a Sunday for two hours.<sup>172</sup> After spending most of their week at school, some children resented spending their weekday evenings or weekends learning Hebrew. Harold Cairns, for instance, attended the *cheder* at Cardiff’s Windsor Place synagogue in the 1930s, and remembered going:

at least three, if not more evenings a week...I’d be doing that after school...You went to read Hebrew and you learnt the prayers and you had...a bit of Jewish history—pretty dull and time wasting because you had homework to do from school as well.<sup>173</sup>

For Jewish families living away from organised Jewish centres, there were nonetheless always some arrangements in place to provide for the religious educational needs of their children. Indeed, it was custom for some Jewish children to travel to local Jewish centres for their *cheder* lessons. Joyce Arron (née Cohen) of Ammanford, for instance, recalled that during the 1940s and early 50s her father would drive her to Swansea (approximately seventeen miles) every Sunday for *cheder*, while during the same period Diane and Gerald Rose of Llanhilleth travelled by bus to Newport (approximately fifteen miles) every Sunday to attend *cheder*.<sup>174</sup> During the Second World War Moses Stein of Amlwch travelled twenty miles by train to Bangor once a week for his *cheder* lessons, but prior to the outbreak of war Bangor’s minister held religion classes once a week for the Steins in their family home in Amlwch, and also taught Jewish children living in Holyhead.<sup>175</sup>

Indeed, it was common for Jewish families in isolation to arrange for ministers or teachers of nearby Hebrew congregations to come to their homes to teach their young. During the

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<sup>170</sup> Cyril Cohen, interview with Trudy Browning and Diana Soffa, 11 March 2010, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>171</sup> Lena and Leslie Burns, interview with David Jacobs.

<sup>172</sup> Lionel Bernstein, interview with Nicola Tucker, 29 June 2010, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>173</sup> Harold Cairns, interview with author, 17 February 2011, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>174</sup> Joyce Arron, interview with author, Swansea, 23 January 2013; ‘The Only Jews in the Village’: <http://youandus.theus.org.uk/womens-view/features/the-only-jews-in-the-village> (last accessed 18/07/2013).

<sup>175</sup> Letter from Rev. D. Wolfson to E. Stein, 28 March 1940, WM 1780/28, Anglesey Archives (henceforth, AA).

1920s, for instance, Rev. Berry of Llandudno travelled once a week to Conwy (approximately four and a half miles) to teach ten Jewish children, while during the 1940s and 50s a *cheder* teacher from Cardiff named E. Fischer travelled to the Black's residence in Porthcawl every Wednesday to teach eleven children.<sup>176</sup> During his visit to the latter *cheder* in 1955, the then inspector of the Central Council of Jewish Religious Education, Harold Levy, observed that it was 'very encouraging to see that these isolated children [were] not being neglected'.<sup>177</sup>

In some instances, Jewish children living away from Jewish communities were provided with religious educational instruction by family members. For example, despite only living approximately two miles away from his nearest *cheder* in Merthyr Tydfil, the family of the late Ben Hamilton of Dowlais thought it was too far and insisted that he be taught by his father and grandfather. Although they were not formally trained to teach, Hamilton (b.1896) believed he 'had a first class Hebrew education' and 'probably a more scholarly one' as he 'was incorporated into the love of Judaism and Biblical knowledge by the type of life [his] father and grandparents lived' in Eastern Europe.<sup>178</sup> Similarly, during the early twentieth century Solomon Pollecoff of Caernarfon provided Hebrew lessons for his children because his wife Esther was 'anti-religious' and refused to send them to nearby Bangor for religious instruction. According to Solomon's granddaughter, the children were educated to the extent that they were all literate in Hebrew.<sup>179</sup>

Yet, not all Jewish families in Wales sent their children to *cheder* or made alternative religious educational arrangements. Jacqueline Magrill, for instance, grew up in Cardiff in the 1930s and after disliking her first few *cheder* lessons her mother told her that she was not obliged to attend. Having never learnt Hebrew, Jacqueline felt disadvantaged in synagogue services as an adult and eventually regretted her mother's decision.<sup>180</sup> Cynthia Kahn (née Cohen) grew up in an irreligious Jewish household in Penrhiwceiber during the 1930s and 40s and was never sent to *cheder*. Unable to follow a service at the synagogue, Cynthia felt deprived of a religious education and at the age of sixteen began attending Hebrew and

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<sup>176</sup> Letter from Rev. E Berry to Chief Rabbi, 8 March 1920, ACC/2805/04/02/075, LMA.

<sup>177</sup> Report of Porthcawl Hebrew Classes, 27 February 1955, MS179 AJ 289/7/3, Hartley Library, University of Southampton (hereafter HLUS).

<sup>178</sup> Ben Hamilton, interview with David Jacobs.

<sup>179</sup> Notes from a telephone conversation between June Bourne and unknown, 10 November 2002 (in possession of author).

<sup>180</sup> Jacqueline Magrill, interview with Sue Mansell.

Jewish History lessons twice a week at the home of a ‘very religious’ layman named Sam Kahn (her future father-in-law).<sup>181</sup>

Assessing the quality of *cheder* education in Wales is complex given that it varied from congregation to congregation and also differed from time to time. Sometimes the results were good, while other times they were poor. This inconstant pattern, particularly in smaller communities, was due to the high turnover of ministers, who, as we have seen, often doubled up as *cheder* teachers, and were varied in their Jewish learning and knowledge. Congregational religious classes were visited, typically on an annual basis, by outside educational authorities such as the Chief Rabbi, inspectors for the Central Council of Religious Education or learned ministers, and their comments demonstrate the variation in standards. In 1900, for instance, Mr. S. Bloom examined the *cheder* classes of the Wrexham Hebrew Congregation and complimented ‘the new minister and teacher’ Rev. L. Abrahamson ‘on the improvement in the Hebrew education of the children’, who were previously taught by Rev. Lewis Smorgansky.<sup>182</sup> During his inspection of the Llanelli Hebrew Congregation’s *cheder* in 1921, Rabbi Schechter of Manchester ‘expressed himself greatly pleased with the high standard’ of Rev. L. Solomon and Mr. J. Cohn’s teaching.<sup>183</sup> However, a 1938 report on Rev. Abelson’s classes in Llanelli was less complimentary. The inspector ‘found a lack of system and method’ in his classes and commented on the deficiency of basic facilities in the classroom such as a blackboard, ‘an essential means of helping in the grasp of Hebrew’.<sup>184</sup>

Undoubtedly there were gaps between the employment of an outgoing and incoming minister, and in their absence Jewish education was either provided on an informal basis, often of low quality, or not at all. For instance, when Hermann Adler inspected Merthyr Tydfil’s *cheder* classes in 1899, ‘he was not all satisfied with the progress made by the children’ and blamed the poor result on ‘the absence of a minister and teacher’.<sup>185</sup> Similarly, following the departure of Rev. Alfred Waxman from Merthyr in 1951, the congregation was without a minister and *cheder* teacher for about a year. The staffing problem was solved temporarily by the employment of a Mr. R. Silverman, who ‘added the conduct of the classes to his multifarious duties’. The standard of his teaching must have been quite low, for in his

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<sup>181</sup> Kahn, *Wild Water Lilies*, 47-61.

<sup>182</sup> *JC*, 28 December 1900.

<sup>183</sup> *JC*, 22 July 1921.

<sup>184</sup> Report of Llanelli Hebrew Classes, 12 July 1938, ACC/2805/01/04/002, LMA.

<sup>185</sup> *JC*, 12 May 1899.

inspection of the classes in February 1953, Harold Levy noted that the recently appointed minister, Rev. Aaron Cohen had ‘won the confidence of this small community...and is rapidly overtaking the work that the children lost while they were without a teacher’.<sup>186</sup> In July 1952, it was reported that Llandudno Jewry had ‘been without a minister for some time’ and that the children had ‘had no [religious] instruction’ for a number of months.<sup>187</sup> In the absence of a resident *cheder* teacher, some Jewish communities relied on travelling teachers. This occurred in Port Talbot during the 1940s when a visiting teacher taught the children for a few hours once a month. This arrangement, however, was too irregular for some, and one long term congregant remembers his religious education with great resentment: ‘I would’ve liked to have learnt a lot more but I didn’t have the opportunity’.<sup>188</sup>

Some Jews remember their *cheder* classes in very positive terms. Renee Woolf, for instance, recalled that the quality of Llanelli’s *cheder* was very good during the 1940s and 50s because the small number of children enrolled meant that pupils could be taught on a one-to-one basis.<sup>189</sup> However, for others, the opposite was true. In early 1950s Swansea, for instance, the number of children enrolled in the congregation’s *cheder* rose from forty to sixty pupils, and the shortage of staff was solved to some extent by employing members of the community as teachers.<sup>190</sup> Joyce Arron remembers being taught by the wife of the congregation’s minister, but she was ill-trained and not an effective educator: ‘she just taught us the facts of life...I didn’t learn a thing!’<sup>191</sup> The late Harry Cohen described his *cheder* experience in early twentieth-century Pontypridd as ‘bedlam’ because the lack of facilities and teachers meant that ‘children of a wide range of ages [were] taught at the same time’. Despite this inconvenience he recalled that the Jewish boys of his generation in Pontypridd ‘were extremely proficient’, and were educated to such a degree that they were all capable of reciting the *maftir* during Sabbath services.<sup>192</sup> However, even in larger Jewish centres such as Cardiff, *cheder* classes were not always of the highest quality. Reflecting on his childhood in Cardiff during the 1920s and 30s, Leonard Minkes observed that the Windsor Place synagogue’s *cheder*:

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<sup>186</sup> Report of Merthyr Tydfil Hebrew Classes, 24 September 1951 and 24 February 1953, MS 179 AJ 289/6/2, HLUS.

<sup>187</sup> Report of Llandudno Hebrew Classes, 1 July 1952, MS179 AJ 289/5/7, HLUS.

<sup>188</sup> Charles Arron, interview with author, Swansea, 23 January 2013.

<sup>189</sup> Renee Woolf, interview with author.

<sup>190</sup> Report of Swansea Hebrew Classes, 22 February 1953, MS 179 AJ 289/8/10, HLUS.

<sup>191</sup> Joyce Arron, interview with author, Swansea, 23 January 2013.

<sup>192</sup> Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs.



...provided a prolonged but in certain respects, limited education. From the age of about 6-13, in three classes (infants, middle, top)...a largely repetitive but intensive education was given by trained and untrained teachers, in rather inadequate classrooms.<sup>193</sup>

In some instances, parents were not content with the *cheder* education provided by their local Hebrew congregation and employed private tutors to help expand their offspring's Hebrew and religious knowledge. According to Channah Hirsch, Llanelli's *cheder* during the 1910s was not advanced enough for those Jewish families who 'came from towns renowned throughout the Jewish world as seats of learning—such as Grodno, Kovno, and Vilna in Lithuania', and thus they saved their money and employed *rebbe*s to instruct their children privately.<sup>194</sup> With the high turnover of *cheder* teachers in Bangor in the 1930s, Isidore Wartski employed a professor of Semitic languages from the then University College of North Wales to teach his son Hebrew.<sup>195</sup> In some communities there was a practice of sending Jewish children away for schooling so they could receive a more advanced Jewish education. In 1927, after writing to three schools advertised in the *JC*, Harry Wartski of Llandudno wished to send his son to St. Pauls School in London, where 'there is someone who looks after the Jewish pupils'.<sup>196</sup>

### **Burials**

According to the *halakha*, deceased Jews must be buried in consecrated ground and cannot be interred in an unsuitable non-Jewish cemetery. Thus, like all Jewish communities throughout the world, the need for a dedicated Jewish burial ground was a major concern for Jews living in Wales. As has been noted, the oldest burial ground in Wales is in Swansea and dates from 28 November, 1768, when a 99-year-lease for a plot of land in Townhill was acquired by David Michael. Unfortunately, many of the earlier headstones are no longer decipherable, but an anonymous preacher noted in 1859 that 'the first person buried there was a Jew from Carmarthen'.<sup>197</sup> In 1849, the congregation was eligible to purchase the freehold of their burial ground, but since the majority of members were 'in humble circumstances' an appeal for financial assistance from co-religionists was made in the *JC*.<sup>198</sup> The then Chief Rabbi, Nathan

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<sup>193</sup> Leonard Minkes, 'A Jewish Boyhood in Cardiff', 55.

<sup>194</sup> Hirsch, *My Llanelli*, 75.

<sup>195</sup> John Wartski, interview with author, Bournemouth, 19 March 2012.

<sup>196</sup> Letter from H. Wartski to Chief Rabbi, 3, July 1927, ACC/2805/04/02/130, LMA.

<sup>197</sup> Anonymous, *Sundays in Wales: visits to the places of worship of the Quakers, the Unitarians, the Roman Catholics and the Jews* (Swansea: Pearse & Brown, 1859), 30.

<sup>198</sup> *JC*, 12 April 1849.

Marcus Adler, sent a subscription towards Swansea Jewry's 'holy purposes', as did Jews from various communities across the United Kingdom, including Cardiff, Liverpool, Merthyr Tydfil and London.<sup>199</sup> The land was finally purchased for the sum of twenty pounds by the Swansea Hebrew Congregation on 30 April 1864.<sup>200</sup>

According to a wall plaque, Cardiff's first Jewish burial ground was established in Highfield Road in 1841, when 'ground was given...by the most noble John Marquess of Bute'.<sup>201</sup> The earliest burial that we can find is of Abraham Isaac, who died on 28 February 1845.<sup>202</sup> Before the opening of this burial ground, some historians have claimed that Cardiff Jewry buried its dead in Bristol. Maurice Dennis, for example, wrote, 'Before this gracious gift, Cardiff had buried its Jewish dead in Bristol cemetery', while Ursula Henriques adds 'that the dead had to be shipped to Bristol for burial'.<sup>203</sup> However, neither provide any details of the Jews they state were buried in Bristol, and it is likely that the latter historian is repeating the unfounded claims made by the former.

Certainly, Jews from Wales were buried in Bristol's Barton Road cemetery in the first half of the nineteenth century, but no existing evidence suggests that Cardiff Jews were also buried there. Judith Samuel's inspection of the cemetery, for instance, reveals that a Phillip Morris of Abergavenny and a Henry Emanuel Ansell of Pontypool were both buried in Barton Road in 1841, but no mention is made of Jews from Cardiff.<sup>204</sup> Although part of Great Gardens in Rose Street, Bristol, was designated a Jewish burial ground in 1811, it was used as a small private cemetery for Isaac Jacobs of Bristol and his family and later the Abraham family, following Moses Abraham's purchase of the land from the estate of Isaac Jacobs in 1830.<sup>205</sup> Unfortunately, the cemetery was compulsorily purchased and demolished in 1913 to make way for the Great Western Railway's new goods yard at Temple Meads Railway Station.<sup>206</sup> It was not until the late 1920s that the remains and tombstones of those buried at Rose Street were relocated to the Jewish section of Ridgeway Park Cemetery in Bristol.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> *JC*, 4 May 1849.

<sup>200</sup> Conveyance of the Jewish Burial Ground and piece of land adjoining part of the Town Hill site, 30 April 1864, D/D SHC 27/4, WGA.

<sup>201</sup> See the plaque on the cemetery wall at Highfield Road.

<sup>202</sup> Index of tombstones at Highfield cemetery, 1845-1977, DJR/6/59, GA.

<sup>203</sup> Henriques, 'The Jewish Community of Cardiff', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 12.

<sup>204</sup> Samuel, *Jews in Bristol*, 203-215.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>206</sup> Samuel, *Jews in Bristol*, 78.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

While a number of the headstones are too worn to be decipherable, those that are legible belong to Jews from Bristol only. If Cardiff Jews were buried in Bristol before 1841, it would have been most unusual since Swansea's burial ground was situated approximately thirty-five miles away and the dead could be easily transported by land for burial. Indeed, there is evidence that Cardiff's early Jewish settlers were buried in Swansea. Levi Marks of Cardiff, for instance, was interred in Swansea's Jewish burial ground when he died aged seventy-four in 1828.<sup>208</sup>

As we have seen, sometime between 1887 and 1889 the East Terrace congregation in Cardiff split over personal differences, and formed itself into two rival congregations. Although both congregations remained Orthodox in practice, they were independent of each other and their dead were buried separately. Rather than obtaining their own burial site, deceased members of the New Synagogue continued to be buried in the Highfield Road Cemetery, but were separated from members of the Old Congregation by a wall. When the two congregations amalgamated to form the Cardiff United Synagogue (henceforth CUS) in 1941, the wall was eventually demolished and new cemetery walls were erected and funded by M. A. Rapport.<sup>209</sup>

In 1859, Newport Jewry had 'also obtained a piece of land for the purpose of a Burial Ground' following a donation made by Sir Charles Morgan, 1st Baron of Tredegar.<sup>210</sup> However, unlike Swansea and Cardiff, Newport's burial ground was located in the town's public cemetery. Situated in Risca Road, a wall was placed around the plot to separate the Jewish burial ground from the rest of the cemetery. In 1871 it was visited by the Chief Rabbi who 'expressed himself very much pleased with the perfect arrangements of the place'.<sup>211</sup> Merthyr Tydfil Jewry also had a dedicated burial ground as part of a larger municipal cemetery. In 1864 the congregation made an appeal in the *JC* to their coreligionists throughout Britain for money to fund 'a Jewish Burial Ground'.<sup>212</sup> A year later a cemetery was established when a portion of the public Cefn Coed Cemetery was sectioned off for use as a Jewish burial site. The earliest burial dates from September 1865, but unfortunately the poor condition of the headstone means that the name of the deceased is no longer readable.

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<sup>208</sup> *Cambrian*, 20 September 1828.

<sup>209</sup> Cardiff United Synagogue Account Book, 226, DJR/6/76, GA; *Bimah*, 43 (July 2005), 12.

<sup>210</sup> *JC*, 15 April 1859.

<sup>211</sup> *JC*, 14 July 1871.

<sup>212</sup> *JC*, 5 August 1864.

Prior to the cemetery's opening, Merthyr Tydfil's Jews were buried in Swansea. Rebecca Isaacs of Merthyr Tydfil, for example, was interred in the Jewish cemetery in Townhill, Swansea, when she died in 1859.<sup>213</sup>

Up until the mid-1890s, burials for members of the Pontypridd Hebrew Congregation took place in either Cardiff or Merthyr Tydfil. For example, David Goodman of Pentre Ystrad, Pontypridd, was buried in the Merthyr Tydfil Jewish cemetery in 1872, while Benjamin Mierson died aged sixty-four in Pontypridd in 1890 and was buried in Cardiff's Jewish cemetery in Highfield Road.<sup>214</sup> By 1894, the need for a Jewish cemetery in Pontypridd was great since 'the expense and trouble of going so far [became] a heavy burden' for most of the community's families.<sup>215</sup> In July that year, after a plea made by the Jewish community to the Pontypridd Burial Board, a piece of ground at the Glyntaff Cemetery was acquired for Jewish burials. Similarly, the Brynmawr Hebrew Congregation had 'long felt the need of a Burial Ground', which was acquired in 1919 thanks to 'a sum of money' donated by Abel Myers of Abersychan.<sup>216</sup> A plot of ground was consecrated in the town's municipal cemetery in August 1920, and separated by a railing.<sup>217</sup> Siegfriedt Ballin of Hereford died aged seventy-eight in 1920 and was the first person to be buried in the cemetery.<sup>218</sup>

Although Brynmawr, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Pontypridd and Swansea had dedicated Jewish burial grounds, other Jewish communities in Wales did not. As a result, a large number of Jews in Wales had to bury their dead in their nearest Jewish cemetery. A burial ground was acquired by Llanelli Jewry in 1928, but a lack of funds meant it was never consecrated, and interments always took place in nearby Swansea.<sup>219</sup> Reuben Palto of Llanelli, for instance, was buried in Swansea's Jewish cemetery in 1923.<sup>220</sup> Similarly, Jews from Port Talbot and Neath were buried in Swansea's Jewish cemetery, while Bridgend Jewry buried its dead in either Cardiff or Swansea. Levi Raphael of Aberavon, for instance, was buried in Swansea's Town Hill cemetery in 1913, while Lazarus Samuel of Neath was

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<sup>213</sup> Information regarding Rebecca Isaac's grave can be found at: <http://www.cemeteryscribes.com/getperson.php?personID=I4759&tree=Cemeteries> (last accessed 02/02/2013).

<sup>214</sup> Index of tombstones at Highfield cemetery, 1845-1977, DJR/6/59, GA.

<sup>215</sup> *JC*, 27 July 1894.

<sup>216</sup> *JC*, 5 December 1919.

<sup>217</sup> *JC*, 13 August 1920.

<sup>218</sup> Noted by author during a visit to Brynmawr's Jewish cemetery in May 2012.

<sup>219</sup> Letter from I. H. Benjamin to unknown, 18 June 1928, ACC/3121/D2/077, LMA.

<sup>220</sup> *JC*, 2 May 1924.

interred in Swansea's Jewish cemetery in 1874.<sup>221</sup> Beatrice Rosenberg died in Bridgend in 1928, and was laid to rest in the Townhill cemetery in Swansea.<sup>222</sup>

The Jewish burial grounds in Brynmawr, Merthyr Tydfil and Pontypridd served Jews living in the south Wales coalfield region. In 1874, the Duke of Beaufort donated a piece of land for a cemetery for the Tredegar Hebrew Congregation, but it was never established owing to a lack of funds to erect a wall around the plot.<sup>223</sup> Thus, throughout its existence the Tredegar Hebrew Congregation buried its dead in Merthyr Tydfil, and later in Brynmawr. For example, Tobias Fine of Rhymney, one of the congregation's founders, was buried in the Merthyr Jewish cemetery in 1896, while George Rosenbaum of Tredegar was buried in the Jewish section of Brynmawr's cemetery in 1938.<sup>224</sup> Indeed, Brynmawr's Jewish burial ground served 'a wide and scattered area', and Jews from across the south Wales valleys were buried there, including Hannah Cammerman of Abertillery who died in 1926 and Gustave Abrahams of Ebbw Vale who passed away in 1942.<sup>225</sup> Similarly, those buried in the Jewish section of the Glyntaff Cemetery did not just come from Pontypridd. Others came from the surrounding area, including Moses Freedman of Tonypany who died in February 1915; and Judith Freedman who died in Penygraig in November 1902, aged thirty-six.<sup>226</sup>

Moreover, no Jewish burial grounds were consecrated by any of north Wales' Jewish communities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Due to their proximity to the larger Jewish centres of Liverpool and Manchester (within a hundred miles), internments traditionally took place in these two cities. Sophie Silver of Wrexham, for example, was interred in Rice-Lane Cemetery, Liverpool, when she died in 1932, and Bessie Davie of Llandudno was buried in the Jewish section of Urmston Cemetery in Manchester in 1947.<sup>227</sup> Dolly Wartski of Bangor died in 1923 and was buried in Green Lane Cemetery, Liverpool, while Rev. Emanuel Berry of Llandudno was interred in the Jewish Polish Cemetery in Urmston, Manchester in 1944.<sup>228</sup> As mentioned already, members of the Bangor Hebrew Congregation were anxious to establish a cemetery in 1894, but it never materialised owing

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<sup>221</sup> *JC*, 7 February 1913; Graves Register 1877-c. 1959, D/D SHC 8/1, WGA.

<sup>222</sup> Graves Register 1877-c. 1959, D/D SHC 8/1, WGA.

<sup>223</sup> *JC*, 6 November 1874.

<sup>224</sup> *JC*, 8 May 1896; 17 June 1938.

<sup>225</sup> *JC*, 19 August 1927; 27 March 1942.

<sup>226</sup> Noted by author during a visit to Glyntaff Cemetery in December 2012.

<sup>227</sup> *JC*, 23 September 1932; 3 January 1947.

<sup>228</sup> *JC*, 9 February 1923; 20 July 1945.

to a lack of funds. A second attempt was made by Isidore Wartski in 1929, who considered making an ‘appeal from the Jewish community’ to the town council for a burial plot in the new municipal cemetery. This failed, however, owing to the division of local Jewish opinion.<sup>229</sup> Unfortunately, the lack of extant documentation means that the precise reason for the division of opinion is unknown, but by this time the tradition of burying the deceased in Liverpool and Manchester was well established, and it’s likely that members wished to be buried in those cities alongside their families. Furthermore, Vicki Lazar, a former Jewish resident of Llandudno, recalls that a plot of land for Jewish burials in the Great Orme cemetery was acquired by the town’s Hebrew Congregation in the early half of the twentieth century, but it never materialised because a *Bet Tohorah* could not be erected on the site. For Lazar, the lack of a Jewish cemetery in Llandudno was a great disadvantage for the community because congregants ‘had to go somewhere else to be buried’.<sup>230</sup>

### **Kosher**

Just as Jews in Wales sought to establish separate burial grounds that would meet their religious needs, they also tried to provide for many other requirements of an observant Jewish lifestyle. For instance, throughout their existence, Welsh-Jewish communities made arrangements for kosher meat to be readily available. At the outset the Jewish communities of Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport and Swansea were all too small to sustain their own kosher butcher shops, and arrangements were initially made with non-Jewish butchers to sell kosher meat slaughtered by the congregation’s *shochet*. During the 1880s, for instance, two non-Jewish butchers, Frederick Whale of St. John Street and W. H. Richards of Cowbridge Road, served kosher meat to the community under the supervision of M. Lewis, the then *shochet* of the Cardiff Hebrew Congregation.<sup>231</sup> Similarly, in the last decades of the nineteenth century members of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation purchased their kosher meat from three gentile butchers—Abraham’s and Saunders’ of Swansea market, and Smale’s of Wind Street—under the supervision of their *shochet*; while at the turn of the twentieth century Jews in Merthyr Tydfil obtained their kosher meat from Albert E. Bull’s butcher shop in Victoria Street, where the meat would be *treibered* by the congregation’s *shochet*.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> I. Wartski, letter to Chief Rabbi, 21 May 1929, ACC/2805/04/02/130, LMA.

<sup>230</sup> Vicki Lazar, interview with author, London, 13 December 2011.

<sup>231</sup> *CAJEX*, 19, 1 (1969), 27.

<sup>232</sup> Lena and Leslie Burns, interview with David Jacobs, 25 May 1978, 6014/2, Sound Archive, SFNHM.

Nevertheless, by the early twentieth century all four of these Jewish communities provided enough of a clientele for Jewish butchers trained in *shechita* to operate full-scale markets. Around 1910, a Jewish butcher from London named Barnett Krotosky opened a kosher butcher shop in Wellington Street, Merthyr Tydfil, providing kosher meat to a Jewish population of around 300 individuals, while his nephew, Louis Krotosky, opened a kosher butcher shop in Bridge Street, Newport, c.1907, supplying around 200 Jews with kosher meat until his departure in 1916.<sup>233</sup> Similarly, the 400 or so Jewish individuals living in Swansea witnessed their first resident Jewish butcher in 1905, when Russian-born butcher Jack Silver began selling kosher produce from a stall in Swansea's Market.<sup>234</sup> Silver was the first of many kosher butchers to serve Swansea Jewry. Others included Meyer Lipshitz and Bessie Dulin, who also sold kosher meat from a stall in Swansea market between the 1910s and the 1930s, and the 1940s and 1970s respectively.<sup>235</sup>

As well as Merthyr Tydfil and Newport, the Krotosky family had kosher butcher shops in Cardiff. The first was established in Clare Street in 1901 by Joseph Krotosky (Barnett's brother), and the business was eventually run by various family members from a number of locations in the city, serving a Jewish population numbering 1,250 at its lowest and 3,500 at its greatest, until its closure in 1992.<sup>236</sup> At times the Cardiff Jewish population provided enough of a clientele for more than one kosher butcher to operate in the city. Others included 'Kosher Meat Supply' in Tudor Street which was owned by Lipka Gaist from around 1910 up until her death in 1948; and 'Kayes (Kosher) Ltd.', which operated from Frederick Street between the 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>237</sup> Indeed, such was the demand for kosher meat in Cardiff during the first half of the twentieth century, that the Jewish Institute and Social Club in High Street opened its own kosher restaurant in the 1930s.<sup>238</sup>

Whilst Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport and Swansea's Jewish communities were served, at one time or another, by full-time kosher butchers, the quality of this facility was sometimes a cause of concern. In April 1916, for instance, it was apparent that members of the Newport

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<sup>233</sup> Johns' Newport Directory (1907- 1913).

<sup>234</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, Balance Sheet: 1905-1906, D/D SHC 1/1.

<sup>235</sup> Wales Trades Directory (1912); Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, Balance Sheet: 1931-1932, D/D SHC 1/2; Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, Statement of Account for the year ending 31 October 1954, D/D SHC 1/3. Norma Glass, interview with author, Swansea, 23 January 2013.

<sup>236</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales* (1901); *JC*, 31 January 1992.

<sup>237</sup> A. Rivlin, letter to Chief Rabbi, 13 June 1934, ACC/2805/04/02/029, LMA; *Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales* (1910); *Western Mail's Cardiff directory* (1922).

<sup>238</sup> *CAJEX*, 36. 2 (1986), 21.

community had purchased non-kosher rum for Passover from the then Jewish butcher, Louis Krotosky. The Chief Rabbi's Office wrote to the then minister of the Newport Hebrew Congregation, Rev. A. Snadow, stating that the offence committed by Krotosky was 'a very serious one'.<sup>239</sup> By early May the congregation terminated the butcher's contract, and subsequently advertised for a replacement in the *JC*.<sup>240</sup> Moreover, in November 1918, a complaint arose from an anonymous member of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation after she received a parcel 'containing *unporged* meat' from the community's butcher.<sup>241</sup> As a result of this error, the congregation appointed a special committee 'to see that the Jewish butchers [carried] out their obligations when supplying kosher meat to their Jewish customers'.<sup>242</sup> It was suggested that a suitable person be appointed to 'look after the *Kashres*, in the slaughterhouse and the butchers', as the congregation's *shochet* was no longer considered reliable.<sup>243</sup> Unfortunately, the lack of extant documentation means that the outcome of the matter is unknown.

Although many of Wales' smaller Jewish communities had a large percentage of religiously observant Jews, the client base for kosher meat was limited. Thus, in many instances no kosher butchers trained in *shechita* existed, and throughout their history the purveyors of kosher meat were Gentile butchers who made special arrangements to supply the Jewish community. For example, during the 1910s in New Tredegar, a local non-Jewish butcher closed his shop to non-Jewish customers one day a week to supply Jewish families with kosher meat, while in early twentieth-century Waunlwyd, the late Simon Joseph noted that it 'was customary for [Jewish] husbands' in the locality 'to buy their [kosher] meat every Thursday' from 'a special section of the window' of J.P. Bishop's butchers in Cwm.<sup>244</sup> The actual slaughtering of livestock was done in a local abattoir by the *shochet* of the Ebbw Vale Hebrew Congregation, who then stamped the meat 'with a blue dye with the word "kosher" in Hebrew characters' and delivered it to the butchers.<sup>245</sup> During the 1910s and 1920s, the hundred or so Jews living in Pontypridd made arrangements for kosher meat to be available, which saved congregants a trip to a kosher butcher's in nearby Cardiff and reinforced the

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<sup>239</sup> Letter from Chief Rabbi Office to A. Snadow, 1 May 1916, ACC/2805/04/02/097, LMA.

<sup>240</sup> Letter from L. Jacobs to Beth Din, 5 May 1916, ACC/2805/04/02/097, LMA.

<sup>241</sup> Letter from I. R. Levi to Chief Rabbi, 18 November 1918, ACC/2805/04/02/122, LMA. Italicised by author. For definition see glossary.

<sup>242</sup> Letter from I. R. Levi to Chief Rabbi, 18 November 1918, ACC/2805/04/02/122, LMA.

<sup>243</sup> Letter from H. Goldblum to Beth Din, 25 December 1918, ACC/2805/04/02/122, LMA.

<sup>244</sup> *CAJEX*, 25, 1 (1975), 31.

<sup>245</sup> Joseph, *My Formative Years*, 39-40.



character of the congregation as a self-contained community. According to the late Harry Cohen of Pontypridd, the community ‘always [had] Jewish meat koshered in the proper way’, and arrangements were made with a local butcher to allow the congregation’s *shochet* or *shomer* to serve Jewish customers at his stall in the Pontypridd market once a week.<sup>246</sup>

Similar arrangements took place in north Wales. In 1894, for instance, Joseph Owen’s butchers in Bangor’s High Street began supplying ‘prime kosher Beef, Lamb, Veal, and...Welsh Mutton’ to north Wales Jewry under the daily supervision of Bangor’s *shochet* Rev. J. Rosenzweig.<sup>247</sup> According to the *JC*, it was ‘the only Kosher Butcher in North Wales’ at the time, and during the first decades of the twentieth century, kosher parcels were sent on a weekly basis from Bangor and put on a train for ‘outlying members’ of the local Hebrew congregation.<sup>248</sup>

With no kosher facilities in Llandudno during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jews holidaying in the seaside resort either ordered kosher meat to be delivered from nearby Bangor or brought meat with them from Liverpool or Manchester. The impracticality of this arrangement was highlighted by Isidore Wartski of Bangor, who stated in an article in the *JC* in May 1895, that holidaying Jews in Llandudno kept up ‘kosher living under very great difficulties’.<sup>249</sup> As we have seen, during the first decade of the twentieth century Llandudno’s popularity as a Jewish holiday destination was steadily increasing, leading to the establishment of a string of Kosher and strictly Orthodox Boarding Houses in the town. The bulk of kosher supplies for the hotels came from Jewish wholesalers in Manchester and Liverpool, but following the appointment of Rev E. Berry as the first resident *shochet* of the newly formed Llandudno Hebrew Congregation in 1910, kosher meat could be purchased locally from a designated kosher counter in a non-Jewish butcher’s in Mostyn Street.<sup>250</sup> This system continued well into the mid-twentieth century, when a local butcher named Mr. Wynne agreed to use a special kosher counter, and allowed the local *shochet* to come to his Mostyn Street store every Thursday morning to supervise the meat being distributed to his Jewish clients.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs.

<sup>247</sup> *JC*, 3 August 1894.

<sup>248</sup> Letter from I. Wartski to Mr. Feldman, 25 October 1920, ACC/2805/04/02/002, LMA.

<sup>249</sup> *JC*, 24 May 1895.

<sup>250</sup> Letter from S. Croop to Chief Rabbi, 17 April 1917, ACC/2805/07/07/087, LMA.

<sup>251</sup> Michael Lee, letter to author, 28 January 2013.

For those communities that were unable to support a full-time licensed kosher butcher or a *shochet*, or when their services were unavailable, there were nonetheless some arrangements in place to provide for the needs of Jews who observed the laws of *kashrut*. Indeed, in places without a local kosher butcher or meat supplier, it was common for Jews to purchase their meat from other, often larger, Jewish centres. Throughout the twentieth century, some of the more observant families in north Wales had kosher food delivered by train from Liverpool or Manchester. Jack and Rebecca Pollecoff, for example, lived in Pwllheli from the 1930s up until the 1970s and ‘were sent...kosher meat from either Liverpool or Manchester’ by train, while Paul Sugarman grew up in Rhyl in the 1930s and recalled that he used to go down to the railway station each Friday ‘and get what they sent in from Manchester, like a kosher killed chicken’.<sup>252</sup> In the immediate years after the Second World War, Bangor’s gentile butcher stopped providing kosher meat to the Jewish community as the demand was limited. Thus, observant Jewish families in Bangor began having their meat delivered from Manchester or Liverpool by train.<sup>253</sup> This was also the case for some time for a number of Jews living in south Wales. According to Diane Marcus (née Rose), kosher meat was sometimes sent to her family in Llanhilleth from London by train during the 1930s/40s. It was not the most efficient system, however, as the meat often did not arrive or had ‘to be thrown out as it had gone off during the journey’.<sup>254</sup> The small number of Jewish families living in Newbridge during the 1910s and 1920s were unable to afford a full-time *shochet*, and therefore had kosher meat delivered to a non-kosher butcher in the village from Brynmawr’s Jewish community (located approximately ten miles away). As the late Herman (Harry) Jaffa (b.1906) recalled:

Despite the difficulties, *kashrus* was observed. The meat came to a Gentile butcher in the village. A rubber stamp, with the designation kosher in Hebrew characters, was kept in the nearest Jewish home to the butcher. The parents being busy generally sent the small son, who gravely inspected the blue kosher mark stamped on the sides of beef. As the butcher cut up the side, he diligently stamped each piece with his small stamp, choosing the white parts where the symbol would appear more clearly.<sup>255</sup>

<sup>252</sup> Eve Pollecoff, interview with author; Paul Sugarman, interview with author, Rhyl, 19 April 2012.

<sup>253</sup> Shirley Goldsmith, interview with author, Menai Bridge, 7 February 2012.

<sup>254</sup> ‘The Only Jews in the Village’: <http://youandus.theus.org.uk/womens-view/features/the-only-jews-in-the-village>.

<sup>255</sup> *CAJEX*, 26, 4 (1976), 48.

Rather than arranging delivery, some Jewish families travelled to get their kosher meat. In early twentieth-century Ystalyfera, for instance, the Samuels took live chickens by horse and cart to Swansea to be slaughtered by a *shochet*, while in the 1940s and 1950s, the Landy family made a weekly trip from Llanelli to Swansea to buy meat from Bessie Dulin's kosher meat counter in Swansea market.<sup>256</sup> The Cohens of Ammanford made a similar weekly trip to Swansea in the 1940s, while in wartime Penrhiwceiber, Cynthia Kahn's (b. 1925) mother travelled by train to Cardiff to buy kosher meat and provisions.<sup>257</sup>

Under the laws of *kashrut* it is preferable to buy bread from a Jewish baker, and such amenities were available in certain Welsh-Jewish communities from one time or another. Reflecting on his youth in Cardiff during the 1910s and 1920s, Sidney Wien recalled that there were three kosher bakers serving the local Jewish community at that time, including 'Adler the baker in Eldon Road' and 'Marcovitch and Zemla's in Wood Street'. There was also Gotlib's which opened in Bridge Street in the 1940s.<sup>258</sup> Swansea Jewry did not have access to a full-time Jewish baker, but during the 1940s and 50s a Mr. Corrick, 'the only Kosher Grocer in the town', supplied the community with black bread and *chalas* 'which he obtained weekly from Leeds'.<sup>259</sup> Similarly, during the 1910s a Jew nicknamed 'Shmuel the Schuster' (Mixture of Hebrew and Yiddish: 'Samuel the Shoemaker') was responsible for supplying Pontypridd's Jewish community with black and brown bread which was delivered from London 'in a large sack'.<sup>260</sup> If no Jewish baker was available it was acceptable for Jews to purchase bread and baked goods from a non-Jewish baker, but some Jews living in small communities or in isolation throughout Wales preferred to bake their own bread. Reflecting on her childhood in Tredegar during the 1910s and 1920s, Minnie Harris noted that 'we did our own baking at home, but because we lacked the facility of an efficient oven, [we] had to carry the unbaked loaves to the nearest bakers'.<sup>261</sup> Similarly, in 1930s Gilfach Bargoed, Rebecca Fine (née Levi), remembered that her grandmother used to take over the premises of

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<sup>256</sup> CAJEX, 37, 1 (1977), 75; Renee Woolf, interview with author.

<sup>257</sup> Joyce Arron, interview with author; Kahn, *Wild Water*, 76.

<sup>258</sup> *Kelly's Western Mail Directory* (1949).

<sup>259</sup> Miscellaneous papers concerning Rev. E. Morris c. 1948, D/D SHC 10/1, WGA.

<sup>260</sup> Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs.

<sup>261</sup> CAJEX, 34, 4 (1984), 26.

Huw Evans the Baker every other Thursday ‘and bake enough bread and cinnamon rolls [for the family] for a fortnight’.<sup>262</sup>

Despite living away from a formally established Jewish community, Rebecca insists that her family ‘established a Jewish way of life in [their] little village’ and ‘a kosher way of life amongst the *goyim*’. As well as baking their own bread, the Levis only ate kosher meat, but the method of obtaining it often depended on a variety of unconventional arrangements. Chicken, for instance, was purchased from a local farmer and then taken to Ystrad Mynach by bus to be slaughtered by a *shochet* at ‘Mr. Groman’s House’, while other kosher meat would be purchased once a week from a designated counter at Dewhurst butchers in nearby Bargoed. Inevitably, living in isolation did require compromises at times. During Chanukah, for instance, the Levis were never able to get hold of kosher candles, thus Rebecca’s grandmother would always create her own makeshift *menorah* by hollowing out potatoes and filling them with cotton wool and oil.<sup>263</sup>

### **Mikvah**

Another concern for Jewish communities in Wales was providing a *mikvah*, a communal purification pool used primarily by married Orthodox Jewish women to keep the laws of family purity. The earliest reference to a *mikvah* in Wales is in Swansea in 1835, when the then president of the Hebrew congregation, Michael Marks, leased a back garden of a house in Wellington Street to ‘erect water baths’.<sup>264</sup> The land was leased for a period of fifty years at a rent of £2 per annum, but a *mikvah* was not fully functional on the site until 1837. In November of that year, the then Chief Rabbi, Solomon Hirschell, wrote to Marks, calling his attention to the need for completing the *mikvah*, which allegedly only required the laying of a pipe to the sea for its completion.<sup>265</sup> No record of how long this *mikvah* was in use survives, but rent for the site continued to appear on the congregation’s balance sheet in 1879.<sup>266</sup> Kadish suggests the *mikvah* was used ‘at least until 1903’, which seems plausible since the then president of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, Hyam Goldberg, wrote to Chief Rabbi

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<sup>262</sup> *The Last Jew in Merthyr*, BBC Radio Wales, 18 March and 25 March 1992, 359K016/KO17, BBC Wales Archive, Cardiff.

<sup>263</sup> *CAJEX*, 27, 1 (1977), 88.

<sup>264</sup> Agreement between W. Lewis and M. Marks regarding lease of premises in Wellington Street, 3 July 1835, D/D SHC 27/3, WGA.

<sup>265</sup> Goldblum, ‘Swansea’, 2.

<sup>266</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Balance Sheet 1878/1879, D/D SHC 4/34, WGA.

Hermann Adler in April 1902, asking for advice regarding ‘the removal of the Bath (*mikvah*) from where it is now to a new room we propose building for the purpose’.<sup>267</sup>

Consequently, a new *mikvah* was built in a room at the Goat Street Synagogue and approved by the Chief Rabbi Hermann Adler, but the exact date of its opening remains a mystery. Nevertheless, by September 1911, the room housing the ritual bath was found to be ‘too small’ and ‘its situation at the synagogue unsuitable’.<sup>268</sup> Two years later the then president of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, A. Freedman, wrote to Chief Rabbi Joseph H. Hertz, informing him that the *mikvah* was ‘still in use’, but was ‘not in the opinion of many of the members in a satisfactory condition’.<sup>269</sup> After a fire in the synagogue in December 1914, the possibility ‘for having the synagogue reconstructed with the addition of the *mikvah* and the schools in basement’ was rejected by honorary committee members, and it was proposed to move the *mikvah* to a more ‘suitable premises’.<sup>270</sup> In April 1915, the Swansea Hebrew Congregation purchased Cornhill House in Christina Street for conversion ‘into a schoolroom, *mikvah*, and poultry yard’.<sup>271</sup> The new *mikvah* was located in the basement, and was in use from 1916 up until 1956, serving the Swansea Jewish community and Hebrew Congregations from the surrounding area such as Aberavon.<sup>272</sup>

In reply to the Chief Rabbi’s questionnaire of 1845 the Cardiff Jewish community, then in its infancy, stated that they were contemplating erecting facilities for a ritual bath.<sup>273</sup> Unfortunately, a lack of existing documentation means the outcome is unknown, but we know for certain that the community was in possession of a *mikvah* by the late nineteenth century. In April 1896, a *mikvah*, constructed and maintained by the local authority, opened at the Corporation Baths in Guildford Crescent.<sup>274</sup> According to an admissions leaflet from

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<sup>267</sup> Kadish, *Jewish Heritage in England*, 202; Letter from H. Goldberg to Chief Rabbi, 13 April 1902, Swansea Hebrew Congregation Letter Books, 1901-1904, D/D SHC 2/26, WGA.

<sup>268</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 11 September 1911, D/D SHC 1/2, WGA. An article from the *Cardiff Times* reveals that there were two baths at the Goat Street Synagogue. See *Cardiff Times*, 12 December 1908.

<sup>269</sup> Letter from A. Freedman to Chief Rabbi, 1 December, 1913, ACC/2805/04/02/122, LMA.

<sup>270</sup> *JC*, 11 December 1914; Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 7 February 1915, D/D SHC 1/2, WGA.

<sup>271</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 16 March and 18 April 1915, D/D SHC 1/2, WGA; Kadish incorrectly states that Cornhill House was purchased in 1914. See, Kadish, *Jewish heritage in England*, 202.

<sup>272</sup> Saunders, *Swansea Hebrew Congregation*, 53.

<sup>273</sup> Susser, ‘Statistical accounts’, 2.

<sup>274</sup> See the website for the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales:

<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/415047/details/CORPORATION+BATHS,+GUILDFORD+CRESCENT,+CARDIFF/>, (last accessed 02/08/2013).

1896, Guildford Crescent's 'Jewish slipper and tepid plunge baths' cost 1s. 6d. per visit (compared with 4d. for a monthly ticket for the swimming baths).<sup>275</sup> Heating costs and maintenance were the reasons for the *mikvah*'s higher admission charge, and it was likely staffed by a paid female bath attendant. In December 1916, for instance, the Swansea Hebrew Congregation was in search of a 'suitable Jewish woman' to be 'employed as an attendant at [their] *Mikvah*' and offered a weekly salary of 5s.<sup>276</sup> Another example of a *mikvah* constructed in a public bathhouse was that at Stow Hill baths in Newport, which opened in 1898.<sup>277</sup>

Cardiff's *mikvah* in Guildford Crescent was used by the Jewish community up until the opening of a new *mikvah* at the Empire Pool in Wood Street in 1959. A prime mover in the construction of this *mikvah* was E. C. Roberts, a Cardiff City Surveyor who approached Rav Ber Rogosnitzky of the Cardiff United Synagogue in 1955 'with a proposal that a *Mikvah* in keeping with Jewish ritual requirements be included within the Empire Pool building'.<sup>278</sup> This was particularly well received by the then Chief Rabbi, Dr. Israel Brodie, who 'expressed his pleasure and delight, not only with the planning, but at the thought that it was the Civic Authorities who first suggested the idea'.<sup>279</sup> The construction of the *mikvah* was mostly subsidised by the Cardiff Corporation, but as the cost of the Empire Pool rose, an application was made to the Jewish community to help with funding. Councillor Leo Abse 'played a prominent part', and the amount required was donated by Victor Freed, Harry and Abe Sherman, and the Stern brothers. The *mikvah* officially opened on 27 May, 1959.<sup>280</sup>

When a number of Wales' smaller Jewish congregations erected purpose-built synagogues, it was usual for them to include a *mikvah*. Pontypridd's purpose-built synagogue, for example, included a *mikvah* in its basement, while Llanelli Jewry's *mikvah* was located in a room to the left of the synagogue's main prayer hall.<sup>281</sup> Brynmawr's Hebrew

<sup>275</sup> Simon Allen and Scott Fleming, 'Public Baths and Wash-houses in Cardiff: A Case Study of Public Health in 1900', in Robert Snape and Helen Pussard, eds., *Recording Leisure Lives: Histories, Archives and Memories of Leisure in 20th Century Britain* (Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association, 2009), 155.

<sup>276</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 17 December 1916, D/D SHC 1/2, WGA.

<sup>277</sup> See the website for the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales: <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/415040/details/CORPORATION+BATHS,+STOW+HILL,+NEWPORT/>, (last accessed 02/08/ 2013); *The Surveyor and Municipal and County Engineer*, 25 (17 June, 1904), 749-750.

<sup>278</sup> *CAJEX*, 9, 2 (1959), 83.

<sup>279</sup> *CAJEX*, 8, 1 (1958), 104.

<sup>280</sup> *CAJEX*, 9, 3 (1959), 82.

<sup>281</sup> *JC*, 25 October 1895; 12 September 1913; Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs; Renee Woolf, interview with author.

Congregation also had a *mikvah* which adjoined the synagogue, while Merthyr Tydfil's ritual bath 'was situated beneath the *shul*'.<sup>282</sup> The grandmother of the late Harry Sherman of Swansea regularly used Merthyr's *mikvah* in the 1920s, when the Sherman family lived in nearby Dowlais. According to Harry, the room was 'sparsely furnished with a few upholstered chairs, a couch...and a small rug. The floor gleamed with red quarry tiles. Hot water came from a coal-fired boiler at one side of the room'.<sup>283</sup> Merthyr's *mikvah* also catered as a private bathing facility for the Shermans, who 'revelled in its luxury' once a week since it was much 'better than the tin bath in front of the fire' at the family home.<sup>284</sup>

No *mikvaot* were constructed by any of North Wales' Jewish communities. In 1898, Bangor Jewry contemplated building 'Jewish baths' if a 'suitable place of worship' was erected, but, as we have seen, a purpose-built synagogue was never constructed because of lack of finances.<sup>285</sup> Rather, those who wished to observe the 'family purity' laws went to the larger Jewish centres of Liverpool and Manchester. Shirley Goldsmith (née Pollecoff), for instance, was born in Bangor in 1936 and remembered that her aunt, Rebecca Pollecoff of Pwllhelli, visited the *mikvah* in Liverpool once a month, while Llandudno-born Michael Lee recalled that members of the Llandudno Hebrew Congregation went 'on special occasions...either to Liverpool or to Manchester' to use the *mikvah*.<sup>286</sup>

### **Welfare**

No Hebrew congregation, however small, could avoid its obligation of performing *tzedakah*. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Britain has been home to numerous Jewish charities for the poor and destitute, and the most prominent example is the Jewish Board of Guardians. Founded in London in 1859, it offered impoverished Jews an alternative to the publicly funded Boards of Poor Law Guardians.<sup>287</sup> By the 1890s, several of Wales' Jewish communities founded their own branch of the Board of Guardians or similar benevolent societies. For instance, Cardiff Jewry established a Board of Guardians in 1892, and founded

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<sup>282</sup>Letter of appeal, Brynmawr Hebrew Congregation, February, 1928, ACC/2805/4/2/130, LMA; *Bimah* 27 (September 2001), 22.

<sup>283</sup>*Bimah* 27 (September 2001), 22.

<sup>284</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup>*JC*, 14 October 1898.

<sup>286</sup>Shirley Goldsmith, interview with author; Michael Lee, interview with author, Llandudno, 5 March 2012.

<sup>287</sup>For more on the Jewish Board of Guardians see, Lipman, *A Century of Social Service, 1859-1959*; Ruth Dove, 'Anglo-Jewish Philanthropy in England 1859-1905: a Study of the Foundation and Early Work of the Jewish Board of Guardians in London, Manchester and Liverpool' (Unpublished MPhil Thesis, University of Lancaster, 1998).

a Jewish Ladies' Benevolent Society in 1894 to offer financial aid to 'the resident [Jewish] poor'.<sup>288</sup> Newport Jewry also founded a Board of Guardians around this time, while a Benevolent Association 'to help the resident [Jewish] poor' was established in Swansea in 1893.<sup>289</sup> In 1904 the ladies of the Merthyr Tydfil Hebrew Congregation established a benevolent society and by 1907 the community had a Board of Guardians which set up a Passover Relief Fund to ensure that needy Jews in the town were provided with basic necessities during the festival.<sup>290</sup> Self-help charities such as these were not features of any other Jewish community in Wales, and their formation in communities that predate the mass migration of poor Eastern European Jews in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is not coincidental. This is because these organisations were founded and financed by long-established, acculturated and increasingly prosperous Jews who felt compassion for the poverty of their recently arrived co-religionists. They were also reluctant to see Jews becoming a financial burden on the state.<sup>291</sup> Thus, the president of Swansea's Benevolent Association in 1900 was Isaac Seline, a fifty-nine-year-old Welsh-born Jew who ran a successful insurance agency in the town, while the president of Merthyr Tydfil's Ladies' Benevolent Society in 1904 was London-born Bertha Gittlesohn whose husband Hermann was 'a well off' pawnbroker.<sup>292</sup>

As mentioned above, Jewish communities founded in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Wales were composed entirely, or almost entirely, of poor Eastern European immigrants, and thus there were no wealthier and long-established Jews available in the community to provide them with financial aid. This, however, is not to suggest that charitable organisations were absent in these communities. Indeed, a number, including Bangor and Llanelli, established Jewish friendly societies, a mutual-aid organisation where members donated a certain amount of money each week to receive financial benefits in times of hardship.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> *JC*, 17 June 1892; *JYB*, 1900.

<sup>289</sup> *JYB*, 1900.

<sup>290</sup> *JC*, 12 April 1907.

<sup>291</sup> For further works on Jewish Philanthropy in Britain, see Mordechai Rozin, *The Rich and the Poor: Jewish Philanthropy and Social Control in Nineteenth-Century London* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999); Williams, *Jewish Manchester*; Haim Sperber, 'Philanthropy and Social Control in the Anglo-Jewish Community during the Mid-Nineteenth Century (1850-1880)', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 11, 1 (2012), 85-101.

<sup>292</sup> *JYB*, 1900; *JYB*, 1904.

<sup>293</sup> *JC*, 12 November 1897; *JC*, 27 February 1914.



Regardless of their wealth, size and origin, many Welsh-Jewish communities took financial responsibility over poor Jewish vagrants who wandered among British towns. In 1893, for instance, a Poor Aid society was established by Tredegar Jewry ‘to relieve the Jewish itinerant poor’, while during the 1910s Port Talbot’s Jewish community ‘became the venue of the travelling brotherhood of mendicants’ and formed a society to aid their cause.<sup>294</sup> Port Talbot’s congregants paid an extra shilling a week ‘to keep the society going’, but this arrangement was short-lived as ‘in the course of a few weeks the fund was exhausted’.<sup>295</sup> In many instances, communities regarded the vagrants as undeserving, artful and financially burdensome. In January 1900, for instance, Isidore Wartski of Bangor complained to the *JC*, noting that:

Poor are sent here from Dublin, Liverpool and Manchester’ and ‘during the last four weeks this congregation has been visited by no less than five such “Jewish tramps.” These people have no object in coming here further than that of preying upon the funds at our disposal.<sup>296</sup>

Similarly, ‘a wandering Jew at Merthyr’ in 1899 was described by the local Hebrew congregation as ‘a perfect pest’, while the *South Wales Jewish Review* from 1904 complained that ‘a great number of the 284 casuals that passed through Merthyr have also been relieved in other towns and so the monies...are spent mostly and in some cases solely, in paying the railway fares of a wandering tribe’.<sup>297</sup>

Furthermore, all of Wales’ Jewish communities, at one time or another, donated money to a variety of Jewish charities, both domestic and abroad. In December 1915, for instance, all of the Jewish communities in existence in Wales at the time donated to the Fund for the Relief of the Jewish Victims of the War in Russia.<sup>298</sup> Similarly, during the 1910s and 1920s members of the Abertillery, Llandudno and Merthyr Tydfil Hebrew congregations collected donations for the relief of oppressed Jews in Poland, while Cardiff Jewry collected funds for such charities as the Foreign Jewish Protection Committee and the Jewish National Fund.<sup>299</sup> During the first decades of the twentieth century Tredegar Jewry donated annually to the Jewish Soup Kitchen in London, and collected monetary donations for the Jewish

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<sup>294</sup> *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961). 66.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>296</sup> *JC*, 26 January 1900.

<sup>297</sup> *Evening Express*, 19 January 1899; *South Wales Jewish Review*, 11 (November 1904), 171.

<sup>298</sup> *JC*, 24 December 1915.

<sup>299</sup> Leslie and Lena Burns, interview with David Jacobs; *JC*, 12 September 1919; 26 February 1915; 13 July 1917; 23 January 1920.

National Fund and special appeals such as the Manchester Victoria Memorial Jewish Hospital Fund.<sup>300</sup> Indeed, although charitable giving must have been a financial strain for smaller Jewish communities, there is nothing to suggest that *tzedakah* was ever neglected by Welsh Jewry.

### **Conclusion**

Religious concerns were central to all of Wales' Orthodox Jewish communities between the late eighteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, and despite their variation in population, wealth, and infrastructure they were all able maintain an observant Jewish lifestyle. Of course, some of Wales' smaller communities found it more challenging and difficult than larger ones to perpetuate a Jewish way of life, and at times they did not adhere to the highest Orthodox standards, but they did the best that could be done in such circumstances.

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<sup>300</sup> *JC*, 1 May 1914.

### **3. Jewish Refugees, Evacuees and the Second World War**

No area of modern Jewish history has received more attention from scholars than the persecution of German Jewry under Hitler during the 1930s and the destruction of six million European Jews by the Nazis between 1939 and 1945. Despite the plethora of published work on the topic, this period is arguably one of the most neglected areas within British-Jewish studies.<sup>1</sup> This is primarily because unlike other European countries such as Hungary and the Netherlands, mainland Britain was never occupied by Hitler between 1939 and 1945, nor was its Jewish population, with the exception of Jews living in the German-occupied Channel Islands, deported to Nazi concentration and extermination camps.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, as William Rubinstein once commented, 'Britain's was the largest European Jewish community to survive the Nazi Holocaust', and thus the study of Jewish refugee experiences in Britain, and the experiences of Jews in Britain more generally during the Second World War, has often been perceived by scholars as insignificant.<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately, a handful of scholars have recognised the significant impact that the persecution of Jews in Hitler's Germany during the 1930s, and the 1939-45 conflict that followed, had on British Jewry, and British society as a whole. Daniel Snowman and Gerhard Hirschfeld, among others, have examined aspects of the experience of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany in Britain, while the responses of both the British government and leaders of British Jewry to Nazi refugees and Hitlerism have been studied by Richard Bolchover and Louise London.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, what is lacking in the growing literature around the subject is

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<sup>1</sup> Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 280.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the history of the German occupation of the Channel Islands and the deportation of its Jewish population, see Charles Stephenson, *The Channel Islands, 1941-45: Hitler's Impregnable Fortress* (Oxford: Osprey, 2006); David Fraser, *The Jews of the Channel Islands and the rule of law, 1940-1945: quite contrary to the principles of British justice* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2000); Frederick E. Cohen, *The Jews in the Channel Islands during the German occupation: 1940-1945* (London: Wiener Library Institute of Contemporary History, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 280; Judith T. Baumel-Schwartz, *Never look back: the Jewish refugee children in Great Britain, 1938-1945* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Snowman, *The Hitler émigrés: the cultural impact on Britain of refugees from Nazism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2002); Gerhard Hirschfeld, ed., *Exile in Great Britain: refugees from Hitler's Germany* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1984); Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003); Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948: British immigration policy, Jewish refugees and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For additional works on the history of Jewish refugees in Britain, see, Baumel-Schwartz, *Never look back*; Anthony Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain 1933-1970: their image in AJR information* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010); Zoë Josephs, *Survivors: Jewish refugees in Birmingham 1933-1945* (Oldbury: Meridian, 1988); Rayner Kölmel, 'German-Jewish Refugees in Scotland', in Collins, *Aspects of Scottish*, 55-84; Bill Williams, *Jews and other foreigners: Manchester and the rescue of the victims of European fascism, 1933-*

a consideration of the Jewish refugee experience in Wales, and the experience of the principality's Jewish communities more generally during the Second World War.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, so ingrained is the association between Jews and the Second World War in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century society, that no modern history of any Jewish community in the diaspora would be complete without exploring and addressing the impact of this period on its Jewish population.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to both explore and assess how the rise of Nazism and the Second World War affected Welsh-Jews and Jews living in Wales between 1933 and 1945. Tony Kushner estimates that around 80,000 Jews, most on temporary visas, were admitted to the United Kingdom during the 1930s, but exactly how many came to Wales during this period is difficult to ascertain because, as we will see, refugees were highly mobile in Britain.<sup>6</sup> However, their numbers were significant enough to help diversify the make-up of Welsh Jewry, which, from the late nineteenth century onwards, was largely composed of Eastern European immigrants and their British-born offspring. As well as the impact of Jewish immigrants, the chapter explores the impact of internal Jewish migration to Wales during the Second World War, when thousands of Jews, and non-Jews, from England evacuated to the principality because it was considered a safe haven from the threat of German aerial bombing raids. Indeed, the presence of Jewish evacuees in the principality during the war years resulted in a temporary increase of Wales' Jewish population, and also led to the formation of several new Orthodox Jewish communities. While a number of Jews, both British and refugee, fled to Wales to seek safety from the threat of Hitlerism, others sought to join the fight against Nazism. The final section of this chapter therefore examines the contribution made by both Welsh-Jews and Jewish refugees in Wales in the civilian and armed forces between 1939 and 1945. As we shall see, a number volunteered to fight for the

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1940 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). The responses of the British government and leaders of British Jewry to refugees of the Nazi era have also been examined by Ari J. Sherman in *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939* (London: Elek, 1973); Bernard Wasserstein in *Britain and the Jews of Europe* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999); Pamela Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue: Impotent or Indifferent? Anglo-Jewry 1938-1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Two chapters have been written on the history of Jewish industrialists and medical refugees in south Wales, but the literature is not extensive. See Anthony Glaser, 'Jewish Refugees and Refugee Industries', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 177-205; Weindling, 'The Jewish Medical Refugee Crisis', 183-200.

<sup>6</sup> Tony Kushner, 'Collaboration Begins at Home: Racism and Our Roma Therapy', in Silvia Bigliuzzi and Sharon Wood, eds., *Collaboration in the Arts from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 170.

Allied cause, while others enrolled as they felt an extra obligation as Jews to fight Nazi anti-Semitism.

### **Jewish Medical and Academic Refugees**

The position of German Jewry came under immediate threat when Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany on 30th January 1933, and the Nazis gained control of the machinery of the state. Jews at once began to seek to escape the hostile regime by fleeing the country, and throughout the 1930s Britain witnessed an influx of German-Jewish refugees. This did not occur in one period, however, but took place in several stages. Thus to fully understand the history of German-Jewish migration to Britain in the interwar period, one must take account of both Nazi policy towards the Jews and the British government's policy towards the Jewish refugees, for both effectively dictated the pace of emigration and immigration.

Jewish physicians were among the first victims of Nazi persecution. As early as 22 April 1933, restrictions were placed on the number of Jewish doctors in National Health Insurance practices, and by the summer of that year, the Nazis forbade Jewish doctors to cooperate with their non-Jewish counterparts.<sup>7</sup> Jewish doctors in the Third Reich also lost their role as experts and consultants, and from 1933 onwards were no longer allowed to take part in professional training schemes.<sup>8</sup> Facing harassment and dismissal, thousands of Jewish doctors fled Germany during the 1930s and looked throughout the world for locations where their skills might be valued, including the United Kingdom.

For the first five years of Nazi rule, British government policy was, broadly, to restrict the admission of refugees to a modest number. Government officials were not insensitive to the plight of the refugees, especially when Nazi brutality outraged public opinion and provoked waves of sympathy for the refugees, but British interests ultimately came first. In a period of continuing high levels of unemployment, the British government favoured the admission of refugees who would be a benefit to Britain. They preferred, for instance, refugees who had distinguished themselves in an artistic, scientific or technological field and/or those who might create new industrial enterprises.<sup>9</sup> Refugees who had sufficient

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<sup>7</sup> Sherman, *Island Refuge*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Naomi Baumslag, *Murderous Medicine: Nazi Doctors, Human Experimentation, and Typhus* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2005), 90.

<sup>9</sup> Grenville, *Jewish Refugees*, 5.

financial resources to provide for themselves were also at an advantage. Otherwise, those who lacked any obvious means of supporting themselves financially were turned back at their port of entry by immigration officers. As Anthony Grenville reminds us, for most of the 1930s it was these officials who were ‘at the front line in deciding who could and could not enter Britain’.<sup>10</sup>

While Britain was important as a place of safety and staging-post for onward migrants and temporary exiles, it became a new home for a large number of displaced Jewish doctors.<sup>11</sup> By 1939 1,200 German and Austrian doctors, the majority of whom were Jews, were estimated to be resident in Britain, but on their arrival they faced formidable difficulties in their efforts to re-establish themselves.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, during the 1930s the British Medical Association (BMA) opposed the admission of all but a select few of ‘refugee physicians of special distinction’ on the basis that Britain was adequately supplied with doctors; that medical refugees would compete for employment with British graduates; and the fear that ‘foreign doctors would subject British homes to foreign influences’.<sup>13</sup> The BMA made it as difficult as possible for a qualified German doctor to settle—their German medical qualifications were invalidated, and as early as 1933, all refugee doctors were required to take an examination in anatomy and physiology and study for two years before taking the British medical examinations.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, the Scottish Triple Qualification Board, the qualification of the medical colleges of Edinburgh and Glasgow, allowed refugee doctors to take the final examinations after only one year of clinical studies and there was no requirement to take anatomy and physiology exams. The simpler regulations in Scotland led to the arrival of

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<sup>10</sup> Grenville, *Jewish Refugees*, 5. The British Government’s immigration policy during the early 1930s dates from the Aliens Act of 1905, which was passed largely in response to anti-alien agitation that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century following the influx of Eastern European Jewish immigrants to Britain. The act introduced a system of controlling aliens at the ports, which subjected the bulk of the poorest class of passengers to inspection by immigration officers. Alien steerage-class passengers, if they could not establish on inspection that they were capable of supporting themselves and their dependants, were liable to be refused entry as ‘undesirable immigrants’. After the end of the First World War, the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act 1919 was passed. The 1919 system was more comprehensive than the repealed 1905 Act, as all aliens were now subjected to immigration controls. Asylum could only be granted if the state saw it fit. For more on this, see Louise London, ‘Immigration Control Procedures and Jewish Refugees 1933-1939’, in Mosse and Carlebach, eds., *Second Chance*, 485-517.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Weindling, ‘Medical Refugees in Britain and the Wider World, 1930-1960: Introduction’, *Social History of Medicine*, 22, 3 (2009), 451.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Weindling, ‘Medical Science and Practice’, in Mosse and Carlebach, eds., *Second Chance*, 253.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Collins, ‘European Refugee Physicians in Scotland, 1933-1945’, *Social History of Medicine*, 22, 3 (2009), 513-516.

<sup>14</sup> Weindling, ‘Medical Science and Practice’, 247. Even after re-qualifying, the BMA made it clear to the refugees that obtaining a British qualification did not automatically confer the right to practise medicine in Britain.

significant numbers of refugee physicians in Edinburgh and Glasgow.<sup>15</sup> According to Kenneth Collins, between 1933 and 1945, a total of 352 refugee doctors obtained the Scottish Triple Qualification.<sup>16</sup>

The influx of medical refugees into Wales was small by comparison to Scotland, but a number were admitted to the Welsh National School of Medicine in Cardiff, which offered a 'special scheme of instruction for refugee students'.<sup>17</sup> In October 1933, for instance, six Germans holding medical qualifications were admitted as students and in January 1934 the overall number of 'German medical men' admitted to study at Cardiff was twelve.<sup>18</sup> The school's Annual Report of 1934-35 reported that seven German students had obtained a registrable qualification and that 'they proved [to be] very satisfactory students in every respect'.<sup>19</sup> When it came to the emergency of the Austrian *Anschluss* in 1938 and the Nazi takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1939, the Welsh National School of Medicine showed itself to be more generous than most other medical schools in Britain. Whilst most medical schools took two refugee students, the Welsh National School of Medicine admitted over seven Austrians and fifteen Czechs, the majority of whom were Jewish such as Austrians Alfred Feiner and Edgar Rhoden.<sup>20</sup>

Of the many Jewish refugee doctors who found refuge in Britain during the 1930s, only a small number were offered permanent positions in the United Kingdom, and most

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<sup>15</sup> Although he does not provide a figure, Collins notes that 'several hundred refugee physicians' were present in Scotland between 1933 and 1945. See Collins, 'European Refugee Physicians in Scotland', 513. Not all refugee physicians enrolled with the Scottish Triple Qualification Board studied in Scotland, since other medical schools, such as those in Manchester and Cardiff, were also helping candidates prepare for the Scottish examinations. See Paul Weindling, 'Medical Refugees as Practitioners and Patients: Public, Private and Practice Records', in Andrea Hammel and Anthony Grenville, eds., *Refugee Archives: Theory and Practice* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 145.

<sup>16</sup> Collins, 'European Refugee Physicians in Scotland', 528.

<sup>17</sup> Weindling 'The Jewish Medical Refugee Crisis', 188. A major obstacle for many re-qualifying refugee doctors in Britain was securing enough financial support to be able to pay for the fees and their livelihood at the same time. They had to take loans, try to get a scholarship, or scrape together whatever money they and their spouses were able to earn at a time when, officially, refugees were not given work permits in most cases. To take one example: when the Viennese Jewish doctor, Alfred Feiner, was re-qualifying at the Welsh National School of Medicine in Cardiff in the late 1930s, his wife, Herta, took on a job as a cook and a housekeeper so that he could study for his British qualifications. See, *AJR Information*, 32, 3 (1977), 12.

<sup>18</sup> Council Minutes of the Welsh National School of Medicine, 20 June 1933; 20 July 1933; 17 October 1933; 30 January 1934, quoted in Weindling 'The Jewish Medical Refugee Crisis', 198. According to Weindling, the records of the Welsh National School of Medicine are held at Llandough Hospital in Cardiff. See Weindling, 'Medical Refugees as Practitioners', 145.

<sup>19</sup> Welsh National School of Medicine, Annual Report, 1934-5, 5, quoted in Weindling 'The Jewish Medical Refugee Crisis', 198.

<sup>20</sup> *Bimah*, 68 (May 2012), 54; *JC*, 28 January 1977; Weindling, 'The Jewish Medical Refugees', 189.

were pressed to move on to other countries such as the United States.<sup>21</sup> In 1934, Dr. Paul Rothschild, newly re-qualified in Scotland, moved to a mining village in south Wales where he worked as a general practitioner, and was perhaps the first of the German-Jewish medical refugees to practise in the principality. Although Rothschild later moved to London, there are examples of Jewish refugee doctors who did settle permanently in Wales. They included German-born Max Weis, who worked as a physician at the Rookwood Ministry of Pensions hospital in Cardiff from 1942 until his death in 1952; Werner Bernfeld, originally from Leipzig, who was appointed a venereologist in Cardiff City Hospital in 1955; and the already mentioned Alfred Feiner of Vienna, who, after re-qualifying at the Welsh National School of Medicine, worked as a general practitioner in Pontypridd between 1941 and 1977.<sup>22</sup>

From April 1933 onwards, Nazi policy rapidly swept Jewish scholars from their positions in German universities and research institutes. While the BMA fought to keep refugee doctors out of Britain, the British academic community saw advantages in encouraging displaced German-Jewish academics to settle in the United Kingdom. Indeed, by early May 1933 British universities were fully alerted to the dismissal suffered mostly by Jewish academics in Nazi Germany, and on 22 May an Academic Assistance Council (AAC) (renamed the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning in 1935) was founded under the leadership of William Beveridge, then director of the London School of Economics, to aid displaced academics. The AAC helped displaced scholars and scientists to pursue their careers through information about possible openings at British universities and the provision of modest maintenance grants.<sup>23</sup> It was hoped that the British public would respond positively to their funds and that British universities would try their best to offer employment to the refugee academics. Set against this was the hope that refugees of intellectual distinction would be valuable assets to British universities. As Gerhard Hirschfeld once observed, the ostensibly ‘liberal’ and exceptional policy of admitting academic refugees into British universities was, to a certain degree, an expression of self-interest.<sup>24</sup> This, however, is not to deny the humane intentions of the AAC or of the British universities, but to suggest that the

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<sup>21</sup> In an article which appeared in the medical journal *The Lancet* in 1938, Samson Wright, the distinguished physiologist who was active in Jewish refugee relief, wrote that only 187 German doctors had been licensed to practise medicine in Britain since 1933 in a profession which numbered over 50,000. See Samson Wright, ‘Our Colleagues in Austria’, *The Lancet* (9 April 1938), 865.

<sup>22</sup> *CAJEX*, 3, 1 (1953), 66; 27, 3 (1977), 25; miscellaneous correspondence, including letter from Dr. Bernfeld’s brother following Dr. Bernfeld’s death, 1972-4, DCNS 7/24, GA.

<sup>23</sup> London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 48.

<sup>24</sup> Hirschfeld, “‘A High Tradition of Eagerness...’: British non-Jewish Organisations in Support of Refugees,” in Mosse and Carlebach, *Second Chance*, 605.



chances for refugee scholars were at their best when a coincidence existed of refugee need and British advantage.<sup>25</sup>

The AAC found considerable support from the Welsh academic community. In July 1933, for instance, Emrys Evans, the principal of the University College of North Wales at Bangor, expressed general sympathy with the appeal, but regretted that the university had insufficient funds to assist displaced scholars.<sup>26</sup> Many Welsh academics subscribed to the AAC—including chemists Charles R. Bury of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and Joseph E. Coates of the University College of Swansea—and responded favourably to supporting fund raising appeals for recruiting individual refugee scholars at their respective institutions.<sup>27</sup> At Cardiff, enough funds were raised for Professor Werner Friedrich Bruck, a German economist of Jewish origin, to work at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire between 1934 and 1938.<sup>28</sup> Yet most displaced academics could only obtain temporary posts, and were expected to re-emigrate like other refugees.<sup>29</sup> Thus Werner Friedrich Bruck left for the United States in 1940, where he worked as a professor of political management at the New School of Social Research in New York.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, of the small number of displaced refugee academics in Welsh universities, only Erich Heller was to make a career in Wales after the war.<sup>31</sup> Born in Chomutov, Bohemia, in 1911, Heller, a then Doctor of Law, fled to Britain in 1939, where he held temporary positions as a German lecturer at the London School of Economics, and University of Cambridge. He was naturalised as a British citizen in 1947, and was appointed head of the German department at the University College of Swansea in 1948. In 1950, he became the first holder of the University's chair in German,

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<sup>25</sup> Williams, *Jews and Other*, 36.

<sup>26</sup> Society for the Protection of Science and Learning (hereafter SPSL), Box 51/1, f.17 and 26, Bodleian Library, Oxford (henceforth, BLO).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Letter from J.F. Rees to Thomson, 2 December 1938, SPSL, 130/3, f. 189, BLO.

<sup>29</sup> Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 273; Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 337.

<sup>30</sup> Rudolf Vierhaus, *Deutsche Biographische Enzyklopädie 2., überarbeitete und erweiterte Ausgabe* (München: Saur K.G. Verlag, 2005), 107.

<sup>31</sup> In addition to Werner Friedrich Bruck at Cardiff, Professor Otto Piper, an eminent Protestant theologian, was offered a temporary post at University College, Swansea, between 1934 and 1936. He later moved to the University College of North Wales, Bangor, for a brief period, before eventually settling in the United States in 1937, where he lectured at Princeton University until 1962. See, David Dykes, *The University College of Swansea: an illustrated history* (Stroud: Sutton, 1992), 141.

and left for the United States in 1960, to take up a professorship at Northwestern University in Chicago.<sup>32</sup>

### **Jewish Refugee Industrialists**

This policy of ultra-cautious selectivity was also applied to Jewish refugee businessmen and industrialists. As mentioned above, the early 1930s was a period of mass unemployment in Britain, with over two million of the insured population out of work by 1935. While unemployment levels in Britain varied by region, it was especially high in areas which suffered a decline in traditional heavy industries such as south Wales and the north-east of England. The government's response to the growing unemployment was to pass a Special Areas Act in 1934, which sought to create jobs in depressed areas through the establishment of government-sponsored industrial estates.<sup>33</sup> In south Wales, it was decided to establish a trading estate south of Treforest, a village situated approximately eleven miles north of Cardiff. In May 1935, the Commissioner for the Special Areas of England and Wales wrote to 5,000 British firms inviting them to consider setting up factories in one of the Special Areas. Of the 200 which replied, only twelve were interested.<sup>34</sup> As there was a marked unwillingness on the part of British firms to go the Special Areas, the authorities began to show an interest in finding refugee businessmen who would agree to settle there and start up business in the waiting empty factories.<sup>35</sup>

Although the Home Office lacked the powers to make the admission of refugee manufacturers dependent on any particular area, it found ways of steering them towards the Special and other Depressed Areas. Resident permits, for instance, were to be issued quicker for those settling in areas of high unemployment, while the factories were offered at a significantly lower rent than elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> According to Bill Pollock (1931-), such incentives were highly appealing to his father, Albert Pollock, who fled Austria in 1938.<sup>37</sup> In 1939, he and his business partner from Vienna, Joseph Krakauer, established a leather gloves company

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<sup>32</sup> Martin Swales, 'Heller, Erich (1911–1990)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edn, January 2008): <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/92861>, (last accessed 01/08/ 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Herbert Loebel, 'Industry in the Depressed Areas' in Mosse and Carlebach, eds., *Second Chance*, 382.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Glaser, 'Jewish Refugees', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 185.

<sup>36</sup> Loebel, 'Industry in the Depressed Areas', 385.

<sup>37</sup> Bill Pollock, interview with author, London, 10 November 2011, Hineni, BHAC.

on the Treforest Industrial Estate called Burlington Gloves Ltd.<sup>38</sup> For other refugee industrialists, it was south-east Wales' relative proximity to London (approximately 157 miles), which made the Treforest Industrial Estate an attractive site to start up a business. Although they had never been to south Wales before, German-born brothers Julius and Moritz Mendle established a plastic moulding business in Treforest in 1939 because it was closer to the British capital than the other Special Areas in Britain such as the north-east of England and the south-west of Scotland.<sup>39</sup>

The Treforest Industrial Estate officially opened in 1936, but it appears that Jewish refugee firms were not established there until 1938/1939.<sup>40</sup> This is because the majority of Jewish businesses in Nazi Germany were allowed to function up until 1938, when the Reich Interior Ministry ordered the registration of all Jewish-owned companies and sold them cheaply to non-Jewish German businesses.<sup>41</sup> Jewish businesses in Austria and Czechoslovakia remained unaffected until the Austrian and German *Anschluss* in March 1938 and the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Having lost their businesses, thousands of Jewish businessmen and industrialists fled their homelands in 1938/1939 to try and re-establish their firms abroad.

By June 1939 sixty-three companies had taken premises on the Treforest Trading Estate, of which thirty were owned by Jewish refugees from Austria, Germany and Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia.<sup>42</sup> The variety of businesses represented by the Jewish refugee firms at Treforest showed a good spread across the industrial spectrum. They included O. P. Chocolates, a chocolate and confectionery company owned by Oscar Peschek of Vienna; Embee Abrasive Materials, owned by brothers Paul and Alfred Mayer from Hamburg; Pearl Paints Ltd., a paint and varnish factory run by brothers Simon, Fritz and Willi Stern from Fulda, Germany; Gnome Photographic, a manufacture of photographic apparatus, founded by Stuttgart-born Heinrich Löbstein; Metal Products Ltd., a light engineering company

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<sup>38</sup> Bill Pollock, interview with author.

<sup>39</sup> Sybille Holden, interview with Diana Soffa, 20 August 2010, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>40</sup> Francis M. L. Thompson, ed., *Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 309. A comprehensive list of companies established by Jewish refugees on the Treforest Industrial Estate in the late 1930s and early 1940s can be found at the Glamorgan Archives in Cardiff; - see Refugee Industries. Analysis of Replies to Questionnaire re. Present and Post-War Activities of Refugee Industries in Wales and Monmouthshire, DIDC/68, GA.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: the Nazi persecution and murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 66.

<sup>42</sup> *JC*, 9 June 1939.

established by the Golten family of Prague; and Aero Zipp Fasteners Ltd., a zip manufacturing company founded by Joachim Koppel of Berlin.<sup>43</sup> Such companies were praised by the British Government for employing local men and women and helping to alleviate levels of unemployment in the area. On a visit to Treforest in June 1939, for instance, the then prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, exclaimed that the industrial estate was:

one of the most heartening things that I have ever seen in Wales. There are quite a large number of people there all employed upon new industries for Wales, some of them brought by people who had to leave their own countries.<sup>44</sup>

By May 1940, it was reported that fifty-five Jewish refugee firms were in operation at Treforest, employing 1,800 people.<sup>45</sup> As well as improving levels of unemployment in the area, the refugees were praised for introducing new industries to Britain which reduced the import of a variety of goods and also increased the number of goods exported. According to an article in the *JC*, Treforest's refugee firms played an important role in helping 'to cripple Nazi Germany's export trade'.<sup>46</sup> In fact, a number of the Jewish refugee companies were deemed beneficial for the war effort. For instance, Austrians Jacob Schoenmann and Rudolf Wilhelm opened a factory for their company 'General Paper and Box Manufacturing Company Ltd.' on the Treforest Industrial Estate in 1939.<sup>47</sup> Throughout the war, the firm's cigarette paper division was in high demand since cigarettes were 'deemed essential to keeping up morale both in the forces, and at home', while their 'well equipped tool-room' led to a government contract to produce turned parts for aircraft engines.<sup>48</sup> In his memoir, George Schoenmann (b.1934) recalls how 'greatly impressed' he was as a young boy to learn that his grandfather's company 'made parts for Spitfires and Hurricanes'.<sup>49</sup> Other Jewish firms at Treforest contributed to the war effort, including the already mentioned Metal Products Ltd. and Aero Zipp Fasteners Ltd., whose factories were requisitioned to create aircraft

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<sup>43</sup> Refugee Industries. Analysis of Replies to Questionnaire, DIDC/68, GA.

<sup>44</sup> *JC*, 30 June 1939.

<sup>45</sup> *JC*, 10 May 1940.

<sup>46</sup> *JC*, 15 December 1939.

<sup>47</sup> According to George Schoenmann, the company was formed by his grandfather, Jacob Schoenmann, and Rudolf Wilhelm in Vienna in 1938. Unfortunately, Jacob Schoenmann was in poor health and too ill to travel. He stayed in Vienna until his death in 1941. Wilhelm ran the business from Treforest and was soon joined by Jacob's son, Paul. A Czech Jewish refugee named Herman Toffler invested in the business and eventually became a co-director of the company. See George Schoenmann, *Memoirs...The Long Road to Retirement* (Self-published c. 2011), 8-22. In possession of author.

<sup>48</sup> Schoenmann, *Memoirs*, 16.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

components for the Ministry of Aircraft Production; and Livia Leather Goods Ltd., founded by an Austrian-Jew named Otto Brill, which produced 'leather covers for seats for R.A.F. planes'.<sup>50</sup>

### **Kindertransport**

For the first five years of Nazi rule, the British government's immigration policy was, broadly, to restrict the admission of refugees to those who would be beneficial to the British economy and the national interest. By 1938, however, this policy underwent a marked change. The turning point took place in November that year, in the wake of a pogrom against Jews in Germany and parts of annexed Austria. The carnage of the night of 9-10 November 1938, later called *Kristallnacht* (night of the broken glass), sounded the alarm for a number of refugee aid organisations, both in Germany and abroad.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, almost immediately after *Kristallnacht*, a delegation representing both British Jewish and Quaker groups, including the Central British Fund for German Jewry; and the Friends Service Council, mobilised their forces to put political pressure on the British government to permit the entry of refugees from the Third Reich. Acknowledging that an 'open door' policy for all Jewish refugees was not possible, the Jewish organisations urged the British government to consider allowing large numbers of children into Britain.<sup>52</sup> The Home Office eventually gave way to pressure and in late November 1938, permitted an unspecified number of unaccompanied children under the age of seventeen to enter the United Kingdom from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia.<sup>53</sup> The children were admitted to Britain on temporary travel visas provided that private citizens or organisations could guarantee to pay for each child's care, education, and eventual emigration once the crisis was over.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Norman Bentwich, *Wanderer in war, 1939-45* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1946), 30; Refugee Industries. Analysis of Replies to Questionnaire, DIDC/68, GA.

<sup>51</sup> Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 50-51. *Kristallnacht* was the wave of violent anti-Jewish pogroms which took place throughout Germany, annexed Austria, and in areas of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia recently occupied by German troops. Instigated primarily by Nazi Party officials and members of the SA and Hitler Youth, *Kristallnacht* was allegedly a response to the assassination of Ernst vom Rath, a German embassy official stationed in Paris, by a Polish Jew named Herschel Grynszpan. More than 1,000 synagogues were burnt and damaged, around 7,500 Jewish businesses were looted, at least 91 Jews were killed and around 30,000 Jewish males aged between 16 and 60 were arrested. The latter were sent to concentration camps such as Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>53</sup> Patricia Heberer, *Children During the Holocaust* (Lanham: AltaMira Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011), 73.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

The first *Kindertransport* (Children's transport) arrived in Harwich, England, on 2nd December 1938, bringing around two hundred children, many from Jewish orphanages in Berlin that had been destroyed during *Kristallnacht*.<sup>55</sup> The number of children who arrived in the United Kingdom under official auspices amounted to almost 11,000, of whom 9,354 (7,482 were Jewish) were brought over by the Refugee Children's Movement (henceforth RCM).<sup>56</sup> Once in Britain the experience of refugee children varied considerably. Some arrived through private initiatives, and went directly to the home of their foster families or relatives/family friends once in Britain, while those who had no relatives or foster families to go to were sent to reception camps such as Dovercourt in Essex until they were suitably placed.<sup>57</sup> Potential sponsors frequently visited Dovercourt to pick out children, and one of those included Rev. Joseph Weintrobe, the then minister of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, who visited the camp in January 1939 following the formation of Swansea Jewry's Refugee committee in December 1938. He picked twelve Jewish boys, who arrived in Swansea in February 1939, and were cared for by members of the local Jewish community.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, a major resettlement issue facing the RCM was that of religious placement. That is, should Jewish refugee children be placed with non-Jewish foster families? Representatives of the RCM were initially divided on the question of accepting non-Jewish hospitality.<sup>59</sup> However, the lack of sufficient offers from Jewish households led to the acceptance of all homes, Jewish and non-Jewish, that met the necessary requirements.<sup>60</sup> As mentioned above, some Jewish refugee children were sent to live with relatives or family friends who provided the necessary sponsorship and financial guarantees. In most instances the children's Jewish upbringing continued uninterrupted, and there are a number of examples from Wales, including German-born Eva Gibbor (née Schwarz) (b.1928), who in 1939 was sent to live

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<sup>55</sup> Heberer, *Children During the Holocaust*, 357.

<sup>56</sup> Mosse and Carlebach, eds., *Second Chance*, 591; Martin Gilbert, *Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), 227. The Refugee Children's Movement was under the joint chairmanship of Sir Wyndham Deedes and Viscount Herbert L. Samuel. Other British organisations and individuals, both Jewish and non-Jewish, also became involved in the rescue and reception of child refugees from Austria, Czechoslovakia and Germany. They included Nicholas Winton, who organised the rescue of 669 Czech children from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia in 1939; the B'nai B'rith Care Committee for Refugee Children; the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council headed by Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld; and the Women's appeal committee, among others.

<sup>57</sup> Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 113-117.

<sup>58</sup> *JC*, 16 December 1938; 3 February 1939.

<sup>59</sup> Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 119.

<sup>60</sup> *First Annual Report of the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany Ltd.*, Central British Fund Archives, 27/28/153, Wiener Library (henceforth WL).

with family friends in Cardiff called the Kayes, an Orthodox Jewish family who were members of the Windsor Place Synagogue; and Leipzig-born Anneliese Barth (née Baumann) (b.1924), who was sent with her younger sister to live with her mother's cousin in Cardiff.<sup>61</sup> Other Jewish children were fostered by Welsh-Jewish families that were previously unknown to them, including Vienna-born Erwin Malz (b.1932), who, after living with nine non-Jewish families in England since 1939, was eventually fostered by a Jewish couple in Cardiff named Isadore and Ethel Rosen in 1943. Whilst living in Cardiff, Malz attended the Cathedral Road *cheder* and celebrated his *bar mitzvah* at the synagogue in 1945.<sup>62</sup> Other examples included German-born Joseph Berg (1923-1983), who was sponsored by the Pontypridd Jewish community in 1938, and became an active member of the town's Hebrew Congregation; and Ellen Davis (born Kerri Ellen Wertheim in 1929) of Hoof, Germany, who was fostered by a childless Jewish couple in Swansea named Hyman and Sarah Feigenbaum in 1939. In her memoir, Davis recalls that her Jewish upbringing continued uninterrupted in south Wales:

Being a good Jewish family, we went to the [Goat Street] synagogue [in Swansea] on Saturday morning...to say our prayers...It was a beautiful building which I came to love. I felt at home hearing the prayers in Hebrew. It reminded me of Hoof where going to the synagogue had been so much part of my life. On Sunday morning in Swansea as at home, we went to *Chader* [sic]....my Hebrew was good and the teacher could not fault my reading.<sup>63</sup>

With a large number of Jewish refugee children placed in Christian homes, the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council issued several pleas to host families to not convert Jewish children to Christianity. Some Christian families in Wales respected his wishes. For instance, Erwin Kestenbaum, a Jewish refugee from Czechoslovakia, was fostered by a Unitarian minister in Swansea named Rev. Rosalind Lee, and was *bar mitzvah* at Swansea's Goat Street Synagogue in August 1939.<sup>64</sup> To take another example, Anglicans Helen and Bourke Harvey of Swansea took in German-Jewish sisters Edith (b. 1932) and Ruth Cohn (b. 1926) in 1939. According to Edith's memoir, the Harveys did their best to maintain her and her sister's Jewish identities, and had made arrangements for them to attend weekly Sabbath morning services at the Goat Street Synagogue.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, having been 'brought up in the cool,

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<sup>61</sup> Eva Gibbor, interview with author, Cardiff, June 2012; letter from Anneliese Barth to Mrs. Leverton, 21 November 1988, 1368/2/2/11, WL.

<sup>62</sup> *CAJEX*, 24, 3 (1984), 54-55.

<sup>63</sup> Davis, *Kerry's Children*, 65.

<sup>64</sup> *JC*, 18 August 1939.

<sup>65</sup> Edith Milton, *The Tiger in the Attic: Memories of the Kindertransport and Growing Up English* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 106.

egalitarian customs of the Reform tradition' in Germany, the girls found the Orthodox services in Swansea 'entirely foreign' and refused to go back.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, Edith adapted voluntarily to her non-Jewish surroundings and decided to attend church services with the Harveys every Sunday. After 'following these exercises for several years' she eventually embraced Christianity.<sup>67</sup> According to Edith, her sister Ruth retained her Jewish faith and culture because she was six years older and 'had [already] chosen a set of religious beliefs...in Germany'.<sup>68</sup>

While Edith Milton voluntarily adopted Christianity, other Jewish refugee children placed with Christian families in Wales, and Britain more generally, were forced to grow up without any Jewish learning or any real sense of their Jewish identity. For example, German-born Jewish twins Susi and Lottie Bechhöfer (b. 1936) arrived in Britain on the *Kindertransport* in May 1939 and were fostered by a Cardiff Baptist minister and his wife named Edward and Irene Mann. While the Manns reassured the RCM that they would not baptise the girls, they were nevertheless sent to Sunday school and raised as Christians.<sup>69</sup> In fact, the Manns erased all traces of the girls' Jewish and German identities. They were stripped of their names—Susi became Grace Elizabeth, while Lotte became Eunice Mary—and were educated at boarding schools such as Clarendon Girls' School in Denbighshire, 'an institution noted for laying great emphasis on Christian ethics'.<sup>70</sup> Eunice died when the twins were thirty-five, and it was not until Grace was fifty-two that she re-discovered her Jewish roots.<sup>71</sup>

Although the preferred form of refugee child resettlement was in foster homes, hostels ultimately became the most common place of resettlement for Jewish refugee children, particularly for teenagers who were harder to place. These collective homes for large numbers of Jewish refugee children were established in many Jewish communities throughout Britain, including Cardiff and Newport.<sup>72</sup> Cardiff's Refugee Hostel was established at 33 Cathedral Road in May 1939 under the auspices of Max and Solomon Shepherd and several other local Jewish communal leaders, including Isaac Gaba and Isador

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<sup>66</sup> Milton, *The Tiger in the Attic*, 106.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-109.

<sup>69</sup> Jeremy Josephs with Susi Bechhöfer, *Rosa's Child: the True Story of Ozone Woman's Quest for a Lost Mother and a Vanished Past* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1996), 26.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-35.

<sup>71</sup> *JC*, 2 September 1988.

<sup>72</sup> Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 117-118.



Rapport.<sup>73</sup> The then minister of the Windsor Place Synagogue, Rev. Maurice Unterman, undertook the responsibility for the education and spiritual well-being of the thirty-five Jewish refugee children, and according to an advertisement in the *JC*, religious services were held daily at 8 a.m. and 5.15 p.m.<sup>74</sup> One of the hostel residents was Vienna-born Frieda Korobkin (née Stolzberg) (b. 1932), who recalls in her memoir that the children received a proper, Jewish education, and lived in a nurturing, supportive, and religious environment. According to Frieda it was the hostel's caretaker 'Mr. Z. [who] set the tone for religious observance':

On *Shabbos* he led the *davening* in one of the downstairs rooms where a thick, wooden *mechitzah* was erected to separate the boys from the girls. Friday nights and *Shabbos* lunch were uplifting occasions, despite the food shortage. Mr. Z. made *Kiddush*, and after we had eaten we sang traditional *zemiros*. It carried me back to our Friday nights at home in Vienna....Mr. Z. was very learned and gave *shiurim*, lessons in *Talmud* to the boys. During the week, after school, volunteer tutors, Jewish residents of Cardiff, arrived to give us Hebrew Lessons.<sup>75</sup>

Throughout its short-lived existence the Cathedral Road hostel was burdened by financial insecurity. In January 1940, for instance, the *JC* reported that Cardiff's Jewish Refugee Committee was in desperate need of funds since the revenue gleaned from annual subscriptions did not sufficiently cover the costs of the children's upkeep.<sup>76</sup> After a meeting with the then Lord Mayor of Cardiff, Charles Henry McCale, it was agreed to launch a financial appeal among local non-Jewish citizens.<sup>77</sup> The appeal appears to have been successful in the short-term as the hostel was still open in 1942.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, the committee continued to face financial difficulties and were forced to close the hostel in 1943 owing to lack of funds.<sup>79</sup>

Newport's Jewish Refugee Hostel was founded in 1940 under the auspices of the town's Hebrew congregation.<sup>80</sup> A house was rented in Chepstow Road to house twelve refugee girls and furniture was donated by congregants.<sup>81</sup> While the hostel provided a place for the refugee

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<sup>73</sup> *JC*, 12 May 1939.

<sup>74</sup> *JC*, 12 May 1939; 19 December 1939.

<sup>75</sup> Frieda Korobkin, *Throw your Feet over your Shoulders: Beyond the Kindertransport* (Pittsburgh, PA: Dorrance, 2012), 82.

<sup>76</sup> *JC*, 19 January 1940.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *JC*, 27 February 1942.

<sup>79</sup> Korobkin, *Throw your Feet over your Shoulders*, 80-87.

<sup>80</sup> *JC*, 21 June 1940.

<sup>81</sup> *CAJEX*, 19, 2 (1969), 52.

girls to sleep and eat, it also accommodated for their religious needs. The then Hebrew teacher of the Newport Hebrew Congregation, Alexander Hyams, and his wife, Miriam, provided the girls with Hebrew lessons and held weekly Friday evening services and dinners at the hostel.<sup>82</sup> The Newport hostel was still operational in 1942, but the difficulty in securing a full-time matron to care for the girls led to its closure in November that year.<sup>83</sup>

Apart from reception camps, foster homes and hostels, another form of resettlement was agricultural training. In addition to the children who were brought over to Britain by the RCM and individual sponsors, a large group of Jewish children arrived in the United Kingdom from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia as part of the Youth Aliyah movement. This organisation, founded by Recha Freier of Berlin in 1932, sought to combine productive agricultural training for Jewish youth with educational and Zionist values.<sup>84</sup> The ultimate goal was emigration to Palestine, where the children would live and work on a *kibbutz*. In early 1933, Youth Aliyah had already initiated the concept of *Ausland-hachshara* (agricultural training outside Germany) and by 1939 *hachshara* centres existed in countries such as Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Sweden.<sup>85</sup> The United Kingdom was added to the list after *Kristallnacht* when Youth Aliyah activists proposed to bring one thousand younger *hachshara* candidates to the country.<sup>86</sup> Finding suitable accommodation for the children proved to be a major obstacle for the movement in Britain since unlike the RCM, Youth Aliyah opposed placing Jewish children in foster homes. This is because living in a foster home would not prepare the refugee children for the collective way of life that the organisation hoped they would be leading in Palestine.<sup>87</sup> The movement also opposed sending children to live with non-Jewish families as it was feared that they would be exposed to assimilationist influences.<sup>88</sup> The solution was to place the children on special *hachshara* farms purchased, leased or given as a gift to Youth Aliyah, where it was hoped a communal and agricultural life-style would prepare them for a future on a *kibbutz* in Palestine.

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<sup>82</sup> CAJEX, 19, 2 (1969), 52.

<sup>83</sup> JC, 30 October 1942; Bertha Leverton and Shmuel Lowensohn, eds., *I Came Alone: the Stories of the Kindertransports* (Lewes: Book Guild, 1990), 253-254.

<sup>84</sup> Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 138.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 140.

Between 1939 and 1945, around twenty Youth Aliyah centres were established throughout Britain, some of which were found in Wales.<sup>89</sup> The largest of the Welsh *hachsharot* was Gwrych Castle in Abergele, north Wales. It was acquired on 28 August 1939, after the castle's owner, Lord Dundonald, offered it rent-free for use by Jewish refugee children. As the castle had been uninhabited for over fifteen years, Dundonald took it upon himself to pay half the cost of repairs. He also expressed hope that the five hundred acres of land accompanying the castle would compensate the children for the building's derelict condition.<sup>90</sup> The Gwrych Castle Agricultural Training Centre, as it became known, was opened on 31 August 1939, with a total of 180 children in its care.<sup>91</sup> The majority of the children belonged to the Youth Aliyah organisation, but around sixty were members of *Bachad*, a Zionist youth group formed in Germany and led in Britain by German refugee Arie Handler.<sup>92</sup> Handler worked as a Medical adviser at Gwrych, while the children were under the supervision of Erwin Seligman.<sup>93</sup>

As in most of the *hachsharot*, the children at Gwrych divided their day between agricultural work and study. The children's religious education was provided by Rav. Shmuel (Samuel) Sperber of Romania, who gave them a short but extensive course in Jewish learning.<sup>94</sup> Great emphasis was also placed on language lessons, both English and Hebrew, to prepare the children for their supposed temporary sojourn in Britain and their permanent life in Palestine.<sup>95</sup> The castle came with sleeping and eating quarters, forests and farmlands, but with such little funds the Youth Aliyah and Bachad movements were unable to provide some of the basic necessities for running a home for Jewish refugee youth. In April 1940, Erwin Seligman made an appeal in the *JC* for prayer books and *Sifrei Torah* to be donated to Gwrych, while various groups and families contributed furniture and other goods.<sup>96</sup> Osias Findling (b. 1922), an English language assistant at Gwrych, remembered the generosity of

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<sup>89</sup> Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 140.

<sup>90</sup> *Chayenu: Organ of the Torah Va'Avodah Movement and Brit Chalutzim Datiim of Western Europe*, 1, 1 (November-December 1939), 11; *JC*, 15 September 1939.

<sup>91</sup> *JC*, 19 April 1940; 20 June 1941; Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 145.

<sup>92</sup> Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 146.

<sup>93</sup> E. Wynne Williams, 'Jewish Refugees at Gwrych Castle', *Abergele Field Club and Historical Society Review*, 1 (1982), 3; *JC*, 19 April 1940; Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 146.

<sup>94</sup> *JC*, 20 June 1941.

<sup>95</sup> Herman Rothman, interview with Peter M. Hart, February 2008, 30627, IWM; Martin Steinberger, interview with Hermione Sacks, date unknown, C410/104, BL..

<sup>96</sup> *JC*, 19 April 1940.

Marks and Spencer in Manchester, who donated beds, mattresses and cupboards, and the Gestetner family of London, who contributed a significant amount of food.<sup>97</sup>

The children's arrival stimulated trade in the nearby town of Abergele. Local baker Dick Edwards and milkman Mr. Morrison delivered bread and milk to the castle daily, while Mr. Morgan, a local chemist, often provided medical supplies to the refugee children.<sup>98</sup> Similarly a local builder named Edgar Jones was employed to repair any damages at Gwrych, while the children regularly had their haircuts at D. Hywel Roberts's barber shop. As well as working as agricultural labourers in local farms such as Edwin Roberts' farm in Tyddyn Uchaf, Gwrych's Jewish children provided labour for local businesses, including Slater & Wheeler's garage and Robert Jones' Printing Works in Abergele.<sup>99</sup> The children were reported to have blended well with the local workers, and a good relationship had developed between them and the townspeople. According to the late Arie Handler, the children in Gwrych:

had no difficulty in making friends with the locals, the shopkeepers, artisans and in particular with the farmers in the surrounding area. Many had no idea what we were doing in Abergele, who we were, where we came from and why we occupied Gwrych Castle...As can be expected some of the employers in Abergele were interested in cheap labour. However, invariably the work carried out by the boys and girls was satisfactory. They were considered to be honest and trustworthy, and we received many applications for their services.<sup>100</sup>

The *hachshara* centre at Gwrych Castle was eventually abandoned in April 1941 due to the lack of agricultural work in the area.<sup>101</sup> The remaining children at Gwrych were transferred to small satellite *hachsharot* in Ruthin, St. Asaph and Rossett.<sup>102</sup> The latter training centre opened at Lane Farm in 1940, and intended to operate as a self-supporting *kibbutz*. This proved to be financially impossible, however, and to alleviate financial strains, the refugee children were hired out as agricultural labourers to neighbouring farms such as Wrexham Road Farm in Holt.<sup>103</sup> In a similar vein to the *hachshara* at Gwrych, Lane Farm also found itself heavily dependent on donations. In December 1940, for instance, Arie Handler made

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<sup>97</sup> Osias Findling, interview with Gillian Van Gelder, 7 August 2000, C830/104, BL.

<sup>98</sup> Williams, 'Jewish Refugees at Gwrych Castle', 2; John Edelnand, 'Welcome in the Hillside', *Abergele Field Club and Historical Society Review*, 6 (1987), 3.

<sup>99</sup> Williams, 'Jewish Refugees at Gwrych Castle', 2.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>101</sup> *JC*, 6 February 1942; Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 139.

<sup>102</sup> Martin Steinberger, interview with Hermione Sacks; *JC*, 2 August 1940; 3 July 1942.

<sup>103</sup> *JC*, 2 August 1940.

an appeal in the *JC* for goods required for Lane Farm, including a case of tools, typewriter, gramophone, records and an English dictionary.<sup>104</sup>

Refugee children from yet another set of Zionist youth movements—Gordonia (a non-political movement based on the beliefs of Aaron D. Gordon), Young Maccabees, Zionist Youth, and Brith Kodesh (movements connected with the General Zionists)—were housed in Llandough Castle, south Wales, which was donated to Youth Aliyah by the YMCA.<sup>105</sup> Due to its relative proximity to Cardiff, the *hachshara* at Llandough was adopted by the Cardiff Jewish community. One resident, Vienna-born Thea Sonnenmark (née Neuringer) (1921-2004) worked as a secretary for Youth Aliyah at Llandough, and recalled how Jewish families from Cardiff would often visit the children at the castle, and invite those who were able to speak English to their homes for Friday night dinners.<sup>106</sup>

How many refugee agricultural trainees actually left Britain for Palestine is difficult to ascertain, but it appears that a large number never did. A survey conducted by the Association of Jewish Refugees in 2007, for instance, revealed that only five refugees resident at Gwrych Castle out of twenty two surveyed emigrated to Palestine during or after the war. Twelve settled in the United Kingdom, while four had emigrated to the United States and Australia.<sup>107</sup> One factor that restricted the number of those able to emigrate to Palestine was the limited number of immigration certificates available.<sup>108</sup> Others simply grew tired of agricultural labour and felt they were ill-suited to *kibbutz* life in Palestine. Berlin-born Herman Rothman (b.1924), for instance, lived and worked in Gwrych Castle between 1939 and 1940, but eventually settled in London because he wanted to learn a profession, while Manfred Alweiss (b.1925), also from Berlin, settled in Surrey after the war, rather than Palestine, because he ‘became disillusioned with the prospect of becoming a *Chalutz*.’<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *JC*, 20 December 1940.

<sup>105</sup> Bracha Habas, *Sefer Aliyat ha'noar* (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency for Israel, 1940), 178-179; Perez Leshem, *Strasse zur Rettung: 1933-1939 aus Deutschland Vertrieben-bereitet sich Jüdische Jugend auf Palästina vor* (Tel Aviv: Verband der Freunde der Histadrut, 1973), 201.

<sup>106</sup> Thea Sonnenmark, interview with Toby Blum-Dobkin and Lucia Ruedenberg, 26 March 1990, 1990. V.4, Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York.

<sup>107</sup> The results of the Association of Jewish Refugees' 2007 'Kindertransport Survey' can be found on-line: [www.ajr.org.uk/documents/KinderTransport\\_Survey\\_2007\\_Final\\_Databases\\_21Aug2009\\_-clean\\_results\\_deduped\\_renumbered.xls](http://www.ajr.org.uk/documents/KinderTransport_Survey_2007_Final_Databases_21Aug2009_-clean_results_deduped_renumbered.xls). (last accessed 03/08/2013).

<sup>108</sup> Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 148.

<sup>109</sup> Herman Rothman, interview with Peter M. Hart; Manfred Alweiss, 'My Exodus from Berlin', *Kindertransport Newsletter* (April 2006): <http://www.ajr.org.uk/documents/ktapr06.pdf> (last accessed 08/08/2013).

### **‘Enemy Aliens’ and Internment**

On 3 September 1939, the day Britain declared war on Hitler’s Germany, thousands of refugees, most of whom were German and Austrian Jews, were living in Britain. Although originally labelled by the British government as ‘victims of oppression’, throughout the Second World War all refugees from Germany and Austria, Jewish and non-Jewish, were transformed into suspect ‘enemy aliens’ because they were subjects of countries with which Britain was at war.<sup>110</sup> Policy towards ‘enemy aliens’ at the start of the war was dominated by the Home Office and the then Home Secretary, John Anderson, who, on 4 September, called for ‘an immediate review of all Germans and Austrians in this country’ to determine their loyalty.<sup>111</sup> Between September and December 1939 a hundred and twenty tribunals were set up by the Home Office across Britain with the task of examining and dividing all ‘enemy aliens’ over the age of sixteen into three categories: A (to be interned); B (to remain at liberty, but subjects to some restrictions); and C (to be exempt from internment and from restrictions). The vast majority of Jewish refugees were allocated to Category C (about 64,200), and out of 73, 400 ‘enemy aliens’ examined by the tribunals, only 600 had been interned.<sup>112</sup>

By the spring of 1940, however, with the apparently imminent and real threat of a German invasion, pressure grew to intern all ‘enemy aliens’. In May 1940, Winston Churchill’s coalition government first decreed the internment of male ‘enemy aliens’ between the ages of 16 and 60 living in ‘Protected Areas’ on the threatened sectors of the coast, and then issued the notorious order on 11 June to ‘collar the lot’.<sup>113</sup> Male and female refugees in Category B were interned, while the detention of all German and Austrian male refugees in Category C was ordered in late June.<sup>114</sup> This measure, to some extent a panic response to the extreme situation of national emergency prevailing in May/June 1940, ultimately caused the internment of some 28,000 refugees, most of whom were Jews.<sup>115</sup> Interned aliens were sent to camps in various parts of Britain, the largest of which was on the Isle of Man. At the height

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<sup>110</sup> On 10 June 1940, the Italian Prime Minister, Benito Mussolini, declared war on Britain and France, leading to thousands of Italians living in Britain being declared ‘enemy aliens’.

<sup>111</sup> *Parliamentary Debates: Official Report*, 351 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1939), 367-368.

<sup>112</sup> François Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1940), 37-63.

<sup>113</sup> Peter and Leni Gillman, *‘Collar the Lot!’: How Britain Interned and Expelled its Wartime Refugees* (London: Quartet Books, 1980), 153.

<sup>114</sup> Mark Donnelly, *Britain in the Second World War* (London: Routledge, 1999), 47.

<sup>115</sup> Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 185.

of the internment crisis in June and July 1940, approximately 7,000 internees were deported to internment camps in Australia and Canada.<sup>116</sup>

A number of Jewish refugees residing in Wales during this period were interned as ‘enemy aliens’. They included German-born Lothar Bernd Israel Bick, who temporarily settled in Cardiff with his family in 1939, before being deported to the Fredericton Internment Camp in Canada in July 1940; and German-born Eli Dror (b.1923), who came to Britain on the *Kindertransport* in January 1939 and later joined the *hachshara* at Gwrych Castle in Abergele.<sup>117</sup> In May 1940 Eli was sent to the Huyton internment camp near Liverpool, and on 10 July he volunteered to board the *HMT Dunera* (a passenger ship which deported approximately 2,543 ‘enemy aliens’ to Australia) believing it was safer to take his chances on the high seas than to remain and be persecuted by the Germans if their expected invasion of Britain was successful.<sup>118</sup>

As mentioned above, the Jewish refugee industrialists who set up factories and businesses on the Treforest Industrial Estate in the late 1930s were praised by the British government in the summer of 1939 for their part in helping to revitalise the economically depressed south Wales valleys. However, in May 1940 these ‘friendly aliens’ who helped ‘reduce unemployment’ and ‘cripple Nazi Germany’s export trade’, suddenly came under attack by the British authorities. According to a contemporary author with the pseudonym ‘Scipio’, nineteen of the refugee industrialists, Jewish and non-Jewish, were interned.<sup>119</sup> Seventy-five individuals connected to the industrial estate were also ordered to move away from Cardiff because the city, owing to its docklands and position on the coast, was designated a ‘protected area’ throughout the war.<sup>120</sup> One of those included the already mentioned Albert Pollock of Vienna, who co-owned Burlington Gloves Ltd. Albert was interned in the Isle of Wight, while his sons, William and Arthur, and his wife, Fritz, were forced to relocate from Cardiff to rural Wiltshire.<sup>121</sup> The Pollocks eventually returned to Cardiff in the latter half of the 1940s, but Albert lost control of his gloves business in

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<sup>116</sup> David Cesarani and Tony Kushner, eds., *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth-century Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 45.

<sup>117</sup> Ted Jones, *Both Sides of the Wire: the Fredericton Internment Camp, Volume 1* (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1988), 17-19.

<sup>118</sup> Letter from Eli Dror to unknown, c.1988, 1368/2/2/29, WL.

<sup>119</sup> Scipio, *100,000,000 Allies--if We Choose* (London: Victor Gollacz, 1940), 102.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Bill Pollock, interview with author.

Treforest during his incarceration. Another Treforest internee was Nuremberg-born Wilhelm Jondorf, who ran a greeting cards company named 'Cardiff Cards Ltd'. He was arrested in May 1940 and spent almost a year in internment camps, first at Prees Heath in Shropshire, and then the Isle of Man.<sup>122</sup> His family were 'forced to move away' from the seaside town of Penarth, and relocated to Abergavenny, where they lived for the remainder of the Second World War.<sup>123</sup>

Some of Treforest's Austrian and German Jewish refugee industrialists, including the already mentioned Julius and Moritz Mendle of Mendle Bros. Ltd, who were spared internment because their businesses were deemed beneficial to the war effort. According to Moritz's daughter, Sybille Holden (1933-2012), her father and uncle were not interned 'because at that time they were making goggles for the air force'.<sup>124</sup>

Although the policy of internment was gradually reversed by the British government from August 1940 onwards, many people in Wales, and Britain more generally, continued to misunderstand the special position of Austrian and German Jewish refugees and were therefore unable to differentiate them from German and Austrian nationals. Consequently, several Jewish refugees residing in Wales during the war years suffered from xenophobic abuse, including the already mentioned George Schoenmann of Vienna and Austrian-born Robert Krakauer (b. 1935), who were both taunted as 'Nazis' and German sympathisers by schoolchildren in Cardiff.<sup>125</sup> To avoid further discrimination, Robert's father, Joseph, anglicised the family surname to Gregory when he was granted naturalisation in 1946.<sup>126</sup> Some Jewish refugees attempted to avoid discrimination by denying their national identity. For instance, whilst living in Gwrych Castle, the already mentioned Herman Rothman of Berlin told local Welsh labourers that he was Polish: 'I didn't tell them I was German, that was absolutely murderous, they would have killed me, so I told them I was from Poland'.<sup>127</sup> However, other Jewish refugees recall experiencing no trouble at all, especially in rural mid-Wales where prejudice against the English was strong. One German-Jewish refugee named Maria Beate Green (née Siegle) (b. 1925) came to Britain on the *Kindertransport* in June

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<sup>122</sup> Ronald Stent, *A bespattered page?: the internment of His Majesty's 'most loyal aliens'* (London: Deutsch, 1980), 9-10.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Sybille Holden, interview with Diana Soffa.

<sup>125</sup> Schoenmann, *Memoirs*, 68-69; Bob Gregory, interview with Eve Lavine, 1 June 2011, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>126</sup> Bob Gregory, interview with Eve Lavine.

<sup>127</sup> Herman Rothman, interview with Peter M. Hart.



1939, and briefly lived in Mathrafal near Welshpool. Despite being German, she recalled being ‘adored’ by locals ‘in principle because [she] wasn’t English’.<sup>128</sup>

### Evacuees

In addition to Jewish refugees that arrived in Wales from Germany and Nazi occupied Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, the principality witnessed the presence of a large number of Jewish evacuees, both British and non-British, between 1939 and 1945. Enemy bombs had constituted a major threat in Britain since the First World War, and from the early 1930s onwards the British government feared that aerial bombing would be a major feature of warfare if the country was involved in another European conflict.<sup>129</sup> Whitehall predicted that if war broke out there would be mass destruction of major British cities and towns in the first weeks with very high death rates.<sup>130</sup> To avoid such a catastrophe, the British government drew up plans for an official evacuation of civilians living in urban centres such as Manchester and London to areas of the United Kingdom unlikely to be targeted by bombers. The evacuation scheme titled ‘Operation Pied Piper’ was conceived in the summer of 1938, and implemented on 31 August 1939, three days before Britain officially declared war on Germany.<sup>131</sup>

Between 1 and 3 September 1939, 1,473,000 people—mostly children over the age of five, pregnant women, mothers with children under the age of five, teachers and disabled people—were officially evacuated from major cities in England and Scotland to areas deemed safe from German bombing.<sup>132</sup> They were joined by an additional two million evacuees, who had made their own arrangements.<sup>133</sup> By January 1940, when the expected bombing raids had not materialised, almost half of the evacuees returned to their homes.<sup>134</sup> Yet further waves of official and private evacuations occurred from the south and east coast of England in June 1940, when a seaborne invasion was predicted, and from cities affected by the Blitz, which

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<sup>128</sup> Maria Beate Green, interview with Lyn E. Smith, 07 December 1996, IWM.

<sup>129</sup> John Welshman, *Churchill's Children: The Evacuee Experience in Wartime Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18-21.

<sup>130</sup> Stuart Broomfield, *Wales at War: The Experience of the Second World War in Wales* (Stroud: History Press, 2009), 27.

<sup>131</sup> Geoffrey G. Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11.

<sup>132</sup> Broomfield, *Wales at War*, 28.

<sup>133</sup> Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil*, 12.

<sup>134</sup> Stuart Hylton, *Their Darkest Hour: the Hidden History of the Home Front, 1939-1945* (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), 43.

began in September 1940.<sup>135</sup> A final wave of evacuation began in June 1944 when the sudden and enormously destructive V-1 flying bomb and V-2 rocket attacks on London convinced many individuals to flee the British capital. There was no big evacuation event as in September 1939, but there was a constant trickle of evacuation to meet need as it arose. By September 1944 over 700,000 people left London and the south-east of England, but most returned to their homes within a few months.<sup>136</sup>

Between 1939 and 1945, the British Isles were divided into three zones—evacuation areas, which were mainly English urban and industrial centres in danger of attack such as London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester; neutral areas, which were neither to send out nor receive evacuees; and reception areas. The west and north of Scotland, rural parts of England, and most of Wales, including the industrial south Wales valleys, were all designated reception areas.<sup>137</sup> In the case of Wales, it was assumed that the principality was too far west and too rural to suffer from German bombing raids.<sup>138</sup> As Stuart Broomfield reminds us, ‘this was probably a fair judgement to make’ in 1939, but as the war progressed parts of Wales, particularly the industrial south-east, could no longer be designated as areas ‘safe’ from air attack.<sup>139</sup> Between June 1940 and March 1944 all three of Wales’ largest cities and towns—Cardiff, Swansea, and Newport—suffered severe bombing. Over the course of the Second World War, it is estimated that around 200,000 people evacuated to Wales, among them were British-Jews and Jewish refugees from Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe, who were residing in England.<sup>140</sup>

In a similar vein to the *Kindertransport* children, the experiences of Jewish evacuee children in Wales varied widely. Some were evacuated with their schools or with their mothers, while others were evacuated individually or with their families. Some lived with Jewish foster parents or resided in an area with an existing Jewish community, while others, owing to a limited number of Jewish families in Wales to act as foster parents, lived with non-Jewish families or away from an organised Jewish centre. Indeed, as Tony Kushner once

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<sup>135</sup> Broomfield, *Wales at War*, 32.

<sup>136</sup> Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil*, 30.

<sup>137</sup> Broomfield, *Wales at War*, 28.

<sup>138</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, 601.

<sup>139</sup> Broomfield, *Wales at War*, 28.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

wrote, ‘evacuation was a very personal experience’.<sup>141</sup> In September 1939, for instance, Maurice Hesselberg (b.1926) was evacuated to Bangor with his school, the Liverpool Institute, and lived with a non-Jewish Welsh couple named Alec and Louisa Griffiths. Since around sixty of the evacuee schoolchildren were Jewish, members of the Bangor Hebrew Congregation established a kosher canteen in a hut donated by the then vicar of St. James’ Church, Rev. J.R. Davis, and arranged weekly Sabbath morning services for them at the High Street synagogue.<sup>142</sup> According to Hesselberg, his foster parents respected his religious dietary requirements, and they bought him meat every week from the kosher counter at the Vaynol Meat Stores, High Street (though they did not use separate cooking utensils).<sup>143</sup> The experience of other Jewish evacuee children was very different. Victor Sassoon from London (b.1929), for instance, evacuated with his family to Llandudno in September 1940, where they rented a small apartment for the duration of the war. Despite moving away from their Jewish surroundings in Stoke Newington, the Sassoons maintained a Jewish way of life in north Wales. They purchased meat from a kosher counter at a butcher’s in Mostyn Street, attended services at Llandudno’s synagogue, and celebrated Victor’s *bar mitzvah* in the town in 1942.<sup>144</sup>

In contrast, London-born evacuee, Celia Stern (née Kalina) (b.1932), was separated from her family in 1940, and billeted with a non-Jewish couple named Annette and Jack Sharp in Lisvane, south Wales. Although the Sharps ‘wrote to [her] mother to find out about Jewish dietary law and what [she] shouldn’t eat’ and sent Celia to a local *cheder* class led by an evacuated Jewish schoolteacher from London named Hyam Lipschitz, she was not immune to Christian influences.<sup>145</sup> In her memoir she recalls celebrating Christmas with her foster parents:

I was Jewish, so [Christmas] was not one of our festivals. Mrs Sharp explained a bit...I was shown how to hang up my stocking by the fireplace and leave a mince pie with a

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<sup>141</sup> Tony Kushner, ‘Horns and Dilemmas: Jewish evacuees in Britain during the Second World War’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 8 (1988), 276.

<sup>142</sup> *JC*, 15 December 1939 and 27 February 1953.

<sup>143</sup> Hesselberg, *Bangor 1939-1942*, 5.

<sup>144</sup> Victor Sassoon, interview with author, London, 17 April 2012.

<sup>145</sup> Celia Stern’s memoir is in possession of the author, and is available on-line:

<http://www.lisvanecommunity.org.uk/Core/Lisvanec/UserFiles/Files/AboutLisvane/thisaccountisdedicatedtohanahalexander.doc>. (last accessed 03/08/2013).

glass of milk on the hearth. I thought the room looked so beautiful with decorations and a pretty Christmas tree.<sup>146</sup>

While the Sharps did not encourage Celia to attend church with them, going to church or chapel services on a Sunday became part of the weekly routine for many Jewish evacuee children in Wales. London-born Malcolm Eagle (b.1935), for instance, was billeted with a Baptist couple named Mr. and Mrs. Thomas in Tonypany in 1940. The family attended chapel every Sunday, and wrote to Malcolm's mother asking whether he could go with them. She agreed to the arrangement, only if Malcolm could attend *cheder* classes at the nearest synagogue.<sup>147</sup>

The scattering of Jewish evacuee children, their placement in non-Jewish homes and the involvement of many in Christian activities was a concern for some Jews in Britain. 'Divorced as [many of] our children are from the influence of their parents, of their homes, of the synagogue and of various other Jewish associations...and living as they are now in totally different surrounding, they will, as time goes on, inevitably become more and more assimilated', wrote a Mr. Casper on 10th November 1939.<sup>148</sup> Or, as an editorial in the *JC* asked, 'do you want thousands of Jewish children to run wild in various parts of the country and to grow up ignorant heathens, bringing reproach and hatred to the name of Jew?'<sup>149</sup>

In 1941, the then director of the central council for Jewish education in Britain, Nathan Morris, inspected a number of Jewish evacuees living with non-Jewish families in 'remote parts of Wales', and remarked that 'all these simple village folk tried to restore the faith of those of a different faith', that is to proselytise the children. Concerns that Jewish children billeted with non-Jewish foster parents were conforming to the routines of Christianity and losing contact with their Jewish roots were raised by leaders of south Wales Jewry at a conference held at the Cathedral Road Synagogue, Cardiff, in June 1941. One speaker spoke of his concern that Jewish children were attending church services and singing in chapel choirs, while another noted how 'the names of children called Cohen and Solomons' featured in a 'list of winners of a church examination'.<sup>150</sup> To prevent the alleged 'proselytizing zeal of non-Jewish foster parents', Rev. Aron Cohen of Tredegar suggested the

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<sup>146</sup> Celia Stern's memoir.

<sup>147</sup> Malcolm Eagle's reminiscences are available on-line:

<http://www.timewitnesses.org/evacuees/~malcolm.html> (last accessed 03/08/2013).

<sup>148</sup> *JC*, 10 November 1939.

<sup>149</sup> *JC*, 20 September 1940.

<sup>150</sup> *JC*, 13 June 1941.

establishment of a hostel for Jewish evacuee children in south Wales.<sup>151</sup> The hostel scheme, ‘providing it was not too large’, was approved as a satisfactory solution by those present at the conference, and it was agreed that a South Wales Council for Jewish Evacuees (SWCJE) be formed to administer the project.<sup>152</sup> At a follow up meeting, the then minister of the Pontypridd Hebrew Congregation, Rev. M. Morris, and honorary president, S. Elkan, assured those present that they would assist the scheme by billeting evacuated Jewish children with Jewish families in the town.<sup>153</sup>

The hostel for Jewish evacuees opened at Tan-Y-Bryn House in Cefn-Coed-Y-Cymmer near Merthyr Tydfil on 16th November 1941.<sup>154</sup> Accommodating up to forty-five children, the hostel was supervised by Rev. Chaim Pearl of Liverpool, who, alongside his wife Anita, was responsible for the children’s religious and Hebrew education.<sup>155</sup> Due to its proximity to Merthyr Tydfil, the hostel had close relations with the town’s Jewish community. In March 1942, for instance, members of the Merthyr Hebrew Congregation, including the then president Abraham Moscovitch, attended a *Purim* party at the hostel, while in August that year, the congregation held a sports and games day for the children.<sup>156</sup>

Given limited funds and accommodation, the Cefn-Coed hostel was unable to accommodate a large number of south Wales’ Jewish evacuees, and despite the efforts made by the leaders of Pontypridd Jewry, Jewish children in the region continued to be billeted with non-Jewish families and participated in Christian activities. In April 1942, for instance, the *JC* reported that around twenty of the forty Jewish evacuees living in the mining-town of Abertillery regularly attended church or chapel services.<sup>157</sup> To ameliorate the situation, the SWCJE arranged ‘special [religious] services for evacuee children’, which were led by Maurice A. Pinnick of Cardiff at the home of a Mrs. Cohen in Abertillery.<sup>158</sup> *Cheder* classes were also held three times a week at the Powell-Tillery Workmen’s Hall and Institute, so that

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<sup>151</sup> *JC*, 13 June 1941.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *JC*, 27 June 1941.

<sup>154</sup> *JC*, 7 November 1941.

<sup>155</sup> *JC*, 20 June 1941; 7 November 1941; 18 October 1968.

<sup>156</sup> *JC*, 13 March 1942; 28 August 1942.

<sup>157</sup> *JC*, 17 April 1942.

<sup>158</sup> *JC*, 3 July 1942.

the children's religious education and knowledge of Hebrew would continue uninterrupted during their evacuation.<sup>159</sup>

Throughout the Second World War the Jewish population of Wales rose quickly with the arrival of Jewish children and families, both British and refugee, who sought a safe haven in Wales. Unfortunately, the exact figure is unknown since the *JYB* kept no record of the population of British Jewish communities between 1941 and 1945, 'due...to war exigencies'.<sup>160</sup> However, a sense of demographic growth can be gleaned from reports in the *JC*. In September 1940, for instance, Llandudno's Jewish population had increased to the extent that the synagogue at the Masonic Hall in Mostyn Street was too small to accommodate local worshippers over the High Holydays. Indeed, such was the demand that tickets had to be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis for those wishing to attend the services.<sup>161</sup> As a solution, the founder and life president of the congregation, Morris Wartski, made arrangements for overflow services to be held at the schoolroom of the Wesleyan Ebenezer Chapel in Lloyd Street.<sup>162</sup>

As we have seen, in September 1939, the population of Bangor's small Jewish community of Bangor, then numbering around twenty individuals, was boosted by the arrival of over sixty Jewish evacuee school children from the Liverpool Institute. As the threat of bombing progressed during the war, more Jews evacuated to Bangor, including Jewish students from the University College of London (such as chemistry student Anne Beloff), who continued their studies at the University College of North Wales; the Shafran family, who left London in September 1940, and established a delicatessen shop in Bangor's High Street; the pianist, Harriet Cohen, who evacuated to Bangor from London with the BBC's Variety Department in 1941; and Albert Monnickendam, a Dutch Jew, who, in 1940, temporarily relocated his diamond business from Hatton Garden, London, to a room on the first floor of 233, High Street, Bangor.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *JC*, 3 July 1942.

<sup>160</sup> *JYB*, 1945-1946.

<sup>161</sup> *JC*, 13 September 1940.

<sup>162</sup> *JC*, 1 November 1940.

<sup>163</sup> *JC*, 31 January 1941; 11 April 1941; 5 December 1975; Michael Shafran, and Rita Hyman, interview with author, August 2011; memories of Hazel Frances Snowden (née Brown): <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/06/a4294406.shtml> (last accessed 02/08/2013).

The presence of Jewish evacuees in Bangor during the war years led to the establishment of a number of new Jewish societies and facilities in the city. In December 1940, a Jewish literary and social centre was established, owing to ‘the steadily increasing number of coreligionists in the locality’, while in March 1941 a Habonim group for evacuated and local Jewish children was founded.<sup>164</sup> Indeed, the influx of Jewish evacuees to Bangor brought confidence and stability to the city’s dwindling Jewish community, so much so that the *JC* reported in 1941 that the newcomers would be ‘a source of great, if not permanent, strength to the peacetime Jewish community’.<sup>165</sup>

As mentioned in Chapter One, a short-lived Hebrew congregation existed in Rhyl between 1897 and 1907, but dissolved following a fire that destroyed the synagogue chambers housed in the Queen’s Palace. From then onwards a sprinkling of Jewish families lived and worked in the town such as the Sugarmans and the Mendelssohns, but the nearest synagogue was in Llandudno (approximately sixteen miles away).<sup>166</sup> However, this changed at the outbreak of the Second World War, when an influx of Jewish evacuees from Liverpool and Manchester to Rhyl led to the revival of the town’s defunct Hebrew congregation. A large number of Jewish servicemen from various countries, including the United States and Poland, were also stationed in nearby military camps such as Kinmel Park Camp, and their presence helped boost the number of Jews in the vicinity.<sup>167</sup> According to the late Paul Sugarman (1930-2013), the influx of Jews to the town during the war was so great that one year there were no suitable buildings available to hold High Holyday services. As the Rhyl Pavilion, large enough for audiences of over 1,000, was full, services took place outside on the promenade.<sup>168</sup> Eventually, a small synagogue situated above Lloyd’s Bank in Queen Street was secured by Paul’s father, Jacob Sugarman, and it opened in 1941 (see appendix A21).<sup>169</sup> Rev. Louis Israel, an evacuee from Manchester, served as the congregation’s first, and only, full-time minister, and services over the High Holydays were led by both Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman, the then head rabbi of Liverpool, and Rabbi Dr. Simon M. Lehrman of Liverpool’s Greenbank Drive Synagogue.<sup>170</sup> Rhyl’s wartime synagogue also catered for evacuated Jewish families in nearby Prestatyn (approximately four miles away) such as the

<sup>164</sup> *JC*, 20 December 1940; 29 March 1941.

<sup>165</sup> *JC*, 31 January 1941.

<sup>166</sup> Paul Sugarman, interview with author; *JC*, 13 April 1934.

<sup>167</sup> Paul Sugarman, interview with author.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> Paul Sugarman, interview with author; *JC*, 25 July 1941.

<sup>170</sup> Paul Sugarman, interview with author; *JC*, 25 July 1941; 5 September 1941.

Burmans and Beilins of Liverpool, and between 1941 and 1943 it hosted five *bar mitzvahs* and one wedding.<sup>171</sup> The synagogue also featured a recreation room for Jewish servicemen stationed in the area, and religion classes for both children and adults were led by Rabbi Lehrman, his wife, Vivienne and other volunteers on weekend mornings at Arcville College.<sup>172</sup>

As well as reviving Wales' defunct Jewish centres, the influx of Jewish evacuees during the Second World War also led to the establishment of new Jewish communities in the principality. In late 1939, Jewish evacuees from Liverpool and Manchester evacuated to the safety of Colwyn Bay, north Wales, and formed a Hebrew congregation in the town in the early months of 1940.<sup>173</sup> In a similar vein to the Hebrew congregations established in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Wales, the Colwyn Bay Hebrew Congregation was initially too small in numbers and too poor to secure permanent facilities for worship. Services and religious celebrations thus took place in improvised spaces, including a room at a local swimming pool; and classrooms adjoining the English Presbyterian Church in Conway Road.<sup>174</sup> Following the efforts of Manchester evacuee, Mark Bloom, a synagogue was eventually consecrated in Colwyn Bay in January 1943.<sup>175</sup> Situated in a Victorian house in Princes Drive, the synagogue was named 'Zion House' and catered for around one hundred members.<sup>176</sup> As well as a prayer room on the first floor, Zion House's ground floor featured *cheder* classrooms, and a social centre which hosted dances and meetings for the town's Jewish Literary and Social Society.<sup>177</sup> In 1942, Rev. David Wolfson of Bangor was appointed the congregation's minister, and as chaplain to the armed forces in north Wales, he organised a communal *Seder* for over 200 Jewish servicemen stationed in the region at Taylor's Café in Colwyn Bay in April 1942.<sup>178</sup> After a number of years of service, Rev. Wolfson was

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<sup>171</sup> *JC*, 29 August 1941; 5 September 1941; 26, December 1941; 9 January 1942; 20 March 1942; 1 May 1942; 14 August 1942; 25 June 1943; 5 November 1943.

<sup>172</sup> *JC*, 3 January 1941.

<sup>173</sup> *JC*, 7 March 1947. The Jewish evacuees of Colwyn Bay were later joined by a sprinkling of Jews working for the Ministry of Food in London, which relocated its headquarters to the north Walian seaside town in June 1940. Rona Hart, telephone interview with author, 2 July 2012; Ray Sopher, interview with author, London, 11 December 2011.

<sup>174</sup> Ray Sopher, interview with author; *JC*, 5 September 1941.

<sup>175</sup> *JC*, 15 January 1943.

<sup>176</sup> Ray Sopher, interview with author.

<sup>177</sup> *JC*, 15 January 1943; 29 January 1943.

<sup>178</sup> *JC*, 6 February 1942; 27 March 1942; 9 April 2010.



succeeded by Rev. Louis Kushell, who served as the congregation's part-time minister and reader until his death in 1967.<sup>179</sup>

While the wartime Jewish communities of Rhyl and Colwyn Bay were still in existence after the Second World War, a number of Wales' evacuee Jewish communities were products of the war only. At the outbreak of war, for instance, Jewish students from University College London were evacuated to the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and established a temporary Hebrew congregation in the seaside town. According to the *JC*, the first ever *minyan* in the history of Aberystwyth was held in the home of drapers, Mr. and Mrs. John Brodie, 'the [town's] only Jewish residents' in October 1939.<sup>180</sup> Later that month weekly Friday evening and Sabbath morning services were organised at 5, King Street.<sup>181</sup> With no resident rabbi, services were led by students. They included law students Asher Fisherman and Yaakov Herzog, the son of the then Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the British Mandate of Palestine, Rabbi Isaac Herzog.<sup>182</sup> Unfortunately, the lack of extant documentation means that it is unknown how many Jews participated in the services, but it appears that the arrangements ended in the summer of 1940, following the students' return to London.<sup>183</sup> Despite the absence of weekly religious services, evacuated Jews continued to reside in Aberystwyth during the war years. In March 1945, for instance, Stanley, the son of Mr. and Mrs. H. Ash of Aberystwyth and north London, celebrated his *bar mitzvah* at the town's Meeting Hall. The service was conducted by Rev. A Berman, a chaplain for the armed forces.<sup>184</sup>

In addition to Aberystwyth, the towns of Builth Wells and Llandrindod Wells in mid-Wales witnessed the formation of short-lived wartime Jewish communities. In 1941, for instance, evacuated families in Builth Wells, including the Fligelstones of Cardiff and the Rashbasses of London, conducted High Holyday services in the hall of a Baptist church in the town, while the festival of *Succoth* was celebrated at the home of a Mr. P. Rich.<sup>185</sup> The last communal note for Builth Wells' Jewish community in the *JC* came in September 1942, when arrangements for High Holyday services at the residences of Messrs. P. Rich and

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<sup>179</sup> *JYB*, 1949-1968. Rev. Louis Kushell passed away in 1967.

<sup>180</sup> *JC*, 13 October 1939.

<sup>181</sup> *JC*, 27 October 1939.

<sup>182</sup> *JC*, 27 October 1939.

<sup>183</sup> *JC*, 2 August 1940.

<sup>184</sup> *JC*, 16 February 1945.

<sup>185</sup> *JC*, 15 November 1940; 7 March 1941; 5 December 1941.

Sydney Fligelstone were announced.<sup>186</sup> Thereafter, we have little record of the community's activities, suggesting that families began returning to their hometowns from late 1942 onwards. In November 1942, for instance, the Fligelstones were recorded in the *JC* as living in Cardiff.<sup>187</sup>

High Holyday services were held for the first time in Llandrindod Wells in 1940 and took place at the Friends Meeting Hall in High Street.<sup>188</sup> The services were conducted by two evacuees from London named Sidney Bolsom and Abraham Wix, and were attended by a large number of Jewish servicemen stationed in the area.<sup>189</sup> Despite the lack of Jewish facilities in Llandrindod, the evacuated families resolved to live a Jewish way of life in the town. The continuance of their children's religious education appears to have been a top priority, and in 1941 Hebrew and religious classes for over thirty evacuated children were organised and led by Edith Wix.<sup>190</sup> The final communal notice relating to Llandrindod Wells that appeared in the *JC* came in November 1943, revealing that Jewish families began returning to their homes from then onwards.<sup>191</sup>

It is impossible to generalise how Jewish evacuees were received in wartime Wales since individual and group experiences varied from place to place. As we have seen, various Christian congregations in Bangor, Builth Wells, Llandrindod Wells, Llandudno and Colwyn Bay offered their facilities for Jewish services, suggesting that relations were relatively harmonious with the local non-Jewish population. Indeed, a number of Jewish evacuees had pleasant memories of their stay in Wales, despite their religious differences. For example, Ray Sopher, an evacuee from Manchester, recalled 'everybody [being] very friendly' in Colwyn Bay because the locals sympathised with the plight of the evacuees, while Frank Schwelb, one of the many Jewish students at the evacuated Czech School at Llanwrtyd Wells between 1943 and 1945, remembered 'with particular affection the Welsh people who welcomed' him and his classmates 'so warmly during [their] time of need'.<sup>192</sup> This was

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<sup>186</sup> *JC*, 4 September 1942.

<sup>187</sup> *JC*, 20 November 1942.

<sup>188</sup> *JC*, 11 October 1940.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *JC*, 17 October 1941; 9 May 1975.

<sup>191</sup> *JC*, 5 November 1943.

<sup>192</sup> Frank E. Schwelb, 'Abernant Lake Hotel, Llanwrtyd Wells, Wales': [www.czechsinexile.org/places/abernant-en.shtml](http://www.czechsinexile.org/places/abernant-en.shtml) (last accessed 05/08/2013). The Czechoslovak State School was established by the Czech government-in-exile for refugee children in Great Britain. The school taught around 140 pupils, most of whom were Jewish. A small number were Roman Catholic, Protestant, or without religious affiliation. The school was first located

echoed by Vera Gissing, a fellow Jewish student at the Czech school, who remembered ‘everyone [being] so exceptionally friendly’.<sup>193</sup> The good relations can possibly be explained by the fact that the evacuees reached out to local society. Townspeople were often invited to cultural evenings and plays held at the school, for instance, while a number of the evacuee teachers and pupils regularly attended dances and other social events organised in the town.<sup>194</sup> Indeed, so cordial was the relationship that the evacuated children and teachers were invited to a reunion in Llanwrtyd Wells in June 1985, where the local council awarded them ‘the freedom of Llanwrtyd’.<sup>195</sup> In return, the former pupils and teachers, most of whom were Jewish, presented the mayor of the town with a new chain of office and donated a lime tree to the people of Llanwrtyd Wells with a plaque, which read: ‘The smallest town in the land remains forever the greatest in our hearts’.<sup>196</sup>

Other evacuees, however, complained of anti-Jewish bigotry in some areas, particularly by individuals in towns and villages who had little previous contact, if any, with Jews. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Ruth Fainlight (b. 1931) evacuated with her mother from London to ‘a small coal-mining village in south Wales’, and was stunned to find that a number of villagers refused to believe they were Jews because they had no horns:

No one in the village seemed to have met or had any personal contact with a Jewish person before. We were told that we could not possibly be Jews...Jews had horns. Early on in the school year someone reached up to feel my head. When I asked what was going on, the girl laughed embarrassedly and ran away. We did not have horns, so how could we be Jewish?<sup>197</sup>

Moreover, some individuals resented the influx of Jewish evacuees to Wales, claiming that they were both burdensome and exploitative. In June 1941, for instance, Dr. John Roberts of the Presbyterian Church of Wales wrote of his resentment that rich Jewish evacuees from London and the north-west of England were monopolising all available goods and local

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in Camberley, Surrey, and then evacuated to Hinton Hall, near Nantwich, Shropshire. In 1943, Hinton Hall ‘was crumbling’, and the evacuated school relocated to the Abernant Lake Hotel in Llanwrtyd Wells, in Wales. See, Vera Gissing, *Pearls of Childhood* (London: Robson, 1988), 86-98.

<sup>193</sup> Vera Gissing, interview in ‘The Lost Children: Jewish Refugee Escaping Nazi Persecution in Czechoslovakia’, 3 October 1988, Radio Cymru, ‘The Lost Children: Jewish Refugee Escaping Nazi Persecution in Czechoslovakia’, 03 October 1988, Radio Cymru, Cell E123 000846/12, National Library of Wales (henceforth NLW).

<sup>194</sup> Hanna Backer, interview with author, Cardiff, 18 September 2012; Gissing, *Pearls of Childhood*, 104-105; Bryn Jones, interview in ‘The Lost Children’.

<sup>195</sup> ‘The Lost Children’.

<sup>196</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 15 February 2003.

<sup>197</sup> Bryan S. Johnson, ed., *The Evacuees* (London: Gollancz, 1968), 90.

housing on the north Wales coast.<sup>198</sup> His views echoed those of Welsh politician and academic, William J. Gruffydd, who in 1941 wrote in his periodical *Y Llenor* a piece condemning Jewish evacuees in north Wales which drew heavily on age-old anti-Jewish stereotypes of Jewish financial exploitation and greed. He wrote:

North Wales full of rich and crafty Jews who lap up all the resources of the country and leave the poor natives deprived and helpless. And by the way, is it not time for someone to protest openly against these Jews who have become a burden on Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and Abergele and the surrounding countryside?... they have two main aims, and two alone, - escaping from every danger in every place whatever the danger to other people, and carrying forward their old traditional manner of enriching themselves on the weakness of the gentile.<sup>199</sup>

The influx of evacuees from England, both Jewish and non-Jewish, became a grave concern for a number of people in Wales, particularly those living in predominantly Welsh-speaking areas, who feared that their arrival would threaten the Welsh language and its culture. One of the most vocal speakers on the issue was the former leader of *Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru* (The National Party of Wales), Saunders Lewis, who once called evacuation ‘one of the most horrible threats to the continuation and to the life of the Welsh nation that has ever been suggested in history’.<sup>200</sup> Such condemnations were later expressed by Lewis in his poem ‘Golygfa mewn Caffè’ (Scene in a Café), where he describes the unwelcome presence of alien English evacuees in Welsh Aberystwyth in 1940. With references to ‘Whitechapel’s lard bellied women, Golders Green Ethiopians’ and ‘kosher vinegar’, Lewis clearly targeted Jewish evacuees from London, whose presence in Wales, like English evacuees more generally, were allegedly impinging on Welsh cultural life and values.<sup>201</sup> Indeed, while there were at times strong feelings against Jewish evacuees in wartime Wales, it is important to note that such resentment found little support and did not break into violence.

### **Jews in the Armed Forces**

As well as receiving and aiding refugees from Nazi occupied Europe, and Jewish evacuees from England, Welsh Jewry played its part in the war effort by joining the armed forces. As was the case in the First World War, a disproportionate number of British Jews joined the

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<sup>198</sup> Papers of Reverend James Williams Parkes, MS60.07.006.005, HLU.S.

<sup>199</sup> William J. Gruffydd, ‘Editor’s Notes’, *Y Llenor*, 20 (1941). Excerpted in Davies, *The Chosen People*, 168-169.

<sup>200</sup> Quoted in Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 16.

<sup>201</sup> Joseph P. Clancy, ed., *Selected Poems: Saunders Lewis* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), 4.

forces during the Second World War—seventeen per cent of British Jewry or 60,000 men and women compared to ten per cent of the British population as a whole.<sup>202</sup> The pressure faced by Jewish immigrants and their children to prove themselves devoted and loyal British citizens partly explains why the Jewish military war effort was so great. However, it is possible that a heightened sense of patriotism amongst second and third generation British Jews was also a factor. Typical is Harry Poloway (b. 1916) from Newport, who voluntarily joined the Royal Air Force in 1940 because he wanted to ‘do his bit’ for his country.<sup>203</sup>

Nevertheless, as Tony Kushner reminds us, ‘the existence of such motives was beyond the understanding’ of many non-Jews in Britain during this period. Indeed, the idea that Jews tried to avoid war work was common in anti-Jewish propaganda of the period, and appears to have trickled down into the minds of many individuals.<sup>204</sup> In 1940, for instance, a number of non-Jewish residents in Newport accused local Jews of trying to secure top positions in the town’s Auxiliary Fire Service, so that they could get more pay for less laborious work.<sup>205</sup> Such claims were later refuted by Newport’s then mayor, John Henry Swallow, who stated at a meeting of the town council that ‘Newport Jews were setting up a high example in service’ by donating a large amount of their pay from civil defence work to local municipal causes.<sup>206</sup>

More prevalent, however, was the myth that Jews were dodging military service. ‘When a war is brought, up goes another cry. “The Jews are dodging military service”’ wrote A.C. Crouch in his wartime study on British anti-Semitism.<sup>207</sup> The origin of this myth is unclear, but it likely stems from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when, as we have seen in Chapter One, a number of Jewish immigrants fled to Britain to avoid conscription into the Tsarist army. To avoid such accusations appearing in south Wales, officials of the South Wales and Monmouthshire Jewish Ex-Servicemen’s Association summoned its members to an emergency meeting in Cardiff in July 1940 to discuss ways of

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<sup>202</sup> Martin Sugarman, *Fighting Back: British Jewry’s Military Contribution in the Second World War* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010), foreword. Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 123. The number of Jews in the armed forces during the First World War amounted to 55,000 or 18 per cent of British Jewry. See Rubinstein, Jolles and Rubinstein, *The Palgrave Dictionary*, 36.

<sup>203</sup> *South Wales Argus*, 26 September 2012.

<sup>204</sup> Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice*, 123.

<sup>205</sup> *JC*, 10 November 1939.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> A. C. Crouch, *Jews are News!* (Leicester: N. Wolsey Ltd, 1944), 14.

increasing Jewish enlistments to the armed forces.<sup>208</sup> It was agreed that a circular letter be sent to all Jewish households in south Wales. Addressed to both Jewish men and women, the letter urged its readers ‘to mobilise all [their] forces behind the British Government for a successful prosecution of the war’ and to ‘see how [their] endeavour on behalf of [their] beloved country can best be utilised’.<sup>209</sup> The result of this recruiting effort is unknown, but we do know that Welsh Jewry was well represented in the British forces during the Second World War (as is true of the First World War), and they expected to share, for good or ill, the common fate of the wider non-Jewish community in Britain.<sup>210</sup>

Indeed, while some Jewish men and women in Wales were called up for military and civil defence service between 1939 and 1945, many volunteered for duty and served with distinction. Among them were Marjorie Rivlin of Cardiff, who volunteered for the Women’s Royal Naval Service; Captain Ronald H. Bernstein from Swansea, who volunteered to join the Royal Air Force in 1942, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1944 ‘for gallant and distinguished services in Italy’; Ammanford-born solicitor Sylvia Cohen, who was awarded the Medal of the British Empire for providing voluntary services for the armed forces legal aid scheme; and Sergeant Philip D. Phillips of Newport, who joined the Territorial Army in 1938, and throughout the Second World War served with the Royal Artillery in France and Germany.<sup>211</sup>

To ensure that the religious and social needs of Jewish servicemen and women were sufficiently met whilst they were away from their communities, from 1939 onwards the Jewish War Services Committee and the Senior Jewish Chaplain’s Office in London sought to recruit Jewish ministers and rabbis in Britain to serve as chaplains in the armed forces. Altogether, five Welsh-Jewish ministers— comprising of those either born in Wales or

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<sup>208</sup> *JC*, 12 July 1940.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> The names of a number of Welsh Jews who fought and fell in the First World War can be found in Michael Adler, ed., *British Jewry Book of Honour* (London: Caxton, 1922). The names of First World War Jewish soldiers from Wales can also be found in the number of ‘Roll of Honour’ erected by Hebrew congregations throughout the principality. A photograph of Merthyr Tydfil’s First World War ‘Roll of Honour’ tablet can be found at <http://www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk/Item/10194-memorial-to-jewish-war-dead-1914-1918> (last accessed 01/08/2013), while at the time of writing, the memorial tablets of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport’s Jewish communities are in possession of the respective Hebrew congregations. Aberavon and Port Talbot’s First World War ‘Roll of Honour’ tablet was transferred to the Swansea Hebrew Congregation in 1980. See *JC*, 27 June 1980.

<sup>211</sup> *JC*, 26 September 2003; 5 May 1944; 24 June 2004; Book of Honour and Order of Service for Consecration and Unveiling of the 1939-45 War Memorial at Cathedral Road Synagogue, Cardiff, DJR/2/4, GA; *CAJEX*, 18, 4 (December 1968), 63.

serving Welsh Hebrew congregations at the time—served as chaplains to the British armed forces during the Second World War. One of the ministers, Rev. Joseph Weintrobe of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, was appointed a chaplain to Jewish soldiers stationed in the south-west of England between 1941 and 1945, while the then minister of the Llanelli Hebrew Congregation, Rev. R. Abenson, was appointed a chaplain to the Royal Air Force in 1944, and served Jewish servicemen stationed in the English east-midlands and Germany until he was demobbed in 1947.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, some Jewish chaplains were deployed to minister the religious needs of Jewish troops on the front-line. Rev. Alec Ginsburg from Aberavon, for instance, was sent to Egypt, where he organised a number of *Sedarim* for Jewish soldiers and used a military ambulance as a mobile synagogue, while Rev. Leslie Hardman from Glynneath, served in the Netherlands and Nazi Germany, and was one of the first people to enter Bergen-Belsen after its liberation by the British and Canadian army on 15 April 1945.<sup>213</sup> On 20 April Hardman conducted the first official Friday night *Shabbat* service to take place at the camp, and later said *Kaddish* at the mass burial of 20,000 victims.<sup>214</sup>

It is estimated that around 2,000 British-Jewish servicemen and women were killed during the 1939-1945 conflict, and Welsh-Jews were among the casualties.<sup>215</sup> The Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation, for instance, lost twenty-five of its congregants in battle, including seventeen-year-old Steward L. Phillips of the Merchant Navy, who ‘drowned at sea’ in December 1944; and twenty-five-year-old Guardsman S. Huntman of the Welsh Guards, who was killed whilst serving in Italy in February 1944.<sup>216</sup> Members of other Welsh Hebrew congregations were also killed in service, including thirty-four-year-old Aircraftman Israel P. Benjamin from Merthyr Tydfil, who was reported killed in action in May 1942; Sergeant Henry E. Jacobs of Newport, a wireless operator and air gunner for The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, who was reported killed in action in October 1941; and Twenty-

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<sup>212</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 2 December 1945, D/D SHC 1/3, WGA; *JC*, 28 February 1941; 21 April 1944; 26 January 1945; 28 July 1944; 7 December 1945; 18 October 1946; 30 May 1947; 13 February 1948.

<sup>213</sup> *JC*, 29 April 2005; 17 October 2008; Leslie Hardman, interview with Lyn E. Smith, 22 September 1997, 17636, IWM.

<sup>214</sup> Compilation of BBC broadcasts from Bergen-Belsen camp, 15 April 1945, 30528, IWM;

<sup>215</sup> Henry Morris, *We Will Remember Them: a Record Of The Jews Who Died In The Armed Forces of the Crown 1939-1945: an Addendum* (London: AJEX, Association of Jewish Ex-servicemen and Women, 1989), 3.

<sup>216</sup> Book of honour and order of service for consecration and unveiling of the 1939-45 war memorial at Cathedral Road Synagogue, Cardiff, DJR/2/4, GA; Morris, *We Will Remember Them*, 48-104.

four-year-old, Private Sidney Wald of Swansea, who was ‘accidentally killed’ in June 1940, whilst serving with the South Wales Borderers in north-west Europe.<sup>217</sup>

Providing that their application was approved by the Military Intelligence Branch of the War Office, refugees were granted permission to enter the British armed forces in November 1939. Many refugees were eager to join the fight against Hitler, though at first they were only allowed to serve in the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps (renamed the Pioneer Corps in 1941), an unarmed military unit which provided general labour for the British army.<sup>218</sup> Although a setback for those wishing to fight Nazism, from 1940 onwards joining the Pioneer Corps became an attractive option to many refugees as it meant an early release from internment.<sup>219</sup> Throughout the war some 4,000 Jewish refugees enlisted in the Pioneer Corps, and among them were those who resided in Wales or were sent to the principality to work.<sup>220</sup> They included Bernhard Neumann of Berlin (1909-2002), an assistant lecturer in Mathematics at the then University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire between 1937 and 1940, who, following a period of internment in a disused cotton mill in Lancashire, was assigned work with the Pioneer Corps in France until 1943; Eric Sanders, born Ignaz Schwarz in Vienna in 1919, who was sent to various locations in Britain with the Pioneer Corps between 1941 and 1943, including Carmarthenshire, where he assisted the Royal Engineers in lumbering and the construction of Nissen Huts; and Stephen Dale, born Heinz Spanglet in Berlin in 1917, who joined the Pioneer Corps in 1942 and was assigned to fix draining pumps in various locations in Wales such as the defensible barracks in Pembroke Dock and an engineering camp in Aberaeron.<sup>221</sup> Though they were non-combatants, some of the pioneers were engaged in dangerous tasks such as deactivating bombs and land mines. With little, if any, experience in such operations, explosions often claimed the lives of many. In April 1942, for instance, three Jewish refugees—Corporal Heinz Abraham, and Privates

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<sup>217</sup> *JC*, 31 October 1941; 22 May 1942; 21 June 1940.

<sup>218</sup> Peter Leighton-Langer, *The King's Own Loyal Enemy Aliens: German and Austrian Refugees in Britain's Armed Forces, 1939-1945* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 9.

<sup>219</sup> Steven Karras, *The Enemy I Knew: German Jews in the Allied Military in World War II* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2009), 13.

<sup>220</sup> Vivian Lipman, *A History of Jews*, 230.

<sup>221</sup> Transcript of interview between Bernhard Neumann and Bob Crompton, 1998: <http://science.org.au/scientists/interviews/n/bn.html> (last accessed 03/08/2013); Langer, *The King's Own Loyal Enemy Aliens*, 65; Eric Sanders, interview with Roderick Bailey, 2005, 29954, IWM; Stephen Dale, interview with Lyn E. Smith, 26 August 1994, 14582, IWM.



Ludwig Rosenthal and Heinz Schwartz—were killed by an explosion during a training exercise on landmines at the defensible barracks in Pembroke Dock.<sup>222</sup>

Enlisting in the Pioneer Corps provided refugees between the ages of sixteen and fifty an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty and support to the Allied cause, and from 1942 onwards, Austrian and German refugees were permitted to enlist directly into technical units and the Special Forces. As the war progressed they were admitted to all branches of the British armed forces.<sup>223</sup> Given their knowledge of the enemy culture and their fluency in German, a considerable number of Jewish refugees from Austria and Germany, both men and women, were recruited to work for the British Intelligence Service as translators and interpreters. In 1941, for instance, Frankfurt-born Lore Confino (1923-2007), a *Kindertransportee* who was evacuated with her school from Eastbourne to Betws-Y-Coed at the outbreak of war, and later recruited as a German translator for the BBC World Service and the Foreign Office's Political Intelligence Department in London. Similarly, in 1945, German-born Edward Lees (1921-1985) worked as an interpreter and intelligence officer at Island Farm Prisoner-of-War camp in Bridgend, where he interrogated a number of Senior German Officers.<sup>224</sup> Jewish refugees thus came to play an increasingly important part in Britain's war effort.

As well as working as translators and interpreters, some Jewish refugees from Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe were specially selected by the British Army for secret commando operations. In 1942, for instance, Lord Louis Mountbatten, the then head of Combined Operations and of German extraction himself, devised a plan to form a clandestine British commando force consisting largely of refugees from Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe, who would work as interrogators and military intelligence experts in enemy territory. Formed in autumn 1942, the group was officially named No. 3 Troop of No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commandos (nicknamed 'X-Troop' owing to its secrecy), and was led by a Cambridge languages graduate from Caernarfon named Captain Bryan Hilton-Jones.<sup>225</sup> One hundred and thirty men, eighty-six of whom were German-speaking refugees, were recruited and billeted

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<sup>222</sup> Morris, *We Will Remember Them*, 54; *Pembroke and Pembroke Dock Observer*, 04 May 2012. Abraham and Schwartz were both buried in the Pembroke Dock Military Cemetery, while Rosenthal was buried at the Willesden Jewish Cemetery in London.

<sup>223</sup> Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany*, 40.

<sup>224</sup> Lore Confino, interview with Lyn E. Smith, 15 June 2005, 28453, IWM; *Western Mail*, 17 June 1985.

<sup>225</sup> Helen P. Fry, *German Schoolboy, British Commando: Churchill's Secret Soldier* (Stroud: History Press, 2010), 73.

to the secluded seaside village of Aberdyfi in Gwynedd, where they lived with local families and trained in the mountains of Snowdonia for some nine months.<sup>226</sup> The men in 'X-Troop' were trained in various military skills, including field craft, and camouflage; reading a map in multiple languages; dealing with hidden underwater obstacles; using British and German weapons; and climbing rocks and cliff faces. One Jewish soldier, Vienna-born Peter Terry (formerly Peter Tischler) (1924-2012), recalled how strenuous the training was in Aberdyfi:

It was pretty horrendous in the beginning what he [Hilton-Jones] made us do. He told us to go down into the village to the jetty and, in full uniform, jump into the sea. Then he would scream at us because we got our weapons wet and make us do the whole thing again. I remember a ridge almost at the top of a mountain, where we were in single file...[it was] sometimes just a foot or so wide, with almost vertical drops on either side...laden with fifty pound gear, [we] negotiated the ledge by sitting atop and moving ourselves along on our bottoms, trying not to look down on either side...after a rest he ordered us to get up and descend the mountain, so we did, re-negotiating the ridge in the opposite direction, this time standing up-right.<sup>227</sup>

To prevent German intelligence from discovering the existence of the troop, each refugee soldier had to disguise their Germanic/continental origins by adopting a British sounding-name and identity, which were verified by impenetrable documentation. Thus one German-Jewish soldier named Hanns-Guenter Engel became Herbert George Envers, while Berlin-born Ernst Freytag chose Tommy Farr after the pre-war Welsh heavyweight boxing champion.<sup>228</sup> Enrolment into the troop was purely voluntary, and it appears that revenge against the Nazis motivated most, if not all, of the refugee soldiers to join. Indeed, they wanted to fight a regime that tried to destroy their lives. Jewish soldier Ian Harris (formerly Hans Hajos) from Vienna, for instance, 'couldn't wait to fight the Nazis' because he 'knew they would have killed [him] and [his] family if [they] had stayed in Austria'.<sup>229</sup>

Ultimately the troop never fought as a unit; many were deployed alone or in small groups in and behind the frontline in the islands of Crete and Sicily and mainland Italy.<sup>230</sup> The troop disbanded in 1944, and its members were attached to other military units just prior to D-Day. Of the forty-four men of No. 3 (Miscellaneous) who had landed on the shores of Normandy on 6 June 1944, twenty-four had been killed or wounded and three were

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<sup>226</sup> Letter from Brian Grant to G R Jones, Chief Executive of Gwynedd Council, 26 January 1998, Private Papers of B. Grant, 99.59.1, IWM.

<sup>227</sup> Karras, *The Enemy I Knew*, 85.

<sup>228</sup> James Leasor, *The Unknown Warrior* (London: Heinemann, 1980), 12; *Daily Mail* 22 May 2009.

<sup>229</sup> *Daily Mail*, 22 May 2009.

<sup>230</sup> Ian Dear, *Ten Commando 1942-1945* (London: Leo Cooper, 1987), 171-200; Sugarman, *Fighting Back*, 290.

missing.<sup>231</sup> The Jewish casualties included Austrian-born Eugene Fuller (Eugen von Kagerer-Stein), who was accidentally killed by an American bomb on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1944; and German-born Ernest Lawrence (Ernst Lenel), who, on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1944, disappeared while on a solo patrol to identify German units.<sup>232</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The years between 1933 and 1945 saw a remarkable transformation in Welsh Jewry. With the arrival of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe, the period witnessed the first, and final, mass migration of Jews to the principality since the turn of the twentieth century. Like their Eastern European predecessors, the German and Central European Jewish refugees contributed greatly to both the established Jewish population of Wales, and Wales as a whole. Although they were also Ashkenazi Jews, the Continental Jews were generally more assimilated, educated and wealthier, than their Eastern European counterparts, and their arrival contributed to both the diversification and the embourgeoisement of the indigenous Jewish communities. As we have seen, a number had a good business or professional acumen which was of particular benefit to the economically depressed region of south Wales. A number of Jewish refugees in Wales, and Welsh-Jews more generally, also contributed to the British war effort either on the Home Front or in the armed forces.

Initially, Jewish refugees were warmly welcomed by the Welsh population, but as war approached a large number of Austrian and German Jews in Wales were treated with suspicion, as were a number of Jewish evacuees from England. The presence of the latter in Wales further augmented the principality's Jewish population and resulted in the establishment of five wartime Jewish communities. While the return of evacuated Jewish families to their hometowns, and the onward migration of refugees to other countries such as

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<sup>231</sup> Nicholas van der Bijl, *Commandos in exile: No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando 1942-1945* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2008), 32; Sugarman, *Fighting Back*, 290.

<sup>232</sup> Helen Fry, *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens: Germans Who Fought for Britain in the Second World War* (Stroud: Sutton, 2007), 67. On 15<sup>th</sup> May 1999, a stone memorial and plaque was unveiled in Penhelig Park, Aberdyfi, in remembrance of both the warm welcome the troop received in the town between 1942 and 1943, and the fallen. Surviving troop member Brian Grant was the main instigator behind the project. Although a large number of the troop were Jewish refugees, it was decided not to include the word 'Jewish' on the memorial because its purpose was to remember 'all members', be they Jewish or non-Jewish. The inscription reads: 'For the members of 3 Troop 10 (1A) Commando who were warmly welcomed in Aberdyfi while training for special duties in battle 1942-1943. Twenty were killed in action'. For more on this, see Private Papers of B. Grant, 99.59. 1, IWM.

America, both during and immediately after the war, led to the eventual decline and demise of some of these communities, a number of displaced Jews did stay in Wales and were to call the principality 'home'. Typically, it was those refugees and evacuees who had established businesses or found employment in Wales before or during the war. In 1963, for instance, the *JC* commented that 'very few of the [refugee] firms who were at Treforest before the war have in fact left Wales', while London evacuee Philip Shafran stayed in Bangor with his family after 1945 because he had established a successful delicatessen business on the High Street.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> *JC*, 20 September 1963; Michael Shafran and Rita Hyman, interview with author.

#### **4. A Tolerant Nation?: An Exploration of Jewish and Non-Jewish Relations in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Wales**

The history of race and ethnic relations in Wales is surrounded by myths. In particular, Wales has often been imagined by both the Welsh and non-Welsh alike as a nation that is devoid of racial prejudice and intolerance.<sup>1</sup> There are a number of reasons why this conception has emerged. According to Charlotte Williams and Neil Evans, it stems primarily from the notion of the *gwerin*, a Welsh-language word originally signifying the common folk, but from the late nineteenth century onwards was used to describe the Welsh as ‘the most upright, God-fearing, radical, moral, philosophical, cultured and tolerant [people] in the world’.<sup>2</sup> In part, the relatively low concentration of ethnic minorities in Wales has also led to popular perceptions that racial prejudices and intolerance were and *are* only significant in areas of Britain with high ethnic minority settlement such as London and England more generally.<sup>3</sup>

To implicate the English even further, the myth of Welsh tolerance also stems from the notion of Wales as an ‘internal colony’, which was first proposed by Michael Hechter in

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<sup>1</sup> See Williams, Evans and O’Leary, *A Tolerant Nation?*, 4 and 14. Reflecting on the warm hospitality he received from the Welsh when he moved to Cardiff, the English-born writer Trevor Fishlock once wrote that ‘the Welsh are the most welcoming and the least xenophobic people I have met’. See Trevor Fishlock, *Wales & the Welsh* (London: Cassell, 1972), 13. Moreover, miners of the south Wales coalfield have long been portrayed as a symbol of Welsh tolerance and international proletarian solidarity. Such is the portrayal in Hywel Francis and David Smith’s *The Fed: a History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century*, which highlights the involvement of Welsh miners ‘in vigorous campaigns against fascism and reactionary regimes from post-War Greece to Chile in the 1970s...and constant support of the anti-Franco Spanish miners’. See Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed: a History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980), 429. A number of scholars have observed that Scotland, like Wales, is also characterised by a long-standing discourse of tolerance. See, for instance, Jan Penrose and David Howard, ‘One Scotland, Many Cultures: The Mutual Constitution of Anti-Racism and Place’, in Claire Dwyer and Caroline Bressey, eds., *New Geographies of Race and Racism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 95-111; Robert Miles and Anne Dunlop, ‘The Racialization of Politics in Britain: Why Scotland is Different’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 20 (1986), 23-33. More generally, Colin Holmes has pointed out that there has traditionally been ‘an emphasis upon Britain as a centre of liberty and toleration’. See Colin Holmes, *A Tolerant Country?: Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities in Britain* (London: Faber, 1991), 98-99.

<sup>2</sup> Neil Evans, ‘Immigrants and Minorities in Wales, 1840-1990: a Comparative Perspective’, in Williams, Evans and O’Leary, *A Tolerant Nation?*, 14; Charlotte Williams, ‘Passports to Wales? Race, Nation and Identity’, in Ralph Fevre and Andrew Thompson, eds., *Nation, Identity and Social Theory: Perspectives From Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 77-78. According to the *New Companion to the Literature of Wales*, *gwerin* is: ‘a term meaning either the people in general without reference to social class or else the common people in contradistinction to the gentry. The second meaning began to emerge as a result of egalitarian ideas which gained a wider currency in the wake of religious and political events during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the common people came to be idealised and regarded as the main upholders of Welsh culture. This concept (was) associated with an emphasis on education, temperance and Radicalism (...)’. See Meic Stephens, *The New Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), 294.

<sup>3</sup> Vaughan Robinson and Hannah Garner, ‘Place matters: exploring the distinctiveness of racism in rural Wales’, in Sarah Neal and Julian Agyeman, eds., *The New Countryside: Ethnicity, Nation and Exclusion in Contemporary Britain* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2006), 50; Vaughan Robinson, ‘Exploring Myths about Rural Racism: a Welsh Case Study’, in Williams, Evans and O’Leary, *A Tolerant Nation?*, 160.

1975.<sup>4</sup> In his history of the relationship between England and its three ‘internal colonies’ of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, Hechter believed England to be a dominant colonising power. Thus, having been economically and culturally ‘oppressed’ by the English for centuries, there is a long-held belief that the Welsh have been inclined to empathise with other oppressed people and minorities.<sup>5</sup> In this sense the Welsh national character is portrayed as anti-imperial, tolerant and internationalist, in contrast with the English, who are perceived as colonialist and racist.<sup>6</sup> This myth, however, has been disputed by a number of scholars who have examined Welsh contributions to the British imperial project, and have come to comprehend Wales as a core part of the empire rather than a colonial dependency.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in Wales the ‘significant other’ in terms of self-definition has long been England and the English, and, as a result, the principality’s longstanding cultural diversity, and its relations with migrants and ethnic minorities, experiences of intolerance and racial prejudice in particular, have largely remained unexamined until very recently.<sup>8</sup>

Although scholars have tackled the tolerant image of Wales in various journal articles and chapters over the last three decades, it was Neil Evans, Paul O’Leary and Charlotte Williams’ book, *A Tolerant Nation?: Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Wales* (2003) that brought these studies together in one volume, and made it clear that Wales was not the tolerant nation that it fondly imagines itself to be.<sup>9</sup> Neil Evans, for instance, has tackled the myth of Welsh tolerance by focusing on the history of ethnic riots in nineteenth and twentieth century Wales, while Paul O’Leary and Jon Parry have both ‘excavated the tangled history of

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> Williams, ‘Passports to Wales?’, 79.

<sup>6</sup> Sandra Betts and Charlotte Williams, ‘Gender and “race”’, in Hugh Mackay, ed., *Understanding Contemporary Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 91-124.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, ‘Passports to Wales?’, 84; Neil Evans, ‘Internal colonialism? Colonisation, economic development and political mobilisation in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland’, in Graham Day and Gareth Rees, eds., *Regions, Nations and European Integration: Restructuring the Celtic Periphery* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 235-264.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, Evans, and O’Leary, *A Tolerant Nation?*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Paul O’Leary, ‘Anti-Irish riots in Wales, 1826-1882’, *Llafur*, 5, 4 (1991), 27-36; Jon Parry, ‘The Tredegar anti-Irish riots of 1882’, *Llafur*, 3, 4 (1983), 20-3; Charlotte Williams, ‘“Race” and Racism: Some Reflections on the Welsh context’, *Contemporary Wales*, 8 (1995), 113-31. The publication of *A Tolerant Nation?* in 2003 was not entirely coincidental. With the birth of devolution in 1997, the late 1990s and early 2000s was a time of ‘national narrative reinvented on a grand scale’ in Wales when the newly established Welsh Assembly Government committed itself to a programme aimed at promoting racial equality and the inclusion and participation of all ethnic minorities in contemporary Welsh society. Such developments called attention for a study exploring the history of ethnic diversity in Wales, and how the principality has both responded and reacted to migrants and ethnic minorities within its borders.

ethnic conflict in Wales' in relation to Irish migrants.<sup>10</sup> But when the issue of Welsh tolerance has been discussed more generally it has primarily focused on the position of Blacks and New Commonwealth migrants in Welsh society during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This is because such groups, owing to their skin colour, are more 'visible minorities' in a predominantly white Wales.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast, there have been few attempts to examine the history of Welsh tolerance in relation to Jews, and the published literature is not extensive. As stated in my introduction, when non-Jewish and Jewish relations in Wales have been considered most, if not all, historical works have focused on the Tredegar riots of 1911.<sup>12</sup> While the riots demonstrate that Jews have not been immune to tension or conflict in Wales, an over-emphasis on the subject has consequently portrayed Welsh Jews primarily as victims. Since the 1911 riots, no further rioting involving Jews is reported to have occurred in Wales, but as Jasmine Donahaye reminds us, 'in the absence of analysis of other aspects of Jewish history in Wales, [The Tredegar riots] have come to erroneously represent Welsh-Jewish experience and Welsh attitudes to Jews...more generally'.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, as has been noted, Tredegar has become synonymous with Welsh Jewry, and casual reading of the available literature would leave a strong impression that the history of non-Jewish and Jewish relations in Wales has been unremittingly negative.<sup>14</sup>

This chapter, therefore, argues that now the Tredegar riots have been adequately charted, historical research needs to move beyond this event and examine non-Jewish and

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<sup>10</sup> Evans, 'Immigrants and Minorities in Wales', in Williams, Evans and O'Leary, *A Tolerant Nation?*, 5-26; O'Leary, *Immigration and Integration*; O'Leary, 'Anti-Irish riots in Wales, 1826-1882'; Parry, 'The Tredegar anti-Irish riots of 1882'.

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Charlotte Williams, 'Revisiting the Rural/Race Debates: a View from the Welsh Countryside', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30, 5 (2007), 741-66; Alan Llwyd, *Cymru Ddu/Black Wales: a History* (Cardiff: Hughes, 2005); Vaughan Robinson and Hannah Gardner, 'Unravelling a Stereotype: the Lived Experience of Black and Minority Ethnic People in Rural Wales', in Neil Chakrabarti and Jon Garland, eds., *Rural Racism* (Cullompton: Willan, 2004), 85-107.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, Alderman 'Anti-Jewish riots of August 1911'; Alderman, 'The anti-Jewish riots of August 1911: a response'; Evans, 'Immigrants and Minorities in Wales', 21; Glaser 'The Tredegar Riots of August 1911', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*; Holmes 'The Tredegar riots of 1911'; Rubinstein, 'The anti-Jewish riots'. The two exceptions are Davies' *The Chosen People* and Donahaye's *Whose People?*.

<sup>13</sup> Jasmine Donahaye, "'By whom shall she arise? For she is small": the Wales-Israel tradition in the Edwardian period', in Nadia Valman and Eitan Bar Yosef, eds., *The Jew in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture: Between the East End and East Africa* (London: Palgrave, 2009), 162; In this thesis I have chosen 'non-Jewish and Jewish relations in Wales' rather than 'Welsh attitudes towards Jews', as the latter implies that Jews were/are not Welsh. The complexities of Welsh-Jewish identities are examined in Chapter Five.

<sup>14</sup> Of course, the only exception is Rubinstein's 'The anti-Jewish riots', which overstates that Jewish and non-Jewish relations in Wales were unremittingly positive.

Jewish relations in Wales in a wider context. By doing so, it seeks to demonstrate that relations between non-Jews and Jews in the principality were/*are* complex and do not fit comfortably within the confines of ‘philo-Semitism’ or ‘anti-Semitism’, which is how the subject has mainly been scrutinised by historians up until now.<sup>15</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, for instance, with reference to the history of south Wales Jewry before 1914, once wrote that ‘anti-Semitism in South Wales was widespread and had a long history’ and that Jews were unfortunate to have ‘entered a land seething with religious bigotry’.<sup>16</sup> William D. Rubinstein has suggested the opposite by highlighting the uniqueness of the Welsh ‘love of Jews’, arguing that ‘philo-Semitism (admiration and support of Jews by gentiles) was virtually ubiquitous in Edwardian Wales’ and ‘that it permeated every aspect of Welsh culture until very recent times’.<sup>17</sup> Both interpretations, however, are far too simplistic and monolithic as the history of non-Jewish and Jewish relations in Wales, as elsewhere, is not wholly consistent and does not easily fit into a binary opposition of pro- or anti-Jewish. Thus, to label the attitudes of non-Jews to Jews in Wales as either anti- or philo-Semitic is to disregard its ambivalences and ambiguities. As Donahaye rightfully points out, such an approach that overlooks these ambiguities in the context of Wales essentially ‘permits the notion of a predominantly tolerant Wales to remain intact’.<sup>18</sup> This is because scholars such as Rubinstein who examine non-Jewish and Jewish relations in Wales solely through the prism of ‘philo-Semitism’ tend to render any expressions of hostility as ‘isolated’ and ‘exceptional’ and present ‘friendly, “affectionate” or “tolerant” and loving attitudes’ as the definitive.<sup>19</sup>

A number of scholars recognise the limitations of an opposing anti- and philo-Semitic framework, and have offered an alternate term, ‘Semitic discourse’, which addresses the complexity of ambivalence in both the representations of Jews by non-Jews and the relations between Jewish and non-Jewish people. David Cesarani, for example, describes ‘Semitic discourse’ as ‘a discourse about the Jews...that can be either positive or negative depending

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<sup>15</sup> Philo- and anti-Semitism are both notoriously difficult to define, but the terms are employed here to mean support/opposition towards Jews only, rather than Semitic peoples more generally.

<sup>16</sup> Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat?’, 67.

<sup>17</sup> Rubinstein, ‘The anti-Jewish riots’, 670.

<sup>18</sup> Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 66.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* The term ‘philo-Semitism’ also has its own ambiguities, which Rubinstein chooses to ignore. This is because ‘admiration’ for Jews, no matter how benign, can still position Jews as different from the non-Jewish mainstream. For more on this, see Zygmunt Bauman, ‘Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern and Postmodern’, in Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus, eds., *Modernity, Culture, and ‘the Jew’* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 143.



upon the intention of the agent employing them’, while Bryan Cheyette notes that ‘the term has the added advantage of eschewing the inherent moralizing’ associated with anti- or philo-Semitism by enabling us to see ‘the radical emptiness and lack of a fixed meaning in the construction of “semitic” difference...[that] results in “the Jew” being made to occupy an incommensurable number of ...positions which traverse a range of contradictory discourses’.<sup>20</sup>

The idea of ‘tolerance’ also deserves further consideration in this context. This is because ‘tolerance’, like ‘Semitic discourse’, is never absolute—it is a conditional acceptance, which paradoxically holds within its reach the possibility of responding both negatively and positively to difference. As Paul O’Leary reminds us, ‘toleration presupposes a defined power relationship’ whereby minority cultures are ‘endured’ rather than ‘embraced’ by the majority.<sup>21</sup> Thus, while a tolerant society may extend the culturally or ethnically different ‘other’ the space and freedom to nurture their beliefs and customs, this acceptance can easily be revoked should the majority feel that their values are being threatened.

With these premises in mind, the aim of this chapter is not to prove whether Wales was/is a nation of philo- or anti-Semites or indeed a ‘tolerant’ or ‘intolerant’ nation. Rather, by exploring the conditional nature of acceptance, this chapter seeks to shift the argument away from competing claims of ‘welcome’ or ‘hostility’, and focus instead on the inherent complexities, contradictions and ‘lack of fixed meaning’ within Jewish and non-Jewish relations in the principality.

### **A Reverent Curiosity**

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the indigenous Welsh first came into contact with Jews. As noted in Chapter One, Jews have been present (and officially absent) in Wales since the Middle Ages, but as most of Wales’ Jewish communities were not established until the mid to late nineteenth century, it is likely that most non-Jews in the principality would not have encountered a Jew until the latter period. Grahame Davies speculates that Welshmen

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<sup>20</sup> David Cesarani, ‘Reporting Antisemitism: The *Jewish Chronicle* 1879-1979’, in Siân Jones, Tony Kushner, and Sarah Pearce, eds., *Cultures of Ambivalence and Contempt: Studies in Jewish-non-Jewish Relations* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998), 255; Bryan Cheyette, *Constructions of ‘the Jew’ in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>21</sup> Paul O’Leary, ‘Foreword to the New Edition: Conflict and Co-operation: The Jews of South Wales and the study of Welsh Jewry’, in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 2nd ed., xiv.

involved in the Third Crusade between 1189 and 1192 were ‘likely to have encountered Jewish communities’ in the Holy Land, but admits that there are no extant passages from the period ‘dealing with the Jews’.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, while Christian Wales would have been familiar with Jewish figures from the Bible, particularly after 1588 when the entire Bible was translated into Welsh for the first time by William Morgan, there may have initially been suspicion among locals when Jewish migrants began to arrive in the principality in the nineteenth century, as many had never seen Jews before. By and large, however, surviving evidence suggests that Jewish settlers in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Wales were treated with a reverent curiosity by their indigenous Welsh neighbours.

Indeed, many reports from the Welsh-Jewish communities, particularly at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, note the presence of interested or curious gentiles at synagogue services and other events. During the consecration service of Bangor’s synagogue in 1894, for example, it was noted that ‘the synagogue was filled by the members, visitors from adjacent towns, and several Christians’, while in 1873, the foundation stone ceremony of Newport’s Jewish school rooms was attended ‘by a number of Gentiles’ who were ‘interested in the ceremony’.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, in 1889, the *JC* reported that during the *Kol Nidre* service in Brynmawr ‘a large number of Christians stood outside the temporary synagogue...listening in respectful silence to the chaunting [*sic*] of the prayers’.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the foundation stone ceremony of Llanelli’s synagogue in July 1908 was attended by a number of non-Jews, including a Rev. D. E. Rees who was ‘interested in the ceremony’ because ‘he was well acquainted...with the Jewish people through his Bible’.<sup>25</sup>

An interest in the traditions and practices of local Jews was also expressed by a number of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Welsh newspapers, which often included detailed reports on local Jewish occasions and festivities. In September 1877, for instance, the *Cambrian* educated its readers on ‘The Jewish Day of Atonement’ and disclosed that ‘the day was duly observed in Swansea by a religious service in the synagogue’, while in 1873 the *Western Mail* printed a lengthy article on a *bar mitzvah* ceremony conducted at the East

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<sup>22</sup> Davies, *The Chosen People*, 12.

<sup>23</sup> *JC*, 13 July 1894; *Western Mail*, 15 March 1873.

<sup>24</sup> *JC*, 11 October 1889.

<sup>25</sup> *JC*, 17 July 1908.

Terrace synagogue in Cardiff.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, in 1900, the *North Wales Chronicle* reported on ‘a special afternoon service’ held at Bangor’s synagogue when congregants consecrated ‘a fine “Scroll of the Law”’.<sup>27</sup> Nineteenth-century Welsh newspapers also showed an invariable tone of interest in Jewish weddings. In 1856, for instance, the *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* reported on a ‘very imposing’ Jewish wedding in Merthyr Tydfil, which ‘attracted a good deal of attention’ from non-Jewish locals, while the *North Wales Guardian* noted that ‘the first Jewish wedding celebrated in Wrexham’ took place ‘in the presence of a large number of onlookers’.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, in 1912, The *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald* featured a lengthy article on the Jewish wedding of Willie Crystal and Pauline Goldman in Caernarfon, ‘the first ceremony of its kind ever celebrated in the town’. It observed how the event ‘created unusual curiosity’ with ‘hundreds of people assembled to watch the arrival of the wedding party to the Guild Hall’. At the reception, Isidore Wartski of Bangor noted how ‘he was very glad to find so many of their...neighbours present, as it showed there were no feelings of animosity, but of good fellowship’.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, such examples demonstrate that the indigenous Welsh were curious, but respectful and tolerant of their Jewish neighbours’ religious customs and traditions.

### **Non-Jewish Welsh Reactions to Jewish Concerns**

As an indicator of how Jews were viewed by the non-Jewish Welsh, a large number of the latter were sympathetic and supportive of Jewish issues, particularly the persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Russian pogroms of the 1880s, for instance, produced energetic protests in Wales against the oppression of Russian Jewry. A protest meeting was held in Cardiff’s Town Hall in February 1882, which saw ‘a large attendance’ and was presided over by the then mayor, Alfred Thomas.<sup>30</sup> Another meeting took place in Cardiff in May 1882, where a Jewish resident of

<sup>26</sup> *Cambrian*, 21 September 1877; *Western Mail*, 16 June 1873. In 1886 the *Western Mail* incorrectly reported that the Jewish New Year was celebrated in Swansea. It was in fact Passover. See *Western Mail*, 10 April 1886.

<sup>27</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 20 January 1900.

<sup>28</sup> *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, 12 April 1856; *North Wales Guardian*, 11 August 1899. The *Wrexham Advertiser* also reported on the latter wedding, noting that such a ceremony was ‘peculiarly interesting with the Gentiles’, 12 August 1899. For further examples, see ‘Grand Jewish Wedding at Swansea’, *Western Mail*, 30 January 1879; ‘A Jewish Wedding at Swansea’, *Cambrian*, 18 December 1874; ‘400 Guests at Swansea Synagogue Wedding’, *Cambrian*, 26 March 1921; ‘Jewish Wedding’, *Western Mail*, 22 July 1869; ‘Fashionable Jewish Wedding at Pontypridd’, *Western Mail*, 7 December 1878; ‘Jewish Wedding at Newport’, *Western Mail* (Cardiff, Wales), 6 November 1884.

<sup>29</sup> *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 19 January 1912.

<sup>30</sup> *Cardiff Times*, 4 March 1882.

the city, H.F. Cohen, proposed ‘a cordial vote of thanks...to the [local] press for the assistance [they gave] in making known the distress and suffering existing among the Jews in Russia’.<sup>31</sup> A similar protest meeting took place at the Abermorlais Lecture Theatre in Merthyr Tydfil in March that year. It was convened by G.C. James, the High-Constable of Merthyr, ‘to take into consideration the recent terrible persecutions of the Jews in Russia and to express public sympathy with the sufferers’.<sup>32</sup> Newspapers throughout Wales unanimously condemned the persecution of Jews in Russia. In reference to the number of protest meetings that emerged across Britain during this time, the *Pembrokeshire Herald* noted that it was ‘very satisfactory to see that the feeling of indignation at the atrocities perpetrated on the Jews in Southern Russia intensifies and spreads’, while the Carmarthenshire-based Welsh-language newspaper *Seren Cymru* wrote that ‘the Jews that dwell in Russia have suffered a humiliating and inhumane persecution at the hands of the Russians these past few months’.<sup>33</sup>

There were further incidences of anti-Jewish violence overseas that were criticised by both Welsh newspapers and people during this period. In 1896, for instance, Cardiff’s *Evening Express* denounced the ‘intense [racial] hatred of the Jews’ in Austria, while in 1905 the citizens of Swansea generously supported a charity appeal to provide shelter for Jewish families who were affected by the recent pogroms in Odessa.<sup>34</sup> The Beilis affair, in which a Ukrainian Jew was falsely accused of ritual murder in Kiev in 1913, also led to a ‘crowded’ protest meeting in Cardiff’s Cory Hall in December that year.<sup>35</sup> Similar meetings occurred in Wales during the 1930s to protest against the maltreatment of Jews in Nazi Germany. The Nazi boycott of German Jewish businesses in April 1933, for example, led to two mass protest meetings in Pontypridd and Swansea. The former was ‘organised by the Pontypridd League of Christian Churches’ and held at the Town Hall with over 2,000 persons present, including a number of local civic, business and religious leaders.<sup>36</sup> For the *JC*, the meeting ‘undoubtedly’ showed that ‘the whole of the Welsh Valleys were aroused in sympathy with

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<sup>31</sup> *Western Mail*, 26 May 1882.

<sup>32</sup> *Merthyr Express*, 11 March 1882.

<sup>33</sup> *Pembrokeshire Herald and General Advertiser*, 10 February 1882; *Seren Cymru*, 17 February 1882— ‘Mae yr Iuddewon a breswylant yn Rwsia wedi dyoddef [*sic*] erlidigaeth waradwyddus ac annynol ar law y Rwsiaid y misoedd diweddaf hyn’. Translated from Welsh by author.

<sup>34</sup> *Evening Express*, 16 May 1896; *South Wales Daily Post*, 15 December 1905.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Ritual Murder’ (also known as ‘Blood Libel’) is the superstitious accusation that Jews ritually sacrifice Christian children at Passover to obtain blood for unleavened bread. It first emerged in medieval Europe (originating in Norwich in 1144) and was revived sporadically in eastern and central Europe up until the early twentieth century, often leading to Jewish persecution.

<sup>36</sup> *JC*, 12 May 1933.

the German Jews'.<sup>37</sup> The latter meeting was held at the Central Hall in Swansea, where over 1,500 individuals gathered to protest 'against [the] Nazi Persecution of the Jews'.<sup>38</sup> In reflection of the meeting, the minister of St. Mary's Church in Swansea, Canon William T. Havard, said that 'he had never seen a more representative gathering in Swansea', while the then minister of the town's Hebrew Congregation, Rev. J. Weintrobe, 'thanked the people of Swansea on behalf of the Jewish community for their sympathy, kindness and support' and added that he 'would always recall with pride the name of Swansea'.<sup>39</sup>

As well organising mass protest meetings, non-Jewish organisations throughout the principality often displayed their sympathy for Jewish persecution in the Third Reich by inviting local Jews to speak on the subject. In December 1938, for instance, the minister of Port Talbot's synagogue, Rev. M. Landy, addressed the local Methodist Young Guild on 'the Position of German Jews from 1933 to 1938', where the chairman, Rev. M. Freeman 'expressed deep sympathy with the position of the Jews in Germany'.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, in March 1940, Bangor's Jewish minister, Rev. David Wolfson, addressed the local branch of the international Christian movement 'Toc H', where 'deep sympathy was expressed by several [non-Jewish] speakers with the persecuted Jews in Germany and Poland'.<sup>41</sup>

At the same time as the non-Jewish Welsh were openly condemning the Nazi persecution of Jews, Britain was plagued by the activities of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF), one of the largest and most well-known British movements hostile to Jews during the twentieth century.<sup>42</sup> Although the BUF came to south Wales in 1934, historians and commentators are in general agreement that the party made little headway in the region.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, BUF meetings and rallies held in south Wales were often not well-attended and

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *South Wales Evening Post*, 28 April 1933.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *JC*, 9 December 1938.

<sup>41</sup> *JC*, 22 March 1940.

<sup>42</sup> Led and formed by the estranged former Labour MP, Oswald Mosley, the BUF was established in 1932 following the failure of Mosley's New Party in the 1931 General Election. It has been argued that Mosley was not at first hostile to Jewish interests, but by the mid-1930s both he and the BUF became well known for their anti-Semitic views. With references to Jews as 'alien financiers' and 'international minded' bankers, the BUF played on the age-old conspiracy that Jews were leaders of a financial cabal seeking world domination. For more on the BUF's anti-Jewish activity, see William Brustein, *Roots of Hate: Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 151; Cesarani and Kushner, *The Internment of Aliens*, 42.

<sup>43</sup> See, for instance, Stephen M. Cullen, 'Another Nationalism: The British Union of Fascists in Glamorgan, 1932-40', *Welsh History Review*, 17, 1 (1994), 101-114; Hywel Francis, *Miners against Fascism: Wales and the Spanish Civil War* (Abersychan: Warren & Pell Publishing, 2004), 40.

expressed with great disapproval by the local population. In 1934, for instance, Mosley obtained permission to hold meetings in Swansea and Neath, but such was the disruption from opponents that the BUF failed to hold meetings again in the towns.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, when Mosley addressed a meeting in Pontypridd's Town Hall in May 1936 'a special force of 250 police was drafted in...to protect the Fascists', while two months later the chief constable of Merthyr Tydfil had to relieve 'an ugly situation between Fascists and their opponents' following the arrival of a party of Blackshirts to the town.<sup>45</sup> One of the largest anti-fascist rallies in Wales took place in Tonypandy in June 1936, when Blackshirt speakers were mobbed by a crowd of two thousand people.

The main impetus behind the anti-fascist campaigns in south Wales was provided by working-class organisations, particularly the Communist Party, who opposed the BUF's far right policies, but the BUF's anti-Jewish stance was certainly disapproved by a number of non-Jews in south Wales.<sup>46</sup> For instance, in a speech delivered in October 1936, former Cardiff councillor Dr. G.N. W. Thomas 'defended the Jews, and said Parliament should pass an Act to stop any person maligning any section of the community'.<sup>47</sup> With reference to Mosley, Thomas said that if he:

...wishes to bring any criminal charge against any particular Jews, the Law Courts are open to him. Let him apply to the magistrates for a summons. If, on the other hand, he cannot bring a charge against a single Jew, let him hold his peace.<sup>48</sup>

The BUF's anti-Semitic claims were countered in the columns of the *Western Mail* by notable Cardiff Jews, including Councillor Abe Lewis and the minister of the Cathedral Road Hebrew Congregation, Rev. H. Jerevitch.<sup>49</sup> In October 1936, the latter thanked the paper's editor in a sermon 'for his wonderful leading articles in the defence of the Jews'.<sup>50</sup> Similarly

<sup>44</sup> Francis, *Miners against Fascism*, 41.

<sup>45</sup> *JC*, 1 May 1936; *JC*, 28 August 1936.

<sup>46</sup> Francis, *Miners against Fascism*, 41. Working-class organisations were also the main impetus behind anti-fascist campaigns in Scotland during the 1930s. For more on this, see Henry Maitles, 'Blackshirts across the Border: The British Union of Fascists in Scotland', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 82, 213, 1 (2003), 92-100. Despite the presence of anti-Semitic propaganda at both the University of Glasgow and Edinburgh and articles regarding the anti-Semitic activity of the BUF in Glasgow in the city's *Jewish Echo* newspaper, Maitles notes that their activity in Scotland was not severe enough to have resulted in any significant negative comment from both Scottish non-Jews and Jews (p.98). This is repeated by Abrams, who, in his work on the history of the Aberdeen Jewish community, wrote: 'Although Fascism came to Aberdeen in the 1930s, it did not seem to affect the Jewish community'. See Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 26.

<sup>47</sup> *JC*, 30 October 1936.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Western Mail*, 16,17,18,19, 20 April 1934; 23, 25, 28, 30 September 1936.

<sup>50</sup> *JC*, 2 October 1936.

in December 1936, the *JC* applauded Cardiff County Council's decision to forbid the BUF from using any 'expressions of hostility to the Jews' at their meetings in the city, while in August 1936, the Merthyr Watch Committee objected to Fascist meetings on the ground that 'local Fascists had threatened respectable citizens, Jews and non-Jews, with personal violence'.<sup>51</sup> The following year, L. J. Cumming, the district leader of the BUF in south Wales, resigned because of the party's growing anti-Jewish position. In a letter to the *Western Mail*, he wrote:

When I became a member of the British Union of Fascists in 1932...anti-Semitism was not part of our policy....I have myself never been an anti-Semite, and people who have been to any of my meetings will bear that statement out. We must not overlook the fact that the traditional policy of Britain has been to receive the victims of foreign tyranny...<sup>52</sup>

With the threat of Fascist anti-Semitism increasing in Britain during the 1930s, the Board of Deputies of British Jews in London established a Co-ordinating Committee in 1936 (renamed the Jewish Defence Committee (JDC) in 1938) to carry out defence work against the BUF's propaganda.<sup>53</sup> In Cardiff, the concentration of the BUF's speeches on anti-Semitism, and their passive support from a small number of local shopkeepers led the city's *JC*'s correspondent, Henry Samuel, to call for a 'well-organised [Jewish] Defence Committee to deal with local anti-Semitism' to be formed in September 1936.<sup>54</sup> However, no such committee was established at the time because it soon became apparent that the BUF had little support in Cardiff. For instance, following the low turn-out 'of some thirty people' (of which around thirteen were Jews) to hear BUF member 'Mick' Clark speak in Cathays Park in June 1937, and the audience's lack of enthusiasm for his anti-Jewish remarks, Henry Samuel reported that 'I don't think we have much to fear in this city from...a fast-diminishing group of Blackshirts'.<sup>55</sup>

### **Embracing Welsh Political Life**

Perhaps the ultimate manifestation of the acceptance of Jews by non-Jews in Wales was the participation of the former in the political and civic life of the towns and cities in which they

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<sup>51</sup> *JC*, 27 November 1936; 28 August 1936.

<sup>52</sup> *JC*, 18 June 1937.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-39: Parties, Ideology and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 106.

<sup>54</sup> *JC*, 4 September 1936; Cullen, 'Another Nationalism', 110.

<sup>55</sup> *JC*, 4 June 1937.

resided. Indeed, the documentary evidence available suggests that Jews met little or no problems in being elected councillors or mayors in Wales. Although Neil Evans states that ‘Jews were so well integrated that they shared the central experiences of the majority of the [Welsh] population’, he stresses that ‘politically it took Jews a long time to arrive [in Wales], with Cardiff getting its first Jewish councillor in 1928 and its first Jewish Lord Mayor in 1987’.<sup>56</sup> Evans, however, is guilty of generalising and uses the Cardiff Jewish experience as representative of the wider Jewish experience in Wales. In fact, there were a number of Jews elected as councillors in the principality before Abraham Lewis’ appointment to the Cardiff City Council in 1928.<sup>57</sup> They included Lionel S. Abrahamson who was ‘elected a member of the Newport Town Council, by a large majority in 1898’; Brahem Freedman who was elected Swansea’s first Jewish town councillor in 1896; Marks. J. S. Lyons of Ebbw Vale who became a Justice of the Peace in 1895 and was elected to the local district council in 1896; and Henry Cohen who was re-elected ‘at the top of the pool for the Aberaman ward of the Aberdare Urban District Council’ in 1923.<sup>58</sup>

While Julius Hermer was elected Cardiff’s first Jewish mayor in 1987, he was certainly not the first Jew to be elected a leader of a local council in Wales (In county-boroughs the presiding officer is called the ‘mayor’, in urban districts and non-county boroughs ‘the chairman of the council’).<sup>59</sup> Grain merchant Michael John Michael, for instance, was Wales’ first Jewish-born mayor when he was elected Swansea’s mayor in 1848.<sup>60</sup> The grandson of David Michael, the founder of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, Michael eventually renounced his Jewish faith and joined the Unitarian Church.<sup>61</sup> However, despite living a Christian lifestyle he was still considered to be Jewish by some of his contemporaries. In 1895, for instance, both the *Evening Express* and *Western Mail* commented that ‘Swansea once had a Jew as mayor. He was Mr. John Michael, a highly respected citizen’.<sup>62</sup> Wales’ first self-identifying and practising Jewish mayor, however, was Isidore Wartski, who after serving as a councillor in Bangor for fifteen years was elected mayor of the city between

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<sup>56</sup> Evans, ‘Immigrants and Minorities in Wales’, 21.

<sup>57</sup> *JC*, 21 January 1938.

<sup>58</sup> *The South Wales Jewish Review*, 6 (June 1904), 91; *JC*, 6 November 1896; 20 September 1895; 21 February 1896; 16 April 1923.

<sup>59</sup> *JC*, 5 June 1987; Jeffrey Stanyer, *County Government in England and Wales* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 64.

<sup>60</sup> *Cambrian*, 10 November 1848.

<sup>61</sup> Neilson, ‘The History and Influence of Swansea’s Jewish Community’, 24. Michael J. Michael died in 1861, and was buried in the High Street Unitarian Church, Swansea.

<sup>62</sup> *Evening Express*, 26 April 1895.



1939 and 1941.<sup>63</sup> At his inauguration ceremony in November 1939, Wartski described his appointment as an ‘assertion of the principle of religious toleration’ and ‘religious equality’ that prevailed among the citizens of Bangor.<sup>64</sup> Wartski’s achievements were repeated elsewhere in north Wales, when Jack Pollecoff was elected mayor of Pwllheli between 1967 and 1969, and Vicki Lazar was appointed Aberconwy’s first, and only, Jewish mayor in 1978.<sup>65</sup> More recently, London-born Cedric Rigal was elected both mayor of Conwy and the Constable of Conwy Castle in 2012, the first Jew in Wales to hold the dual title.<sup>66</sup>

In Rhymney, outfitter Lewis L. Fine was elected both chairman of the district council and magistrate for the county of Monmouth in 1896 after holding ‘several important positions’ in the local community, including president of the Rhymney and Pontlottyn Chamber of Trade.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, in Burry Port, Labor Dennis, ‘a much loved and respected’ cinema owner, was elected chairman of the local urban district council in both 1949 and 1966 and also an alderman of Carmarthenshire County Council in 1965.<sup>68</sup> In Ammanford, Russian-born outfitter, Morris Cohen, served as a member of the town council ‘and its only Jewish Chairman’ from 1925 until his retirement in 1939.<sup>69</sup> At a dinner held in appreciation of his services to the local council in April 1939, Cohen thanked:

The people of Ammanford...[for they] were always kind and considerate to the members of his family, who had resided there for thirty-three years, and never looked upon them as strangers in their midst.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, it did not take Jews as long a time to arrive politically in Wales, as Evans suggests, and their appointments to such positions demonstrate just how well Jews had integrated into Welsh public life.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 10 November 1939; *JC*, 6 April 1945.

<sup>64</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 10 November 1939.

<sup>65</sup> Untitled Newspaper Clipping, 21 April 1978, XML 4558/46/129, CRO; 23 June 1978.

<sup>66</sup> *JC*, 24 May 2012.

<sup>67</sup> *JC*, 15 May 1896.

<sup>68</sup> *JC*, 10 June 1949; 12 February 1965; 17 June 1966; ‘The Adelphi: Burry’s Popular Cinema’, [http://burryport.blogspot.co.uk/2011\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://burryport.blogspot.co.uk/2011_05_01_archive.html) (last accessed 21/05/2013).

<sup>69</sup> *JC*, 7 April 1939.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> The pattern of political service established by Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries continued well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In Bangor, for instance, Philip Pollecoff was elected a councillor in 1929, while in Wrexham I. W. Reuben was elected to the town council in 1935. Abraham Freedman was elected to the Swansea County Borough Council in 1945, while Ammanford-born Myer Cohen was a councillor for the south ward of Cardiff City between 1935 and 1938. Between the 1950s and 1970s Cardiff County Council had a number of Jewish councillors, including Hilda Cohen; Cecil Rapport; Gerald

As well as local government, Jews in Wales have met little or no problems being elected Members of Parliament, and to date three Jews have served as MPs for Welsh constituencies. They included Leo Abse, the first and only Welsh-born Jew to serve as an MP for a Welsh constituency when he sat as Labour MP for Pontypool and Torfaen between 1958 and 1987; Alex Carlile who sat as both Liberal and Liberal Democrat MP for Montgomeryshire between 1983 and 1997; and Lancashire-born industrialist Alfred Mond, who sat as Liberal MP for Swansea Town and Swansea West from 1910 to 1923, and Carmarthen between 1924 and 1928 (he changed parties from Liberal to Conservative in 1926).<sup>72</sup> The son of a German Jewish chemist and industrialist, Mond was appointed a managing director of the Mond Nickel Works in Clydach, near Swansea in 1902. A Liberal MP for Chester since 1906, and the employer of a bulk of Swansea's working-class population, he seemed an ideal parliamentary candidate for the generally secure Liberal constituency of Swansea Town.<sup>73</sup>

Mond's political career in Swansea was not without difficulties, however, and the abusive treatment he repeatedly received from his political opponents, particularly during the 1910s, sheds light on the conditional nature of tolerance. Indeed, despite being British by birth, both his German and Jewish origins were often negatively targeted by his political opponents. During the general election of 1910, for instance, his Conservative contenders ridiculed his German accent with an array of posters which proclaimed 'Vales for the Velsh'.<sup>74</sup> Hostility towards Mond intensified in the late 1910s following the rise of anti-German feeling that emerged in Britain during the First World War. For instance, the Conservative candidate for Swansea Town in the general election of 1918, David Davies, played the anti-German card in his paper, the *South Wales Daily Post*, in a bid to discredit Mond. The paper claimed that Mond was unsuitable to represent a Welsh constituency because of his German ancestry, and gave column space to the allegations that Mond had violated the Defence of the Realm Act by unlawfully trading and communicating with the German enemy.<sup>75</sup> On the eve of the

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Brinks. More recently, Hotelier Mark Michaels was appointed mayor of Montgomery in 2006, and re-elected in 2012. See *JC*, 5 January 1945; 17 April 1959; 11 August 2006; 3 August 2012; *Bimah* 42 (April 2005), 39; *CAJEX*, 11, 3 (1961), 9; 31, 5 (1985), 55.

<sup>72</sup> *JC*, 14 November 1958; 20 May 1994; 5 July 1996; Andrew Russell and Edward Fieldhouse, *Neither Left nor Right?: The Liberal Democrats and the Electorate* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 224; Cameron Hazlehurst, Sally Whitehead, Christine Woodland, eds., *A Guide to the Papers of British Cabinet Ministers, 1900-1964* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 270.

<sup>73</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Democratic politics in Glamorgan 1884-1914', *Morgannwg*, 4 (1960), 13.

<sup>74</sup> Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 139.

<sup>75</sup> *South Wales Daily Post* 5, 6, 7, 8, 14 November 1918.

general election of November 1918, Davies' paper adopted a distinctly anti-Jewish line by claiming that Mond and his fellow German-Jews were the driving forces behind the increasing threat of Soviet Bolshevism.<sup>76</sup> Fortunately for Davies, such unfounded allegations did resonate with some of his paper's readers, with Mond repeatedly encountering both anti-German and anti-Jewish remarks from Swansea residents in the run-up to the 1918 general election. As Mond's biographer, Hector Bolitho, once wrote:

The post-war election came and Alfred Mond went to Swansea again, to ask for the support of the electors. His reception was not whole-hearted. When he walked in the streets, thin-lipped women shouted 'German Jew' at him as he passed by.<sup>77</sup>

The Swansea Jewish community was appalled by such anti-Semitic expressions and 'shameful attacks', but in the midst of these ugly conflicts it is important to remember that Mond successfully fought and won his elections in the 1910s.<sup>78</sup> Mond eventually lost his Swansea West constituency in the general election of 1923, and consequently a myth has emerged that this was because of his Jewishness. In 1975, for instance, the journalist Michael Wallach wrote in the *JC* 'that Sir Alfred Mond failed to carry Swansea many years ago because he was a Jew'.<sup>79</sup> Yet, there is no evidence for this assertion. Rather, Mond's election loss to a Labour candidate in 1923 simply reflected the wider political landscape of south Wales at the time when the majority of Liberal seats, particularly in the south Wales coalfield, gave way to the rising Labour party.<sup>80</sup> As Kenneth O. Morgan has put it:

Sir Alfred Mond found himself in increasing difficulty after 1918 as local Liberals dissolved in acrimony during the Liberal schisms that marked the peacetime Lloyd George coalition government of 1918-22. William Jenkins of Swansea gave the prime minister a lucid analysis of the disintegration of Swansea Liberalism, via Mond, in August 1922. He described how miners, tinplaters and other workers were moving

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<sup>76</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, 20 November 1918. It read: 'He [Alfred Mond] is a Bolshevik and they are Bolsheviks...The Bolsheviks happen to be murderous ruffians in Russia, led not by Britishers, but by German Jews, who as a class have, everywhere, been the most malignant and dangerous enemies of Great Britain and her Allies'.

<sup>77</sup> Hector Bolitho, *Alfred Mond: First Lord Melchett* (London: Secker, 1933), 201.

<sup>78</sup> Beth Hamedrash Minute Book, 12 December 1918, D/D SHC 1/7, WGA.

<sup>79</sup> *JC*, 28 November 1975.

<sup>80</sup> For more on this, see Stephen Meredith 'A "Strange Death" Foretold (or the Not So "Strange Death" of Liberal Wales): Liberal Decline, the Labour Ascendancy and Electoral Politics in South Wales, 1922-1924', *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, 7 (2012), 18-37; Duncan Tanner, Deian Hopkin and Chris Williams, eds., *The Labour Party in Wales 1900-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000).

towards Labour in the western valleys, while the town Liberals lacked organization, public relations flair or perhaps even belief in themselves.<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, it is highly unlikely that Mond's Jewishness was the reason behind his failure to carry Swansea in 1923. Despite the verbal xenophobic and anti-Semitic attacks he received from his political opponents, his Jewishness did not prevent him from holding onto his parliamentary constituency in the town for thirteen years, or from being elected MP for Carmarthen for four years in the 1920s. In fact, to fully understand the hostility Mond received in early twentieth-century Swansea, one must place it within the context of the intolerance which gripped Britain during the First World War.

### **Social Clubs, Societies and Sport**

As well as their heavy involvement in the political life of the Welsh towns and cities in which they settled, the historical record suggests that Jews faced little or no problems in becoming members of non-Jewish social clubs and civic societies in Wales—further testifying their successful integration and acceptance by the non-Jewish Welsh. Indeed, many were involved in Freemasonry which provided a meeting ground for Jewish businessmen to network and build relationships with their non-Jewish peers. Freemasonry traditionally prides itself on being openly accepting of any fair-minded man regardless of creed, and although this principle of religious tolerance was ignored by a number of masonic lodges in Germany and America throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there is no evidence to suggest that Jews were barred entry to masonic lodges in Wales.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, Welsh Jewry was proud of its involvement in Freemasonry and the appointment of a Jew to the position of Worshipful Master, (the highest honour to which a lodge may appoint any of its members) was often announced in the *JC*. They included A. I. Freedman of Merthyr Tydfil who was the third Jew 'within about ten years' to attain the position of Worshipful Master of the Loyal Cambrian Lodge when he was appointed in 1908; Joseph Simons and his son S. Simons of Abertillery who were both installed Worshipful Masters of the Gwent Lodge respectively in 1918 and 1926; and Philip Pollecoff who was elected 'Worshipful Master of the St. David's

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<sup>81</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, *Modern Wales: Politics, Place & People* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), 310.

<sup>82</sup> Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1723-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 105; John J. Robinson, *Born in Blood: The Lost Secrets of Freemasonry* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 257; Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 92.

Lodge of Freemasons' in Bangor in 1924.<sup>83</sup> At a dinner celebrating Pollecoff's appointment, Isidore Wartski 'made a reference to the broadmindedness of the lodge, and of all the Institutions in Bangor' for accepting a Jewish man.<sup>84</sup>

Moreover, Jews reached top positions in many other social clubs and societies in Wales. Some such individuals have already been mentioned, but there is no shortage of additional examples. In early twentieth-century Tredegar, for instance, S. Louis Harris 'a man of considerable literary attainments' acted as secretary for the Tredegar Literary and Scientific Society, while during the same period Julius Prag of Merthyr Tydfil was appointed president of several societies and clubs, including the Liberal Club and the local Chamber of Trade.<sup>85</sup> A number of Jews also held high offices in their local business clubs, including glazier Charles Arron, who was elected president of the Aberavon and Port Talbot Chamber of Trade in both 1970 and 1971; and Matt Cohen, who acted as president of the Pontypridd Rotary Club during the 1950s.<sup>86</sup>

Nonetheless, despite active Jewish participation, civic and social clubs in Wales were not immune to prejudices. In a similar vein to other parts of Britain such as Glasgow and London, Jews were at times barred from membership of both country and social clubs in the principality.<sup>87</sup> In 1934, for instance, a professional man was told to revoke his membership of a country club in Cardiff simply because he was Jewish, while twenty years later the owner of the Victoria Club in Cardiff declared that 'Jews were not wanted' because her late husband wished for 'no Jewish members'.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, in 1946, a survey of local anti-Jewish attitudes conducted by the Cardiff branch of the Council of Christians and Jews noted that an unnamed organisation in Aberdare 'unobtrusively bar[s] Jews'.<sup>89</sup> Altogether, however, these events

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<sup>83</sup> Others included Reuben Fligelstone of Cardiff who acted as Worshipful Master of the Carmel Lodge in the early twentieth century; Isaac Barnett of Bargoed who was installed Worshipful Master of the St. David's Lodge in 1927; Herman Gittlesohn of Merthyr Tydfil who was installed Worshipful Master of the Ashlar Lodge in Tredegar in 1914. See *JC*, 10 January 1908; 11 December 1914; 18 October 1918; 29 October 1926; 12 December 1941; 29 April 1927; 22 February 1924.

<sup>84</sup> *JC*, 22 February 1924.

<sup>85</sup> *JC*, 26 October 1906; 12 November 1920.

<sup>86</sup> *JC*, 22 March 1957; 13 February 1970; Charles Arron, interview with author.

<sup>87</sup> Gizela. C. Lebzelter, 'Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939', in Herbert A. Strauss, *Hostages of Modernization: Studies on Modern Antisemitism 1870-1933/39* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 400; Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 164.

<sup>88</sup> *South Wales Echo*, 15 August 1934; *JC*, 2 July 1954.

<sup>89</sup> Letter from the Cardiff Council of Christian and Jews to M.J. Roston, Secretary of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 4 July 1946, 1658/4/2/9, WL. The revelation of Nazi atrocities in wartime Europe led to the establishment of the Cardiff branch of the Council of Christians and Jews in February 1945. An inter-faith

were rare, adding up to a handful of incidents, and the surviving records suggest that Jews were generally tolerated and welcomed into Welsh social clubs and societies.

In addition to clubs and societies, historians have long recognised the important role played by sport in promoting the social inclusion (or sometimes exclusion) of ethnic minority groups. With reference to ethnic minorities in Wales, Paul O’Leary and Neil Evans once wrote that ‘sport has been a means of socializing individuals’ and ‘is fundamentally about the drawing of boundaries between those who are considered members of the group and those who remain outside’, while Gerry Black stresses that ‘sport has always been an important avenue of upward social mobility’ for minorities because it is ‘a way of gaining popular recognition...for the group to which one belongs’.<sup>90</sup> How did Jews fare in this instance? The available records reveal that Jews integrated well into Welsh sporting circles and faced little, if any, obstacles in participating in amateur or professional sports in the principality—a record very different from that of Jews in the United States and in Central Europe where Jews during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were often barred from sporting activities.<sup>91</sup> While some Jewish families in Wales, in keeping with Jewish tradition, may have favoured learning and intellectual accomplishments over sporting pastimes, a number of Jews demonstrated their acceptance and sense of belonging to the surrounding society by participating in the sporting associations of their locality.<sup>92</sup> For instance, during the latter half of the nineteenth century members of both the Aronson and Wartski families played for Bangor’s Cricket Club, while in the interwar period the already mentioned Morris Cohen of Ammanford was a prominent member of the town’s bowls club.<sup>93</sup> In the first decades of the twentieth century, Abram Marienberg was the goalkeeper for the junior A.F.C. team of St. Agnes Church in Port Talbot, while Phyllis Barnett of Bargoed, the daughter of Russian-born

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voluntary organisation, its chief aim on its formation was to promote mutual understanding and fellowship between Christians and Jews and to ‘foster co-operation in post-war reconstruction’. *JC*, 2 February 1945.

<sup>90</sup> Neil Evans and Paul O’Leary, ‘Playing the Game: Sport and Ethnic Minorities in Modern Wales’ in Williams, Evans and O’Leary, eds., *A Tolerant Nation?*, 109; Black, *Jewish London*, 37.

<sup>91</sup> See, for instance, Steven A. Riess, ‘Antisemitism and Sport in Central Europe and the United States c.1870-1932’, in Leonard Greenspoon, ed., *Jews in the Gym: Judaism, Sports, and Athletics* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2012), 97-124; Stephen H. Norwood and Eunice G. Pollack, eds., *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History*, 2 (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 526; George Eisen, ‘Jewish History and the Ideology of Modern Sport: Approaches and Interpretations’, *Journal of Sport History* 25, 3 (1998), 500.

<sup>92</sup> Abse, ‘A tale of collaboration’, 17; Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Judaism’s Encounter with American Sports* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 15-19.

<sup>93</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 13 June 1868; 1 July 1893; 25 May 1895; Joyce Arron, interview with author. According to Joyce (Morris’ granddaughter), a trophy cup was named in his honour, and continues to be awarded to bowls players in Ammanford to this day.

Isaac Barnett, won both the Junior Welsh Tennis Championship and the Carmarthen County Tennis Championship in 1934.<sup>94</sup>

Jews have also acquired the Welsh enthusiasm for rugby, and the role the sport has played in promoting the acceptance and social integration of some Jews in Welsh society has been stressed by a number of Jews in the principality. According to Joyce Arron of Ammanford (b.1940) and Norma Glass of Swansea (b.1938), their fathers' participation in local amateur rugby matches in the early twentieth century meant that they were both treated as 'one of the boys' by their non-Jewish peers.<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, with the exception of the James brothers, who were both Jewish by birth and played rugby for Wales in the 1890s, and Abraham Freedman (b.1883), who began his sporting career as a Welsh Rugby Union referee, self-identifying and practising Jews have generally been absent from the elite and professional levels of Welsh rugby.<sup>96</sup> There is no evidence, however, to suggest that this was because of anti-Semitism.

In his research on British Jewish involvement in sport, David Dee notes that 'From the 1920s through to the 1960s, many socially mobile Jews faced considerable racism from [British] golf clubs, especially when seeking membership of these organisations'.<sup>97</sup> This is because the movement of Jews out of the immigrant milieu during this period and their involvement in middle-class sporting activity was seen by some gentiles as both an 'invasion' and threat to 'the inherently exclusive milieu of British 'clubland', which closely 'represented the hierarchical structure of society and bourgeois class-consciousness'.<sup>98</sup> Although there are

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<sup>94</sup> John I. Hanson, *Outline of a Welsh Town* (Port Talbot: Daffodil Publications, 1971), 111; *JC*, 29 June 1934; 26 October 1934.

<sup>95</sup> Joyce Arron, interview with author; Norma Glass, interview with author.

<sup>96</sup> *JC*, 31 December 1965. Brothers David (1867-1929) and Evan James (1869-1902) were born in Bonynmaen, Swansea, to a Jewish mother, but were not raised as Jews. Their Anglo-Jewish mother, Jane, was born in Truro, Cornwall in 1844 and married a non-Jewish Welsh tin miner named Evan James. Having married out of the faith, it was decided not to raise the children Jewish. See James A. Davies, *A Swansea Anthology* (Bridgend: Seren, 1996), 55; David Smith and Gareth Williams, eds., *Fields of Praise: The Official History of the Welsh Rugby Union 1881-1981* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), 191. However, Jews have not been absent from the professional level of Welsh football. Cardiff-born Joseph M. Jacobson was signed to play for Cardiff City F.C. between 2006 and 2007, for instance, while Israeli footballer Dekel Keinan played for Cardiff City F.C. between 2011 and 2012. Similarly, Israeli footballer Itay Schechter played for Swansea City F.C. between 2012 and 2013. See *JC*, 18 August 2006; 7 January 2011; *The Independent*, 8 August 2012.

<sup>97</sup> David Dee, *Sport and British Jewry: Integration, ethnicity and anti-Semitism 1890-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 181.

<sup>98</sup> Tony Kushner, 'Clubland, Cricket Tests and Alien Internment', in Kushner and Cesarani, eds., *The Internment of Aliens*, 91; Gisela Lebzelter, 'Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939', in Strauss, *Hostages of Modernization*, 400; Dee, *Sport and British Jewry*, 174-175. In his research on American Jewish country clubs in the 1920s, Peter Levine demonstrates that discrimination towards Jews was prevalent within the

numerous examples of middle-class Jews being barred membership of golf clubs in British cities such as Manchester, Glasgow and London, the existing evidence suggests that Jews were generally welcomed and readily accepted by the Welsh golfing community.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, other than the forced resignation of a Jew from a Cardiff country club in 1934, as mentioned above, the barring of Jews from golf clubs was certainly not prevalent in the principality, and a number became prominent players in Welsh golfing circles. In the 1930s, for instance, Louis Littlestone ‘won numerous competitions’ for Pontypridd’s golf club, while Muriel Lermont played in the junior championship of the Cardiff golf club in 1936.<sup>100</sup> In Llandudno, Joe Lazar was elected captain of the local golf club in 1964, while Jackie Fine and Sol Shepherd were both respectively appointed captains of golf clubs in Mountain Ash and Cardiff in 1961.<sup>101</sup>

In 1960, Cardiff Jewry formed its own golf club, but there is no evidence to suggest that it was founded in response to anti-Semitism or discrimination, as occurred in other British cities such as Leeds, London and Manchester.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, a letter sent from Bernard Steyn of Cardiff to the Board of Deputies in 1945 suggests that Jews faced little, if any, difficulties in gaining golf club membership in the city. It noted that ‘socially Jews and non-

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American middle-class sporting and social club environment. Peter Levine, “‘Our Crowd at Play’: The Elite Jewish Country Club in the 1920s”, in Steven A. Riess, ed., *Sports and the American Jew* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 162-168.

<sup>99</sup> Hewlett Johnson, *Searching for Light: an Autobiography* (London: Joseph, 1968), 23; Tony Collins, ‘Jews, Antisemitism, and Sports in Britain, 1900-1939’, in Michael Brenner and Gideon Reuveni, eds., *Emancipation Through Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 147; Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 35.

<sup>100</sup> *JC*, 4 November 1938; 18 August 1939.

<sup>101</sup> Other examples include Jack Pollecoff, who was elected captain of the Pwllheli Golf Club in 1961 after thirty years of membership, and was preceded by his wife Rebecca, who was appointed lady captain of the same club in 1948; Maurice Simons, who was elected captain of the Pyle and Kenfig Golf Club in 1960 after thirty years of membership; Winifred Wartski, who was president of the ladies golf club in Bangor in the 1950s. See *JC*, 15 October 1954; 29 May 1964; *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), 53; 17, 2 (1967), 69; Untitled newspaper clippings, April 1961, and 21, April 1978, XML 4558/46/129, CRO.

<sup>102</sup> *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), 53; Collins, ‘Jews, Antisemitism’, 147; Dee, *Sport and British Jewry*, 188-191. Other Jewish sporting societies and clubs existed in Wales in the twentieth century, but there is no evidence to suggest that they were formed in response to discrimination. Rather, they were an expression of community identity, and were founded on the same lines as other local teams, some of which were organised around particular churches or neighbourhoods. In the early twentieth century, for instance, Newport and Cardiff’s Jewish communities both had cricket teams which competed against each other and played in local non-Jewish tournaments, while during the 1920s, inter-community sporting events between Cardiff and Swansea Jewry were a regular occurrence. Neil Evans and Paul O’Leary note the same reasons for the existence of Irish sporting teams in south Wales during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See *JC*, 22 September 1911; 17 August 1923; *CAJEX*, 1, 4 (1951), 38; Saunders, *Swansea Hebrew Congregation*, 25; Evans and O’Leary, ‘Playing the Game’ in Williams, Evans and O’Leary, eds., *A Tolerant Nation?*, 110.



Jews mix together very well. There is a customary dissemination [of Jews] in certain golf clubs'.<sup>103</sup>

As well as participating in sporting activities at both a professional and amateur level, a number of Welsh Jews became prominent administrators in Welsh sporting circles, and faced no obstacles in being elected to such positions. In 1951, for example, brothers Philip and Louis Fligelstone of Newport were respectively appointed president of the Welsh Amateur Swimming Association and chairman of the Glamorgan County Cricket Club.<sup>104</sup> In 1975, Anthony Simons, a former player for the Glamorgan Wanderers rugby team, was elected president of Pontypridd's Rugby Club. He held this title until 2001 when he was appointed the first Welsh-Jewish representative of the Welsh Rugby Union's international board.<sup>105</sup> Similarly in 1978, Myer Cohen of Cardiff, a 'well-known [figure] in sporting circles', and former president and chairman of the Welsh Hockey Association was elected chairman of the Welsh Games Council, while the already mentioned Abraham Freedman, a former Welsh Rugby Union referee and chairman of Swansea Town Football Club, was elected president of the Welsh Football League in 1947 and re-elected in 1962.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, the election of Jews to such positions demonstrated just how well Jews had become integrated not just in Welsh sporting circles, but in Welsh society more generally.

### **Tolerance**

How should we explain the relevant tolerance displayed towards Jews in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Wales? There are several possible, and probably interrelated, explanations. First, most of Wales' Jewish communities were never significantly large, and all formed a small percentage of their cities' and towns' population. Thus, Cardiff Jewry at its peak in the 1960s made up a mere 0.01% of the city's population, while Bangor's Jewish population formed no more than 0.02% of the city's total population.<sup>107</sup> While Nathan Abrams is correct in pointing out that 'small numbers...do not guarantee tolerance', the small size of Welsh-Jewish communities did mean that Jews living in Wales were more likely to come into contact and interact with non-Jews on a regular basis than those living in towns and cities

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<sup>103</sup> Letter from Bernard Steyn, Cardiff, to Mr. Roston, Secretary of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 31 January 1945, 1658/4/2/9, WL.

<sup>104</sup> *JC*, 2 March 1951.

<sup>105</sup> *JC*, 7 September 2001.

<sup>106</sup> *JC*, 4 August 1978; 13 July 1962.

<sup>107</sup> *JYB*, 1901 and 1966-1968.

with neighbourhoods that were overwhelmingly Jewish in complexion. This is because ‘they lived cheek by jowl with non-Jews’ from the very beginning, and consequently became known to local society as individuals.<sup>108</sup> For Michael Howard, the small amount of Jews in Llanelli meant that the Jewish community was more integrated and less ghettoised than in towns and cities with larger numbers of Jewish residents.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, Rona Hart, believed that the small number of Jewish evacuees that settled and lived in Colwyn Bay during the 1940s and 1950s formed a distinct but non-ghettoised community. Living amongst non-Jews, Rona took on the role of a Jewish ambassador, teaching her gentile neighbours about Judaism and its customs, and thus broke any suspicion and ignorance that may have previously existed.<sup>110</sup> This is echoed by Alan Schwartz of Cardiff, who described the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the city during the 1940s and 50s as ‘pretty good’ because ‘most [non-Jewish] people lived near Jewish people. They knew...how they lived, they knew about the holidays...they knew what happened in the Jewish year’.<sup>111</sup> In many instances, non-Jews have reported getting along very well with their Jewish neighbours. Typical is the recollection of the Welsh-language author, W.C. Elvet Thomas, who wrote of his close childhood relationship with his Jewish neighbours in Canton, Cardiff, in the 1910s:

They were Orthodox Jews and their appreciation of every good turn was great. Every Friday night, when it became dark, we could see them lighting the candles—their custom to show that the Sabbath had begun. They went regularly to the synagogue and celebrated every one of the festivals of their religion. Feasting was often part of the celebration, and because they were of a generous nature no feast occurred without plenty of fruit and delicacies passing over the garden wall for us. When the Feast of the Unleavened Bread came we, too, had plenty of bread from them. It is often said that the Jews are miserly but we found them otherwise.<sup>112</sup>

Moreover, Tom Devine argues that Jewish hostility was largely absent in Scotland because most Jews did not compete directly with Scots or others in the labour market, and the same can be argued for Wales to some degree.<sup>113</sup> As we have seen, the vast majority of Jewish migrants were not looking for manual labour work in Wales. Rather, they worked in

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<sup>108</sup> Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland*, 203; Ó Gráda notes that that Jewish immigrants in late nineteenth-century Ireland lived in close proximity to non-Jews, which helped to minimise the tensions and suspicions between native and newcomers in Ireland.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Howard, interview with author, London, 26 April 2012.

<sup>110</sup> Rona Hart, telephone interview with author, July 2012.

<sup>111</sup> Alan Schwartz, interview with author, Cardiff, 9 March 2011.

<sup>112</sup> W. C. Elvet Thomas, ‘A People Apart’, in Meic Stevens, ed., *A Cardiff Anthology* (Bridgend: Seren, 1987), 50; A similar recollection can be found in Hanson, *Outline of a Welsh Town*, 107-121.

<sup>113</sup> Thomas M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2007* (London: Penguin, 2006), 520.

commercial and skilled trades which they had traditionally occupied in Eastern Europe such as tailoring, watchmaking and shopkeeping. Providing commercial services for a predominantly non-Jewish population meant that a number of Jewish individuals and families became familiar faces to locals and contributed to the local economy of towns and villages across Wales. In Bangor, for instance, the Shafran family established a delicatessen store in 1939, which was a first for the city and frequently seen with a long queue of people outside, while in Llandudno Joe Lazar ran a successful and popular department store, and was a highly respected and recognised member of the wider community, so much so that when he died in 1985, over six hundred people attended his memorial service.<sup>114</sup> This is echoed by a number of Jews in the principality. The then editor of *Cajex*, H.M. Jaffa, for instance, wrote in 1961 that the ‘good relations with our Gentile neighbours...is due in no small measure to our conduct in personal and business behaviour’, while Michael Sugarman of Swansea believed that his father, Samuel Sugarman, became a respected individual in the town during the 1960s because of his regular interaction with non-Jewish customers at his car garage.<sup>115</sup>

Indeed, such was the influence of Jewish owned businesses in certain parts of Wales during the twentieth century that despite no longer being operational, their legacies continue, especially among older generations. For instance, Eve Pollecoff, daughter in-law of Jack Pollecoff, whose family, as we have seen, ran a number of drapery stores in north-west Wales, remembered a Welsh doctor in London asking about her surname, and how his grandparents ‘remembered them [the Pollecoffs] with the greatest pleasure’.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, Renee Woolf recalled being treated with the utmost respect when she visited her native Llanelli, after it was discovered she was a member of the Landy family, who ran a successful drapery business in the town during the mid-twentieth century.<sup>117</sup>

It may also be that the Jewish tradition of self-help and charity projected a respectable image of the Jewish community to the wider non-Jewish population, and thus pre-empted any suggestions that Jews were financially burdensome or an encumbrance on public welfare schemes. This is suggested by J. Ronald Williams in his 1926 sociological study of Merthyr Tydfil, in which he writes:

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<sup>114</sup> Rita Hyman and Michael Shafran, interview with author, London, 17 August 2011; Lazar, interview with author.

<sup>115</sup> *CAJEX*, 11, 3 (1961), 9; Michael Sugarman, ‘Aspects of my father’s life’, D/D SHC 11/14, WGA.

<sup>116</sup> Eve Pollecoff, interview with author.

<sup>117</sup> Renee Woolf, interview with author.

They [the Jews of Merthyr Tydfil] have been law-abiding citizens and give great assistance to charities and public causes. Their contribution to local life exceeds what one would expect from a small community. ...Although they have never lived in colonies they are strongly united and have always helped those in distress so that no Jew has ever become a charge upon the local Guardians.<sup>118</sup>

Similarly, during Chief Rabbi Dr. Joseph Hertz's visit to Pontypridd in June 1934, the chairman of the urban district council, George Paget, noted that 'the town was proud of its Jewish citizens. They lived good lives and clean lives' and were 'estimable citizens'.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, Cardiff's Jewish community was praised by the *South Wales Echo* in 1946 following the opening of the Cardiff Home of Aged Jews in Canton. The paper wrote that 'the problem of securing the welfare of our aged folk in south wales has concerned many minds' and 'the Jewish citizens of Cardiff...have taken an active lead in the matter'.<sup>120</sup> In reference to the Old Age Home, the then mayor of Cardiff, George James Ferguson, noted that Cardiff Jewry 'have set us [the city's non-Jewish population] an example' and 'it is for us to follow'.<sup>121</sup>

Perhaps too, Jews and non-Jews in Wales, particularly those of the latter who are Welsh speaking, share both a 'cultural empathy', and a perception of themselves as cultural minorities. Indeed, the cultural parallels and identifications between Jews and the indigenous Welsh were often highlighted by members of the Jewish community, and appear to have first emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1897, for instance, suggestions of 'native' Welsh empathy with the Jews were raised in the sermon of the then Chief Rabbi, Hermann Adler, during the opening of the Cathedral Road synagogue in Cardiff. According to the *JC*, the Chief Rabbi is reported to have adverted to:

....the remarkable parallels between the Welsh and the Jews. One of the most striking resemblances was the fact that both nationalities had ever been so earnest and enthusiastic in the cause of educational progress...the Welsh [are] convinced that national education is the first line in national defence...Need I speak to you of the paramount importance which Judaism attaches to education, to a knowledge of our ancient hallowed tongue, a knowledge of the Divinely inspired word?<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> J. Ronald Williams 'The influence of Foreign Nationalities on the Life of the People of Merthyr Tydfil', *The Sociological Review*, 28 (1926), 150.

<sup>119</sup> *JC*, 8 June 1934.

<sup>120</sup> *South Wales Echo & Evening Express*, 11 September 1946.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *JC*, 14 May 1897.

Similarities between Welsh and Jewish culture, and the support and sympathy of the former towards the cultural heritage of Jews were also raised in *The South Wales Jewish Review* in 1904. The February issue, for instance, included a letter sent from a W. Ben Griffiths that referred to the need to preserve the unity and ‘glorious heritage’ of the Jews. ‘I am always happy’, Griffiths states, ‘in my name being associated with your much maligned people’.<sup>123</sup> Indigenous Welsh empathy and sympathy was also expressed in the September issue. Under the heading ‘A Jewish Oratorio’, the *Review* reported of the performance of D. Emlyn’s oratorio ‘In Captivity’ at the National *Eisteddfod* in Rhyl in 1904, where the then MP for Denbigshire West, John Herbert Roberts, is reported to have said that the subject of the piece—the captivity of the Jews in Babylon—‘had always stirred the hearts of Welshmen’. This is because:

The national life of Wales had passed through many similar phases of experience that fell to the lot of the children of Israel, for they had been kept in isolation for many centuries; but now they had emerged with new hope, broader sympathies, and a wider outlook upon human affairs.<sup>124</sup>

However, Jasmine Donahaye dismisses the sincerity of these comparisons, and suggests that it is important for scholars to consider their context and timing, since:

In the first few years of the twentieth century...there occurred...matters of grave concern for the Jewish community: the Kishinev massacres, the Aliens Act...It may well be, therefore, that Jewish writers sought to reinforce a cultural or political sympathy that was tenuous, in order to try to secure a support and reassurance that was not in fact felt. It would be a mistake, consequently, to view such ‘reinforcements’ as evidence in and of themselves of a ‘tradition of identification’.<sup>125</sup>

Even so, Jews have highlighted the close parallels and associations between themselves and the non-Jewish Welsh in times of stability, which suggests that these identifications are and *have* been genuinely felt by some Jews in the principality. In 1963, for instance, Lionel Simmons of Cardiff wrote an article for the *JC* entitled ‘The Welsh and Ourselves’, which dwelled on the affinities between Jewish and indigenous Welsh culture. According to Simmons:

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<sup>123</sup> *South Wales Jewish Review*, 2 (February 1904), 30-32.

<sup>124</sup> *South Wales Jewish Review*, 9 (September, 1904), 130.

<sup>125</sup> Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 131.

To say that Welshman and Jews have much in common is a gross understatement: culturally, spiritually and socially the similarity of the two peoples is remarkable...Over the centuries the Welsh, in *their* Diaspora, have clung stubbornly to their traditional way of life, habits and customs, refusing to be swamped by the dominant environment...Like the Jew, he is intensely proud of his heritage, his kinsmen and the Land of his Fathers, the spiritual roots which have nurtured him...Like the Jew he is often the butt of detractors and revilers...Common nobility through common sufferance is matched by similarity of temperament.<sup>126</sup>

Finally, there is also an argument that Welsh (non-Jewish Welsh) tolerance towards Jews may be attributable in part to the emphatically Old Testament focus of several Nonconformist denominations that made up the greater part of Welsh religious affiliation from the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries.<sup>127</sup> As Sharman Kadish put it:

The 'People of the Book' existed in the imagination of the Christian Welsh...Welsh Nonconformist chapels were often referred to as *tabernaclau*, in Welsh, and given place names such as Zion, Bethel, Jerusalem or Salem and Carmel, reflecting a familiarity and identification with the Old Testament and the land of ancient Israel.<sup>128</sup>

Similarly, William Rubinstein once wrote that:

Identification with, and knowledge of, the Old Testament Hebrew was pervasive in nineteenth-century Welsh culture...the intimate knowledge of the ancient Hebrew, and the identification of nonconformist Welshmen with the ancient Hebrew, was extraordinarily widespread...as witnessed by the appearance of so many Old Testament names in every facet of Welsh life—and not to the same extent with the New Testament.<sup>129</sup>

There are indeed a number of historical examples from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries where such affinities with biblical Jews are the subject of positive commentary by Welsh nonconformists. The most well-known and often-cited example is that of former Prime

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<sup>126</sup> *JC*, 20 September 1963.

<sup>127</sup> Donahaye, 'By Whom Shall She Arise?' 161. In Wales, the strong traditions of Nonconformism can be traced back to the Welsh Methodist revival of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By the time of the religious census in 1851, nearly eighty per cent of worshippers in Wales were Nonconformist. The influence of Nonconformism, boosted by the 1904–1905 Welsh Revival, led to the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales in 1914. Thereafter decline accelerated, assisted by the cynicism caused by the First World War clerical army recruiters, the break-up of traditional communities, the rise of new leisure activities and the growth of hedonism and consumerism. For more on the decline of Nonconformity in Wales, see Paul Chambers, 'Social Networks and Religious Identity: an Historical Example From Wales', in Grace Davie, Linda Woodhead, Paul L.F. Heelas, eds., *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular, and Alternative Futures* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 74–85; Paul Chambers, *Religion, Secularization and Social Change in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005).

<sup>128</sup> Kadish, 'The Jewish Presence in Wales', in O'Kane and Morgan-Guy, eds., *Biblical Art from Wales*, 272.

<sup>129</sup> Rubinstein, 'the anti-Jewish riots', 670–671.

Minister David Lloyd George (1863-1945), who was raised a Baptist in north-west Wales and later approved the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which approved the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. In a speech to the Jewish Historical Society of England in 1925, Lloyd George stressed that it was the Old Testament basis of his religious upbringing and education in Wales which prepared the ground for his sympathy and support of Zionism later in life:

It was undoubtedly inspired by natural sympathy, admiration, and also by the fact that, as you must remember, we had been trained even more in Hebrew history than in the history of our own country. I was brought up in a school where I was taught far more about the history of the Jews than about my own land...five days a week in the day school, and...in our Sunday schools, we were thoroughly versed in the history of the Hebrews.<sup>130</sup>

Similarly, the scholar Rev. D. Wynne Evans wrote of the identification of nonconformist Welshmen with Jews in an article which appeared in *Young Wales* in 1902:

The writer of *Hanes Cymru* very truly remarks that ‘when it is remembered how adapted to the mind of the Welshman is the Old Testament, it is not difficult to believe that the Cymro and the Hebrew are brothers from the wilderness’. So adapted is it that our historian, in ‘The Young Wales School Series’, himself appropriates a Hebrew prophetic temporal blessing as a suitable motto for the first chapter.<sup>131</sup>

This affiliation between Welsh nonconformists and the Hebrew Bible did not occur in isolation, however, and was also expressed by a number of Jews in the principality, both past and present. Reflecting on her childhood in early twentieth-century Tredegar, Millie Harris wrote that ‘the local [non-Jewish] people were very religious; they respected us [the Jewish community], and always reminded us that we were “the People of the Book”’, while the late Ben Hamilton of Merthyr Tydfil stressed that ‘Welsh people...[are] more closely akin to the Jew than probably other people, in their respect of their great affection for the Old Testament’.<sup>132</sup> This opinion was echoed by Leslie Burns of Merthyr Tydfil, who found ‘the little Welshman, typical Welshman, very pious one, [was] nearer to us than anyone else, than any other English, Scotch, anything. The little Welshman is more Jewish, he’s more Old

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<sup>130</sup> Cited in Eitan Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English culture 1799-1917: Palestine and the Question of Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 182.

<sup>131</sup> D. Wynne Evans, ‘Studies in Britannic-Hebraic Eschatology IV’, *Young Wales: a National Periodical for Wales*, 8 (April 1902), 87.

<sup>132</sup> *CAJEX*, 24, 4 (1984), 26; Ben Hamilton, interview with David Jacobs.

Testament'.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, Alwyn Pierce Lloyd of Abergele recalled that his teachers in 1950s north Wales referred to him as 'one of the chosen' and believed that the Welsh were tolerant because most had a chapel background and often referred to Jews as the 'People of the Book'.<sup>134</sup>

Alongside a familiarity and engagement with the Old Testament, Pierce Lloyd also believed that the pro-Jewish sentiment adopted by Welsh nonconformists was reinforced by their opposition to any form of religious persecution (from which they themselves had suffered).<sup>135</sup> This is echoed by the Welsh-born Jewish writer, Lily Tobias, in her novel *My Mother's House* (1931), where she describes a pro-Jewish Welsh schoolteacher as 'a conscientious nonconformist, whose [liberal] principles approved the freedom of another faith'.<sup>136</sup> Tobias' grandson, Leo Abse, also believed there to be 'a fruitful bond' as 'the Nonconformists esteemed the Jews as "People of the Book" and very often had a special regard for them'.<sup>137</sup> His views reflect those of the then minister of the Cathedral Road Hebrew Congregation in Cardiff, Rev. H. Jerevitch, who stated in 1921 that 'Wales was practically free from anti-Semitism because the Welsh people...knew the Bible and believed in it'.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, in 1923 Isidore Wartski of Bangor wrote to the then Chief Rabbi claiming that 'Welsh people have a reverence for the "People of the Book" that is perhaps unique'.<sup>139</sup> Although it was unique in many ways, the identification of Welsh Nonconformity with biblical Jews was paralleled elsewhere. Abrams, for instance, suggests that Scottish tolerance towards the Jews may be 'attributable to the affinities of Scottish Protestantism with the Hebrew Bible', and later draws on the United States, 'where the Pilgrims and Puritans perceived themselves as a modern-day incarnation of the Children of Israel'.<sup>140</sup>

Nevertheless, despite evidence that this affiliation has been shared by Jew and non-Jew alike, Geoffrey Alderman and other scholars, including Jonathan Campbell and Anthony Glaser, have challenged its sincerity by drawing our attention to the objection of

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<sup>133</sup> Leslie Burns, interview with David Jacobs.

<sup>134</sup> Alwyn Pierce Lloyd, interview with author, Bangor, 3 November 2011.

<sup>135</sup> Alwyn Pierce Lloyd, interview with author.

<sup>136</sup> Lily Tobias, *My Mother's House*, 31.

<sup>137</sup> Abse, 'A tale of collaboration', 20.

<sup>138</sup> *Cambrian*, 8 April 1921.

<sup>139</sup> Letter from Isidore Wartski to the Chief Rabbi, 22 April 1923, ACC/2805/4/2/2, LMA.

<sup>140</sup> Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 181.



nonconformists in Blackwood in expressing sympathy with Jewish shopkeepers affected by the 1911 Tredegar Riots.<sup>141</sup> According to Alderman:

There were, to be sure, many local expressions of sympathy with the Jews, but when the Monmouthshire Welsh Baptist Association, meeting at Blackwood, near Bargoed, on 6 September, was asked to pass a resolution expressing sympathy with the Jews, *several* ministers of religion and others took exception to the motion; one delegate argued that 'Resolutions did more harm than good, and they encouraged the Jews. There were about 100 Jews at Tredegar now, and if they had many more resolutions they would have 500 there'. The resolution was indeed allowed to drop.<sup>142</sup>

Yet, Alderman chooses to ignore why the Baptists 'took exception to the motion', and is guilty of manipulating evidence to support his argument that early twentieth-century Wales was 'a land seething with religious bigotry'.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, the Monmouthshire Welsh Baptist Association did not refuse to express sympathy with Jews because its members were anti-Jewish, but rather because 'the premises of Nonconformists were also looted'.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, Alderman fails to acknowledge that the anti-Jewish remark made by the one delegate was 'greeted with dissent and loud cries of "Withdraw"' from the floor.<sup>145</sup> Nevertheless, that such a comment was raised in the meeting does alert us to the fact that the toleration of Jews by nonconformists was not absolute, and that the attitude of the latter to the former was considerably more ambiguous and complex than simply one of 'support and admiration'.<sup>146</sup>

Indeed, the identification of nonconformists with Jews was largely with the ancient Hebrew people of the Old Testament, and thus when examining non-Jewish and Jewish relations in Wales it is important to distinguish between non-Jewish responses to 'biblical' and 'non-biblical' contemporary Jews. This is because giving prominence to the former does not guarantee a positive attitude to the latter. Although, as we have seen, the affiliation between nonconformists and the Hebrew Bible predisposed a number of Welsh people to take a positive interest in their Jewish contemporaries, religious admiration did, in some cases,

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<sup>141</sup> Alderman, 'The Anti-Jewish Riots of August 1911: a Response', 568; Campbell, 'The Jewish Community in Britain', in Gilley and Sheils, eds., *History of Religion in Britain*, 438; Glaser, 'The Tredegar Riots of August 1911', 159.

<sup>142</sup> Alderman, 'The anti-Jewish riots of August 1911: a response', 568.

<sup>143</sup> Alderman, 'The Jew as Scapegoat?', 67.

<sup>144</sup> *The Times*, 7 September 1911.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Rubinstein, 'the anti-Jewish riots', 670.

give way to prejudice and intolerance. Lloyd George, for instance, the ‘showpiece for Welsh [Nonconformist] philo-Semitism’, was not completely immune to anti-Jewish prejudices, as some scholars, including Rubinstein, would like to believe.<sup>147</sup> Although there is no denying that Lloyd George’s sympathy and support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine was influenced by his nonconformist upbringing, there is much truth in Geoffrey Alderman’s claim that ‘Lloyd George was philo-semitic only when it suited him’.<sup>148</sup> In 1909, for instance, Lloyd George, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, launched two verbal attacks against Lord Lionel Rothschild (then leader of the Conservative opposition in the House of Lords to Lloyd George’s ‘People’s Budget’) which were both crudely anti-Semitic and insensitive to Jews. According to *The Times*, Lloyd George criticised Rothschild by likening him to Pharaoh, the great oppressor of Jews in ancient Egypt, and referred to his budget’s opponents as ‘those Philistines, who were not all uncircumcised’.<sup>149</sup> It is unclear why Lloyd George made these public remarks, but in an interview with the *London Jewish Express* he denied that they were actuated by Jewish hostility.<sup>150</sup>

While some Jews repudiated the charge that the then Chancellor of the Exchequer was anti-Semitic, others condemned Lloyd George’s attack upon Lord Rothschild.<sup>151</sup> The *JC*, for instance, wrote that ‘the double attack (by Mr. Lloyd George) on Lord Rothschild was a veiled appeal to the anti-Semitism which...is always dangerously near the surface’, while an anonymous ‘Jewish elector’ stated that ‘Lloyd George’s attack on Lord Rothschild was vicious and contemptible and should be borne in mind by all Jews at the coming election’.<sup>152</sup>

Regrettably, there are further instances of anti-Jewish prejudices expressed by Lloyd George. For example, at a speech in Carmarthen in November 1899, Lloyd George accused German Jewish financiers of pushing Britain into the Boer War to safeguard and extend their interests in the South African gold fields. He stated that: ‘the people we are fighting for, those Uitlanders, are German Jews—15,000 to 20,000 of them...Pah! Fighting for men of that type!’<sup>153</sup> Moreover, Lloyd George occasionally made anti-Semitic comments about Edwin

<sup>147</sup> Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 79. See, for instance, Rubinstein and Rubenstein, *Philosemitism*, 145.

<sup>148</sup> Alderman, ‘the anti-Jewish riots of August 1911: a response’, 566.

<sup>149</sup> *The Times*, 17 and 18 December 1909.

<sup>150</sup> *JC*, 7 January 1910.

<sup>151</sup> See, for instance, the response of an M. Wolfsohn of Manchester; *JC*, 10 January 1910.

<sup>152</sup> *JC*, 17 December 1909; 10 January 1910.

<sup>153</sup> Cited in John Grigg, *The Young Lloyd George* (London: Methuen, 1973), 260. Lloyd George was not alone in his anti-Jewish prejudice. Labour MP Keir Hardie, for instance, joined with John Burns to promote a House of Commons early day motion which attributed the war largely to Jewish financiers, while the Liberal

Montagu, a former secretary of state for India. According to the memoirs of William J. Braithwaite, a civil servant at the Board of Inland Revenue, Lloyd George once said Montagu was a ‘Dirty coward. Men of that race always are’, after the then under-secretary of state for India suggested that the National Insurance Bill of 1911 should be abandoned, while in a diary entry dated 4 April 1915, Lloyd George’s secretary, mistress, and later second wife, Frances Stevenson, wrote that both she and Lloyd George found Montagu to be loathsome and the ‘most ambitious of Cabinet Ministers, differing from the majority of the others in that he [had] in an enormous degree the “push” which [was] characteristic of the Jew’.<sup>154</sup> Conversely, anti-Jewish insults such as these were never present in Lloyd George’s remarks about his solicitor Rufus Isaacs, a former Liberal MP for Reading, and perhaps Naomi Levine is correct in her observation that ‘When a man was useful to him’, as Rufus Isaacs was, ‘his religion became irrelevant’, but ‘When he was not, Lloyd George’s latent anti-Semitism surfaced’.<sup>155</sup>

Lloyd George, however, was not alone, and there are further examples of anti-Jewish antipathies in the writings of other Welsh liberal nonconformists, which mainly draw on the age-old stereotype of Jewish financial greed. As noted in Chapter Three, in 1941 W. J. Gruffydd, ‘a convinced Nonconformist’ and ‘a Liberal in his political sympathies’ attacked Jewish evacuees settling in north Wales during the Second World War in his periodical *Y Llenor*, claiming that they were both cowardly and financially exploitative.<sup>156</sup> Although Grahame Davies acknowledges Gruffydd’s anti-Jewish remarks in his anthology, he isolates this example of hostility and labels it ‘exceptional’.<sup>157</sup> According to Davies, Gruffydd’s statement was ‘entirely out of touch with the Welsh Nonconformity and Liberalism for which Gruffydd was otherwise such an eloquent spokesman’.<sup>158</sup> However, the inclusion of other anti-Jewish pieces by Liberal Nonconformists in Davies’ anthology presents something of a

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statesman, John Morley, claimed that a ‘ring of financiers...mostly Jewish, are really responsible for the War’. For more on this, see Roy Hattersley, *David Lloyd George: The Great Outsider* (London: Little, Brown, 2010), 123; cited in Robert Rhodes James, *The British Revolution: British Politics, 1880-1939* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1978), 201.

<sup>154</sup> Henry N. Bunbury, ed., *Lloyd George’s Ambulance Wagon: Being the Memoirs of William J. Braithwaite, 1911-1912* (London: Methuen & Co., 1957), 174; Alan J.P. Taylor, ed., *Lloyd George: a Diary, by Frances Stevenson* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1971), 40.

<sup>155</sup> Naomi B. Levine, *Politics, Religion, and Love: The Story of H.H. Asquith, Venetia Stanley and Edwin Montagu* (New York, New York University Press, 1991), 574-575.

<sup>156</sup> Davies, *The Chosen People*, 168.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

contradiction.<sup>159</sup> In a similar vein to Gruffydd, the travelogue *O'r Bala i Geneva* (From Bala to Geneva; 1899) by the Calvinistic Methodist Liberal, Owen M. Edwards (1858-1920), draws on the age-old stereotype of the avaricious and economically exploitative Jew. Following an encounter with Jews in Heidelberg, he wrote:

...I have realised for a long while now, that the Jews, the old Israelites of the Bible, are still a living nation. I remember well the time when I felt this first. I was preaching, around five years ago, in a mountainous area in Cardiganshire, and as I went towards the chapel, on that cold November morning, I saw heaps of corn rotting on the hillside. I asked the kind farmer who was with me if they had had a bad harvest. 'No', he said... 'that there's the work of the Jews'. My sermon was weighing too much on my mind for me to ask more about them at this time; but I knew then that it was possible to see that what one sees every day on this Continent can also happen in Wales,—a Jewish wolf falling on his prey in the darkest hour.... Can one justify the hatred of the nations of the Continent towards the Jews? I have thought a great deal before replying,—yes, without a doubt. For one thing, their presence has been an obstacle on the road to developing commerce...<sup>160</sup>

Although Edwards writes sympathetically of a Rabbi Jacob who was murdered by irate Christians, and asks the reader to withhold condemnation of Shylock as a usurer before considering the fact that it would have been difficult to trade without credit in the Venice of the period of Shakespeare's play, his passage on Jews is predominantly anti-Semitic in tone.<sup>161</sup> It is important to note that such anti-Jewish prejudices were common in a great deal of contemporary literature on Jews, and as Hazel Walford Davies observes, Edwards' expressions were probably met with silent acquiescence by a majority of his readers in

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<sup>159</sup> Davies' anthology includes the anti-Jewish remarks of both the Calvinistic Methodist Liberal, Owen M. Edwards and the Nonconformist minister and poet William Williams (better known by his bardic name 'Crwys'). See Davies, *The Chosen People*, 65-70, 157-165.

<sup>160</sup> Owen M. Edwards, *O'r Bala i Geneva* (Wrecsam: Hughes a'i Fab, 1922), 43 and 60. '...yr wyf wedi sylweddoli ers tro byd bellach, fod yr Iddewon, hen Israeliaid y Beibl, eto'n genedl fyw. Yr wyf yn cofio yn dda am y pryd y teimlais hyn gyntaf. Yr oeddwn yn pregethu, tua phum mlynedd yn ol, mewn ardal fynyddig yn sir Aberteifi, ac wrth fynd tua'r capel, ar y bore oer hwnnw ym mis Tachwedd, gwelwn sypiau o ŷd yn braenu ar ochr y bryn. Gofynnais i'r amaethwr caredig oedd gyda mi a oeddynt wedi cael cynhaeaf drwg. "Na", ebai yntau... "gwaith yr Iddewon yw hwnacw." Yr oedd fy mhregeth yn pwysu gormod ar fy meddwl i holi ychwaneg am danynt ar y pryd; ond gwybum wedyn fod yn bosibl i beth welir bob dydd ar y Cyfandir yma ddigwydd hyd yn oed yn Nghymru, —blaid o Iddew yn disgyn ar ei ysglyfaeth yn yr awr gyfyngaf... A ellir cyfiawnhau casineb cenhedloedd y Cyfandir at yr Iddewon? Yr wyf wedi meddwl llawer cyn ateb, —gellir, yn ddiameu. Yn un peth, y mae eu presenoldeb wedi bod yn rhwystr ar ffordd datblygiad masnach...'. My translation.

<sup>161</sup> Edwards, *O'r Bala i Geneva*, 58-59.

1889.<sup>162</sup> However, the decision of Thomas Jones to leave out Edwards' anti-Jewish passage in a later edition of the book suggests that there were also readers who met his prejudices with silent resistance and disapproval.<sup>163</sup> Or perhaps, as Donahaye suggests, it was intentionally not reproduced to keep the myth of a pure, liberal and tolerant Wales intact.<sup>164</sup>

### Conversionism

The ambiguities and complexities in the attitude of Welsh Nonconformists towards Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are further exemplified by the commitment of the former to the practice of evangelism and proselytism. Indeed, the question of whether conversionism is 'philo-' or 'anti-' Semitic has long been debated by historians. For William and Hillary Rubinstein, 'conversionism can perhaps be properly viewed as one particular strand of philosemitism' since 'according to the conversionists' own lights, theirs was the ultimate act of kindness towards Jews'.<sup>165</sup> That is they believed they were 'saving' the Jews before the second coming. However, other historians find little evidence of philo-Semitism since conversionism involved a deliberate Christian failure to appreciate the authenticity of Judaism as a religion in its own right. For Frank Felsenstein, conversionists sought to 'undermine the very existence of Jews as Jews', while Todd Endelman described conversionists as 'hostile' because they sought to destroy the very existence of Jews as Jews.<sup>166</sup> Nonetheless, as we shall see, conversionist discourse and practice in the context of Wales is problematically contradictory and does not fit comfortably within a binary opposition of 'anti-' or 'philo-' Semitism.

The Evangelical Revival of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was noteworthy for an upsurge in conversionist activity in Britain, when evangelists were inspired by an instinctive impulse to revitalise British religious life and spread the message of Christianity to all peoples. The Jews were not exempt from this missionary activity. Drawing

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<sup>162</sup> Hazel Walford Davies, 'Boundaries: The Early Travel Books and Periodicals of O. M. Edwards', in Hywel T. Edwards, ed., *A Guide to Welsh Literature: Vol. V, c.1800-1900* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 193.

<sup>163</sup> Thomas Jones, ed., *Teithio'r Cyfandir gan Syr O.M. Edwards: Detholion o O'r Bala i Geneva, Tro yn yr Eidal, Tro yn Llydaw* (Wrecsam: Hughes a'i Fab, 1959). Edwards' original chapters 'Synagog ac Eglwys' (Synagogue and Church), and 'Yr Iddewon' (The Jews), are both absent in Jones' edited volume.

<sup>164</sup> Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 21.

<sup>165</sup> Rubinstein and Rubinstein, *Philosemitism*, 133.

<sup>166</sup> Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: a Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 11; Todd Endelman, *Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 17.

on the Book of Revelation, a number of evangelists believed that Jews were to be given priority in any missionary work since their conversion to Christianity and their restoration to Palestine were necessary precursors of the Second Coming of Christ.<sup>167</sup> This belief that Jews would play a central role in Protestant eschatology originated in the seventeenth century and, having lain dormant for almost a century, it re-emerged with great fervour in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a consequence of the French Revolution.<sup>168</sup> Indeed, the overthrow of the old order in France, the spread of French authority throughout Europe, and the emancipation of French Jews by Napoleon in 1791, all contributed to a reawakening of millenarian speculation and fuelled hopes that some momentous change in the condition of the Jews was imminent.<sup>169</sup> It was in this context that such organisations as the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews (henceforth London Society) (1809) and the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews (henceforth British Society) (1842) were founded in England.<sup>170</sup>

Although missionary societies aimed at Jews were not established in Wales between the early and mid-nineteenth century (most likely because of the small numbers of Jews present in the principality), conversionist efforts were in no way strictly an ‘English madness’, as Michael Ragussis once wrote.<sup>171</sup> Indeed, both evangelical churchmen and nonconformists in Wales expressed their Jewish missionary interests by inviting or allowing representatives of the London societies to speak at their gatherings and offering financial contributions to their cause. In 1811, for instance, the founder of the London Society, Joseph Frey, embarked on a fund raising tour of Wales and visited over seventy towns and villages, while in 1865, the then secretary to the London Society, Rev. J. Drury, ‘preached some eloquent sermons in Talywain church’ where ‘collections were made in aid of the society’.<sup>172</sup> Although an auxiliary to the London based British Society was founded in Merthyr Tydfil in

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<sup>167</sup> Nadia Valman, *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>168</sup> Todd Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1656-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 147.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> For further information on the histories of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews and the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews, see Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 147-151.

<sup>171</sup> Michael Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion: ‘The Jewish Question’ & English National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 15-17.

<sup>172</sup> *Cambrian*, 17 August 1811; John H. Morris, *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists’ Foreign Mission, to the End of the Year 1904* (Caernarfon: C. M. Book Room, 1910), 283; *Illustrated Usk Observer and Raglan Herald*, 19 August 1865.

1847, its primary function was to raise funds for missionary work in London and overseas rather than to proselytise local Jews.<sup>173</sup> Two years previously, the Scottish missionary Dr. Alexander Keith spoke at the North Wales Association of Calvinistic Methodists held in Ruthin, where, according to the minutes, ‘he showed obligations of the Christian Church to realise the present condition of the seed of Abraham, and to pray and labour for their conversion’.<sup>174</sup> Keith’s words resonated with members of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Missionary Society (established in 1840 to convert both the inhabitants of the Khasia Hills in India and English immigrants to south Wales), and in 1846 they sent Rev. John Mills (1812-1873), a Calvinistic Methodist minister at Ruthin, to London to promote Christianity among the Jews of the metropolis. The annals of Welsh history primarily remember Mills as a hymnologist and musician, but his conversionist activities were extensive, and provide something of a case study for the complexities and ambiguities of conversionism in the context of nineteenth-century Wales.

Mills spent twelve years preaching the gospel to Jews living in London, and as Jasmine Donahaye rightfully points out, during this period his attitude towards his Jewish contemporaries appears to have shifted from one of disdain to one of respect.<sup>175</sup> This, however, does not suggest that his earlier views were equated to ‘anti-Semitism’ since his criticisms of Jews appear to have been driven primarily by concern than contempt. For instance, when Mills first encountered his Jewish contemporaries in London he was distressed to find that they were ignorant of both the scriptures and the Hebrew language.<sup>176</sup> The chief explanation he advanced for this ignorance was the Jews’ ‘commercial spirit’, which he saw not as an inherent Jewish quality, but rather a consequence of the condition of Jewish life since their exile from the land of Israel.<sup>177</sup> In Mill’s view, the Jews of London had ‘gone astray from God’, and he saw their conversion to Christianity as a religious obligation.<sup>178</sup> The conversion of the Jews was also of millenarian inspiration, as is suggested in Mill’s 1852 Welsh-language publication *Iuddewon Prydain* (The Jews of Britain): ‘the

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<sup>173</sup> *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, 24 April 1847.

<sup>174</sup> Morris, *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists*, 284.

<sup>175</sup> Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 52.

<sup>176</sup> *Y Drysorfa* (Chwefror 1847), 61.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* ‘...yr ysbryd masnachol sydd yn llenwi’r genedl’. My translation.

<sup>178</sup> *JC*, 6 February 1852.

chief aim of the writer in preparing [this book] was to...win [the Jewish nation] to the truth that is in Jesus'.<sup>179</sup>

Mills published an English translation of *Iuddewon Prydain* in 1853, but the English-version is more anthropological in tone. Entitled, *The British Jews*, the book provides detailed descriptions of the cultural and religious customs of London's Jews, praises Jewish learning and principles, and contests stereotypes.<sup>180</sup> Indeed, Mills was certainly sympathetic towards London's Jewish community, and the book consequently received positive reviews from the British Jewish press.<sup>181</sup> The shift from Jewish disdain to respect in Mills' writings is unclear, but several years of intimate association with London Jewry may have challenged his initial assumptions. It also appears that support for the mission was nearly withdrawn in 1851 because of a 'great divergence of opinion...as to the methods employed by the missionary'. Thus, it is possible that Mills reassessed his conversionist methods during this period and sought to win Jewish souls with sympathy and respect rather than disdain. Mills eventually retired from the mission in 1859, and although a precise record of his conversions is not extant, surviving evidence suggests that he failed to persuade a large number of Jews to adopt Christianity.<sup>182</sup>

Indeed, British Protestant missionaries, whether Anglican or Nonconformist, repudiated the use of coercion to assist the conversion of Jews or non-Jews since for them proselytism was an intensive individual process of spiritual self-reflection and scriptural exploration.<sup>183</sup> However, there is one incident—The alleged 'abduction' and 'forcible' conversion of an eighteen-year-old Jewish girl named Esther Lyons by a Cardiff Baptist minister and his wife in 1868—which stands out in Welsh history and has been used by some historians to prop up arguments that Welsh dissenters were coercive in their conversionist activities, and thus

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<sup>179</sup> John Mills, *Iuddewon Prydain* (Llanidloes: R. Mills, 1852), pp. '...amcan pennaf yr ysgrifenydd yn ei baratoi oedd ennill teimladau crïstionogol ei gydwladyr i weddio dros y genedl Iuddewig, ac i ymdrechu i'w hennill i'r gwirionedd fel y mae yn yr Iesu.' My translation.

<sup>180</sup> John Mills, *The British Jews* (London: Houlston & Stonemann, 1853).

<sup>181</sup> The *JC* noted that 'There is a vein of liberality throughout the work', while the *Hebrew Observer* commented: 'We have never seen a more faithful daguerreotype of Jewish life, than that portrayed [sic] by the Rev. Mr. Mills'. See *JC*, 21 October 1853. In 1901, the already mentioned D. Wynne Evans praised *The British Jews* for promoting Judaism to Christianity rather than vice versa, stating that by writing the book Mills 'did more than any man in Britain to remove the prejudices of Christians against Jews'. See D. Wynne Evans, 'Studies in Iberic=Hebraic Eschatology II', *Young Wales: a National Periodical for Wales*, 7 (August 1901), 124.

<sup>182</sup> At the annual meeting of the Methodist Missionary Society in 1858, for instance, two representatives from Môn and Arfon criticised Mills for his failures in achieving Jewish converts. See Richard Mills and N. Cynhafal Jones, *Buchdraeth y Parch. John Mills* (Aberdare: Mills A. Lynch, 1881), 158.

<sup>183</sup> Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 145.



religiously intolerant towards Jews. Anthony Glaser, for instance, once wrote that ‘the Lyons Case’ was a sign ‘of hostility on the part of the powerful Welsh Baptists towards the Jews’, while Geoffrey Alderman drew on the alleged ‘abduction and conversion of Esther Lyons’ to suggest that ‘South Wales...was a land seething with religious bigotry’.<sup>184</sup> Yet, this was an exceptional incident which has been over-exaggerated by both historians to fit their claims of the existence of ‘Nonconformist anti-Semitism’ in nineteenth-century Wales. It is true, as Alderman states, that Esther Lyon’s father, Barnett, took the Baptist minister and his wife to court in July 1869 and both were ‘found guilty of enticement’, but the verdict was later overturned by appeal after the judges found insufficient evidence of enticement.<sup>185</sup> Indeed, it appeared that Esther Lyons left home voluntarily and consented willingly to her conversion. This is revealed by a letter sent by Esther to the *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* in August 1868:

It ill becomes me to enter into a public discussion with my father, but thus much I may publicly declare, that no one has ever made the slightest attempt and still less coerced me to leave my father’s house....of my own accord I left his house, and that I have found in Jesus of Nazareth the Saviour of my soul, and have been baptized in His name.<sup>186</sup>

Although Esther later admitted that the letter was partly written for her, she insisted ‘that the sentiments in it were her own’.<sup>187</sup> Indeed, the whole affair appears to have been grossly exaggerated by a father who ‘was obviously torn by grief at the loss of his daughter’ and ashamed ‘that she should be a “*Meshummad*”’.<sup>188</sup>

The *JC* devoted considerable attention to the Esther Lyons case and mounted pages of sharp derision on conversionists. Drawing on the Cardiff case, an editorial from August 1869 said ‘We have had nearly enough, by now, of the conversionists...we Jews are sick of them’, while another editorial from August 1870 noted ‘We have always held that the existence of Societies having for object to convert Englishmen of one faith to another faith, is injurious and insulting’.<sup>189</sup> However, despite the *JC*’s outrage, the case generally did not create ‘a

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<sup>184</sup> Glaser, ‘The Tredegar Riots’, in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 159; Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat?’, 67.

<sup>185</sup> Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat?’, 70; *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, 2 July 1870.

<sup>186</sup> *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, 22 August 1868.

<sup>187</sup> *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, 31 July 1869.

<sup>188</sup> Henriques, ‘Lyons versus Thomas’, in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 142.

<sup>189</sup> *JC*, 13 August 1869; 5 August 1870.

storm of indignation in Jewish circles' across Britain, as Alderman suggests.<sup>190</sup> Unfortunately, a lack of extant documentation means that the response of Cardiff Jewry, and Welsh Jewry more generally, is unknown, but the failure of the *JC* to gain substantial support, both numerically and financially, for its defence fund to cover the legal expenses of Barnett Lyons suggests that the event was of little concern to most Jews in Britain. Indeed, a meeting organised at a London synagogue by the *JC*'s editor for those 'interested in the Cardiff Abduction Case' in January 1869, 'was only thinly attended', and the amount of money raised was so trivial (a mere £3) that it was suggested it be donated to a fund for the relief of Russian Jewry.<sup>191</sup> The Board of Deputies of British Jews also did not respond to the *JC*'s condemnations, and was heavily criticised by the paper for doing so.<sup>192</sup> In response, the Board of Deputies noted that it 'was exposed to considerable difficulty. If it had undertaken the expense of the case, there would have been a precedent for requiring the Board to undertake every case of like character'.<sup>193</sup>

Moving away from the Esther Lyons case, a lack of extant sources makes it difficult to draw any comprehensive conclusions regarding the attitudes of Welsh Jews towards conversionism more generally. Despite this, it is interesting to note that there were some Jews in late nineteenth-century Wales who appear to have been unmoved by conversionist activity. One such example was Rev. L. Harris Price, the then minister of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, who, in reference to the establishment of two branches of the London Society in Swansea in July 1890, wrote to *the Cambrian* on behalf of the town's Jewish population, stating:

We can assure our Liberal! enlightened!! and Christian!!! friends that the Jews are not at all in alarm about the mission. We apprehend no diminution in our ranks by their proceedings. They certainly regret that...money should be thrown away on so quixotic a scheme as to induce the Jews to forsake the religion of their fathers...<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Alderman, 'The Jew as Scapegoat?', 67.

<sup>191</sup> *JC*, 22 January 1869.

<sup>192</sup> *JC*, 13 August 1869; 27 August 1869.

<sup>193</sup> *JC*, 27 August 1869.

<sup>194</sup> *Cambrian*, 11 July 1890.

Alas, he does not elaborate on why Swansea Jewry were ‘not at all in alarm’, but it was likely because the London Society and its sister organisations were known for their unsuccessful attempts at attracting Jewish converts.<sup>195</sup>

Moreover, the work of Lily Tobias reveals that there were Jews in Wales, who, despite being sensitive to conversionism, viewed the beliefs of Welsh nonconformist millenarians as positive in their attitude to Jews. In her story ‘Glasshouses’, for instance, the Jewish protagonist, Sheba, meets an elderly Welsh-speaker named Christmas Jones (a reference to the famous Welsh Baptist minister Christmas Evans) who greets her benignly with a quintessential End-of-Days exclamation:

*Merch annwyl* [dear girl], and proud I am to meet you, for sure. Why, I do love the Jews, indeed I do. You are the people of the book and the lord will show His wonders through you yet. You have got a big job in front of you my gell...the return to Zion...Oh that I could live to see the day!<sup>196</sup>

Although the great religious revivals which swept Wales during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were deeply engaged in conversionist activity, there is no evidence to suggest that they especially targeted Jews for conversion. Alderman once admitted ‘that there is no evidence to suggest that the Welsh revival of 1904 was itself philo- or anti-Semitic’ (or indeed neither), but his reference to converted Jews being ‘*brought* to Llanelli to preach as part of the revivalist efforts there’ suggests that Jewish converts were intentionally used by revivalists to target local Jews for conversion.<sup>197</sup> However, rather than being ‘brought’ to Llanelli to preach, as Alderman writes, the *South Wales Daily Post* noted that ‘some converted Jews and some Bristoleans read of the revival’ and ‘travelled down’ to Llanelli ‘to witness it’ on their own accord.<sup>198</sup> Indeed, the lack of response by Jews in Llanelli suggests that the presence of Jewish converts in the town was of little, if any, concern to local Jewry.

### **Tension and Hostility**

So far this chapter has predominantly focused on specific strands of toleration in Welsh society and has stressed particular instances in which it worked favourably for Jews in Wales. But as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, tolerance is never absolute and Welsh

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<sup>195</sup> For more on this, see Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, 170-172.

<sup>196</sup> Tobias, *The Nationalists*, 46.

<sup>197</sup> Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat?’, 67; My emphasis.

<sup>198</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 23 September 1904.

Jewry was certainly not immune to instances of narrow-mindedness and intolerance. We have already noticed some of these expressions in passing, but in order to present a more comprehensive picture of Jewish and non-Jewish relations in Wales, it is necessary to devote particular attention to examples of hostility, discrimination, and tensions which Jews have encountered in the principality.

Indeed, lists can be drawn up of possible anti-Semitic incidents, and, in addition to the 'Jewess-Abduction Case' of 1869, at least two other events have been adduced by Geoffrey Alderman, and others, to support their argument that there has been a long tradition of anti-Semitism in Wales: the attack on *shechita* in Llanelli in 1904 and the alleged 'blood libel' at Pontypridd in 1903.<sup>199</sup> Concerning the first, Alderman stated that the attempt to prohibit *shechita* in Llanelli in 1904 was a sign of 'sheer prejudice [on behalf of the non-Jewish Welsh] against the Jewish religion and those who practised it'.<sup>200</sup> Nonetheless, it appears that the case was raised because of a genuine concern for the welfare of animals and the safety of those using the local abattoir, rather than from motives of anti-Semitism. This is revealed by an article from the *South Wales Daily Post*, which stated:

Mr. J. C. Hill, veterinary inspector of the Llanelli Urban Council, reported...that steps should be taken to prevent unnecessary pain to animals killed by the Jews at the slaughterhouse. As present they do not stun the animal before its slaughter, but tied it in a most peculiar fashion, which rendered it most dangerous...to the other people at the slaughter-house...The chairman (Mr. D. H. Edmunds) said he had *great respect for these people, and their persuasion*, but would not agree to allowing them to carry on acts of cruelty and risking other people's lives.<sup>201</sup>

The other alleged anti-Semitic incident concerned a 'blood libel' in Pontypridd in 1903. Alderman once wrote that Pontypridd Jewry 'had been the victim of a particularly ugly disturbance involving the notorious blood libel, spread, curiously at Rosh Hashonah [Jewish

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<sup>199</sup> Alderman, 'The Jew as Scapegoat?', 67; Glaser, 'The Tredegar Riots', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 159.

<sup>200</sup> Alderman, 'The anti-Jewish riots of August 1911 in south Wales: a response', 567.

<sup>201</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 23 September 1904. My emphasis. A similar incident occurred in Bangor in 1914 when the local Hebrew congregation terminated the services of their kosher meat supplier after he criticised *shechita*. Again, there is nothing to suggest that his actions arose from any anti-Jewish feeling, but rather of concern for the welfare of animals. In response, the then minister of the Bangor Hebrew Congregation, Rev. D.I. Devons, wrote a letter to the local press in defence of *shechita*, explaining its method and the reasons for it. According to the *JC*, the letter claimed to have 'made a very good impression in non-Jewish circles', and the issue was eventually dismissed. See *JC*, 22 May 1914. Kenneth Collins wrote of a similar case in Aberdeen, which 'involved key issues of animal welfare and abattoir hygiene' rather than anti-Semitism. See Kenneth Collins, 'A Community on Trial: The Aberdeen Shechita Case, 1893', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 30 (2010), 75-92.

New Year] rather than *Pesach* [Passover]’.<sup>202</sup> Christopher Andrew also takes this allegation at face value, stating that a ‘medieval “blood libel”...surfaced in Pontypridd as late as 1903’.<sup>203</sup> Glaser, with no further evidence, said that there ‘had been an unpleasant disturbance at Pontypridd involving the age-old and ever-renewed blood libel’.<sup>204</sup>

Despite these scholarly citations, a ‘blood libel’ never occurred in Pontypridd, and it seems that Alderman is guilty of propagating certain myths. The only evidence of a ‘blood libel’ appeared in the *JC* in September 1903, when an unnamed correspondent wrote of a ‘Blood Accusation Fable in Wales’.<sup>205</sup> However, it appears that the London-based newspaper exaggerated the resemblance of the Pontypridd incident to the infamous blood libels of medieval Europe. Indeed, rather than accusing the local Jewish community of murdering a Christian child to obtain blood for their rituals, a rumour circulated in Pontypridd that a young servant girl employed by a local Jew named Myer Fishout had been taken by force to the town’s synagogue, wrapped in a sheet and insulted.<sup>206</sup> Concerned by what they had heard, a group gathered outside Fishout’s house to discuss the matter, with some allegedly threatening and verbally insulting any Jew that passed by. Police were called in, and the affair quickly died down after the girl admitted that she made up the story ‘for fun’.<sup>207</sup> Although the incident was not caused by any profound contempt for Jews, the fact that a group of gentiles believed the rumours to be true and insulted members of Pontypridd Jewry as a result, does reveal that, for all their acceptance as fellow citizens, the toleration of Jewish immigrants in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Wales was conditional—it could easily be revoked should the host society feel threatened by the actions of the culturally or ethnically different ‘other’. Members of Pontypridd’s Jewish community were undoubtedly insulted by the affair, which served as a reminder that they were slightly out of place in an overwhelmingly Christian milieu. In an interview in 1978, the late Harry Cohen summed up the feeling of Pontypridd Jewry during the early twentieth century by observing succinctly that ‘whilst

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<sup>202</sup> Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat?’, 67.

<sup>203</sup> Christopher Andrew, ‘Religious Violence in Past and Future Perspective’, in Anna S. Abulafia, ed., *Religious Violence between Christians and Jews: Medieval Roots, Modern Perspectives* (Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2002), 176.

<sup>204</sup> Glaser, ‘The Tredegar Riots’, in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 159.

<sup>205</sup> *JC*, 25 September 1903.

<sup>206</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 5 October 1903; David Cesarani incorrectly states that Jews were physically assaulted in Pontypridd. See Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 98.

<sup>207</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 5 October 1903; *JC*, 2 October 1903.

there was no overt anti-Semitism' in the town, Jews 'felt a bit out of place of the community at large'.<sup>208</sup>

Between the 1880s and early 1900s the issue of Jews being 'out of place' and 'threatening' to British society became highly politicised. As we have seen, this period witnessed an influx of poor Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe, and their arrival permanently altered the character of the Jewish community in Wales, and Britain as a whole. By virtue of their numbers (between 120,000 to 150,000 individuals), they gave British Jewry an overwhelming foreign and destitute image, and their concentrated visibility in inner city districts, particularly East London, gave rise to heightened anti-alienism.<sup>209</sup> Complaints were made that Jewish migrants arrived penniless and dirty, spread diseases, were a burden on the rates and that their concentration in one area led to increased rents.<sup>210</sup> In a period of economic depression, they were also accused of competing with the indigenous population for employment and there was concern that their foreign ways posed a threat to a British way of life.<sup>211</sup> Anti-alienism as a movement surfaced in London in 1886 and was first voiced in Parliament a year later.<sup>212</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, local anti-alien feeling in East London was articulated through the British Brothers League, an alliance of East End workers and local conservative MPs such as William Evans-Gordon.<sup>213</sup> Pressure from Evans-Gordon eventually led to the establishment of a Royal Commission on immigration in 1902.<sup>214</sup> Its report the following year proposed limited restrictions on the entry of aliens into Britain, which were later embodied in the 1905 Aliens Act.<sup>215</sup> Though the act primarily sought to control the entry of destitute Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe to Britain, there was nothing specifically anti-Semitic about the legislation.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs.

<sup>209</sup> Anne J. Kershen, 'Immigrants, Sojourners and Refugees', in Chris Wrigley, ed., *A Companion to Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 142.

<sup>210</sup> Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 155; David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 166-184.

<sup>211</sup> Black, *Jewish London*, 118.

<sup>212</sup> David Cesarani, 'An Alien Concept? The Continuity of Anti-Alienism in British Society before 1940', in Cesarani and Kushner, eds., *The Internment of Aliens*, 29.

<sup>213</sup> Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 89.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-97.

<sup>215</sup> Englander, *A Documentary History*, 248.

<sup>216</sup> The Aliens Act did not mention Jews outright, but it was clear to most observers that the purpose of the act was to halt the flow of Eastern European Jews into Great Britain. See, for instance, Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice*, 10-11.

The small number of Jewish migrants in Wales during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries meant that the immigration debate was less of an issue in the principality than in London. This, however, is not to suggest that the indigenous Welsh were not receptive to some of the anti-immigrant and anti-Jewish views present in contemporary British politics. The *Western Mail*, for instance, followed the immigration debate with interest and caused great offence to Cardiff's Jewish community in February 1903 when it published a cartoon fearing that Britain's indigenous working-class population was being replaced by a degenerate class of foreign criminals from the continent (see appendix B1).<sup>217</sup> Though the foreigners in the cartoon were not referred to as 'Jews', their hooked noses, and hunched appearances were typical of anti-Semitic caricatures of the period.<sup>218</sup> East European Jews were also the largest immigrant group coming into Britain from the continent during this period, and thus the term 'foreigner' was often used synonymously for 'Jew'.<sup>219</sup> Indeed, the anti-Jewish connotations were clear enough for many, and the cartoon prompted a rapid response from a local Jewish resident, who claimed that the paper had seriously misrepresented the facts.<sup>220</sup> In addition to the *Western Mail*, the *South Wales Daily News* regularly published articles which portrayed Jewish immigrants and aliens more generally in a negative light.<sup>221</sup>

As noted in Chapter One, though the majority of Jewish migrants that settled in Wales during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries worked in trade and thus did not compete for employment in the industrial sector, a small number, particularly in the south Wales coalfield, were engaged in primary industry and their presence was enough to cause some disdain amongst some of Wales' indigenous labourers. In early 1903, for instance, over two hundred Eastern European Jewish migrants settled in the Gellifaelog district of Merthyr Tydfil, and the employment of many in the local ironworks was heavily criticised by a reader of the *Western Mail*, who wrote to the editor complaining that:

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<sup>217</sup> *Western Mail*, 11 February 1903. The cartoon suggests that a disproportionately high percentage of foreigners in London were involved in criminal activity. It read: 'it appears that out of 1,896 prisoners tried at the Clerkenwell Session in twelve months 280, or not quite one-seventh, were foreigners'.

<sup>218</sup> See, for instance, Henry Wassermann 'Caricature, Anti-Jewish (Modern)', in Richard. S. Levy, ed., *Antisemitism: a Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, 1 (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2005), 102-107.

<sup>219</sup> Lara Marks and Michael Worboys, eds., *Migrants, Minorities, and Health: Historical and Contemporary Studies* (London: Routledge, 1997), 180-181.

<sup>220</sup> *Western Mail*, 12 February 1903.

<sup>221</sup> See, for instance, 'The Alien Immigrant', *South Wales Daily News*, 10 January 1903; 'Destitute Aliens', 4 April 1903; 'Aliens who came to thief', 10 April 1903; 'Alien Immigration', 18 April 1903.

During the last few months hundreds of foreign Jews, etc. have arrived at Dowlais and Merthyr, and are ousting our own countrymen from various positions in the works, owing to their adaptability and willingness to work for something next to nothing, and the management do not care who they are, providing they can make a good percentage out of their labour....<sup>222</sup>

By the summer of 1903, resentment towards the employment of Jewish migrant labourers went beyond malicious attacks in the local press and erupted into open violence when a Polish-Jew named Lewis Kyseman was physically assaulted by a group of workers at the Cyfarthfa Ironworks. The motive for the attack is obscure, but in court Kyseman stressed that his fellow workmen resented him because he was unable to communicate in either English or Welsh.<sup>223</sup> Perhaps, therefore, this was a case of pure xenophobia.

A similar incident occurred on 31 August and 1 September 1903, when Jewish migrant workers employed by the ironworks of Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds Ltd. in Dowlais were attacked by non-Jewish workers, a number of whom were Irish.<sup>224</sup> Again, the reason for these attacks is not entirely clear-cut. According to contemporary newspaper reports, the Jewish labourers were not attacked because they worked longer hours or undercut wages, since it was found that they worked similar hours and received the same pay as other workmen.<sup>225</sup> However, a letter sent to the *JC* by a Jewish resident of Merthyr Tydfil named George Goodman reveals that a party of Jewish labourers at Dowlais were expected to leave for Canada on 24 August, but failed to do so because the Jewish Board of Guardians did not receive confirmation from Canadian authorities.<sup>226</sup> Perhaps local workmen or unemployed labourers were waiting to replace these Jewish workers, and were irritated when they discovered that they were unable to commence their employment. Indeed, an article in the *Merthyr Express* from 12 September 1903 reveals that a contingent of both unemployed militiamen from the Boer War and local workmen were prepared to take the place of these Jewish workers once they departed for Canada.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> *Western Mail*, 13 February 1903.

<sup>223</sup> *Merthyr Express*, 8 August 1903.

<sup>224</sup> *Western Mail*, 3 September 1903; *Merthyr Express*, 12 September 1903; *The Times*, 3 September 1903; *JC*, September 4 1903.

<sup>225</sup> *JC*, 11 September 1903.

<sup>226</sup> *JC*, 4 September 1903; 23 October 1903.

<sup>227</sup> *Merthyr Express*, 12 September 1903.



Alderman wrote that ‘a large number’ of Jewish workers decided to migrate to Canada in consequence of the disturbances in Dowlais, but, as we have seen, plans to assist Jewish ironworkers to leave the district were arranged prior to the disorders.<sup>228</sup> Rather, the events at Dowlais accelerated the onward migration of Jews to North America, and on 14 September about a hundred Jews, consisting of Dowlais workmen and their families, left south Wales for Canada.<sup>229</sup> Disturbances against Jewish workers ceased after these attacks, and a small number of Jewish migrants continued to work at the Dowlais ironworks for years to come.<sup>230</sup> Between 1904 and 1906 ‘further batches’ of Russian Jewish workers were sent to Canada, not as a result of persecution in Wales, but because of the irregular work and poor wages they received in Dowlais.<sup>231</sup>

Opposition towards Jewish migrants on account of their economic competition was not confined to the labouring industries, however, and it occasionally appeared in the retail sector. Although it has been stressed that Jewish traders found niches in the local economy and contributed to the economic prosperity of towns and villages across Wales, there were occasionally those with differing attitudes who believed that their influence in the retail business had become too pronounced. This was particularly true during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the rise of Jewish immigrant traders in certain Welsh towns was seen as an economic threat to their indigenous Welsh counterparts. In Llanelli, for instance, a deputation of local shopkeepers approached the Urban District Council in February 1903 demanding that Jewish immigrants be excluded from the local market so that their livelihoods and business interests could be safeguarded.<sup>232</sup> Sadly, a lack of surviving documentation means that the council’s response is unknown, but it is important to note that this kind of opposition was not being argued upon anti-Semitic lines. Rather, the emphasis was upon a defence of the employment of the indigenous Welsh which was, arguably, threatened by migrants who happened to be Jewish.

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<sup>228</sup> Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat?’, 65.

<sup>229</sup> *JC*, 18 September 1903.

<sup>230</sup> Although the *South Wales Jewish Review* reported in January 1904 that ‘further unfortunate incidents’ concerning Jews had ‘occurred at the Dowlais Works’, the following issue stated that this information was incorrect: ‘the report of the scuffle between the Jewish and other working men at the Dowlais Works was quite unfounded’. *South Wales Jewish Review*, 1 (January 1904), 16; 2 (February 1904), 31.

<sup>231</sup> *JC*, 3 June 1904; 6 April 1906.

<sup>232</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, 13 February 1903.

In addition to occasional outbursts of anti-alienism, Jews in nineteenth and twentieth century Wales were often perceived through the lens of anti-Jewish stereotypes, which typically surfaced when they appeared to be threatening or wielding perceived power over the non-Jewish Welsh population. As has become clear from the writings of W.J. Gruffydd and O. M. Edwards, one prevalent Jewish stereotype present in Wales was that of the grasping, exploitative and avaricious Jew. The origins of this stereotype can be traced back to the Middle Ages, when European Jews were forbidden from owning land or practising a large number of professions, and were channelled into a narrow range of commercial and middleman occupations such as moneylending.<sup>233</sup> The Jews' position in moneylending was greatly strengthened by regulations imposed by medieval rulers who granted them special rights to take high interest rates. Unsurprisingly, arrangements of this kind fomented popular aggression towards Jews and gave way to a diehard stereotype of a rapacious, calculating and 'money-mad' people.<sup>234</sup> When such an image first emerged in Wales is a mystery, but there are references in Medieval Welsh poetry which use the word '*Iddew*' ('Jew') in a derogatory manner to denote avarice or callousness. For instance, in his poem '*Rhag Hyderu ar y Byd*' ('Against Trusting in the World') Dafydd ap Gwilym (fl. 1340-1370) writes of a lover who was cheated of his wealth by an '*Eiddig leidr, Iddew gwladaid*' ('Jealous thief, a rustic Jew'), while another poem '*I Iesu Grist*' ('To Jesus Christ') also describes Jews as deceiving thieves: '*Iddeon, lladron rhy dwyllodrus*' ('Jews, thieves too deceiving').<sup>235</sup> Similarly, the lesser-known Deio ab Ieuan Du (fl. 1460-1480), once wrote of '*Mal Iddewon*' ('Indulging Jews'), while the fifteenth-century Welsh bard, Lewis Glyn Cothi (fl. 1440-1490) portrayed Jews as contemptible scavengers by comparing them to 'dogs'—'*gi o Iddew*' ('dog of a Jew').<sup>236</sup>

The stereotype of the avaricious and cunning Jew gained further credence over the centuries and became fixed in the mind of later generations by the depiction of Jewish literary characters in popular English fiction such as Shakespeare's Shylock, the grasping moneylender who showed no mercy towards gentiles in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-1598), and Dickens' Fagin, the covetous Jewish criminal in *Oliver Twist* (1838). Indeed, the

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<sup>233</sup> Pollins, *Economic History*, 18.

<sup>234</sup> Runnymede Commission on Antisemitism, *A Very Light Sleeper: the Persistence and Dangers of Anti-Semitism* (London: Runnymede Trust, 1994), 34.

<sup>235</sup> Thomas Parry, ed., *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), 3, 208.

<sup>236</sup> A. Eleri Davies, ed., *Gwaith Deio ab Ieuan Du a Gwilym ab Ieuan Hen* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 46; E.D. Jones, ed., *Lewys Glyn Cothi: Detholiad* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1984), 75.

image of the Jew as Shylock was particularly animated in south Wales during the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods owing to the large number of Jewish migrants engaged in the pawnbroking business. As noted in Chapter One, south Wales' Jewish pawnbrokers fulfilled a vital economic role for the working-class population who could raise money quickly in times of need, but their business activities also bred resentment when customers were forced, through necessity, to pledge valuable items at high interest rates to meet pressing financial difficulties. When such occasions occurred the image of Jewish pawnbrokers as Shylocks, as greedy money-grabbers preying on the poor, was often expressed by non-Jewish customers. In January 1879, for instance, an anonymous complainant from Aberdare wrote to the *Western Mail* claiming that he had been financially victimised by a local pawnbrokers owned by 'an avaricious race of men'. He wrote:

You may depend upon it, sir, that the common sense of the public is right in sympathising with the borrower against the lender, especially when the latter is a Jew. Money lending is all very well in its way, but when money lenders are extortionate, and unjust, and make unfair profits out of the necessities of the borrower, then they deserve all the odium that can be heaped upon them. There are thousand who, like myself, have been hard up at some time in their lives, and been cruelly victimised by these sanguinary Shylocks.<sup>237</sup>

Moreover, the stereotype of the cunning Jew was often manifested in nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Wales through the employment of the word 'Jew' as a synonym for 'trick' or 'swindle'. Indeed, 'To Jew', as a verb, often appeared in contemporary Welsh newspaper articles, and appears to have been commonly used in everyday Welsh parlance. In 1867, for instance, the *Merthyr Telegraph* titled an article on the arrest of a Jew who stole a petticoat from a Jewish pawnbroker in Merthyr Tydfil, 'Jewing a Jew'.<sup>238</sup> Similarly, in reference to the large number of people in Carmarthenshire who were breaking the Sunday Closing Act of 1881, the county's chief constable told local magistrates in 1889 that 'the populace don't assist us; they try "to Jew" us in every way'.<sup>239</sup> Welsh Jewry evidently found the verb insulting, and in response to the latter example, the then minister of the Cardiff Hebrew Congregation, Rev. J. H. Landau, wrote a letter of complaint to the *Western Mail* expressing his surprise and disappointment that a 'responsible man, such as the Chief Constable of

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<sup>237</sup> *Western Mail*, 11 January 1879.

<sup>238</sup> *Merthyr Telegraph*, 20 April 1867.

<sup>239</sup> *JC*, 8 November 1889.

Carmarthenshire' would use 'a scurrilous slang expression, which [constituted] a false and malicious libel upon a law abiding people'.<sup>240</sup>

Amid all the manifestations of casual stereotyping in Wales, there were also occasional expressions of more flagrant and unmitigated anti-Jewish attitudes, especially in times of social or economic distress. For instance, in response to the local housing shortage in Merthyr Tydfil in 1903, Hugh Jones, a member of the Merthyr Board of Guardians, wrote to the local press, complaining that Jewish landlords were exploiting the situation by charging extortionate rents for their own financial gain. A similar complaint was raised eight years later in Tredegar, and has been cited by a number of historians as one of the main causes of the 1911 riots.<sup>241</sup> But while no direct evidence of any kind exists to suggest that rioters in Tredegar were driven primarily by "rich Jew" anti-Semitism', as Alderman suggests,<sup>242</sup> there is no denying that the complaint raised a decade earlier in Merthyr Tydfil was fuelled by age-old stereotypes and prejudices of Jewish financial greed:

For the present, I shall pass by the Welsh and English rack-renters who carry on this game, and call it the prosperity of the town, and confine myself to a protest against the conduct of the foreign element. The German and Russian Jews in Johannesburg embroiled our country in the South African tangle and exploited our empire to satisfy their greed for gold. The same tribe here at home slowly but surely spread its tentacles in all directions, and is sucking the life blood of our people. The health and happiness, the physical and moral well-being of our poorer classes are to a great extent at the mercy of this octopus.<sup>243</sup>

Indeed 'rich Jew' anti-Semitism singled out financial greed and economic exploitation as an inherent quality of the Jew, and this stereotype certainly featured in the campaign against company unions at the Bedwas Colliery in 1936. During the dispute, much of the miners' frustration was directed against the colliery's Jewish owner, Samuel Instone, who sought to replace the more radical South Wales Miners' Federation (S.W.M.F.) with the 'non- political'

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<sup>240</sup> *JC*, 8 November 1889.

<sup>241</sup> Glaser, 'The Tredegar Riots', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 163-165; Holmes, 'The Tredegar Riots of 1911', 219-222.

<sup>242</sup> Alderman, 'The Jew as Scapegoat?', 67-8; Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, 193; Alderman, 'The anti-Jewish riots', 196.

<sup>243</sup> *Merthyr Express*, 2 May 1903. The language used bears some resemblance to that found in the contemporary anti-Semitic text *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Published in Russia in 1903 it described a 'so-called' Jewish plan for global domination, and depicted Jews as an octopus spreading its tentacles over the wealth of the world.

South Wales Miners' Industrial Union.<sup>244</sup> While some of the anger unleashed by the miners may have been justified, it was articulated in the most vitriolic and anti-Semitic of terms. According to the then president of the S.W.M.F., Arthur Horner, a number of miners believed they were being oppressed by an exploitative Jewish capitalist, and suggested that they might 'smash the Jewish shops [in the locality] because Instone was a Jew'.<sup>245</sup> Fortunately, no such attack occurred as Horner took it seriously enough to raise the matter at a coalfield conference, where he threatened to resign from the presidency of the S.W.M.F. if Bedwas workers started any anti-Jewish activity.<sup>246</sup>

More distasteful, and arguably more deep-rooted, were the anti-Jewish sentiments which appeared in the work of one of the founder-members of the Welsh Nationalist Party (*Plaid Cymru*), Saunders Lewis (1893-1985).<sup>247</sup> An English-born, Welsh-speaking convert to Roman Catholicism, Lewis' political views were heavily influenced by nineteenth and early twentieth-century right-wing French nationalism, and like many on the right in the inter-war period, including T.S. Eliot and Hilaire Belloc, he subscribed to the irrational and unfounded conspiracy-theory that rootless international Jewish financiers were controlling the economic affairs of nations for their own financial gains.<sup>248</sup> Indeed, Lewis expressed this belief in various writings in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1926, for instance, he wrote in *Y Ddraig Goch* (*Plaid Cymru's* Welsh-language newspaper), that it was 'Jews who [shaped] the economic ideas of the modern world, men like Marx and Lenin and Mond, men who have not inherited a single tradition of country and community'.<sup>249</sup> Moreover, in 1933 he praised Adolf Hitler for fulfilling his promise 'to completely abolish the financial strength of the Jews in the

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<sup>244</sup> Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman and David Howell, eds., *Miners, Unions, and Politics, 1910-47* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996) 128.

<sup>245</sup> Arthur Horner, *Incorrigible Rebel* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1960), 152.

<sup>246</sup> Horner, *Incorrigible Rebel*, 152.

<sup>247</sup> For works discussing the anti-Semitic writings of Saunders Lewis, see Davies, *The Chosen People*, 31-32; Grahame Davies, *Sefyll yn y Bwlch: Cymru a'r Mudiad Gwrth-Fodern: Astudiaeth o Waith R.S. Thomas, Saunders Lewis, T.S. Eliot a Simone Weil* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1999); Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 79-82.

<sup>248</sup> The myth of a Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world gained wide currency following the publication of the spurious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which first appeared in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century and soon pervaded much political literature and sentiment throughout Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. For more on this, see Steven L. Jacobs and Mark Weitzman, eds., *Dismantling the Big Lie: the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Jersey City: KTAV Publishing House, 2003).

<sup>249</sup> *Y Ddraig Goch*, Rhagfyr, 1926: 'Iddewon sy'n llunio syniadau economaidd y byd modern, gwŷr fel Marx a Lenin a Mond, gwŷr nad etifeddasant un traddodiad gwlad a bro...'. My translation. Of course, Lenin was not Jewish as Lewis suggests.

economic life of Germany',<sup>250</sup> while his 1939 poem '*Y Dilyw*' ('The Deluge') makes note of the alleged role played by New York Jewish financiers in causing the 1929 Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression that followed:

Then, on Olympus, in Wall Street, nineteen-twenty-nine,  
At their infinitely scientific task of guiding the profits of fate,  
The gods decreed, with their feet in the Aubusson carpets,  
And their Hebrew snouts in the quarter's statistics,  
That the day had come to restrict credit in the universe of gold.<sup>251</sup>

Rubinstein situates the original source for Lewis' anti-Jewish remarks in his Catholicism, a religious affiliation that has been largely responsible for the worst persecutions of Jews throughout history, and is a minority tradition in Wales.<sup>252</sup> By doing so, he attempts to separate Lewis from the allegedly 'philo-Semitic' nonconformist Welsh mainstream, and thus isolates him and his anti-Jewish attitudes as exceptional. Nonetheless, Lewis' hostile statements concerning the stereotype of the exploitative Jewish financier were very much within a tradition in Wales, with similar sentiments being expressed by nonconformist liberals such as O. M. Edwards in the 1880s, Lloyd George at the turn of the twentieth century, and W. J. Gruffydd in the 1940s. While Donahaye is right in pointing out that Saunders Lewis 'has become something of the representative figure of Welsh antisemitism', it is important to note that his views and attitudes towards Jews were more problematic and complex than simply one of disdain.<sup>253</sup> Although there is no denying that Lewis subscribed to the typical negative Jewish stereotypes of his day, he appears to have maintained a clear distinction between his loathing for the supposed calculating and irresponsible Jewish financiers, and Jews more generally. Thus, while Lewis praised Hitler in 1933 for confronting German Jewish financiers, he condemned the Nazi persecution of Germany's 'innocent' Jews who were suffering unjustly 'along with the detrimental ones'.<sup>254</sup> In 1938, Lewis described anti-Semitism as 'one of the plagues of history', while a year later he stated that Nazi

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<sup>250</sup> *Y Ddraig Goch*, Mehefin 1933: 'Ar unwaith cyflawnodd [Hitler] ei addewid...i lwyr ddileu nerth ariannol yr Iddewon ym myd economaidd yr Almaen'. My translation.

<sup>251</sup> Alun R. Jones and Gwyn Thomas, eds., *Presenting Saunders Lewis* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), 178.

<sup>252</sup> Rubinstein, 'The anti-Jewish riots', 676-677.

<sup>253</sup> Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 79.

<sup>254</sup> *Y Ddraig Goch*, Mehefin 1933: 'Bu erlid ar yr Iddewon a dioddefodd y diniwed yn ddiamau gyda'r niweidiol'. My translation.

Germany's anti-Jewish laws were 'contrary to all principles of justice'.<sup>255</sup> Similarly, in 1942 he complained of the 'cruelties of the German Gestapo in Poland' and the 'new atrocities committed against the Jews', while in a speech delivered in 1943 he was reported to have condemned the Nazi persecution of Jews 'three or four times, clearly and decisively'.<sup>256</sup>

Indeed, the horrors perpetrated on the Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War called for a change in Lewis' views on Jews as a whole, and from 1945 onwards he appears to have abandoned his earlier hostile statements concerning the stereotype of the international Jewish financier and adopted a policy of sympathy and admiration.<sup>257</sup> In February 1945, for instance, he described Hitler's 'sustained attack on Jews and his constant belief that the Jews controlled the policies of Russia, England and the United States' as 'something akin to madness', while in 1950, he praised Sir Alfred Mond ('the wealthy Jew' that he had earlier criticised), for his role and support in the disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales.<sup>258</sup> Attitudes of sympathy and empathy towards Jews were also present in Lewis' post-war literary work. For instance, two of his post-war plays, *Brad*, 'Treachery', (1958), and *1938* (1978), have as their heroic protagonists the German officers who conspired to assassinate Hitler, while his play *Esther* (1960) draws parallels between the alleged oppression of the Welsh under English rule and the persecution suffered by biblical Jews in the Persian Empire.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 21 Ebrill 1938: 'gwrth-Semitiaeth hwnnw sy'n un o heintiau hanes'; *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 2 Awst 1939: 'groes i holl egwyddorion cyfiawnder'. My translation.

<sup>256</sup> *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 23 Rhagfyr 1942: 'greulonderau anfad y Gestapo Almaenaidd yng ngwlad Pwyl...erchyllterau newydd tuag at yr Iddewon'; *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 20 Ionawr 1943: 'dair neu bedair gwaith yn glir a phendant'. My translation.

<sup>257</sup> Davies, *The Chosen People*, 32; Although she deplored his anti-Semitic comments and poetry, the Jewish author Judith Maro became a good friend of Saunders, believing that his views on Jews had changed post-Holocaust, and that he regretted his mistakes. See Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 79. Others, however, have been less forgiving. In October 1992, for instance, Tim Williams, a non-Jewish Welsh historian and broadcaster criticised the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff—founded in 1973 with money donated by Welsh-Jewish businessmen, Harry and Abe Sherman—for staging Lewis' play '*Blodeuwedd*' ('The woman of flowers'). See *JC*, 3 April 1992; 2 October 1992; Meredydd Evans, 'Saunders Lewis, Tim Williams, and the Jewish Chronicle', *Planet: The Welsh Internationalist* (December-January, 1992-1993), 73-7.

<sup>258</sup> *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 7 Chwefror 1945: 'Cyhoeddodd y *Times* heddiw gyfieithiad o araiith a ddarlledwyd gan Hitler I bobl yr Almaen....Y mae rhywbeth tebyg i wallgofrwydd i'w ganfod yn yr ymosod cyson ar Iddewiaeth a'r mynnu cyson mai Iddewon sy'n rheoli polisi Rwsia a Lloegr a'r Unol Daleithiau'; *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 8 Chwefror 1950: 'Bu ganddo [Mond] ran bwysig yn y gwaith o sicrhau Datgysylltiad yr Eglwys yng Nghymru'. My translation.

<sup>259</sup> Davies, *Chosen People*, 32; Saunders Lewis, *Brad* (Llandybie: C. Davies, 1978); Saunders Lewis, *Y Cyrnol Chabert a 1938: Dwy Ddrama* (Penygroes, Caernarfon: Gwasg Dwyfor, 1989); Saunders Lewis, *Esther, a Serch yw'r Doctor* (Llandybie: Llyfrau'r Dryw, 1960).

## **The Holocaust and Beyond**

While the atrocities of the Holocaust certainly led many non-Jews to re-assess their previous prejudices against Jews, this is not to suggest that Jews in post-war Wales, and Britain more generally, were immune from tension or troubling incidents. In August 1947, for instance, the execution of two British army sergeants by the Irgun in Palestine led to anti-Jewish riots across Britain, and despite their concentration in English cities such as Liverpool and Brighton, there were a number of unpleasant isolated incidents in Wales.<sup>260</sup> In Rhyl, for instance, the window of a Jewish owned store was smashed, while the *JC* reported that a number of Jewish properties in Cardiff also suffered damage, including the home of the city's then *JC* correspondent, Henry Samuel, which was daubed with the message 'Jews—Good Old Hitler'.<sup>261</sup> The *JC* also noted the arrest of a young man in Swansea who planned to kill the then Jewish chairman of Swansea Town Football Club, Abe Freedman.<sup>262</sup> Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether the latter incident held any specifically anti-Semitic intent or was linked to the riots.

Since 1947, only a few unpleasant incidents concerning Jews in Wales have been found. In the 1960s an isolated case of Nazi graffiti in Cardiff was reported in the *JC*, while in the 1970s and 1980s the Jewish cemeteries in both Brynmawr and Swansea were vandalised.<sup>263</sup> No one was arrested on any of these occasions and it is not known whether the perpetrators were committed anti-Semites or disaffected adolescents. With regards to the Brynmawr cemetery, the absence of anti-Jewish graffiti led local Jewry to conclude that the incident was not an act of anti-Semitism, while the police reassured Swansea Jewry that the damage caused to their burial ground was not 'an anti-Semitic action, as several [non-Jewish] cemeteries had suffered the same treatment in the area'.<sup>264</sup> However, an attack on Swansea's synagogue in 2002 was certainly treated as 'a racially aggravated attack'.<sup>265</sup> Torah scrolls were damaged, windows were broken, and the synagogue's walls were daubed with the

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<sup>260</sup> For more on the 1947 anti-Jewish riots in Britain, see Tony Kushner, 'Anti-Semitism and Austerity: The August 1947 Riots in Britain', in Panikos Panayi, ed., *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), 150-170.

<sup>261</sup> Paul Sugarman, interview with author; *JC*, 8 August 1947.

<sup>262</sup> *JC*, 8 August 1947.

<sup>263</sup> *JC*, 29 April 1960;

<sup>264</sup> *JC*, 28 April 1972; Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 9 October 1978, D/D SHC 1/5, WGA; Newport's Jewish cemetery was also vandalised in 1994, but 'the attack was not [believed to be] racially motivated as the Christian cemetery was also attacked'. See *West Quest Magazine* (March 1994), 9, D/D SHC 24/1, WGA.

<sup>265</sup> *The Independent*, 13 July 2002; *JC*, 19 July 2002.



words ‘T4 Jewish C\*\*ts from Hitler’.<sup>266</sup> Again, no arrests were made, but the presence of swastikas and references to Hitler’s programme of killing the mentally and physically disabled led the police and the National Assembly Against Racism to believe that the attack was the work of neo-Nazis.<sup>267</sup>

Indeed, right-wing extremists have had some presence in Wales post World War Two, but they have never been prominent and most people in Wales were/and *are* appalled by their activities.<sup>268</sup> As a sign of this, hundreds of individuals ‘across Wales’ expressed their disgust at the attack on Swansea’s synagogue in 2002, and members of Swansea’s Jewish community were ‘heartened by [the] messages of support’ they received.<sup>269</sup> This, however, is not to be complacent about the position of Jews in post-war Welsh society. Although anti-Semitism has been and *continues* to be of marginal significance to Welsh-Jewish life, low-level prejudices and hostilities persisted throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. For instance, a number of Jews recalled being bullied as children by students and teachers because of their Jewishness, while others have been the victims of minor forms of harassment.<sup>270</sup> In 1987, for example, the South Glamorgan Racial Equality Council reported that a shot had been fired at buildings owned by Jews (as well as those owned by Asians) in Cardiff, while in 2002 it was reported that a gang of ‘teenage thugs’ made anti-Semitic comments to a group of Hasidic Jews who were staying at Swansea University’s campus.<sup>271</sup> More recently, in 2008, a Jewish man was punched and had his skull cap removed in Llandudno, in what the police described as a ‘racist attack’.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> *The Independent*, 13 July 2002; In 2005, vandals broke into Newport’s synagogue, but according to the congregation’s then president, Avraham Davidson, it was not ‘an act of anti-Semitism; just people wanting shelter or looking for money’. See *JC*, 22 April 2005.

<sup>267</sup> *The Independent*, 13 July 2002.

<sup>268</sup> For recent examples, see “‘Klan man’ harassed Asian shopkeeper’, *Western Mail*, 14 February 2002; ‘Neo-Nazis are convicted of race hatred charges’, *South Wales Echo*, 25 June 2010; ‘Bully from Wrexham made Nazi salute to Jewish teenager in Ysbyty Glan Clwyd A&E’, *Daily Post*, 30 September 2011.

<sup>269</sup> *JC*, 26 July 2006; *South Wales Evening Post*, 8 August 2002.

<sup>270</sup> See, for instance, ‘Anti-Semitism forced me to leave Wales’, *Western Mail*, 28 October 2003; ‘School bullies had no idea what being Jewish meant—and neither did Gideon’, *Jewish Telegraph*, 24 May 2013; Adam Buswell, interview with Sue Mansell, Cardiff, June 2011, Hineni, BHAC; Matthew Solomons, interview with author, Cardiff, January 2011, Hineni, BHAC; Joyce Arron, interview with author.

<sup>271</sup> *South Glamorgan Racial Equality Council Annual Report, 1986-7* (Cardiff, 1987), 24; ‘Jews Targeted’, 7 August 2002, article clipping from [www.TotallyJewish.com](http://www.TotallyJewish.com), D/D SHC 20/1, WGA. In 1981, Elliott Fine of Cardiff was murdered on his way to a morning Shabbat service at Penylan synagogue, but there was no indication that the act held any specifically anti-Semitic intent. In fact, four psychiatrists agreed that Fine’s murderer, Hans Juergen Herrman, was not an anti-Semite, but a paranoid schizophrenic. See *JC*, 25 September 1981; 9 April 1982.

<sup>272</sup> *JC*, 21 August 2008.

As well as occasional acts of violence and vandalism, the presence of anti-Israel and anti-Zionist activity in the principality, particularly in the late 1960s and early 1970s in consequence of the Six Day War, raised the Jewish flag in post-war Wales.<sup>273</sup> Indeed, an oft-discussed issue in research and public debate on anti-Zionism concerns its relationship with anti-Semitism, and this debate became a major source of contention in Wales in 1977 when both the student unions at the then University College of North Wales, Bangor, and the University College of Swansea were named as two of six British university unions which barred Zionist speakers.<sup>274</sup> The Welsh press criticised both universities for refusing to allow guest speakers deemed to be Zionist, but both unions were adamant that they had ‘not taken a stand...which could be construed as anti-Semitic’.<sup>275</sup> This was further stressed by the then Chairman of NUS Wales, Mick Antoniow, who said that the policies passed by the two universities were ‘against the political policy of Zionism, not against Jews’.<sup>276</sup> The event, however, was enough to cause concern amongst the British Jewish community, manifested by its inclusion in the pages of the *JC* and complaints received by the Union of Jewish Students.<sup>277</sup> Some three decades later, in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion of Gaza in January 2009, scores of billboards across Swansea were vandalised with anti-Israeli graffiti.<sup>278</sup> Though the then Swansea representative of the Board of Deputies for British Jews, Norma Glass, ‘expressed sadness at the act’, she affirmed that ‘she was not offended by the graffiti’ or believed it posed a major threat to the local Jewish community.<sup>279</sup> Indeed, while the incidents mentioned above were all individually very distressing, they counted for very

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<sup>273</sup> After the Six Day War in 1967 there was an articulated antipathy for Israel, arising from what was said to be the oppression of the Palestinian population in territories occupied by the Israeli Defence Forces. For more on this, see Bernard Reich, ‘The Founding of Modern Israel and the Arab-Israel Conflict’, in Judith R. Baskin and Kenneth Seeskin, eds., *The Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Religion, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 258-287.

<sup>274</sup> *JC*, 6 May 1977; in theory at least, anti-Zionism is not synonymous with anti-Semitism, nor do anti-Semitic premises automatically or inevitably underpin an anti-Zionist position. It is not inherently anti-Semitic, for example, to criticise the policies and actions of the Israeli government. Nevertheless, the relationship between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism is complicated by the fact that Israel is the only Jewish state in the world. Thus, for some, an attack on Israel is an attack on the Jewish people themselves. For more on this debate, see Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, eds., *The New Anti-Semitism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974); Norman G. Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Jeffrey Herf, ed., *Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism in Historical Perspective: Convergence and Divergence* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>275</sup> *Western Mail*, 26 October 1977; *JC*, 13 May 1977.

<sup>276</sup> *Western Mail*, 26 October 1977.

<sup>277</sup> *JC*, 13 May 1977; 28 October 1977; 11 November 1977.

<sup>278</sup> *South Wales Evening Post*, 10 January 2009.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

little, and failed to shatter the peaceful coexistence between Jews and non-Jews in post-war Wales.

### **Conclusion**

What conclusions can be drawn about non-Jewish and Jewish relations in Wales? Although non-Jews in Wales have certainly not been immune to anti-Jewish prejudices over the years (as some might like to claim), the surviving records suggest that overt anti-Semitism was not a major feature of Jewish life in Wales. There was slander and abuse, and on occasion, intimidation too, but it must be stressed that anti-Semitism in Wales has been an elusive, low-key affair, and is perhaps best understood as an anti-Semitism of minor, or, to borrow the words of Geoffrey Field, an anti-Semitism ‘with the boots off’.<sup>280</sup> Indeed, as we have seen, the Jewish community’s relations with the wider non-Jewish community in Wales were largely positive, and their civil liberties and security were never put in serious jeopardy in the principality. As Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok rightly points out, ‘Wales was never a Russia or a Poland’.<sup>281</sup>

While Wales was certainly more hospitable to its Jewish population than most European countries, the presence of ‘minor’ anti-Jewish sentiments in the principality does reveal that its acceptance and toleration of Jews was never absolute. Indeed, while Jewish immigrants were generally welcomed and integrated well into the gentile society of the Welsh villages, towns and cities in which they worked and lived, hostility towards them did surface occasionally. But when were non-Jews in Wales more likely to be intolerant of Jews? As Paul O’Leary reminds us, intolerance towards minorities typically increases when they are perceived to be threatening the values and lifestyles of the dominant majority; and although acts of intolerance were certainly not daily occurrences in Welsh society, they did tend to surface in Wales during periods of great social change, uncertainty and distress such as an economic depression or a war.<sup>282</sup> This was undoubtedly the case for many Jewish immigrants in south Wales during the first half of the twentieth century, who, as we have seen, encountered anti-Jewish stereotypes and a resentment of them as middlemen in business and/or economic competitors during times of financial struggle and economic uncertainty. Feelings of paranoia and xenophobia spawned by the insecurities of the First World War also

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<sup>280</sup> Geoffrey G. Field, ‘Anti-Semitism with the Boots Off’, in Strauss, ed., *Hostages of Modernization*, 294-325.

<sup>281</sup> Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok, ‘Judaism,’ in Allen and Jones, eds., *The Religious History of Wales*, 250.

<sup>282</sup> O’Leary, ‘Foreword to the New Edition’ in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 2nd ed., xiv- xv.

meant that well-integrated and long-respected Jewish figures in Wales such as Sir Alfred Mond felt the sting of intolerance intermittently during the 1910s.

Although the notion of an inherent Welsh tolerance is certainly a myth, it is important to note that Wales has, for the most part, had a good record of tolerance towards its Jews. Indeed, as Hal and David Weitzmann once stressed, ‘In the grand historical sweep of Jewish wanderings, this Welsh interlude will surely be reckoned among Anglo-Jewry’s happiest periods and will have earned a secure place within its collective experience’.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Weitzman and Weitzman, ‘Jews in Wales’, 31.

## **5. Being Jewish in Wales: Exploring Jewish Encounters with Welshness**

As noted in my introduction, in his study of British-Jewish history from 1656 to 2000, Todd Endelman incorporates ‘Welsh-Jewry’ under the banner of ‘Anglo-Jewry’. Endelman justifies this decision by stating that ‘since the number of Jews who lived in Wales...was never large, folding them into “Anglo-Jewry” does not distort the overall picture.’<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this does not distort the overall ‘Anglo-Jewish’ picture, but as Jasmine Donahaye rightfully points out in her article on early twentieth-century Jewish literature in Wales, folding the Jews of Wales into ‘Anglo-Jewry’ is another kind of distortion.<sup>2</sup> This is because it erases the particularities of the Welsh-Jewish experience, and asserts the English- Jewish experience as the definitive. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to correct such a distortion by exploring how Jews have responded to Wales, and examine how Welsh dimensions have affected and shaped both the experiences and identities of Jews living in or from the principality. By doing so, this chapter highlights the important role played by ‘place’ in the unfolding of Welsh-Jewish history, and British-Jewish history more generally.

### **Welsh Language**

Perhaps the most notable factor in distinguishing the experiences of a number of Jews in Wales from Jews in England is their encounter with the Welsh language. As we have seen, many of the first arrivals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were commercial travellers—poor pedlars and hawkers—looking for new business opportunities throughout Wales. The reality that Jewish pedlars spent most of their working-hours with non-Jews forced them into a quick encounter with difference and put them almost immediately on the path towards learning new languages, cultures and social realities. By definition, they had to learn to communicate and ingratiate themselves with their customers, who opened their doors, looked in the baskets, and made the decision whether or not to buy their wares. As in England, most pedlars in Wales learned and conducted business in English, but regional linguistic variations also made for many different experiences of Jewish peddling in Wales. For example, Jewish pedlars who sold to Welsh-speaking customers in north-west Wales, the western valleys and rural areas, had a different set of experiences from those of Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Jasmine Donahaye, “‘By Whom Shall She Arise? For She is Small’: The Wales-Israel Tradition in the Edwardian Period”, in Eitan Bar-Yosef and Nadia Valman, eds., *‘The Jew’ in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture: Between the East End and East Africa* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 163.

pedlars who sold their wares in the anglicised regions where English predominated. In Welsh-speaking regions of Wales, Jewish pedlars would have acquired some knowledge of Welsh. Paul Sugarman, for instance, was born in Bangor in 1930, and recalls how his Russian-born father, Jacob, worked as a travelling clothier in north Wales and, 'got to learn to speak Welsh by going in and speaking to the farmers.'<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Eve Pollecoff noted how brothers, Phillip and Solomon Pollecoff, 'learnt to speak English and "kitchen" Welsh', when they worked as pedlars in north Wales during the 1890s.<sup>4</sup>

Jewish pedlars also acquired Welsh in certain parts of south Wales. Harry Cohen of Pontypridd noted in 1978 that 'many of these early Jewish settlers were able to speak Welsh in the end, in Welsh areas in particular', and how his father-in-law, Samuel Cohen, a Russian-born general dealer from Swansea became 'fluent in Welsh'.<sup>5</sup> Monty Black, a travelling salesman from Swansea, spoke Welsh to his customers who lived in 'farms across the Black mountain from Brynaman.'<sup>6</sup> In some instances, the children of Jewish pedlars acquired some Welsh in school, and brought it home to teach their parents. Nay Joseph was born in Brynmawr in 1906, but lived as a child in New Tredegar, where he recalls teaching his father, a travelling draper, 'certain things in Welsh such as *pais*, petticoat, stockings, *sanau*, window, *fffenestr*...so that he could go to the people, Welsh people, which they liked and said '*ti moyn* (do you want) a *pais* (a petticoat)? *Ti moyn sanau* (do you want stockings)?'<sup>7</sup>

The 1891 census was the first to collect information about the language spoken by the people of Wales.<sup>8</sup> It reveals that some of these early Jewish settlers living in Wales were able to communicate in Welsh. They included Morris Wartski of Bangor, a thirty-six year old jeweller from Poland, and his Prussian-born wife, Flora, both of whom are listed as speaking 'English, Welsh and German'; and Harry Cohen of Llangynwyd, a twenty-eight year old watchmaker and commission's agent from Wolverhampton, who is listed as both a Welsh and English speaker. Unfortunately, the 1891 census was not careful about how it ascertained and recorded the languages of the individuals they listed. The column headed 'language spoken' meant that some individuals listed their most used language only. Tobias Shepherd of

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Sugarman, interview with author.

<sup>4</sup> Eve Pollecoff, interview with author.

<sup>5</sup> Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs.

<sup>6</sup> *The Last Jew in Merthyr*, Radio programme, BBC Wales, March 1992.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Parry and Williams, *The Welsh Language*, 14.

Ystalyfera, for instance, is listed as an English speaker, but his grandsons, Dannie and Leo Abse, have revealed that he also spoke Welsh and Yiddish. As Leo once said, 'I always claim he [my grandfather] was the first Welshman, first Jew to speak Welsh with a Yiddish accent.'<sup>9</sup> The 1911 census was the first to include instructions for the language column, asking those completing the form to write either 'Welsh' or 'English', or 'Both' if they could speak English and Welsh. While limiting the option to two languages likely discouraged first generation Jewish settlers to include 'Yiddish', it is interesting to see a number write 'Both' in this column. Russian-born Morris Cohen of Ammanford and John Shapiro, a Russian-Jewish travelling Jeweller residing in Caernarfon, for instance, are both listed as Welsh and English speakers.

These early Jewish pedlars were most often aspiring merchants, and having accumulated enough income a number set up businesses and resided in predominantly Welsh-speaking towns. Like their competitors, these small Jewish retailers provided a personal service to their customers, which, in some instances, required them to learn Welsh. One example is draper, Phillip Pollecoff of Bangor, and his wife, Amelia. The *North Wales Chronicle* reported in 1947 that:

Mr Pollecoff is well known throughout North Wales, and he now possesses two of the largest businesses in North Wales—Bangor and Holyhead...In his early days he learned the Welsh language before English. Mrs Pollecoff has played a very great part in developing the business, she has learned the Welsh language very thoroughly, although she was born in Liverpool and resided there until her marriage.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, their son, Jack, once described as 'a Welsh-speaking member of the Jewish Faith', ran the Pollecoff store in Pwllheli between 1932 and 1978, and spoke colloquial Welsh with his customers.<sup>11</sup> His niece, Shirley Goldsmith recalls that Jack did not speak 'proper Welsh. It wasn't what I call good Welsh. It was counter Welsh...it's over the counter.'<sup>12</sup> Vicki Lazar of Llandudno met Jack on one occasion and remembers him telling her to learn Welsh as 'it would be a great advantage' for her business.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 'Leo Abse in conversation with David Parry-Jones', Wales Video Gallery, 2001, Cell E123 8558.

<sup>10</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 7 November 1947.

<sup>11</sup> Newspaper Clipping, April 1961, XML 4558/46/129, CRO.

<sup>12</sup> Shirley Goldsmith, interview with author.

<sup>13</sup> Vicki Lazar, interview with author, London, 13 December 2011. Lazar also recalls that members of the Gubay family in Llandudno (a Sephardi family with origins in Iraq) conversed in Welsh in their shop the 'Oriental Stores' in Lower Mostyn Street from the 1920s until the last decades of the twentieth century. One of the sons, Robin Gubay, 'definitely spoke Welsh'.

In south Wales, a number of Jewish-owned stores conducted business in both Welsh and English. Hilda Howard (née Kershion), for instance, was born in Russia in 1911, but grew up in Llanelli and spoke Welsh fluently. On marrying her husband, Bernard, in 1940, the couple bought and expanded an existing drapery business, running three shops in Llanelli and Carmarthen. Her son, Michael, recalls that his mother ‘certainly spoke Welsh to a lot of customers in the shop.’<sup>14</sup> Another was Bernard Bernstein, a draper from Merthyr Tydfil. During the 1940s and 1950s the Bernsteins operated a fabrics stall at the Abergavenny market, where Wendy Bellany remembers her father speaking Welsh to the family and how delighted he was to meet Welsh-speaking Jews.<sup>15</sup> Some professional Jews who lived and worked in towns and villages across south Wales also had to acquire a working knowledge of Welsh. Simeon Cohen, for instance, ‘had to learn Welsh’ when he worked as a General Practitioner in 1920s Treorchy ‘because a lot of his patients...didn’t speak English.’<sup>16</sup>

Nonetheless, while Welsh was used by some Jews as a language of business and intercourse with the wider Welsh-speaking population, it was rarely, if ever, spoken in the home, or passed down to the next generation. Indeed, the language of the home for the first Jewish settlers would have been a mixture of Yiddish and English, but over time English predominated. Jack and Rebecca Pollecoff, for example, occasionally spoke Welsh with their housekeeper, Annie, but spoke English with one another and their son, Bernard, while Michael Howard of Llanelli was never taught Welsh by his mother.<sup>17</sup> In Bangor, Russian-born Joseph Bolloten is listed in the 1911 census as a Welsh and English speaker, but his wife and eldest son are noted as English speakers only, while in 1930s Rhyl, Paul Sugarman’s father used Welsh ‘in business, and...if he was out with Welsh-speaking friends’ but spoke English in the house.<sup>18</sup> A number of factors account for this. As we have seen, the few Jewish families who settled and established communities in north Wales had close ties with the larger Anglo-Jewish communities of Liverpool and Manchester, where many had relatives, imported Jewish provisions, sent their children to be educated, and looked for suitable marriage partners. This exchange and relationship with Jews in the north-west of England meant that fluency in English was essential, and it was to become the main language of communication for Jews in north Wales. English was also the major language of Wales in

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Howard, interview with author.

<sup>15</sup> Bellany, ‘A vanished community’, 101-110.

<sup>16</sup> Harold Cairns, interview with author.

<sup>17</sup> Eve Pollecoff, interview with author; Michael Howard, interview with author.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Sugarman, interview with author.



terms of numbers of speakers and a *lingua franca* in most parts of south Wales. Thus learning Welsh was not an imperative. Despite using the odd Welsh word or phrase when speaking to his mother, the late Leo Abse once noted that in inter-war Cardiff:

...Welsh was regarded as a second class language, it was given as an option in the schools, as to whether you could if you wish, to speak Welsh if you wanted to or French and the overwhelming majority of us, in accordance with the wishes of our parents, in accordance with the pressures, cultural pressures of the time, chose French, Welsh was really not part of our way of thinking.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, economic pressures may also account for the use of English in the home, rather than Welsh. While a knowledge of Welsh was useful for many of the early Jewish settlers to conduct face-to-face business in their stores, it was considered irrelevant for the next generation. As we shall see in Chapter Six, this is because early Jewish settlers desired the best for their children in Wales, and Britain more generally, and most wanted their offspring to attend university and climb the economic ladder. Since English was the language of education in Wales, and Britain as a whole, first and second generation Jewish parents were anxious for their children to speak English fluently in order to ‘get on’ in their new country of residence.

Between the late eighteenth and early twenty-first centuries, all but one of Wales’ Hebrew congregations were/are Orthodox in practice. This means that for the past three centuries religious services in the principality’s synagogues were/are predominantly conducted in Hebrew.<sup>20</sup> The one exception, of course, is the Cardiff New Synagogue (Reform) which, since its establishment in 1948, has conducted services in both Hebrew and English, in recognition of the fact that English was and *is* the vernacular language of its congregants.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in a similar vein to other Hebrew congregations in Britain, Sabbath morning

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<sup>19</sup> Transcript of interview with Leo Abse for the television series ‘Cymru 2000’, CYM, Bangor University Archives (henceforth BUA).

<sup>20</sup> The *Talmud* states that it is permissible to pray in any language that you can comprehend, but Orthodox Judaism has always stressed the importance of praying and conducting services in Hebrew, the language in which the covenant with God was formed. In British Orthodox synagogues, only the rabbi’s sermon and the prayer for the Royal family are conducted in English.

<sup>21</sup> As well as being pragmatic, the use of vernacular languages in Reform services is also a doctrinal issue. From the outset, Reform Judaism developed an egalitarian prayer service in the vernacular (along with Hebrew) which emphasises personal connection to Jewish tradition over specific forms of observance. Thus, vernacular languages are used by Reform congregations in parts of their religious services (especially sermons and prayers) so that congregants with a limited knowledge of Hebrew can comprehend what is being said and conveyed. Hebrew prayer books also contain translations in the vernacular language for the exact same reason. For more on this, see Eugene B. Borowitz, *Reform Judaism Today* (New York: Behrman House, 1983), 38.

services in both Wales' Orthodox and Reform synagogues have always featured a prayer for the welfare of the ruling monarch and the royal family, which is the only prayer recited in English in an Orthodox service in Britain and the Commonwealth.<sup>22</sup> In practice then, the daily prayers and services in Welsh synagogues were and are overwhelmingly in Hebrew, but the Welsh language has found its way into Jewish religious ceremonies and services in Wales. In 1982, for instance, both Rabbi Kenneth Cohen of Cardiff and Rev. Noel Davies, General Secretary of the Council of Churches for Wales, composed a Welsh-language Jewish prayer for Wales, which was to be recited at the Cardiff Reform Synagogue's weekly Sabbath morning service.<sup>23</sup> An American-born Rabbi who displayed a 'great love for Wales, its language, culture and traditions', Cohen noted:

We recite a prayer for the welfare of the Royal Family and government in English, after which we recite a prayer for the State of Israel in Hebrew. It only seems right that we, the sole Reform Synagogue in Wales, should pray for this country and that this prayer should be in the language of the land.<sup>24</sup>

The prayer was appended to the prayer books, and recited 'at a *bar mitzvah* by a Welsh speaker on one occasion', but following the departure of Rabbi Cohen in 1983, it became 'a vague memory [of] some older congregants.'<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the vast majority of congregants were non-Welsh speakers, and the prayer was likely deemed unsuitable and irrelevant. Welsh, however, is a first-language for a small minority of Jews, and it has featured in a number of *bar mitzvah* ceremonies across Wales. Alwyn Pierce Lloyd, for instance, celebrated his *bar*

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<sup>22</sup> Throughout their long history in the diaspora, Jews have recited prayers for the welfare of their monarch or government. This practice is believed to have stemmed from the words of the biblical prophet Jeremiah, who, when writing from Jerusalem to the Jewish community exiled in Babylonia, informed his readers to 'Seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the Lord in its behalf; for in its prosperity you shall prosper' (Jeremiah 29:7). In 1665, the first English prayer for an English King appeared in a pamphlet written by Jacob Judah Leon, titled, 'A Relation of the most memorable things in the Tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Salomon.' The prayer has gone through various iterations throughout its history. There are several explanations as to why the prayer is recited in English rather than Hebrew. Firstly, there are no translations for names of monarchs and members of the royal family in Hebrew. Secondly, reciting the prayer in English demonstrates that Jews are loyal and dedicated citizens to the wider non-Jewish community in Britain. For more on this, see David Daiches, *Two Worlds: an Edinburgh Jewish Childhood* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987), 210; Todd Endelman, *Jews of Georgian England*, 275.

<sup>23</sup> The Welsh prayer reads as follows: 'Ein Duw a Duw ein tadau, gweddiwn hefyd dros Gymru. Diolch i ti am brydferthwch ei daear, am gyfoeth ei thraddodiadau ac am gymdeithas ei phobloedd. Boed i holl drigolion Cymru fod yn un yn eu cariad tuag atat ti ac yn eu parch i undod eu dynoliaeth, fel y rhed barn fel dyfroedd a chyfiawnder fel ffrwd gref' ('Our God and God of our fathers, we pray also for Wales. We thank you for the beauty of her land, the wealth of her traditions and the fellowship of her peoples. May all inhabitants of Wales be united in their love of you and respect for their common humanity, so that justices may roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream'). I am grateful to Rabbi Kenneth Cohen for sending me a copy of the Welsh-language prayer together with the English translation.

<sup>24</sup> *JC*, 8 July 1983; *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 27 January 1982.

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Cohen, e-mail to author, 24 May 2012.

*mitzvah* at Llandudno's synagogue in 1968, at which his father said '*Bendith Duw*' (God Bless you).<sup>26</sup> More recently, between 2001 and 2007, Rita, Nia and Ffion Bevan of Carmarthen, celebrated their *bat mitzvahs* at the Cardiff Reform synagogue, where in addition to reading and reciting in English and Hebrew they read a Welsh language poem written especially for the occasion by the bard, Mererid Hopwood.<sup>27</sup>

### **Arts and Culture**

Many Jews who lived and *live* in Wales have displayed an interest in arts and culture, and have creatively produced work reflective of their experiences in the principality. Considering the small size of Welsh Jewry, numbering no more than about 5,000 at its peak in 1920, Jewish Wales has contributed much to the field of Welsh language and English literature, with a number writing works set in Wales and exploring the relationship between Welshness and Jewishness.<sup>28</sup> Novelist, Bernice Rubens, for instance, was born in Cardiff in 1928. Her father was a Russian-Jew who migrated to Britain at the turn of the twentieth century. Although Wales only features in a small minority of her novels, her Jewishness has been a defining influence in her writing. One of her most noteworthy fictions, *Brothers* (1983), explores the Jewish migrant experience in south Wales in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where parallels with her own ancestry are drawn. Despite Michael Woolf's suggestion that the novel's setting could be in 'Rubens' native Wales or *any other small town*' in Britain, the significance of the Welsh context is evident throughout the work.<sup>29</sup> In one scene, for instance, Rubens draws on what she perceives are the affinities between Welsh Nonconformism and the Jewish religion, while a section on the 1913 Senghenydd mining disaster draws parallels between the suffering and resilience of Welsh miners and the Jews of the diaspora more generally.<sup>30</sup>

Another Welsh-Jewish writer interested in Wales was Ystalyfera-born Lily Tobias (1897-1984). A Welsh-speaking novelist, broadcaster and playwright, three of her five English-language books are set in Wales, and her protagonists portray a variety of responses to both

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<sup>26</sup> Alwyn Pierce Lloyd, interview with author.

<sup>27</sup> Devra Applebaum, interview with author, Carmarthen, 12 July 2011, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>28</sup> *JYB*, 1920.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Woolf, 'Negotiating the Self: Jewish Fiction in Britain since 1945', in A. Robert Lee, ed., *Other Britain, Other British: Contemporary Multicultural Fiction* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), 136. My emphasis.

<sup>30</sup> Rubens, *Brothers*, 204, 232-3.

Welshness and Jewishness.<sup>31</sup> Her first book, *The Nationalists and other Goluth studies*, for instance, was published in 1921, and its cover features a red dragon within a *Magen David*. It is a collection of eight short stories which trace the fictionalised experiences of Welsh-Jewish protagonists in the Swansea valley during the early twentieth century and their interactions with the non-Jewish Welsh. For example, the first story, 'The Nationalists', explores the commonalities found between the Welsh nationalistic and Zionist aspirations of the Jewish and Welsh protagonists Leah and Idris, while other stories draw parallels between Welsh and Jewish culture.<sup>32</sup>

In the National Museum in Cardiff hangs a portrait of Dannie Abse (1923-), one of the most important and influential Welsh-Jewish writers of the twentieth century. Born in Cardiff in 1923, he lived most of his adult life in London where he worked as a physician. His literary work consists mainly of poetry, plays, and autobiographical narratives about Wales, a number of which explore the relationship between his Welshness and Jewishness.<sup>33</sup> Describing himself as a 'five feet eight and a half Welsh-Jew', who has 'two roots, that of Dafydd as well as David', he finds that to be both Welsh and Jewish is to belong to a double minority.<sup>34</sup> In his autobiographical narrative, 'Survivors', Abse recalls a visit to a London café frequented by German-Jewish refugees, where he discovers that very few Jews were aware of their Welsh coreligionists:

'So, you're Velsh', he said. I felt constrained to say that I was a Welsh Jew. He did not seem to know, until that moment, Welsh Jews existed. This information, of course, did not embarrass him. On the contrary, I became suddenly, an exotic. I was introduced all round: 'He's a Velsh Jew.'<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, the literature of Wales has been enriched by Jews born beyond its borders. Judith Maro (1919-2012), for instance, will best be remembered as an Israeli novelist and memoirist who immersed herself in Welsh language culture.<sup>36</sup> Born in Ukraine, Maro was brought up in

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<sup>31</sup> For more detail, see Donahaye, 'Jewish Writing in Wales'; Donahaye, 'By Whom Shall She Arise?'; Jasmine Donahaye, 'The link of common aspirations': Wales in the Work of Lily Tobias', in Claire Tylee, ed., *In the Open: Jewish Women Writers and British Culture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006); Donahaye, *Whose People?*

<sup>32</sup> Tobias, *The Nationalists and Other Goluth Studies*.

<sup>33</sup> See, for instance, Abse, *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve*; Dannie Abse, ed., *Twentieth-century Anglo-Welsh Poetry* (Bridgend: Seren, 1997); Abse, *Welsh Retrospective*.

<sup>34</sup> Dannie Abse, interview with author, London, 14 August 2011; *The Guardian*, 15 March 2003.

<sup>35</sup> Dannie Abse, *A Poet in the Family* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1974), 81.

<sup>36</sup> For more detail on her life and work, see Donahaye, 'Jewish Writing in Wales'; Donahaye, *Whose People?*; Davies, *The Chosen People*; Cai Parry-Jones, 'Obituary: Judith Maro', *Planet*, 205 (February 2012), 149.

British Mandate Palestine, where in 1946 she met her husband, the artist Jonah Jones. In 1948 Maro and Jones left for Britain eventually settling in the Llŷn Peninsula, north Wales. She took to the Welsh-speaking communities with real affection, engaging herself in the culture of her adopted home by learning conversational Welsh. The Biblical toponymy of Wales was often referenced in her work, and she found many similarities between the rugged landscape of north Wales and that of Palestine. Such comparisons are most visible in Maro's *Hen Wlad Newydd* (1974), a volume of articles that had appeared in Welsh periodicals; it took its title partly from the Welsh national anthem, and partly from *Altneuland* (Old-New Land) by the founder of modern Zionism, Theodor Herzl.<sup>37</sup> Equally important to Maro was the Welsh language, and despite not speaking it fluently, she insisted that her books be translated into Welsh before appearing in English. Her fluency in Hebrew, a language revived into a modern instrument of communication between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, meant she felt a strong affinity with minority languages such as Welsh. As she explained in a translated article for *Y Faner* in 1988:

...the Welsh language is a living, healthy language. My mother-tongue, Hebrew, was restored because people practised and used it, taught through it in schools and universities, and write the language. Although the situation is so different in Wales, without the mandatory conditions that prompted the Israelites, I see a similarity in the way the problems are faced. And so, despite all the difficulties, I publish in Welsh, because I came to love Wales, and something monstrous for me would be to see the old language disappear to the modern age's bowels of uniformity.<sup>38</sup>

Kate Bosse-Griffiths (1910-1998) is another example of a non-Welsh-born Jewish writer of Wales. Marion Löffler once wrote of Bosse-Griffiths as 'the first German to write creatively and publish literature in the Welsh language', but she is also the first Jew to do so.<sup>39</sup> Born in Germany to a Lutheran family with an assimilated Jewish mother, Bosse-Griffiths worked as an Egyptologist at the Berlin State Museums. In 1936 she was

<sup>37</sup> Judith Maro, *Hen Wlad Newydd* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1974).

<sup>38</sup> *Y Faner*, 19 August 1988. '...mae'r Gymraeg yn iaith fyw ac iach. Fe adferwyd fy mamiaith, Hebraeg, gan fod y bobl yn ei harfer a'i defnyddio, yn dysgu drwyddi mewn ysgolion a phrifysgolion, yn ysgrifennu yn yr iaith. Er mor wahanol yw'r sefyllfa yng Nghymru, heb yr amgylchiadau gorfodol a symbylodd yr Israeliaid, mi welaf debygrwydd yn y dull yr wynebier y problemau. Ac felly, er gwaetha'r holl drafferthion, rwy'n cyhoeddi yn y Gymraeg, oherwydd fe ddes i garu Cymru, a pheth gwrthun i mi fuasai gweld yr hen iaith yn diflannu i grombil unffurfdod y cyfnod modern'. Text originally translated into Welsh from English by Judith Maro's daughter Naomi Jones. Welsh text translated into English by author.

<sup>39</sup> Marion Löffler, 'Kate Bosse-Griffiths (1910-1998)', in Bernhard Maier, Stefan Zimmer, and Christiane Batke, eds., *150 Jahre 'Mabinogion': Deutsch-Walisische Kulturbeziehungen* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2001), 170.

dismissed by the Nazi government when it was discovered that her mother was Jewish. Under these pressures, she left for Britain, settling for a time in Oxford, where she met John Gwyn Griffiths, a Welsh scholar from the Rhondda. It was through Griffiths that Kate developed an interest in Welsh, and letters of correspondence between the couple from 1939 reveal that she intended on learning the language. In one letter, for instance, she wrote of her plans to visit Betws-y-Coed, where she could study ‘the Welsh books I bought to-day’, while another read ‘My Welsh exercises concern specially the Bible and the place names.’<sup>40</sup> On their marriage in September 1939, the couple moved to Pentre in the Rhondda valleys, where Kate ‘learnt Welsh as people here prefer speaking Welsh to speaking English.’<sup>41</sup> Whilst there, Kate and Gwyn became active in Welsh literary circles, establishing ‘Cylch Cadwgan’ (Cadwgan Circle), a literary group of prominent pacifistic and nationalistic Welsh writers including Rhydwen Williams and Pennar Davies. By 1940, Kate’s first Welsh language short stories (originally written in German and translated) were published in the periodical *Heddiw*. Her first novel, *Anesmwyth Hoen* (Uneasy Joy), published in 1941, won first prize in a competition organised by the publishers *Llyfrau'r Dryw*, while in 1942 Kate won a chair in the National Eisteddfod for her short story, ‘*Y Bennod Olaf*’ (‘The Last Chapter’).<sup>42</sup>

Bosse-Griffiths’ short stories transformed Welsh literature in as far as she personally drew upon her German background to write idea-led literature in the Welsh language.<sup>43</sup> Her Jewish background, however, was to remain absent in her fictional work. As Donahaye points out, she did not address her Jewish identity in her published work.<sup>44</sup> Given this, it is unsurprising that she was not included in a 1958 article on Jewish writers of Wales.<sup>45</sup> As a refugee who experienced the upheaval of exile and grieved for the persecution of her family, especially for her mother who died at Ravensbrück concentration camp in 1944, perhaps her Jewishness was too painful and traumatic to write about. Heini Gruffudd observes of his mother that she ‘didn’t like to talk about what happened during the war and a number of our relatives silently carried this heavy

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<sup>40</sup> Heini Gruffudd, *Yr Erid: Hanes Kate Bosse-Griffiths a’i theulu yn yr Almaen a Chymru adeg yr Ail Ryfel Byd* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2012), 138-143.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>42</sup> J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Teithiau'r Meddwl: Ysgrifau Llenyddol Kate Bosse-Griffiths* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2004), 232.

<sup>43</sup> Löffler, ‘Kate Bosse-Griffiths (1910-1998)’, 177.

<sup>44</sup> Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 149.

<sup>45</sup> Mimi Josephson, ‘Dual Loyalties’, *Wales*, 4 (December 1958).

burden.<sup>46</sup> Whatever the reason her Jewishness was something she nevertheless embraced, as her husband once explained: ‘Although Kate does not deal with these things in her work, she certainly had a deep sense about them’ and that ‘one thing is certain: she did not want to deny this part of her personality...she was a German and a Jew’.<sup>47</sup> According to her sons, Bosse-Griffiths was more interested in Egyptian religion than Judaism; but it was through Egyptology that she engaged with her Jewishness.<sup>48</sup> In 1971 she was appointed curator of the new Wellcome Collection of Egyptian Artefacts at the University of Wales, Swansea, where she discovered a scroll of the Book of Esther. In 1992 she wrote an article for *Y Faner* about her discovery and its significance in the Jewish celebration of *Purim*.<sup>49</sup> By September that year she donated a copy of the scrolls to the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, in memory of her late mother.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, many Jewish artists who lived or passed through Wales have produced work reflective of their experiences. One of Welsh Jewry’s best-known artists was Heinz Koppel. Born in Berlin in 1919, he fled to Britain in 1938, where his father, Joachim, set up a zip factory on the Treforest Industrial Estate. Heinz studied art in London, but between 1944 and 1956, he made a home in Dowlais, south Wales, where he taught art to locals. The surrounding countryside and the decaying industrial areas of the south Wales Valleys were important subjects in his paintings, but as Eric Rowan once noted, ‘Koppel changed the grim industrial scene into a world of colour and fantasy.’<sup>51</sup> They include such works as ‘The Engine Shed, Dowlais’ (1951), ‘Lovers’ Lane, Dowlais Top’ (1955), and ‘Merthyr Blues’ (1956). Through his example, a small group of artists joined together to form ‘The Rhondda Group.’ This school of painting was short-lived, but Koppel became one of the original members of the artists’ organisation *56 Group Wales*, which was founded in 1956 to promote Welsh Modernist art and artists. That same year, he and his family left Wales for a time, eventually settling in Cwmerfyn, mid-Wales, where he died in 1980.

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<sup>46</sup> Heini Gruffudd, quoted from: [http://www.s4c.co.uk/ffeithiol/e\\_organon\\_ravensbruck.shtml](http://www.s4c.co.uk/ffeithiol/e_organon_ravensbruck.shtml) (last accessed 16/07/2013).

<sup>47</sup> Griffiths, *Teithiau'r Meddwl*, 239; Translated from Welsh by author.

<sup>48</sup> Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 149.

<sup>49</sup> *Y Faner*, 20 Mawrth 1992.

<sup>50</sup> *Y Cymro*, 16 Medi 1992.

<sup>51</sup> Eric Rowan ‘The Visual Arts’, in Meic Stephens, ed., *The Arts in Wales 1950-75* (Cardiff: Welsh Arts Council, 1979), 63.

Another Jewish refugee artist who made a home in industrial south Wales was Warsaw-born, Josef Herman (1911-2000). He came to Britain in 1938, living in Glasgow and London for a time before settling with his wife in the mining village of Ystradgynlais between 1944 and 1955. Herman studied working people as the subjects of his art, and he found a fascination in coal miners and their landscape when living in Wales. Such works include, 'Three Miners' (1953), 'In the Miner's Arms' (1954) and 'Miners' (1951). The latter was commissioned for the Minerals of the Island Pavilion at the Festival of Britain, and described by Herman as 'one of my key pictures and the most important one I did in Wales.'<sup>52</sup> He was fondly nicknamed 'Joe-Bach' by local villagers and from 1953 'spent more time abroad and in London than in Wales' because the dampness of the Welsh climate began affecting his health.<sup>53</sup> In 1955 he thought 'of returning to the incredible mining village which had become [his] home', but he 'never did'.<sup>54</sup>

The contribution of Jewish refugee artists to the growth of painting in Wales was also felt in north Wales. Karel Lek, for instance, was born in Antwerp in 1929, but moved with his parents to north Wales as refugees in 1940. Educated in Bangor, he later studied at the Liverpool College of Art, and became a member of the Royal Cambrian Academy in 1955. Currently living on Anglesey, the main source of inspiration for Lek's paintings are the local people and landscape of north-west Wales. In an interview conducted in 2006, he explained that this was because he felt like he wanted 'to give something back to Wales' since it was here where he 'found freedom.'<sup>55</sup> His works include 'Sunday in Bontnewydd', 'Parys Mountain' and 'Mr Evan Roberts y diwygiwr'. In 2005, the National Library of Wales purchased six of his paintings and two sketchbooks for the national collection.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Josef Herman quoted from: [http://www.swanseaheritage.net/article/gat.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=1826](http://www.swanseaheritage.net/article/gat.asp?ARTICLE_ID=1826) (last accessed 17/07/2012).

<sup>53</sup> Josef Herman, *Related Twilights: Notes from an Artist's Diary* (London: Robson Books, 1975), 95-103.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>55</sup> Karel Lek, interview with BBC Wales, 2006:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/arts/yourvideo/media/pages/karel\\_lek\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/arts/yourvideo/media/pages/karel_lek_01.shtml) (last accessed 16/07/2013).

<sup>56</sup> Biography of Karel Lek: <http://www.atticgallery.co.uk/scripts/prodlist.asp?idcategory=180> (last accessed 16/07/2013). Such an engagement with Wales was in sharp contrast to the group of Continental Jewish refugee artists and writers who passed through north Wales between the 1940s and 1960s. They included German-Jewish lawyer and painter, Fred Uhlman, who spent many summers in Croesor Valley, Gwynedd, where he produced such works as 'My House in Wales', 'Welsh Hills', and 'Welsh Slate Mines in Snow' (1959); and German-Jewish artist Martin Bloch (1883-1954), who produced a group of nine paintings depicting the region's landscape and its people, including 'Bangor at Nightfall' (1947), and 'Down from the Bethesda Quarries'. Unlike previous artists mentioned, Wales was not to become a home for these émigré artist and writers, but



## Eisteddfodau

Jews in Wales have identified with cultural traditions widely considered to be Welsh, including *eisteddfodau* (plural of *eisteddfod*). A celebratory festival of Welsh literature, music and performance, the *eisteddfod* is, as Carol Trossett once noted, ‘one of Wales’ best known institutions’, and ‘is consciously associated with notions of Welshness’.<sup>57</sup> Held annually throughout the principality, ranging from small village events to larger festivals such as the National Eisteddfod and the Urdd Eisteddod (Youth Eisteddfod), *eisteddfodau* are an ancient custom of Wales. The tradition is believed to date back to 1176 when a meeting of poetry and music was held at the court of Rhys ap Gruffydd of Deheubarth in Cardigan.<sup>58</sup>

When Jews first became involved in *eisteddfodau* is unclear, but it is most likely during the nineteenth century. This is because the present-day format owes much to a late eighteenth-century revival by Iolo Morgannwg and Jews did not migrate to Wales in vast numbers until the nineteenth century. The earliest mention of a Jew involved in the *eisteddfod* that we can find is John Aronson from Prussia, a well-known and established Jeweller in Bangor during the mid-nineteenth century. By 1849 he was commissioned to create prize medals and supply a silver harp for a local *eisteddfod* in Aberffraw, Anglesey.<sup>59</sup> So pleased were committee members with John’s craftsmanship that they commissioned him to produce medals and supply adornments for other *eisteddfodau* in north Wales, including the Caerfallwch Eisteddfod in 1851, and the Rhyl Eisteddfod in 1863.<sup>60</sup> John’s success and involvement in local *eisteddfodau* enabled him to become well integrated into the cultural and civic life of Bangor, so much so that in 1853 he became a member of the committee for the proposed *eisteddfod* to be held in the city that year.<sup>61</sup>

However, Aronson was not an exception. Many Jews in Wales have contributed to *eisteddfodau* both as participators and competitors. Indeed, so proud were a number of Welsh-Jewish communities of the involvement and achievements of their co-religionists in

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rather a rural retreat from urban life. They were visitors who valued north Wales for its peacefulness and as a subject matter. For more on this, see Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 149-154.

<sup>57</sup> Carol Trossett, *Welshness performed: Welsh concepts of person and society* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 42. The Welsh language is an integral part of the *eisteddfod* and its competitions, but the festival is also open to non-Welsh speakers.

<sup>58</sup> John T. Koch, ed., *Celtic Culture: a Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 6.

<sup>59</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 31 July 1849.

<sup>60</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 1 March 1851; 29 August 1863.

<sup>61</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 19 November 1853.

eisteddfodau that their names were published in the *JC*, sometimes appearing as the main piece, or the only piece, of news from the congregation that week.<sup>62</sup> Naturally, as English was, and continues to be, the language spoken by the majority of Jews in Wales, most competed in competitions where proficiency in Welsh was not required. Ada Cohen of Tredegar, for instance, who is listed as an English speaker in the 1911 census, won a prize for a pianoforte solo at a local eisteddfod in 1913, while Harold Rubens won first prize in piano in the National Eisteddfod in 1932.<sup>63</sup> Other examples include Hyam Freedman of Pontycymmer who ‘was awarded first prize in the open competition for violin playing’ at the 1906 National Eisteddfod in Caernarvon; and Winnie Gordon of New Tredegar who ‘gained a first prize for pianoforte playing’ at the 1910 Bargoed Eisteddfod.<sup>64</sup> Non-Welsh speaking Jews also partook in the eisteddfod through volunteering. In 1939, Isidore Wartski of Bangor adjudicated woven Welsh wool at the National Eisteddfod in Denbigh, while a year previously ‘Jews took a prominent part’ at the National Eisteddfod in Cardiff, where the Isaac Memorial Hall of the Cathedral Road Synagogue was used to robe the Bards.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, Jews did partake in Welsh language competitions, but this varied, of course, from one area of Wales to another. On the whole it consisted mainly of those who lived in areas whose population spoke Welsh as a first language. One example is eleven year old Inge Enoch who came into contact with the Welsh language when evacuated to north Wales in 1941. The *JC* reported that ‘in three months she learnt Welsh so well that, on entering for both the solo and recitation competitions at the Eisteddfod at Pandy’r Capel, Corwen, she succeeded beyond expectation and came high in the list.’<sup>66</sup> Others include Fannie Stein of Amlwch, who in 1936 was ‘appointed one of the conductors of the Annual Llangefni County School Eisteddfod’ due to ‘her proficiency in the Welsh language’; eleven-year-old Sarah Janner, who ‘obtained the first prize for the Welsh recitation’ at the annual eisteddfod of the Barry section of the Cymrodorian [*sic*] Society in 1911; and Jack Pollecoff of Pwllheli, a Welsh learner and admirer of the poet, Cyman, who in 1968 became the first Welsh-Jew to be honoured by the Gorsedd of the Bards at the National Eisteddfod.<sup>67</sup> Going by the Bardic

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<sup>62</sup> The inclusion of articles relating to eisteddfodau in the *JC* may also have aroused the curiosity of metropolitan Jews in London and other large Jewish centres such as Manchester and Leeds about their ‘exotic’ coreligionists.

<sup>63</sup> *JC*, 9 May 1913; 16 March 1951.

<sup>64</sup> *JC*, 21 August 1906; 8 April 1910.

<sup>65</sup> *JC*, 15 July 1938; 12 August 1938.

<sup>66</sup> *JC*, 19 January 1940.

<sup>67</sup> *JC*, 24 April 1936; 24 March 1911; untitled newspaper article, XML 4558/46/129, CRO.

name ‘*Gŵr Y Clogwyn*’ (‘Man of the Cliff’), a name which he took from his farmhouse, this unique occasion was a feature of interest and curiosity to the Welsh media. In a televised interview at the National Eisteddfod in Barry, for instance, the first question asked of Jack was how he felt becoming the first Jew in Wales to be so honoured at the eisteddfod. To which he replied in Welsh:

I think the one before me, if there were eisteddfodau during that time, would have been King David for writing the Psalms. He would have been made the first [Jewish] Bard.<sup>68</sup>

Nonetheless, while Pollecoff was the first Welsh-Jew to become a member of the Gorsedd, he was not the first Jewish bard. The first was former Lord Mayor of Liverpool, Louis S. Cohen, who, in recognition of his work as president of the local eisteddfod committee, was initiated to the Bardic Order under the title ‘Cohenydd’ at the Liverpool National Eisteddfod in September 1900.<sup>69</sup>

As well as participating in eisteddfodau, Jews in Wales have sought to incorporate the eisteddfod tradition into their own culture and have been proud to adopt elements of it as their own. In 1928, for instance, the *JC* intended on organising a Music Festival to be held in London, to which Isidore Wartski of Bangor replied in a letter, that the festival should emulate ‘our Welsh Eisteddfod’ and become a ‘Jewish Eisteddfod’.<sup>70</sup> Drawing on his past experiences in eisteddfodau he suggested that ‘prizes, if substantial enough, would fire the enthusiasm of budding poets and songsters and stimulate choirs and craftsmen...of Jewish interest.’<sup>71</sup> It is unknown whether the organisers for the music festival adopted the eisteddfod model proposed by Wartski, but a number of examples exist where Jews have done so. Reflecting on his childhood in Waunlwyd near Ebbw Vale during the early 1910s, Simon Joseph recalls forming a youth society which met at the Ebbw Vale synagogue once a week and how he ‘organised an annual Eisteddfod.’<sup>72</sup> He ‘invited two or three adults to come and act as adjudicators whilst members took part in competitions—speaking, singing and

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<sup>68</sup> Jack Pollecoff, interview with Hywel Gwynfryn, ‘Heddiw yn y Genedlaethol’, 7 August 1968, PCA5407H, BBC Wales Archive, Cardiff. ‘Fase’r un cyn fi fi’n meddwl, os oedd eisteddfodau yn amser hynna, fase Brenin Dafydd am sgwennu’r Salms, fo byse’n iawn i gael neud y bard [Iddewig] cyntaf’. My translation.

<sup>69</sup> *JC*, 21 September 1900. A bardic name is a pseudonym given to poets and other artists who have been appointed to the Gorsedd (Throne) of the Bards in the National Eisteddfod. Bardic names are typically based on the appointees’ place of origin, poetic inventions or their given name. In this instance the bardic name ‘Cohenydd’ stems from the surname ‘Cohen’.

<sup>70</sup> *JC*, 28 January 1928;

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Joseph, *My Formative Years*, 61.

drama.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, by the early 1930s, Cardiff's Young Judeans youth group held eisteddfodau at the Cathedral Road Synagogue school rooms.<sup>74</sup> In 1975, Cardiff Jewry held an eisteddfod fundraiser to raise money for a Hillel House in the city, while in 1977 the city's Orthodox community held a *Purim* eisteddfod at the Penylan Synagogue, where the *cheder* children participated in written, spoken, artistic and musical competitions on Jewish themes.<sup>75</sup> More recently, in 2009, Michael Picardie of Cardiff's Reform Synagogue performed a dramatisation of Etgar Keret's short story, *Shoes*, at Wales' first Interfaith Eisteddfod at the *Urdd* theatre in Cardiff Bay.<sup>76</sup>

The surviving records suggest that Jews were generally tolerated and welcomed in eisteddfodau. Indeed, on retiring as a doctor in Nantymoel, south Wales in 1991, Scottish-born Louis Saville said that 'his appointment as adjudicator for the local eisteddfod was evidence of his acceptance by locals.'<sup>77</sup> However, there is evidence of controversy concerning Jews and the eisteddfod. At the opening of the National Eisteddfod in Llanelli in 1962, the already mentioned Polish-born Jewish artist, Josef Herman, was awarded a gold medal for his 'Services to Welsh Art.'<sup>78</sup> Having been congratulated in Welsh, Herman gracefully replied with a *Diolch yn fawr* (Thank you very much), but the award was heavily criticised by those who believed that it should have gone to a Welshman.<sup>79</sup> The Chairman for the National Eisteddfod's Art Committee, Ingli Williams, described the attitude of objectors as 'bunkum', adding 'I do not think it matters what country the artist comes from originally.'<sup>80</sup> As the *JC* reported, it is important to note that the complaint was not driven by anti-Semitism, but rather by a disparagement of the artist's national identity.<sup>81</sup> Despite not becoming a grave concern for Jews in Wales, this incident is important in highlighting the question of identity, the Welsh identity of Wales' Jewish citizens more specifically. It also highlights issues concerning acceptance and a sense of belonging. As we have seen from

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<sup>73</sup> Joseph, *My Formative Years*, 61.

<sup>74</sup> *JC*, 20 March, 1931.

<sup>75</sup> *CAJEX*, 27, 2 (1977), 32. .

<sup>76</sup> Programme for 2009 Interfaith Eisteddfod:  
<http://www.interfaithwales.org/userfiles/files/ICW%20Final%20Inter%20Faith%20Week%20Report%2017mar10%282%29.pdf> (last accessed 16/07/2013).

<sup>77</sup> *JC*, 3 May 1991.

<sup>78</sup> *JC*, 10 August 1962.

<sup>79</sup> *JC*, 22 June 1962.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

Chapter Four, Jews have generally been tolerated and accepted in Welsh society, but are they accepted as Welsh? The two are not the same.

### **Welsh-Jewish Identity**

In 1975, the editor of the *JYB*, Michael Wallach, asked ‘do the Jews think of themselves as Jewish Welshmen or Welsh Jews?’ To date there has been no sufficient answer to this question, but Welsh-identity like any other is constructed by both self and society, and in the early twenty-first century there are Jews in Wales who take pride in being Welsh. They could only be Welsh, but the process of establishing a Welsh identity, in their own minds as well as in the minds of wider Welsh society, has been a gradual and complex process. As Stuart Hall has said ‘identity is not as transparent and unproblematic as we think.’<sup>82</sup> He argues that identity is a production, ‘a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being”.’ Identities change over time and are shaped by ‘place, time, history and culture.’<sup>83</sup> More recently, David McCrone concludes that identities are fluid and are remade from one generation to the next.<sup>84</sup> These social and historical processes whereby identities are formed and change are particularly marked in the history of Welsh-Jewry.

The first Jews to settle in Wales during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were Ashkenazi Jews who came from Germany and Prussia. However, the majority of the present day Welsh-Jewish population are descendants of Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern European and the Russian Pales of Settlement who, as we have seen, arrived in Wales in large numbers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They left their native countries to either flee persecution or to seek economic opportunities, and when they arrived in Wales they were classified as ‘aliens’ by the authorities and regarded as foreigners by the native Welsh more generally. Dora Lipsett, for instance, settled in Merthyr Tydfil with her Russian family in 1903 and recalled in 1978 that when they arrived, ‘We were Aliens...naturally, and we aliens had to report to the police station.’<sup>85</sup> Even contemporary press reports appear to have classified Jews as foreigners. Whatever the story involving Jews their nationality and country of origin were often included in the description. In 1870, for instance, the *Western Mail* described Charles Huff of Cardiff as ‘the foreigner’ and ‘a

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<sup>82</sup> Stuart Hall, ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’, in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture and Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>84</sup> David McCrone, *The Sociology of Nationalism: Tomorrow’s Ancestors* (London: Routledge, 1998), 30.

<sup>85</sup> Dora Lipsett, interview with David Jacobs.

Russian Jew', while in 1900 the *Wrexham Advertiser* described hawker, Eli Chenker, as 'a Russian Jew'.<sup>86</sup>

The Yiddish language spoken by the first Jewish settlers, and their limited knowledge of English and Welsh on arrival, must have been a prominent marker of difference. Nay Joseph, for example, recalled that his parents 'could only speak Yiddish, nothing else...hardly a word of English' when they first arrived in Brynmawr at the turn of the twentieth century, while Harry Cohen noted that 'not one' of the early Jewish settlers of Pontypridd 'could speak English...they communicated in either Yiddish or Russian.'<sup>87</sup> Reflecting on his childhood in early twentieth-century Cardiff, W.C. Elvet Thomas noted that his neighbours were:

...a young Jewish couple, the husband from Poland (and one look at him was enough to proclaim his race), and his beautiful wife from Bessarabia in Southern Russia. The wife's English was very broken... They were newcomers from the continent. They knew nothing about Wales...<sup>88</sup>

Besides language, the early settlers found themselves distinguished by their accents. Dannie Abse, for example, recalls that his Polish-born grandparents, Tobias and Annabella Shepherd, who lived in Ystalyfera at the turn of the twentieth century, learnt to speak 'Welsh with a Yiddish accent', which made them stand out. He recalls:

My grandmother...used to speak Welsh with such an accent that they thought she was a Patagonian. Cause in those days there was an emigration from Wales and eventually they spoke a rather strange Welsh. So my grandmother...spoke Welsh in such a way...They were the only Jews in the village and they said to her 'c'mon tell the truth Annabella fach...you're a Patagonian.'<sup>89</sup>

If they could afford to pay the fee, naturalisation was a means for first-generation Jewish arrivals to settle permanently in Wales and acquire the status of 'British subject', as was true for immigrants in other parts of the United Kingdom. As part of the naturalisation process all applicants were required to renounce their previous allegiance to their country of birth, to swear allegiance to the British crown, and to have been resident in the British Isles for at least five years.<sup>90</sup> Following the 1905 Aliens Act, the requirements were altered to exclude any

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<sup>86</sup> *Western Mail*, 5 May 1870; WA, 21 July 1900.

<sup>87</sup> 'The Last Jew in Merthyr'; Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs.

<sup>88</sup> Elvet Thomas, 'A People Apart', 50.

<sup>89</sup> Dannie Abse, interview with author.

<sup>90</sup> For more on this, see Gartner, *American and British Jews*, 57.

applicants who were unable to read and write in English.<sup>91</sup> The motivation for naturalisation varied, but was primarily driven by the desire for political, economic and social freedom. David Priceman, a draper from Rhyl, for instance, was a twenty-five-year-old subject of Russia, who sought naturalisation in 1904 ‘to obtain the rights and capacities of a natural born British Subject from a desire to continue to carry on his business’, while Solomon Krupp, a travelling salesman living in Llandudno, was a twenty-eight-year-old Russian Jew, who applied for naturalisation in 1910 as he ‘Intends to reside permanently within the UK because he left Russia before he reached the age for military service. Having established a thriving business and is now married he intends to reside permanently in this country.’<sup>92</sup>

A certificate of naturalisation was then issued to successful applicants, whereby their national identity was reconstructed. A Jew born in the Pale of Settlement but resident and naturalised in Britain subsequently became officially recognised as being of Jewish ethnic or racial origin; of Polish-Russian birth; a British subject and a British citizen. To take one example: Isaac Pruss of New Tredegar, is first listed in the 1901 census as a Russian-born foreign subject. He was naturalised in 1904 and in the 1911 census is listed as a naturalised British subject born in Russia. Thus in reviewing the development of Welsh identity consciousness in Jews, one could argue that for the first generations, the focus was largely, if not wholly, of securing a greater sense of a British identity than a Welsh identity. However, despite officially being recognised as a ‘British subject’, many naturalised Jews did not feel British let alone Welsh. Their ancestral roots lay in their country of origin, and they were content to continue with their own language and customs. This was true of Annie Levi and her parents who lived in Gilfach Fargoed in the 1920s. Annie’s daughter, Rebecca Fine, observed of her mother that:

Her lifestyle didn’t actually change, my grandfather’s lifestyle didn’t actually change when they came here...I think somehow, it was a good thing in a way because it preserved their own culture. I was brought up, my mother always spoke Yiddish to me.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Michael Brenner, Rainer Liedtke, and David Rechter, eds. *Two Nations: British and German Jews in Comparative Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 123.

<sup>92</sup> Naturalisation Certificate of David Priceman, 6 August 1904, HO 144/759/118816, NA; Naturalisation Certificate of Solomon Krupp, 3 June 1910, HO 144/1054/187985, NA.

<sup>93</sup> ‘The Last Jew in Merthyr’.

Still, there are examples of first generation Jewish settlers, particularly those who migrated at a young age, who reveal strong expressions of attachment to Wales. They developed a Welsh identity through their upbringing in Welsh society, and their country of origin was simply to become a foreign land. Morris Silvergleit, for example, was born in Warsaw in 1892 and migrated to Aberfan as a teenager. In 1978 he recalled: 'I wasn't born in this country, I was born in Warsaw, Poland, but I've been here long enough to be Welsh actually....I'm assimilated. I'm more Welsh than Welshman.'<sup>94</sup> The same can be said for Isidore Wartski, who was born in Prussia in 1876. His son, John, believes Isidore would have described himself as 'more Welsh' than his naturalised Polish-born grandfather, Morris, because he lived in Bangor since the age of five.<sup>95</sup> During Isidore's campaign for re-election as Bangor's Mayor in 1940, Alderman John Williams stated, he 'had been a resident of the borough almost long enough to claim himself a native. He had breathed the healthy atmosphere of the town and surrounding Welsh hills from boyhood.'<sup>96</sup> This statement is revealing, indicating that an outsider may, by virtue of length of time spent in the host community, achieve some sense of belonging.

In addition to Eastern European immigrants who arrived in Wales around the turn of the twentieth century, the present Welsh-Jewish community derives from Continental refugees who came during the Second World War to escape Nazism. They mainly consisted of Czech, German and Austrian Jews, many of whom, as we have seen, were classified as enemy aliens by the British Government. Narratives of displacement predominate amongst these wartime refugees. Lore Gang, for instance, fled Nuremberg with her family in 1939 and settled in Cardiff. Her son, Tony Fraser, observes of his mother that despite being naturalised she 'never wanted to be British. She wanted to be herself, as it were, a Continental Jew'.<sup>97</sup> Another wartime refugee, Ina Golten (1928-2012), fled Nazi Germany on the Kindertransport in 1938, eventually settling in Cardiff, but felt she had 'never had roots anywhere, never, ever anywhere at all'.<sup>98</sup> Refugee artist, Karel Lek of Beaumaris, regards his arrival in north Wales as more of an accident: 'The misfortunes of the last War brought me, as a boy of eleven, from

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<sup>94</sup> Morris Silvergleit, interview with David Jacobs, 22 May 1978, 6017/1, Sound Archive, SFNHM.

<sup>95</sup> John Wartski, interview with author.

<sup>96</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 15 November 1940.

<sup>97</sup> Tony Fraser, interview with Colin Heyman, Cardiff, 24 November 2011, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>98</sup> Ina Golten, interview with Diana Soffa, Cardiff, 10 March 2011, Hineni, BHAC.



Antwerp to North Wales, where I have lived for over 70 years. I sometimes wonder whether this qualifies me to call myself a Welshman!’<sup>99</sup>

In some cases, wartime Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe desired to forego their identity from their country of origin and welcomed a new identity in their country of refuge. This is because the murderous actions of the Nazi regime and its collaborators effectively destroyed the possibility of their re-adoption of a German or Austrian identity.<sup>100</sup> Bill Pollock, for instance, was born in Vienna in 1931 and fled with his family in 1939, eventually settling in south Wales. Having been naturalised as a British subject, he considers himself British rather than Welsh, but would not describe himself as Austrian ‘not by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, I haven’t been back to Austria since I left in 1938 and I have no wish to go back.’<sup>101</sup> Another example is Leipzig-born Werner K. E. Bernfeld (1905-1974). A refugee from Nazi oppression, he settled in Cardiff during the Second World War and was eager to rebuild his life in Wales by putting ‘out new roots and become a part of his adopted country’.<sup>102</sup> He soon became ‘an enthusiastic supporter of the Welsh way of life’ by competing in eisteddfodau and learning the Welsh language.<sup>103</sup>

With the second generation, the children of the first settlers, the situation was different. As Alan Llwyd has commented on the position of second generation Blacks in Wales, but is just as appropriate for second generation Jews, many had ‘an ambiguous identity.’<sup>104</sup> They were born in Wales, but felt that they did not belong to the country of their birth. Bernice Rubens, for instance, was born in Cardiff in 1928, but had no sense of belonging to Wales because her birth in the country was purely by chance. Only later in life did she accept a Welsh identity, but was cautious of whether others would accept her as Welsh. As she explains:

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<sup>99</sup> Karel Lek quoted from: <http://www.atticgallery.co.uk/scripts/topicinfo.asp?t=92> (last accessed 16/07/2013).

<sup>100</sup> Anthony Grenville, ‘The Integration of Aliens: The Early Years of the Association of Jewish Refugees Information, 1946-1950’, in Ian Wallace, ed., *German-Speaking Exiles in Great Britain, 1* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 12.

<sup>101</sup> Bill Pollock, interview with author.

<sup>102</sup> *JC*, 10 August 1962. The already mentioned Austrian-Jewish refugee Alfred Feiner of Pontypridd published an English-Language poem in 1967 with the Welsh-language title ‘Cariad Bach’ (‘Little Love’). Feiner found sanctuary from Nazism in Wales, and the poem describes his admiration for the principality and how he wished he was born Welsh rather than Austrian. The poem begins with the lines ‘I wished I was born, in this little hamlet on the steep Welsh hills...’ See Alfred Feiner, *Pages from a Biography* (London: Outposts Publications, 1967), 9.

<sup>103</sup> *CAJEX*, 19, 4 (1969), 42.

<sup>104</sup> Llwyd, *Black Wales*, 173.

For any Jew of my generation, wherever they're born is accidental. I was born in Wales simply because my father came from Latvia...to Cardiff. He could equally have [gone]...to Liverpool or to Glasgow or indeed, like his brothers, to New York. More important in so far as it influenced my home life, my father mightn't have left Germany at all....Having been born in Wales, I grew up there, went to University there.....For most people that would probably make me Jewish...I don't know whether Welsh people think I'm Welsh. I like to think I'm Jewish and also Welsh.<sup>105</sup>

A number of second-generation Jewish children experienced a dilemma of being caught between two worlds and cultures: those of their immigrant parents and those of the country they were living in.<sup>106</sup> Tony Fraser, for instance, was born in Cardiff in 1948, and as a Welsh-born Jewish child of Germanic origin, he recalls a:

mixed upbringing...but this very odd boundary. Inside the house a German Jewish Continental culture; you step outside and it's of Wales—middle-class Wales...And when you asked your non-Jewish friends into your house if they hadn't...they did find it odd and in some ways funny...the fact that my grandmother could barely speak English...She had a strong German accent...you had to prepare your friends a little bit to step over that threshold...<sup>107</sup>

Similarly, Ruth Joseph's parents were refugees from Nazi Germany, and although she was born in Cardiff in 1946 she had an identity outside of Wales:

I lived a life infused with references—strange names from other worlds—other outside existences...I came from another place; my parents Holocaust refugees arriving in Cardiff, desperately seeking a place to settle, needing, wanting a new life.<sup>108</sup>

However, without memories of the old country, many second-generation Jews dissociated themselves from the Eastern European or Continental European cultures that characterised their parents' national identities and sense of belonging. They felt they were Welsh because they were born and raised in Wales, because they were educated in Wales, and because they were a part of the country's day-to-day life. Channah Hirsch, for instance, was of Russian parentage and born in Llanelli in 1913. Despite not having any ancestral roots in Wales, she felt a sense of belonging:

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<sup>105</sup> Michael Parnell, 'Interview: Bernice Rubens', *The New Welsh Review*, 3, 1 (1990), 46.

<sup>106</sup> For more on this, see Sharon Stephens, ed., *Children and the Politics of Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Nancy Foner, *Across Generations: Immigrant Families in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

<sup>107</sup> Tony Fraser, interview with Colin Heyman.

<sup>108</sup> *Jewish Renaissance* (October 2009), 26.

I was born in Llanelli...Llanelli and everything Welsh is in my bones. I loved the clear, crisp air, the skies, the hills and valleys, the murmuring streams, the peace and tranquillity. I belong to Wales and Wales belongs to me.<sup>109</sup>

In a similar vein, Jack Pollecoff of Pwllheli was born in Holyhead in 1903 and was of Russian and English parentage. According to his daughter-in-law, Eve Pollecoff, there was no doubt that Jack felt that he was Welsh. He ‘loved that part of the world, and felt rooted there’.<sup>110</sup> Cardiff-born Brenda Landes (née Samuel) (b.1940) is of Ukrainian and English parentage, and despite being aware ‘of a multicultural environment since [she] was a child’, she considers herself ‘Jewish with strong Welsh roots...very little of my Welshness has been inherited!’<sup>111</sup>

Yet the second generation’s sense of belonging to Wales did not go unchallenged. Lily Tobias, for instance, draws deeply from her own experiences as a second-generation Jewish child living in early twentieth-century south Wales in her short story ‘The Nationalists’. Set in the fictionalised mining town of Trwyntwll, the Jewish protagonist, Leah Klein, was ‘born in the village’ to immigrant parents. Despite being Welsh-born, she was still regarded as a foreigner to some:

‘Dirty little foreigner’, he called her one day.....The forlorn little figure looked up with a start of bewilderment....Her cheeks reddened as she flung up a retort. ‘I’m not dirty, and I’m not a foreigner. I was born here.’ ‘I don’t’ care...Your father comes from Russia, and he says ‘dat’ instead of ‘that’. My dad says you ought to go back to Russia, to your own country.’<sup>112</sup>

The great change in attitude came with the third- and fourth-generations, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the first arrivals. Having been born in Wales to Welsh-born parents, they were no longer identified as ethnically Eastern European or Central European. As Cardiff-born (1925-) Harold Cairns puts it:

...I’m Welsh but I’m certainly British ethnically. My grandparents...they’re northern Eastern European, and of course they all came away, they all came [to Britain] in the nineteenth century...whilst [my] grandparents might have been required to be naturalised, my parents didn’t. My parents were all naturally British because they were

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<sup>109</sup> Hirsch, *My Llanelli*, 5.

<sup>110</sup> Eve Pollecoff, interview with author.

<sup>111</sup> *Bimah*, 22 (April 2000), 18-19.

<sup>112</sup> Tobias, *The Nationalists*, 13-14.

born here... I'm a Welsh Jew because I was born in Wales and I've lived in Wales for the greater part of my life.<sup>113</sup>

In the process of assimilation Ashkenazi distinctiveness began to decline, and as time passed the old ways were bound to experience the flux of memory. The linguistic competence of second and third generations, for instance, became greater in English than in Yiddish or German, with the linguistic gap widening markedly between the first and third generation. To quote Leo Abse:

My grandmother couldn't speak English. She really couldn't speak anything except Yiddish...My grandfather spoke a fair English, with an accent. He spoke Yiddish to his wife, so if I went to my maternal grandfather's house...they were in a house where Yiddish was spoken. In my own house there were of course English, predominantly, bits of Welsh, and my mother and father speaking Yiddish when they didn't want the children to know....<sup>114</sup>

Similarly, Adam Buswell of Cardiff (b. 1984) experienced this language shift between the generations. His grandmother, a Holocaust survivor, left Continental Europe for Britain after the Second World War, eventually settling in Wales. He recalls that:

I didn't really have conversations as such with my gran. As I say, I only learnt 'Grandma German'. My parents were completely fluent in German and my brother and sister lived with it for a little bit longer than I had...We didn't really have conversations because, as I say,...she couldn't speak English and there was only so much German I knew.<sup>115</sup>

Although many of the traditions and customs of the first Jewish settlers began to fade as the younger generations integrated into wider Welsh and British society, a Jewish identity, whether cultural or religious, was retained. Like their parents and grandparents, the majority of children were raised in Jewish homes, many keeping kosher and observing various religious rituals such as lighting Sabbath candles and celebrating Jewish holidays. They were also formally immersed in Jewish life through *cheder* lessons, synagogue services and *bar* and *bat mitzvahs*. The third generation grew up in communities which had adopted Welsh and British secular culture and an appropriate acculturated Judaism. They resisted full assimilation and in the process constructed a hybrid Jewish-Welsh/British identity, enabling

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<sup>113</sup> Harold Cairns, interview with author.

<sup>114</sup> 'Cultivating Irreverence: Leo Abse interviewed by Jasmine Donahaye', *Planet: The Welsh Internationalist*, 160 (August/ September 2003), 10-12.

<sup>115</sup> Adam Buswell, interview with Sue Mansell.

them to combine their Jewish identity and heritage with a strong commitment to Wales and Britain more generally. As Cardiff-born (1982-) Ben Soffa stated in 2012:

There's definitely a strong Jewish component to [my identity], definitely a Welsh component to it... even if I know my family's only been in Wales a hundred years it feels like it's something of me.<sup>116</sup>

But what is Welshness? Early work on Welsh identity has been criticised both for its treatment of the Welsh population as one culturally unified group and its neglect of the variety of ways of expressing a Welsh identity.<sup>117</sup> Later studies, influenced by Benedict Anderson's representation of national identity as both imagined and socially constructed, have presented a much more complex and multiple image of Welshness.<sup>118</sup> 'How many ways of being Welsh?' asked Graham Day and Richard Suggett in 1985, while for Dai Smith 'Wales is a singular noun but a plural experience'.<sup>119</sup> To illustrate the polychromatic nature of Welsh identity in the Welsh-Jewish context, one must consider the differing ways in which Jews in Wales have constructed and imagined their Welsh identities and sense of belonging to the nation.

Reflecting the wider Welsh population, the most important factors associated with Welsh identity for many Jews in Wales are country of birth and residence. Although born to Polish parents, Isaac Samuel described himself in a letter to the *Western Mail* in 1911 'as a Jew, by race and religion, and as a Welshman by birth' since he 'was born and [had] lived in Cardiff all [his] days'.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, Cardiff-born Alan Schwartz (1939-2012) considered himself a 'Welsh-Jew' because he 'was born in Wales' and his 'religion [happened] to be Jewish.' If he 'was born in England' he would have been 'an English-Jew.'<sup>121</sup> The late Rebecca Fine of Gylfach Fargoed also described herself a 'Welsh-Jew' because she was 'a Jewess born in

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<sup>116</sup> Ben Soffa, interview with author, London, 6 June 2012, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>117</sup> For early works on Welsh identity, see Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*; Tom Nairn, *The Break up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Colonialism* (London: New Left Books, 1977). For criticism of these works, see Fevre and Thompson, *Nation, Identity and Social Theory*, 5-13.

<sup>118</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso: London, 1983). For examples, see Fiona Bowie, 'Conflicting interpretations of Welsh identity' in Sharon Macdonald, ed., *Inside European Identities: Ethnography in Western Europe* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), 167-193; Fevre and Thompson eds., *Nation, Identity and Social Theory*; Charlotte Williams, 'Claiming the National: Nation, National Identity and Ethnic Minorities' in Williams, Evans, O'Leary, eds. *A Tolerant Nation?*, 220-234.

<sup>119</sup> Graham Day and Richard Suggett, 'Conceptions of Wales and Welshness: aspects of nationalism in nineteenth-century Wales', in Gareth Rees, Janet Bujra, Paul Littlewood, Howard Newby and Teresa L. Rees, eds., *Political Action and Social identity* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 96; Smith, *Wales*, 36.

<sup>120</sup> *JC*, 1 September 1911.

<sup>121</sup> Alan Schwartz, interview with author.

Wales', while Paul Sugarman of Rhyl (1930-2013) looked 'upon [himself] as Welsh and Jewish....because [he] was born here [in Wales], [he] was raised here [in Wales], and [he] had a great life here [in Wales]', but admits 'it's not just the fact you're born [in Wales], it's how you conduct yourself and what you think of being Welsh.'<sup>122</sup> Conversely, as we have seen, there are those Jews who were born in Wales who would not consider themselves Welsh, and, indeed, might actively resent being so categorised. Leo Abse, for instance, was 'a little sceptical' when he was referred to as a 'Welsh-Jew', often stating an old Yiddish saying that 'because you're born in a stable, it doesn't make you a horse'.<sup>123</sup> Despite being born in Cardiff in 1917, Abse insists that:

I was not born in Wales. My mother was born in Ystalyfera and so she was born in Wales, but I was born in Cardiff. The Welsh influences that would have been pressing upon me if I had been born where my mother was born, and where my grandfather had lived, mean I would have been succoured in a very different environment than I was....although I have always been called a Welsh Jew, I regard it as ridiculous.<sup>124</sup>

Despite the country's compact size, scholars have frequently stressed the depth of internal divisions and differences in Wales.<sup>125</sup> An influential attempt to capture these variations in recent times is Denis Balsom's 'Three Wales Model', which divides Wales into three distinct areas: *Y Fro Gymraeg*, Welsh Wales and British Wales.<sup>126</sup> *Y Fro Gymraeg* refers to rural

<sup>122</sup> *Bimah*, 5 (December 1995), 17; Paul Sugarman, interview with author.

<sup>123</sup> 'Cultivating Irreverence', 8.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>125</sup> For early explorations of this idea, see Alfred E. Zimmern, *My Impressions of Wales* (London: Mills & Boon, 1921); Emrys G. Bowen, ed., *Wales: a Physical, Historical and Regional Geography* (London: Methuen, 1957).

<sup>126</sup> Denis Balsom, 'The Three- Wales Model', in John Osmond, ed., *The National Question Again: Welsh Political Identity in the 1980s* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1985), 1-17. Although Balsom argued that his model referred to the 1980s and did not apply to earlier periods, his three divisions of Wales share many similarities with an earlier model proposed by the historian and political scientist Alfred E. Zimmern in 1921. Zimmern had distinguished between three versions of Wales: 'Welsh' Wales (Welsh speaking), Industrial or 'American' Wales of the south Wales coalfield, and 'Upper-Class' or 'English' Wales (English speaking). See Zimmern, *My Impressions of Wales*, 140. Zimmern's 'English Wales' and Balsom's 'British Wales' share many similarities, in the sense that they both refer to areas of Wales which were and *are* predominantly English speaking and have long attracted high levels of in-migration from England such as south Pembrokeshire, the south-east and areas along the Welsh/English border. The major differences lie in Zimmern's 'American Wales' and his Welsh-speaking 'Welsh Wales'. Zimmern's 'American Wales' referred to the cosmopolitan make-up of the south Wales valleys, which in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had attracted incomers at a rate only surpassed within the Western world by the United States. In a similar vein to Balsom's '*Y Fro Gymraeg*', Zimmern's 'Welsh Wales' referred to west Wales, but also would have included parts of north-east Wales such as Denbighshire since 60-100% of the region's population spoke Welsh in the inter-war period. North-east Wales was later subsumed into 'British Wales' by Balsom, owing to the decline of the Welsh language and the steady process of Anglicisation in the region in the latter half of the twentieth century. For maps depicting the geolinguistic patterns of Wales throughout the twentieth century, see Geraint H. Jenkins and Mari A. Williams,

Welsh-speaking north-west and west-central Wales, while Welsh Wales is made up of the industrialised, working-class south Wales valleys. An area which, though generally not Welsh-speaking, is nonetheless distinctively Welsh in terms of its support for the Labour party, which spread out to dominate Welsh politics for much of the twentieth century.<sup>127</sup> For Abse, the ‘real Wales’ comprised of ‘industrial’ or ‘Welsh Wales’, ‘in the Valleys where the socialist and anarchist...leaders had for a few generations created a world which maintained hope and a socialist Utopia in the face of the crushing and terrible unemployment and poverty that existed there. This was a different world.’<sup>128</sup>

Abse’s Cardiff however, belonged to ‘British Wales’ (or Zimmern’s ‘English Wales’), an ‘imagined community’ of English-identifying non-Welsh-speakers. As stated by Abse, ‘One mustn’t romanticise and say I was in a Welsh city; the dominant section were people who in fact rejected their Welsh identity fundamentally—they wanted to be snobby-nosed Englishmen.’<sup>129</sup> Gwyn A. Williams once noted that ‘Wales is a process...the Welsh make and remake Wales day by day and year after year’, and although Cardiff has been transformed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries into the locus of culture, commerce, power and political discourse in Wales, its position as Wales’ capital city has been tenuous and contested.<sup>130</sup> For many, it is a city that hardly typifies or symbolises the country’s cultural distinctiveness and with a cosmopolitan population quite different to the rest of Wales, Cardiff stands apart from it.<sup>131</sup> Thus, Abse described Cardiff as a ‘mongrel city’ which ‘had no real connection with Wales.’<sup>132</sup> He ‘had no doubt about [his] identity as a

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eds., *"Let's Do Our Best for the Ancient Tongue" : The Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff : University of Wales Press, 2000).

<sup>127</sup> John Osmond, ‘Welsh Civil Society in the Twenty First Century’ in David Harvey, ed., *Celtic Geographies: Old Culture, New Times* (London: Routledge, 2002), 80.

<sup>128</sup> ‘Cultivating Irreverence’, 9. Leo Abse is referring to the south Wales valleys of the 1930s and 1940s, which, although previously described by Alfred Zimmern as ‘American Wales’, were beginning to resemble Balsom’s ‘Welsh Wales’ during this period with their overwhelming support for the Labour movement from the 1922 general election onwards. Zimmern’s ‘American Wales’ gradually evaporated during the 1920s and 1930s when a total of nearly half a million people emigrated from the south Wales coalfield to escape the depression and the overwhelming amount of poverty it created. For geopolitical maps of Wales from the 1930s to the 1980s, see Tanner, Hopkin and Williams, eds., *The Labour Party in Wales*.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Gwyn A. Williams, *The Welsh in their History* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 200; Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan, ‘Mythic Geographies of Representation and Identity: Contemporary Postcards of Wales’, *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 1, 2 (2003), 117.

<sup>131</sup> Huw Thomas, ‘Spatial Restructuring in the Capital: Struggles to Shape Cardiff’s Built Environment’, in Fevre and Thompson, eds., *Nation and Identity*, 174.

<sup>132</sup> Leo Abse in conversation with David Parry-Jones, Wales Video Gallery, NLW.

child. [He] was a Jew', but 'the Welsh influence was marginal, not only in [his] life, but in the life of the majority of children who were living in Cardiff.'<sup>133</sup>

For some Jews born in Balsom's '*Y Fro Gymraeg*' (or Zimmern's 'Welsh Wales'), there lies a more problematic vision of Welshness. Despite being born in Wales they feel that they are denied a Welsh identity because they do not speak Welsh or have not engaged themselves in Welsh language culture. John Wartski, for instance, was born in 1926 and grew up in Bangor, but does not consider himself Welsh 'because [he] couldn't understand' the Welsh language. He knew the odd saying such as '*Iechyd Da*' (Good Health) and '*Sut Heddiw?*' (How are you today?), but felt that he needed to speak the language fluently to claim a Welsh identity: 'If I was ever taught Welsh, of course why not.'<sup>134</sup> In a similar vein, Llandudno-born (b.1941) Michael Lee describes himself as a Jew born in Wales, but not a 'Welsh Jew' because he was not raised in a Welsh-speaking household or exposed to 'Welsh [language] culture.'<sup>135</sup> On the flip-side, Alwyn Pierce Lloyd was born in Shrewsbury in 1955 but grew up in villages in mid- and north Wales where he learnt to speak Welsh as a child. He describes himself as a 'Welsh Jew' because practising his religion and speaking the Welsh language are 'equally as important' to him.<sup>136</sup> He believes his parents would have considered themselves 'Welsh-Jewish' because 'they were born in Wales' and 'they were fluently Welsh-speaking.'<sup>137</sup>

The notion that by speaking Welsh, one becomes a fuller member of Welsh society is axiomatic in *Y Fro Gymraeg*. Liverpool-born Devra Applebaum, for instance, moved to Carmarthen with her husband in 1992, and as a monoglot English-speaker she felt excluded from the Welsh-speaking world around her. She wished to integrate, and decided to learn Welsh on an intensive WLPAN course. Now a fluent Welsh speaker, she holds that she has

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<sup>133</sup> 'Cultivating Irreverence', 10-13. It is interesting to note that Leo Abse's younger brother, the poet, Dannie Abse (1923-), would happily describe himself as a 'Welsh Jew' (See *The Guardian*, 15 March 2003). While geographical and environmental factors led Leo Abse to reject any claims to Welshness, he also suggested that his exposure to his grandparents' Eastern European lifestyle and culture as a child played a part. By the time Dannie was born, their grandparents had either died or had severely aged, and thus, in contrast to Leo, his exposure to an Eastern European way of life was minimal. As Leo once explained: 'My dear brother Dannie...the fact that he was born six or seven years later than I made a particular difference. Fundamentally, that difference was that I knew my grandparents and he didn't, either because they had died, or he was too young before he could relish them. So his attitude to Wales...is certainly not the same as mine'. See 'Cultivating Irreverence', 7-8. In contrast to Leo, who lived most of his adult life in Cardiff, Dannie lived in London, and a sense of *hiraeth* (longing for Wales) may have strengthened his sense of Welshness.

<sup>134</sup> John Wartski, interview with author.

<sup>135</sup> Michael Lee, interview with author.

<sup>136</sup> Alwyn Pierce Lloyd, interview with author.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*



three identities—Adopted Welsh, Jewish and English—and that immersing herself in the Welsh language and its culture has produced a greater sense of belonging to Wales:

Well, I've lived here for nineteen years and I feel very at home. I speak Welsh—I've learned Welsh...and I've been very involved with things like the eisteddfod ...there's a lot of Welsh culture goes on...this is my home and this is where I belong now.<sup>138</sup>

North-west and central-west Wales are thoroughly Welsh-speaking places, but they are not identical with every other area of Wales, nor can we learn all there is to know about the Jewish encounter with the Welsh language from this limited vantage point. Indeed, the vast majority of Jews in Wales have historically settled in the south-east of the country, a region which is not by and large Welsh-speaking. Thus, most cannot relate to a Welshness that is defined by the Welsh language, even if they identify with it and sincerely regret their exclusion. Harry Poloway, for instance, was born in Newport in 1905, and has lived in south Wales all his life. He describes himself as Welsh because he lives in Wales and Jewish because that is his religion. According to Harry: 'I'm Welsh through and through...I've never sat down and cried because I can't speak Welsh. Oh no. I said look I'd like to, but I can't. End of Story.'<sup>139</sup> Indeed, Welsh appears to have a more prominent role for Jews, as is true of non-Jews, living in *Y Fro Gymraeg* than it does in other parts of Wales simply because more people speak Welsh, or attach such importance to it, in this region. As Cardiff-born, Ben Soffa puts it:

[In] Cardiff and south-east Wales where it's not a recent thing that the majority don't speak Welsh in their everyday life...I think you should be able to be fully Welsh and not just define it by the language.<sup>140</sup>

Attitudes and standpoints towards this situation vary, but for the majority of Jews in Wales, as is true of the wider Welsh population, the primary language is English. As a result of this, most Jews have sent their children to English-medium schools. Since 2000, the teaching of Welsh has been compulsory in all schools in Wales until the age of sixteen, but mandatory Welsh lessons in some eyes can never be anything but a school-based exercise and one unlikely to lead to any level of fluency. This is suggested by Matthew Solomons of Cardiff (b. 1965):

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<sup>138</sup> Devra Applebaum, interview with author.

<sup>139</sup> Harry Poloway, interview with author, Newport, 22 September 2011.

<sup>140</sup> Ben Soffa, interview with author.

[My son] came home from school the other day and he had results of a couple of his...assessment tests. And he came home and he said,...‘I got 27 per cent in Welsh.’...It’s difficult—you don’t know whether to be angry because he did badly or...it’s only Welsh. Where do you use Welsh? I mean, I know...the law states that all the schools have got to learn Welsh and they’re trying to bring Welsh back into modern day everyday living, but where would you use it? I’ve never used it.<sup>141</sup>

However, this is not to suggest that one can generalise the attitudes of Jewish parents towards the Welsh language, and the education of their children. In fact, some non-Welsh speaking Jewish parents have sent their children to Welsh-medium schools, but their reasons encompass a range of motivations. David Cohen, for instance, was born in 1950s Montreal, Canada, but has lived in south Wales since 1986. Both he, and his American-born wife, sent their children to welsh-medium schools as a way of strengthening their own sense of belonging to Wales. As Cohen noted, ‘you feel a bit more Welsh than if you send your kids to the English schools.’<sup>142</sup> In addition ‘there was a perception...that the Welsh schools offered a better education’, and on a more personal level, Cohen bitterly resented not being taught French in Montreal, ‘so when [his] kids had an opportunity to be bilingual, through a state school, without sending them privately, [he] jumped at it.’<sup>143</sup> Another example is Alan and Laura Liss, who sent their three children to Welsh-medium schools in Cardiff between 1990 and 2005 because they did not want their children to miss out on learning Welsh as had happened to themselves and they felt that it offered a ‘good education.’<sup>144</sup> Similarly, Devra Applebaum of Carmarthen sent her three daughters to Welsh-medium schools because she married ‘a passionate Welshman’ who saw an opportunity to restore to their children a Welsh linguistic heritage of which he felt deprived, while Judith Maro’s support for minority languages meant that ‘her children had to go to a Welsh school’.<sup>145</sup> So while national sentiment enters into many decisions, that sentiment does not trump practical concerns for many.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Matthew Solomons, interview with author.

<sup>142</sup> David Cohen, interview with author, Pontypridd, 10 August 2011, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Alan Liss, interview with author, Cardiff, 18 July 2012; Malka Liss, interview with author, Cardiff, 26 September 2011.

<sup>145</sup> Devra Applebaum, interview with author; Judith Maro, letter to author, 11 July 2011.

<sup>146</sup> For a case-study on parental incentives for choosing Welsh-medium education for their children, see Rhian Hodges, ‘Welsh-medium education and parental incentives – the case of the Rhymni Valley, Caerffili’, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 15, 3, (May 2012), 355-373.

For some older Jews living in Wales there is also a fixed correlation between Welsh identity and Nonconformity. In an interview in 1990, Bernice Rubens stated, 'I think I'm Jewish and also Welsh, but you know, I'm not Methodist, I don't have those Nonconformist trappings that make you more Welsh than being born in Wales.'<sup>147</sup> Similarly, an unnamed Welsh-Jew suggested in 1975 that 'To be a real Welshman, you must be Chapel.'<sup>148</sup> Indeed, although there is or *was* 'nothing specifically Welsh about the chapel religion of Protestant Nonconformity', it became central to ideas of Welshness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>149</sup> The status of Nonconformity as a significant carrier of Welsh identity emerged in the popular imagination during this period by both the religious census of 1851 (which found that about eighty per cent of the worshipping population of Wales were Nonconformist) and the growing number of Welsh politicians and political leaders that emerged from Nonconformity.<sup>150</sup> Nonconformist concerns such as temperance, disestablishment and support for the Welsh language and its cultural traditions also became intertwined with the Welsh national image.<sup>151</sup> But as Paul Chambers reminds us, 'Mass participation in Welsh Nonconformity was a fairly short-lived experience', and throughout the twentieth century the influence of Welsh Protestantism on Welsh national identity weakened as a result of a number of factors, including urbanisation, secularisation, emigration and the decline of the Welsh language.<sup>152</sup> Reflecting on religious life in Wales in the last quarter of the twentieth century, John Davies once commented that 'with only thirteen per cent of the inhabitants of Wales regularly attending a place of worship, it was

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<sup>147</sup> 'Interview: Bernice Rubens', 46.

<sup>148</sup> *JC*, 28 November 1975.

<sup>149</sup> D. Densil Morgan, "'The Essence of Welshness'?: Some Aspects of Christian Faith and National Identity in Wales, c. 1900-2000', in Pope, ed., *Religion and National Identity*, 141.

<sup>150</sup> Paul Chambers, 'Religious Diversity in Wales', in Williams, Evans and O'Leary, eds., *A Tolerant Nation?*, 125.

<sup>151</sup> Hugh F. Kearney, *Ireland: Contested Ideas of Nationalism and History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2007), 116. Indeed, as Paul Chambers reminds us, Nonconformists in Wales were primarily Welsh-speaking and Welsh language festivals and traditions such as the *cymanfa ganu* (singing festival) and *eisteddfodau* became established parts of chapel life by the late nineteenth century. See Chambers, 'Social Networks and Religious Identity' in Davie, Woodhead and Heelas, eds., *Predicting Religion*, 78.

<sup>152</sup> Chambers, 'Social Networks and Religious Identity' in Davie, Woodhead and Heelas, eds., *Predicting Religion*, 81; Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales*, 272-274. Nonconformity's association with Welshness also weakened throughout the twentieth century as it found itself competing with alternative definitions of Welsh national identity such as sport, rugby in particular, which became a popular way of expressing a sense of belonging to Wales as it did not depend on religious allegiance or fluency in the Welsh language. For more on this, see R. Merfyn Jones, 'Beyond Identity? The Reconstruction of the Welsh', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992), 330-57; Day and Suggett, 'Conceptions of Wales and Welshness', in Rees, Bujra, Littlewood, Newby and Rees, eds., *Political Action*, 91-115.

difficult to claim that the Welsh were a Christian nation.’<sup>153</sup> Indeed, the notion that Wales is a Nonconformist nation appears increasingly contestable, particularly following the establishment of the National Assembly of Wales in 1999.

With the birth of devolution, a new chapter in the understanding of Welsh religious identity has emerged. Recent studies have variously highlighted how one of the principal issues for devolution on its inception was to increase citizen involvement, inclusiveness and participation, or what Dai Smith has termed ‘the language of citizenship.’<sup>154</sup> In the case of religion, a recognition of a religiously pluralistic Wales emerged whereby non-Christian faiths of Wales were officially recognised as Welsh.<sup>155</sup> As D. Densil Morgan has noted, ‘Just as there is no longer a single Welsh cultural identity, pluralism has become an undoubted characteristic of the religious life of the new Wales...Christian verities may still abide, but they are now compelled to do so in competition with the faith claims of many other sects and religions.’<sup>156</sup> The potential opportunities that devolution had for Jews in Wales was welcomed by Alan Schwartz, then editor of *Bimah* Magazine, who wrote in 1999:

The new Welsh Assembly has begun its work with a brief to take note of all cultural viewpoints and also to make sure that unlike Westminster, the various religious groups play an active role in the work of the Assembly...Our small community needs to play a full active role within the Welsh Assembly and Wales in general...This is good news for the Jewish community.<sup>157</sup>

The changing nature of the religious landscape of Wales was affirmed in 2002, when an Interfaith Council for Wales was established under the auspices and sponsorship of the Welsh National Assembly. It was replaced in 2004 by Faith Communities Forum, which was not a part of the Assembly, but was designed to promote a dialogue between the Welsh Government and the major faith communities of Wales. Compared with Scotland, no single government body representing Welsh Jewry was established, but the existence of the Interfaith Council, and subsequently the Faith Communities Forum, nevertheless gave Jews

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<sup>153</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, 642.

<sup>154</sup> See for instance: Paul Chaney and Ralph Fevre, ‘Ron Davies and the cult of Inclusiveness: Devolution and Participation in Wales’, *Contemporary Wales*, 14 (2001), 21-49; Graham Day, *Making Sense of Wales: a Sociological Perspective* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002); Charlotte Williams and Paul Chaney, ‘Devolution and identities: the experience of ethnic minorities in Wales’, *Soundings - A Journal of Politics and Culture*, 18 (2001), 169-184; Smith, *Wales*, 205.

<sup>155</sup> Paul Chambers and Andrew Thompson, ‘Public Religion and Civil Society in Wales’, in Day, Dunkerley and Thompson, eds., *Civil Society in Wales*, 217.

<sup>156</sup> Morgan, “‘The Essence of Welshness’?”, in Pope, ed., *Religion and National Identity*, 159.

<sup>157</sup> *Bimah*, 20 (September 1999), 4.

an institutional presence in the Assembly.<sup>158</sup> Since its inception, two representatives from the Cardiff Orthodox and Reform communities have served on the Forum chaired by the First Minister, where specific issues relating to the Jewish community such as *Shechita* and requirements for burial have been discussed. One factor that has contributed to a sense of engagement between Jews and the Welsh Assembly has been its geographical proximity to Wales' larger Jewish communities and the willingness of Assembly leaders to make themselves accessible to representatives of the Jewish community.<sup>159</sup> As Diana Soffa, a Jewish representative of the Faith Communities Forum, stated in 2012:

it gave a very small community a face...I mean if there's something happening in Cardiff, it's possible that a minister can pop along for half an hour. Whereas obviously it's a different matter if it's further afield, but certainly for South Wales—Cardiff, Newport, Swansea—I can speak for. It's been an open door for us.<sup>160</sup>

While a multi-faith Wales is at present still largely restricted to the south, it is too soon to make any assessment of the long-term impact of the Faith Communities Forum. However, that an organisation such as this has emerged is testament to the impact devolution has had on the changing nature between religion and Welshness.

Furthermore, national identity is often informed by the everyday representations of the nation, or what Michael Billig terms 'banal nationalism.'<sup>161</sup> In his study, Billig draws attention to the way that nationalism does not just exist through openly political acts and ideas, but through many of the 'banal', seemingly mundane and insignificant acts of our everyday lives.<sup>162</sup> In this case, very ordinary, everyday ways of identifying as Welsh have been expressed by Jews in Wales. In 1997, for instance, the then Israeli ambassador, Moshe Raviv, visited the Swansea Jewish Community and was presented with 'a specially engraved Welsh love spoon', while the covers of *CAJEX* from 1990 onwards and its successor *Bimah* have both featured a Red Dragon, perhaps the most powerful and notable symbol of Welshness.<sup>163</sup> In 1941, the Welsh national anthem was sung by Jewish evacuees from

<sup>158</sup> For further information on the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, see [www.scojec.org](http://www.scojec.org) (last accessed 16/07/2013).

<sup>159</sup> Paul Chambers makes this observation of faith communities in Wales more generally. See Chambers, 'Religious Diversity in Wales', in Williams, Evans and O'Leary, eds., *A Tolerant Nation?*, 133.

<sup>160</sup> Diana Soffa, interview with author, Cardiff, 15 June 2012.

<sup>161</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

<sup>162</sup> Mackay, *Understanding Contemporary*, 269.

<sup>163</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Magazine (September, 1997), D/D SHC 21/10, WGA.

Cardiff, and in 1969 the then Israeli ambassador was given ‘a warm, Welsh welcome’ by Cardiff Jewry who sang the national anthem ‘with enthusiasm’.<sup>164</sup>

Support for the Welsh rugby team is one of the principal ways in which ‘banal nationalism’ is manifested in Wales. John Bale once stated that rugby is characteristically Welsh, but as David Andrews reminds us ‘the game has been made to be Welsh by the interpretive actions of the Welsh populace’.<sup>165</sup> Although the Welshness of Rugby is indeed an ‘invention’, it has become the archetypal symbol of an inclusive Welsh identity in its capacity to unite people of differing backgrounds with a common sense of nationhood.<sup>166</sup> Wales, as we have seen, is divided geographically, linguistically and ethnically and thus Welshness has a plethora of different meanings for the people who construct it and absorb it, but rugby, as Martin Johnes once wrote, ‘glosses over the different meanings that the people of Wales attach to their nationality, enabling them to accept, maybe even understand their Welshness in the face of internal division’.<sup>167</sup> Thus it is through supporting the national rugby team that many Jews across Wales, as is true of the wider Welsh population, express their pride and belonging to the nation. Llanelli-born Michael Howard (b.1941), for instance, remarked that he feels Welsh ‘whenever Wales play. Mostly it comes out when I’m watching sport. I always try and watch Welsh Rugby matches...I’m always rooting for Wales’, while Ron Silver of Cardiff (b.1942) feels Welsh when ‘I support Wales...at Rugby’.<sup>168</sup> Similarly, Paul Sugarman noted that his daughter, Sara, is ‘a hundred per cent Welsh...she holds the banner up, she goes to the Rugby matches and everything’.<sup>169</sup> Even going back to the 1930s, Jews cheered Wales against England in rugby matches at Cardiff Arms Park. As Dannie Abse reveals:

These big rugby matches were great fun...Three spectators near us wore red shirts and banged silver saucepans, urging the players to victory with screams of Llanelly

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<sup>164</sup> *JC*, 20 June 1941; *CAJEX*, 19, 2 (1969), 11.

<sup>165</sup> John Bale, ‘Sport and National Identity: a Geographical View,’ *British Journal of Sports History*, 3 (1986), 18-41; David L. Andrews, ‘Welsh Indigenous! and British Imperial?—Welsh Rugby, Culture, and Society 1890–1914’, *Journal of Sport History*, 18, 3 (1991), 336.

<sup>166</sup> Evans and O’Leary, ‘Playing the Game’ in Williams, Evans and O’Leary, eds., *A Tolerant Nation?*, 111.

<sup>167</sup> Martin Johnes, ‘“Every day when I wake up I thanks the Lord I’m Welsh”: sport and national identity in post-war Wales’, in Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter, eds., *Sport and National Identity in the Post-War World* (London: Routledge, 2004), 52.

<sup>168</sup> Michael Howard, interview with author; Ron Silver, interview with author.

<sup>169</sup> Paul Sugarman, interview with author.

encouragement and scathing criticisms. And we shouted too, oh how we shouted... When the noise was loudest we swore and nobody could hear us.<sup>170</sup>

Jewish support for the Welsh rugby team has not, however, been accompanied by an extensive affiliation to Welsh nationalism, or support for the Welsh nationalist party, Plaid Cymru. The exact figure of Jewish voters is unknown, but in 1974 Dafydd Williams, the then General Secretary of Plaid Cymru, admitted that a mere three or four Welsh Jews were party members.<sup>171</sup> Two years later, the then party leader, Gwynfor Evans, stated in an interview with the *JC* that, ‘We have never found any sympathy and support for the national aspirations of the Welsh people among the Jewish community.’<sup>172</sup> Alderman claims this statement suggests that Evans had ‘explicit anti-Jewish sentiments’, implying ‘that Welsh Jews were not quite “Welsh people”’, but as Rubinstein has noted, Evans’ ‘interview was given to the *JC*, and so he was always therefore going to single out Welsh-Jewish communities.’<sup>173</sup> Although Jews in Wales have a good historical record in their participation in Welsh civic life, to date there have been no Jewish MPs, councillors or AMs representing Plaid Cymru.

There are several possible reasons for the disjuncture. One is that the Welsh language has been a central, even an inherent component of Welsh nationalism. As Robin Mann once stated, ‘Historically, Plaid Cymru...[has] represented the main political voices of the Welsh-speaking communities.’<sup>174</sup> But as we have seen, the majority of Jews in Wales are unable to speak Welsh, with most having settled in the predominantly English speaking south-east of the country. It may also be because of the intellectual anti-Semitism that appeared in the work of one of Plaid Cymru’s founders, Saunders Lewis. The content of Lewis’ anti-Jewish statements and writings have been examined in Chapters Three and Four, but it must be stressed that his views were not officially adopted by or a product of the Welsh nationalist party. But in view of this history and Lewis’ association with Plaid Cymru it is unsurprising that few Jews have adopted the Welsh nationalist cause. The thought of Plaid Cymru rounding up Welsh-Jews would seem inconceivable, but the actions of nationalistic movements in recent history, particularly the extermination of six million Jews and others by

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<sup>170</sup> Abse, *Ash on a Young Man’s Sleeve*, 19-20.

<sup>171</sup> *JC*, 3 September 1976; Alderman, *The Jewish Community*, 204.

<sup>172</sup> *JC*, 27 August 1976.

<sup>173</sup> Alderman, ‘The anti-Jewish riots of August 1911: a response’, 566; William Rubinstein quoted from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-14582378> (last accessed 16/07/2013).

<sup>174</sup> Robin Mann, ‘Civil society, community and the Welsh Language’, in Day, Dunkerley and Thompson, eds., *Civil Society in Wales*, 255.

the Nazis during the Second World War, has made some Jews cautious of any form of nationalism, if not completely anti-nationalistic. As Leo Abse once stated:

I lived through a period where in fact I had seen the Welsh nationalist leaders, the people they worshipped, as people I regarded as neo-fascists. They were! And so given my views, prejudices, you can understand that after the war, after seeing the consequences of the Holocaust...Having seen what virulent nationalism had done, any sign of nationalism was, for me, tainted.<sup>175</sup>

On the other hand, Kate Bosse-Griffiths, the German-Jewish exile who fled Nazi Germany, provides a different perspective. She engaged herself in Welsh language culture and became an avid supporter of Welsh nationalism through her husband, J. Gwyn Griffiths. She wrote a number of articles for Plaid Cymru's monthly Welsh and English language organs, *Y Ddraig Goch* and *The Welsh Nation*, and when *Cymdeithas yr Iaith* (The Welsh Language Society) came into being in 1962, she supported its cause and was fined in 1966 for refusing to pay a parking ticket in English.<sup>176</sup> Her actions came as a surprise to her German relatives, but according to her husband, Kate could distinguish between the nonviolent, pacifistic, Welsh nationalism she adopted and the 'perverted nationalism' she fled.<sup>177</sup>

Indeed, a small number of Jews in Wales have been supportive of the Welsh Nationalistic cause. They include a combination of those who, like Kate Bosse-Griffiths, have engaged themselves in Welsh language culture, and those who are Zionistic. When Plaid Cymru was established in 1925, its main aims were the promotion of the Welsh language and its culture and to gain full self-government for Wales. This is not an unfamiliar idea for Zionistic Jews. Wales, like Israel, is a small nation with a long history of oppression, and both have maintained their ancient languages, Welsh and Hebrew, against all the odds. Indeed, Plaid Cymru admired Israeli Jews for their success in reconstituting the Hebrew language, and by the mid-twentieth century a growing concern for the future of the Welsh language meant they often looked to emulate Israel's efforts. During the 1950s and 1960s both *Y Ddraig Goch* and *The Welsh Nation* featured articles on the possibility of emulating the Hebrew ULPAN method in Wales, while others praised Israel's success in creating a national language out of

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<sup>175</sup> Leo Abse in conversation with David Parry-Jones, Wales Video Gallery, NLW.

<sup>176</sup> For examples, see *Welsh Nation*, October 1964; *Y Ddraig Goch*, Mawrth 1962; Griffiths, *Teithiau'r Meddwl*, 231.

<sup>177</sup> Griffiths, *Teithiau'r Meddwl*, 81. Translated from Welsh by author.



Hebrew and its achievement of self-governance.<sup>178</sup> In an article in *Barn* in 1969, Evans expressed his disappointment that the Welsh were not more like the Israelis, and urged the Council of the National Eisteddfod to 'do an immeasurable favour for the Welsh' by sending a 'commissioner from Wales to Israel to study the situation and report back.'<sup>179</sup>

In view of this admiration, it is unsurprising that some Jews have supported Plaid Cymru. Brenda Landes, for instance, recalls that she supported the party after a friend at college, an ardent Welsh nationalist who was 'fascinated at the rebirth of Hebrew', became involved in her Zionist activities.<sup>180</sup> On one occasion Landes remembers participating in 'a sit-down strike in a department store because the management refused to accept a cheque written in Welsh.'<sup>181</sup> Another example is Bridgend-born Alan Liss (b.1948), who became 'very involved with Plaid Cymru' and 'sympathetic to Welsh nationalism' in the 1960s because he:

...was a Zionist, and there was a certain generation of Welsh Nationalists who were very pro Zionist...because of the revival of the [Hebrew] language...they were very pro- Jewish, very pro-Israel. It was probably romantic nationalism more than anything. And of course, all the Welsh nationalists were very pro the re-establishment of the state of Israel after 2000 years. They thought 'If they could do it, then goodness knows...'<sup>182</sup>

Nevertheless, as Israel began to lose some of its moral stature in the eyes of the world, Plaid Cymru's attitude towards the Jewish state gradually began to change. The party had not become anti-Zionist, but Israel itself had changed from the vulnerable and fragile state born in 1948. The Six-Day-War of June 1967 proved to be a turning point. Militarily, the Jewish state had showed itself to be able to capture, hold and settle large expanses of territory with hostile populations. By 1974, Evans continued to boast of 'Israel's achievements in restoring Hebrew', but voiced concerns over 'some aspects of its current policies'.<sup>183</sup> Two years later, the *JC* reported of 'a new and critical attitude on the part of Welsh Nationalist leaders towards Israel and the Jewish community in Wales' following a visit made by four Plaid Cymru members to Libya to foster trade links with Colonel Gaddafi's government, a regime which was notably hostile to Israel.<sup>184</sup> Asked whether the new trade links with Libya

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<sup>178</sup> See, for example: *Welsh Nation*, August 1951; June 1959; August 1963; 8-14 June 1973; 2-8 August 1974; *Y Ddraig Goch*, Gorffennaf 1952; Mai 1953; Ionawr 1954; Ebrill 1954; *DG*, Awst 1965; Hydref 1966.

<sup>179</sup> Gwynfor Evans, 'Digwyddodd yn Israel', *Barn*, 78 (April 1969), 152. Translated from Welsh by author.

<sup>180</sup> *Bimah*, 22, (April 2000), 18-19.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> Alan Liss, interview with author.

<sup>183</sup> Gwynfor Evans, 'Cyflwyniad', in Maro, *Hen Wlad Newydd*, 4.

<sup>184</sup> *JC*, 27 August 1976.

indicated a radical change from the once pro-Zionist sentiment of Welsh nationalism, Evans stated that neither he nor Plaid Cymru were antagonistic towards Israel. He claimed, 'I have been a Zionist for most of my life...having been attracted above all by the revival of the Hebrew language', but added that Plaid Cymru had been 'disturbed by the attitude which Israel had adopted towards the Palestinians and, on occasion, towards her other Arab neighbours...'<sup>185</sup>

The party had thus become a focus of anti-Israeli activity, a perception further reinforced when a 1978 parliamentary survey listed only one Plaid Cymru MP out of three as Pro-Israeli.<sup>186</sup> By the 1980s Israel lost a lot of its international support, especially following the Sabra and Shatila massacres in Beirut in 1982. By 1989, Evans accused the state of backing 'some of the world's cruellest governments', adding that Israel's 'oppression of Arabs in Gaza and the Left Bank is worse than the tyranny of any communist country and is as bad as South African oppression'.<sup>187</sup> Then, in 1995, there was concern when Plaid Cymru referred to Israeli settlers as 'dangerous racists' at its annual conference.<sup>188</sup> The party made the headlines of the *JC* in 2002, after calling for a boycott of Israeli goods and for understanding the motives of Palestinian suicide bombers.<sup>189</sup> Another incident occurred in 2008, when former party leader and then presiding officer of the Welsh Assembly, Dafydd Elis-Thomas, called for Assembly Members to boycott the visit of Israeli ambassador, Ron Prosor.<sup>190</sup> This shift in attitude may account for a decline in Jewish support for the party. Kenneth Cohen, for instance, was an enthusiastic supporter of Welsh nationalism, but 'became disenchanted with Plaid Cymru because of its regular one sidedness of the issue of Israel-Palestine' and believed that 'most Jews [felt] this way', while Llandudno-born Rona Hart (b.1943), has 'never thought of supporting Plaid Cymru because of their policies on Israel.'<sup>191</sup> But for Jasmine Donahaye, Plaid's views on Israel is 'not a problem for me because I'm quite critical of Israel too, and I don't have this unreconstructed Zionist view of things that I used to have.'<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> *JC*, 13 August 1976.

<sup>186</sup> *JC*, 31 March 1978.

<sup>187</sup> Gwynfor Evans, *Pe Bai Cymru'n Rhydd* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1989), 181; 'Creodd Israel enw anhyfryd iddi ei hun yn ystod yr ugain mlynedd diwethaf fel gwerthwr arfau i rai o lywodraethau creulonaf y byd...y mae ei gorthwrwm ar Arabiaud Gaza a'r Banc Chwith yn waeth na gormes unrhyw wlad gomiwnyddol a chynddrwg a gormes De Affrica'. Translated from Welsh by author.

<sup>188</sup> *JC*, 22 September 1995.

<sup>189</sup> *JC*, 27 September 2005.

<sup>190</sup> *JC*, 13 June 2008.

<sup>191</sup> Kenneth Cohen, e-mail to author, 24 May 2012; Rona Hart, telephone interview with author.

<sup>192</sup> Jasmine Donahaye, interview with author, Aberystwyth, 30 July 2012.

Welsh-Jewish identity, like any other in the diaspora, has increasingly incorporated a sense of being a Zionist. As a sign of this, there was and *is* an extensive range of Zionist activities in most, if not all, Welsh-Jewish communities. A Zionist society was founded in Merthyr Tydfil (1901), and by 1904 the Zionist societies of Aberdare, Aberaman, Brynmawr, Abertillery, Cardiff, Newport, Pontypridd, Swansea, Tredegar and New Tredegar organised themselves into the South Wales and Monmouthshire Zionist District Committee.<sup>193</sup> Zionist groups catering for women and youth were also established. A Daughters of Zion group was in existence in Cardiff in 1917 which later became a branch of W.I.Z.O (Women's International Zionist Organisation), while other branches of W.I.Z.O were formed in Llandudno (1939) and Pontypridd (1942).<sup>194</sup> Young Zionist societies were founded by several Jewish communities such as Colwyn Bay (1942) and Swansea (c.1918).<sup>195</sup> The founding of the State of Israel in 1948 channelled the enthusiasm of most Welsh-Jewish communities, and fundraising for Israeli institutions, whether welfare, religious or educational became an important communal activity. In 1947, for instance, Monty Landy of Llanelli set up the inaugural *Magen David Adom* aid committee in London, which sought to provide financial assistance to Israel's medical emergency services.<sup>196</sup> In 1952, Llandudno Jewry raised money for the *Magen David Adom*, while in 1980 the Cardiff Friends of *Magen David Adom* dedicated their second ambulance to Israel.<sup>197</sup>

The planting of trees in Israel, an activity organised by the Jewish National Fund (JNF), was also a feature of Welsh Zionism. In 1943, for example, the Jewish community of Merthyr Tydfil 'decided to plant a grove of trees...in the children's forest in Eretz Yisrael', while in 1963 Llanelli Jewry were 'among the first to support a forest in Israel' which was named after Harry Landy, former Chairman of the Mizrahi Organisation of Great Britain.<sup>198</sup> Wealthy families such as the Shermans of Cardiff also donated money to Israeli institutions. In 1959, for instance, brothers Harry and Abe Sherman donated £100,000 to build a building for the Hebrew University at Jerusalem in memory of their parents, and contributed an average of £5,000 per annum to the then Joint Palestine Appeal.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> *JC*, 12 July 1901; 3 June 1904.

<sup>194</sup> *JC*, 18 May 1917; 17 November 1939; 20 November 1942.

<sup>195</sup> *JYB*, 1918; *JC*, 28 August 1942.

<sup>196</sup> *JC*, 20 March 1998.

<sup>197</sup> *JC*, 28 November 1952.

<sup>198</sup> *JC*, 17 May 1962.

<sup>199</sup> *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), 21-24.

Nevertheless, holding charitable events and offering financial support to Israel should not be seen as a wish to live there or even as an affinity with the place, but rather as a means of forwarding a Welsh-based sense of diasporic Jewish identity.<sup>200</sup> This is not to deny Zionism's self-evident political nature, but for many Jews in Wales, Zionist activities figured as a backdrop for more local social activities and a way of bringing Welsh-Jews together. In the process of planning benefits for Israel members of Cardiff's branch of W.I.Z.O., for instance, were able to meet other Jewish women and share their experience of being Jewish in Wales. As Stella Schiller Levey of Cardiff recalled in 2002:

Just before my elder daughter, Jocelyn, was born [1961] some local new Jewish wives and mothers set up a branch of the World-wide Women's International Zionist Organisation ... Now, after forty-one years... I find that membership of 'Ziona' has been an integral part of my married years and social life, whereby, by dint of hard work, we have raised thousands upon thousands of pounds for underprivileged Israeli and Arab women and children... We have had marvellous times raising money and... I cannot see my social life without it now, whatever else I do.<sup>201</sup>

In 1959, a *Hanoar Hatzioni* group was formed for the Jewish youth of north Wales which met in various towns along the coast. With a membership of around twenty, it was designed primarily to meet the needs of Jewish social life in north Wales. As Rona Hart recalls:

...one week we'd meet in Prestatyn, another week we'd meet in Rhyl, once we went to St Asaph, Llandudno, and we just get together and play records. We didn't do anything overtly particularly Zionist I must say. Each one would bring biscuits or cakes or something and we'd play the usual pop music. So what we did that was anything to do with Israel or ideological was very minimal.<sup>202</sup>

Despite the Zionist Federation's numerous *aliyah* campaigns to Israel, Welsh Jewry has failed to translate its Zionist inclinations into mass emigration. The number of Jews that have left Wales for Israel since 1948 is difficult to ascertain, but emigration to Israel has never been on a large-scale. Indeed, some Jews in Wales visit Israel on holiday, while others have never visited, and wish not to because they are critical of Israel for a host of reasons, ranging from its foreign policy to its internal social and economic maladies. They are happy and comfortable being Jewish in Wales. As the late Paul Sugarman of Rhyl stated in 2012, he

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<sup>200</sup> David Landy, 'Zionism, multiculturalism and the construction of Irish-Jewish identity', *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 16, 1 (2007), 66.

<sup>201</sup> Deirdre Beddoe, ed., *Changing Times: Welsh Women Writing on the 1950s and 1960s* (Aberystwyth: Honno, 2010), 362-363.

<sup>202</sup> Rona Hart, telephone interview with author.

‘wouldn’t want to be anywhere else...I’ve...been to Israel, very nice, but I wouldn’t want to live there. It’s not my home. This [Wales] is my home.’<sup>203</sup> Indeed, for some Jews loyalty to Wales, and Britain more generally, was all, but for others there is a dual loyalty dilemma where Israel is concerned, which is shared by many Jews of the diaspora. That is: Can a Welsh-Jew be a loyal citizen of Wales and at the same time be a supporter of the Jewish state? This is expressed in a poem entitled ‘Which Little Land?’ (1955), by Mimi Josephson of Cardiff:

Child of Israel—  
 Child of Wales.  
 Torn between two loyalties  
 Two duties, two demanding loves.  
 Which one shall I serve—  
 Which little land?<sup>204</sup>

For many, this dilemma has been mediated by the advances in technology and mass communication. Alan Schwartz wrote in 1999 that ‘through the internet, video link. Jewish radio and TV programmes, young people’s initiatives for travel to Israel, as well as affordable flights to Israel, it’s possible to be fully integrated into the worldwide web of Jewish life yet maintain a strong Jewish presence in the capital city of Wales.’<sup>205</sup> Yet, for some, living in a small Jewish community in Wales was Jewishness at one remove. They could offer their financial support to Israel and visit, but it was no substitute for living there. Malka Liss of Cardiff, for instance, made *aliyah* in 2007 and although she ‘enjoyed growing up in Cardiff’ she did not ‘feel as comfortable in [her] Judaism’ in Wales as she would have in Israel.<sup>206</sup> This is because:

being able to practise as a Jew is very hard in Cardiff...there’s no religious people here. Even people in the Orthodox synagogue aren’t religious; there’s no kosher restaurants; there’s no Jewish schools. It’s very limited...Moving to Israel I felt I could be who I want to be...you feel like you’re home.<sup>207</sup>

Her siblings, Joshua and Sarah, also made *aliyah* in 2006, and their reasons for doing so are explained by their mother, Laura: ‘They want to be Jewish twenty four-seven. They want to be able to be Jewish wherever they go. At home in Cardiff they had very few Jewish friends,

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<sup>203</sup> Paul Sugarman, interview with author.

<sup>204</sup> *CAJEX*, 5, 2 (1955), 45.

<sup>205</sup> *Bimah*, 21 (December 1999), 4.

<sup>206</sup> Malka Liss, interview with author.

<sup>207</sup> Malka Liss, interview with author.

the community's not very big, and their friends were not at the same level of religiosity'.<sup>208</sup> Cardiff-born Brenda Landes made *aliyah* in 1962, and notes:

Coming to Israel allows the newcomer to practice Judaism and express Jewish culture in freedom, maybe for the first time. In my case, changing locations was a positive experience. Although I was able to practice Judaism freely in Wales, it was not the Judaism I wanted. In its widest sense, Judaism was far richer to me on *kibbutz*. Here in Israel, living close to the land, the festival became meaningful and the *kibbutz* was an expression of basic Jewish values.<sup>209</sup>

It is not that their Welsh or British identities are being discarded, but living in Israel is about self-asserting and a growing self-confidence of their Jewish identity. In fact, living in Israel has arguably allowed Welsh Jews to express both their Jewish and Welsh identities.

### **In Search of Welshness**

Not only are Welsh Jews a part of the Jewish diaspora, maintaining ties with Israel, but those living in Israel are a part of the Welsh diaspora, maintaining links with Wales. This notion that Welsh-Jews express not only their Jewishness, but also their Welshness by living in Israel may seem paradoxical, but living outside of Wales for extended periods of time has provided a new perspective on their connections to the principality. As Malka Liss puts it, 'When I'm in the other place I'm proud to be that thing. When I'm outside of Wales, I'm proud to be Welsh, and when I'm in Wales, I'm proud to be Jewish... Being in Israel, the Jewish identity is just run of the mill. Everyone's Jewish...I'm Welsh, and that does differentiate me.'<sup>210</sup> Welsh Jews are scattered all over north and central Israel, from the capital, Jerusalem, to coastal cities such as Netanya and Haifa, and a number maintain strong ties with their homeland. In 1972, for instance, a Welsh evening was held in Israel, while St. David's Day dinners have been held annually in Netanya since the last quarter of the twentieth century attracting up to eighty or ninety guests at a time.<sup>211</sup> Events such as these are popular with current Welsh-Jewish expats in Israel, but this aspect of their identity will likely fade with the next generation. Thus Rona Hart, who permanently migrated to Israel in 2008, notes that the St. David's Day dinner attendees are:

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<sup>208</sup> 'O Flaen dy Lygaid: I Wlad yr Addewid', S4C, 11 December 2007, WWFA011A, BBC Wales Archive, Cardiff.

<sup>209</sup> *Bimah*, 22, (April 2000), 18-19.

<sup>210</sup> Malka Liss, interview with author.

<sup>211</sup> *Bimah*, 22 (April 2000), 18-19; Eva Gibbor, interview with author, Cardiff, 29 June 2012; Jackie Altman, e-mail to author, 07 July 2012.

quite elderly...whether that reflects the population of people from Wales, it probably does because the communities [in Wales] have been dwindling for some time....if they're people who have been in Israel a long time then their children were born in Israel so they don't feel the connection with Wales so much....unless there's an injection of something a bit younger, I think in a few years it probably won't hang together...I would imagine it might not go on indefinitely.<sup>212</sup>

As well as Israel, a Diaspora of Welsh-Jews exists throughout the United Kingdom, and is most visible in London. A number of Welsh-Jews live across London, concentrated in areas such as Edgware, Golders Green, Hendon and Willesden, where many live an intensely Jewish lifestyle in the midst of Britain's largest Jewish community. Despite living away from Wales, some still retain a strong sense of a Welsh identity. In 2000, for example, Cardiff Ziona expats established a Welsh Women's Zionist group in north London, and held their 'first *Erev St. David's* Day celebration at Wizo House' in 2004.<sup>213</sup>

Attachment to place and a strong sense of local belonging are said to be among the distinctive characteristics of the Welsh, and a number of Jews who were either born or lived in the principality, but have left, remember their lives in Wales with great warmth. Many express the Welsh notion of *hiraeth*, a word which has no direct translation, but conveys a range of emotions, including a feeling of longing, yearning, homesickness, nostalgia and grief for Wales.<sup>214</sup> Vicki Lazar, who left Llandudno in the late 1980s to be nearer her children in London, recalled in 2011 that she keeps a small Welsh flag in her garden and occasionally gets 'the hiraeth'.<sup>215</sup> Similarly, Brenda Landes of Israel wrote in 2000 that 'when I hear a Welsh choir on the radio, I am overcome with *hiraeth*', while a piece written for *CAJEX* in 1967 by Cardiff-born Joseph Danovitch, who made *aliyah* in 1965, reveals the *hiraeth* he felt for his native land:

...I still, one day, want to make a sentimental journey and retrace my steps in the Welsh valleys and see again the Welsh people I love and respect. There is too, a hallowed piece of ground forever dear to me, near Roath Park in Cardiff, where lie my dear mother and father.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Rona Hart, telephone interview with author.

<sup>213</sup> *Bimah*, 24 (September 2000), 36; 39 (July 2004), 45.

<sup>214</sup> The *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* defines 'hiraeth' as a 'grief or sadness after the lost or departed, longing, yearning, nostalgia, wistfulness, homesickness, earnest desire'. See Gareth A. Bevan, ed., *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru: a Dictionary of the Welsh Language, Cyfrol II* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1987), 1871.

<sup>215</sup> Vicki Lazar, interview with author.

<sup>216</sup> *Bimah*, 22 (April 2000), 18; *CAJEX*, 17, 1 (1967), 28.

Yet, Danovitch gives no indication that he would one day return to live in Wales, since for him ‘the transition from the Land of my Father’s to the Land of my Father’s Fathers [was] not difficult.’<sup>217</sup> Indeed, this quote reveals that there are *hiraethau* more complex for some Welsh Jews than simply a longing for Wales. Danovitch emigrated to Israel, but what about the *hiraeth* felt by the Zionist who stayed in Wales? As Grahame Davies has pointed out ‘we’re used to a Welsh feeling of *hiraeth* in a foreign land. We’re less used to people feeling *hiraeth* within Wales itself.’<sup>218</sup> In fact, some Welsh Jews consider Wales, or the diaspora more generally, as a place of exile and express a *hiraeth* for the Jewish homeland in Israel. John Wartski of Bangor, for instance, spent a year working on a *kibbutz* in Israel in 1950, and served with the Israeli army between 1962 and 1967 before settling with his wife in Bournemouth in 1973. A former Jewish son of north Wales, now living in England, he feels a *hiraeth* not for Wales, but for Israel.<sup>219</sup> Although Wartski chose to remain a Diaspora Jew, living in what may be described as ‘self-imposed exile’, his religious longings for the Holy Land are so intense that he organises annual visits to Israel.<sup>220</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored how Welsh dimensions have both affected and shaped the experiences of Jews in Wales. Indeed, by examining how cultural, linguistic, and political traditions particular to the Welsh context have impacted on the lives and identities of Jews in the principality, it is hoped that future historians of British-Jewry will begin to recognise the distinctive qualities of the Welsh-Jewish experience, and avoid Endelman’s suggestion of ‘folding’ Welsh Jews into the ‘Anglo-Jewish’ mould. Ultimately, by understanding how Jewish life in Wales both reflected and diverged from Jewish life in other parts of the United Kingdom we can begin to appreciate both the diversity of the British-Jewish experience and the powerful role of ‘place’ in shaping that experience.

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<sup>217</sup> *CAJEX*, 17, 1 (1967), 28.

<sup>218</sup> Grahame Davies, ‘Welsh and Jewish: Responses to Wales by Jewish Writers,’ in James Gifford and Gabrielle Zezulka-Mailloux, eds., *Culture and the State: Nationalisms* (Edmonton: CRC Humanities Studio, 2004), 219.

<sup>219</sup> John Wartski, interview with author.

<sup>220</sup> Mark Avrum Ehrlich ed., *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture, Volume 1* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 53.



## **6. The Decline and Endurance of Wales' Jewish Communities in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries**

As noted in Chapter One, the Jewish population of Wales reached its peak in 1918, when the principality was home to around 5,000 Jewish individuals and approximately nineteen Hebrew congregations. Nonetheless, the Jewish population of Wales was not to remain static, and from the 1920s onwards the principality's Jewish population witnessed a steep decline. During the 1950s, for instance, the number of Jews residing in the principality had decreased to around 4,200 individuals, while the number of Hebrew congregations had fallen to eleven.<sup>1</sup> By the 1990s, only five functioning synagogues remained in Wales serving a Jewish population of less than 2,500 individuals.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this chapter therefore is to explore the decline of Wales' Jewish communities in the twentieth century, and examine the reasons behind it. Furthermore, examining the decline of Welsh-Jewish communities permits us to explore the condition of Welsh Jewry in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, decline has become a familiar theme in the historical writings of the Jews in Wales. A quick glance of the available literature would leave a strong impression that Jewish communities in the principality are now largely a thing of the past. Less has been said of the endurance of Welsh Jewry, and while most of the principality's Hebrew congregations have certainly disappeared, this chapter wishes to point out that a Jewish presence, albeit significantly smaller, continues to exist throughout Wales.

### **The demise of Jewish communities in the south Wales coalfield**

During the 1910s the Jewish population of the south Wales coalfield numbered around a thousand individuals and the region was home to approximately twelve Hebrew congregations.<sup>3</sup> From the end of that decade onwards, however, the valleys' Jewish communities witnessed a gradual decline, and by the early 1980s the last functioning synagogue in the region closed its doors to worshippers for the final time. Indeed, the smaller communities were the first to evaporate, and as early as 1918 the handful of Jewish families that made up the minute Newbridge Hebrew Congregation decided to dissolve as they found that they were 'too small in numbers to carry out the essential requirements of religious

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<sup>1</sup> *JYB*, 1955.

<sup>2</sup> *JYB*, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> *JYB*, 1910-1920.

duties', that is to form a *minyan*.<sup>4</sup> Once the congregation was dissolved, Newbridge's Jewish families travelled to nearby Newport for services (approximately twelve miles away), which was then home to a much larger and stronger Hebrew congregation (about 250 members).<sup>5</sup> Despite the lack of a formal congregation in the town, a few Jewish families continued to live and work in Newbridge until the 1940s, with the final communal notice appearing in the *JC* in 1947, which announced the engagement of Harry Jaffa, the only son of E. Jaffa of 3, Victoria Terrace, Newbridge.<sup>6</sup>

The collapse of Jewish communal life in Newbridge was repeated elsewhere in the south Wales coalfield during the early half of the twentieth century. In 1917, for instance, Ebbw Vale's Jewish population was recorded as 100 persons, but by the mid-1930s the population had decreased to such an extent (to around nine individuals) that the town's Hebrew congregation disbanded in 1936.<sup>7</sup> The synagogue was closed down, and its content and appurtenances were transferred to the Cathedral Road Synagogue in Cardiff.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the Tonypandy Hebrew Congregation, which, according to the *JYB*, numbered around 180 individuals at its peak in 1921, was last listed in the almanac in 1936, while Abertillery's Hebrew Congregation disappeared from the pages of the *JYB* from 1940 onwards.<sup>9</sup> Some Jewish communities in the south Wales coalfield tried to bolster their numbers by amalgamating with neighbouring congregations, including New Tredegar's Hebrew Congregation which officially merged with Bargoed's Hebrew Congregation (approximately three miles away) in the late 1920s.<sup>10</sup> According to David Jacobs of New Tredegar (b.1921), the town's Hebrew congregation merged with Bargoed when the former was unable to gather enough men for a *minyan*.<sup>11</sup> The effort appears to have been short-lived, however, with both communities vanishing from the pages of the *JYB* by the mid-1930s.<sup>12</sup>

Tredegar's Jewish population also declined, and fell from 175 individuals in the 1910s to 39 in 1939. Its synagogue eventually closed in 1953 'because of the lack of a

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<sup>4</sup> *CAJEX*, 24, 4 (1976), 29.

<sup>5</sup> *JYB*, 1918.

<sup>6</sup> *JC*, 15 August 1947.

<sup>7</sup> *JYB*, 1917-1939; *JC*, 24 July 1936.

<sup>8</sup> *JC*, 24 July 1936.

<sup>9</sup> *JYB*, 1921-1940.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 1930.

<sup>11</sup> *CAJEX*, 26, 1 (1977), 79.

<sup>12</sup> *JYB*, 1934.

*minyan*'.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the number of Jews in Aberdare went from 90 to 63 between 1904 and 1939, and like Tredegar its synagogue closed for services in 1957 because the congregation struggled to find enough Jewish males over the age of thirteen to form a *minyan*.<sup>14</sup> In Brynmawr, the Jewish population declined from 150 to 49 individuals between 1904 and 1939, and the number was down to twenty-six persons in 1960.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, by the early 1960s 'the membership' of Brynmawr's Hebrew Congregation had 'decreased to such an extent' that the community was forced to stop religious services in 1963.<sup>16</sup> From then onwards the small number of Jews living in Brynmawr joined the Newport Hebrew Congregation (approximately 22 miles away), and the synagogue in Bailey Street was eventually sold in 1966.<sup>17</sup>

Other coalfield Jewish communities such as Pontypridd and Merthyr continued to function in the latter half of the twentieth century, but they too failed to stem the tide of decline. Pontypridd's Jewish community, for instance, had as many as 150 individuals at its peak in 1922, but by the late 1950s only 37 Jews remained in the town.<sup>18</sup> During the 1970s the community numbered a mere 22 individuals.<sup>19</sup> With no resident minister for over twenty years, Friday night services were held 'occasionally' and led by laymen until the synagogue eventually closed in 1978.<sup>20</sup> In Merthyr Tydfil the Jewish population declined from 400 to 175 between 1919 and 1937, and the number was down to twenty in 1975.<sup>21</sup> By 1982, only a handful of Jews remained in Merthyr, including hairdresser George Black, and the insufficient financial support they brought in through subscriptions eventually led to the closure and selling of the town's Victorian synagogue in October that year.<sup>22</sup> The synagogue's contents and appurtenances were transferred to the Gateshead *Yeshiva Ketanah*,

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1915-1939; *JC*, 20 November 1953; Tredegar's synagogue did not close in 1955 as Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok suggests. See Sherbok 'Judaism', 244.

<sup>14</sup> *JYB*, 1904-1939; *JC*, 7 August 1959.

<sup>15</sup> *JYB*, 1904-1960.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from the Clerk of the Board of Deputies to A. Brest, honorary secretary of the Brynmawr Hebrew Congregation, 26 November 1963, ACC/3121/D02/018, LMA.

<sup>17</sup> *JC*, 26 August 1966. The *Sefer Torah* of the Brynmawr Hebrew Congregation were donated to the Cardiff Jewish Home for the Aged in Penylan, *JC*, 16 July 1965.

<sup>18</sup> *JYB*, 1922-1959.

<sup>19</sup> *JYB*, 1971.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, *JYB*, 1970; *JC*, 27 January 1978; Pontypridd's *Sifrei Torah* were donated to Hebrew Congregations in Birmingham and Israel.

<sup>21</sup> *JYB*, 1919-1975.

<sup>22</sup> *JC*, 12 March 1982.

and its closure marked an end to almost a hundred and fifty years of formal Jewish worship in the town, and the south Wales valleys more generally.<sup>23</sup>

### **The decline of north Wales' Jewish communities**

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the towns and villages of north Wales provided a relatively stable and comfortable existence, both socially and economically, for their Jewish inhabitants. The remainder of the century, however, witnessed a gradual decline in north Wales' Jewish population with all but one of its five Hebrew congregations having dissolved by the 1980s. Scanning the pages of the *JC* it becomes apparent that from the late 1920s onwards the Wrexham Hebrew Congregation was nearly defunct in its activity. Compared to earlier years, services, annual general meetings, and social functions, began to peter out from 1929, and little appears from that year on, other than announcements of engagements, deaths and memorials. According to Arthur H. Dodd, Wrexham Jewry celebrated *Rosh Hashanah* at Gladstone House in 1945, but 'little is known of them as a congregation' during this period.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, no more than a handful of Jewish families continued to reside and work in Wrexham from the 1930s onwards, trying to maintain some semblance of communal life. They included the Reuben, Burke and Harris families.<sup>25</sup> Families such as these, however, could do nothing to forestall the demise of Wrexham Jewry, and the last mention of Wrexham in the *JYB* appeared in the 1950 edition.

From 1945 onwards, the wartime Jewish communities of Colwyn Bay and Rhyl gradually began to dwindle as evacuated Jewish families returned to their pre-war lives in Liverpool, Manchester and London. Bangor and Llandudno Jewry also witnessed a decline in numbers in the post-war period. Unfortunately, there are no pre-war figures available for Llandudno Jewry, but between the 1950s and 1960s the number of Jews in the community fell from 50 to 45 individuals, while Bangor's Jewish population, according to the *JYB*, dropped from 75 to 34 individuals between 1905 and 1955.<sup>26</sup> Each loss of a member resulted in a decrease in the annual income of a congregation, and by 1963 Bangor's Jewish community, then numbering only 12 individuals, found it difficult to pay the upkeep on their synagogue rooms in the

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<sup>23</sup> *JC*, 12 March 1982; *The Swansea Hebrew Congregation Magazine* (September, 1997), 14, D/D SHC 21/11, WGA.

<sup>24</sup> Arthur H. Dodd, ed., *A History of Wrexham* (Wrexham: Hughes, 1957), 202-3.

<sup>25</sup> *JC*, 14 June 1935; 2 August 1946; 9 May 1947.

<sup>26</sup> *JYB*, 1905-1966.

Arvonian Buildings.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, the synagogue was sold in April 1963, and a small porch belonging to the Tabernacle Chapel in Garth Road was secured and consecrated as a place of worship in December 1964 by Rev. S. Wolfson of Liverpool.<sup>28</sup> Despite only numbering around 12 members, the congregation was able to continue during this period because the presence of Jewish students at the then University College of North Wales helped to temporarily increase the small numbers of those able to attend religious services. As a letter dated 17 June 1965, from the then treasurer and honorary secretary of the Bangor Hebrew Congregation, Israel Pollecoff, to Jewish student, Evelyn Dresner, suggests:

There is a service every Friday evening at 6.30 at the Tabernacle Chapel. Will you please do your best to attend, and to bring any students you can with you. It is most essential that we should do everything possible to try and keep the small community together.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, when the congregation was nearing extinction in the 1960s, the then University College of North Wales became a hub of Jewish activity in Bangor, particularly following the establishment of a Jewish students' society in December 1965 by Evelyn Dresner, Sandra Pound and several other Jewish undergraduates.<sup>30</sup> As a sign of this, just about all of the *JC*'s coverage of Bangor during this period was devoted to the students and not the community itself.<sup>31</sup> In addition to students, the university had attracted several Jewish academics to Bangor during the 1960s. They included Kate Loewenthal, who worked as a Psychology lecturer between 1966 and 1968, and Eric Mendoza of Manchester, who was appointed professor of Physics between 1963 and 1972.<sup>32</sup> The latter and his family took a great interest in promoting Jewish activities at the university, and reviving Jewish life in Bangor more generally. Admirers of Israel, Eric and his wife, Lilian, often gave talks at the university on their experiences in the Jewish homeland, and in the early 1970s their home was a gathering point for Bangor's Jewish community, possibly because the city's synagogue was so 'tiny'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *JYB*, 1963.

<sup>28</sup> Planning application by Mr. Alfred George Tinsley, 18 April 1963, Caernarfon Planning Department; *JC*, 18 December 1964; Congregants went without a formal place of worship for more than a year, and may have prayed in private or gathered in someone's home.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from Israel Pollecoff to Evelyn Dresner, 17 June 1965, XM 4098/1, CRO.

<sup>30</sup> *JC*, 10 December 1965.

<sup>31</sup> See, for instance, *JC*, 18 February 1966; 20 May 1966; 2 September 1966; 8 March 1968; 8 November 1968; 3 January 1969.

<sup>32</sup> University College of North Wales, Council Minute Book, 1963-1967, currently being catalogued, Bangor University Archives (henceforth BUA); UCNW, Annual Report, 1972-1973, UCNW/ANN/8, BUA; Kate Loewenthal, e-mail to author, 3 November 2011.

<sup>33</sup> In March 1971, for example, the *JC* wrote that 'the *Megila* was read at a *Purim* gathering for students and community at the Mendozas' residence', whilst a month earlier Rev. Malcolm Weisman, visiting minister to

Unfortunately, the Mendozas' stay in Bangor was temporary, and they left for Israel in 1972 following Eric's appointment as Professor of Science at the Hebrew University.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the optimism they instilled at Bangor had all but disappeared, and from then onwards the city's Jewish community was in steep decline, falling to a handful of individuals by the mid-1970s.<sup>35</sup>

Given the close proximity of some of the Jewish communities on the north Wales coast, a survival strategy of merging was implemented as early as the late 1950s. When Bangor and Llandudno dwindled to less than 50 Jewish individuals between them and a handful of Jews were left at Colwyn Bay and Rhyl, it was decided to amalgamate certain communal organisations. In 1959, for example, the north Wales Women's Zionist Society was formed, and in 1963 the 'North Wales-Cheshire Federation of Small Jewish Communities' was established with the aim of uniting the dwindling communities of both regions under one organisational umbrella.<sup>36</sup> For three years the Federation flourished, when large social gatherings were held in Chester, Hoyle and Colwyn Bay, which attracted hundreds of Jews from all over north Wales.<sup>37</sup> Yet, despite these initiatives, the arrangement was eventually deemed impractical given the distances involved (Bangor and Chester, for instance, are approximately sixty miles apart), and the decline of north Wales' Jewish communities continued. By 1968 Colwyn Bay and Llandudno Jewry began alternating Friday evening services so that a regular *minyan* could be held, and in 1985 the two congregations officially merged to form the Llandudno and Colwyn Bay Hebrew Congregation.<sup>38</sup> Centred at Llandudno's synagogue in Church Walks, the congregation became 'the centre for the dwindling communities of North Wales', including Bangor which officially closed in 1985.<sup>39</sup> As we have seen, amalgamating congregations to ensure a prolonged existence was not

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small communities, 'addressed a meeting of representatives of North Wales Jewish communities' at the Mendozas' Bangor home. See *JC*, 5 February 1971; 12 March 1971.

<sup>34</sup> *JC*, 1 June 2007.

<sup>35</sup> In April 1977, the *JC* noted that the University College of North Wales' Jewish society was defunct, owing to so few Jewish students at the university. See *JC*, 1 April 1977

<sup>36</sup> *JC*, 12 June 1959; 12 July 1963; 8 November 1963.

<sup>37</sup> *JC*, 8 November 1963; *Jewish Telegraph*, 8 May 1964; letter from Adele J. Mayorcas to members of the North Wales-Cheshire Federation of Small Jewish Communities, 5 January 1965, in possession of author.

<sup>38</sup> *JYB*, 1968-1985.

<sup>39</sup> *JYB*, 1985; Bangor's Hebrew Congregation officially closed following the death of Israel Pollecoff, the congregation's president and honorary secretary for over three decades. Before his death, Pollecoff made a plea for the synagogue's artefacts to be preserved. His call was answered and the synagogue's contents and furnishings were transferred to the Manchester Jewish Museum in Cheetham, and later made the return journey when they were transferred to the Gwynedd Museum, Bangor, in 1991. *JC*, 11 October 1991.

unique to north Wales Jewry, and reflects the steps taken by many other small Jewish communities in the United Kingdom and the United States.

### **The decline of Jewish communities in the south Wales coastal strip**

The first Jewish community in the south Wales coastal strip to become defunct appears to have been the Bridgend Hebrew Congregation. Frustratingly, the lack of extant documentation means that the exact year of the synagogue's closure is a mystery. Nevertheless, scanning the pages of the *JC*, it becomes apparent that the congregation, then numbering no more than a handful of families, was defunct in its activity from around the early-1930s. While in previous decades it had been possible for the *JC* to report on High Festival services and social events in Bridgend, these reports ceased after 1932. Drawing on the *JYB*, David Morris once wrote that a Jewish community existed in Bridgend up until the late 1960s.<sup>40</sup> However, there is no mention of a 'community' or 'Hebrew Congregation' in the town in any edition of the *JYB* from this period. Rather, copies of the almanac from the 1960s note the presence of ten Jewish families in Bridgend and its vicinity, and that Jewish children in the area were sent to Cardiff and Swansea for *cheder* lessons.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, despite the absence of an official congregation, a few Jewish families continued to live in Bridgend and the surrounding area in the latter half of the twentieth century, including the Struels, the Freedmans and the Josephs, who were all 'country members' of Hebrew congregations in either Cardiff or Swansea (both located less than 25 miles away).<sup>42</sup> Louis and Pauline Saville lived in Ogmore Vale, but they left for Swansea in 1991 following Louis' retirement as a general practitioner.<sup>43</sup>

Aberavon and Port Talbot Jewry followed this downward trajectory. According to the *JYB*, the congregation's Jewish population reached its zenith of 99 persons in 1916, but by 1939 the number of Jews had fallen to 46.<sup>44</sup> By the late 1960s the town's Jewish population had decreased further still, and was down to 18 individuals.<sup>45</sup> The exact date of the synagogue's closure is a mystery, but an article in *CAJEX* in 1961 reveals that it was

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<sup>40</sup> Morris, 'The History of the Welsh Jewish Communities', 157.

<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, *JYB*, 1965; Bridgend is last listed in the *JYB*'s 1981 edition.

<sup>42</sup> Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 5 February 1968, D/D SHC 1/4, WGA; *JC*, 13 April 1945; 24 August 1962; 4 March 1966; 1 March 1968.

<sup>43</sup> *JC*, 3 May 1991.

<sup>44</sup> *JYB*, 1916-1939.

<sup>45</sup> *JYB*, 1965.

irregularly used and maintained by the congregation's then president, Isaac Factor, and his wife, Golda.<sup>46</sup> Following Factor's death in 1975, the synagogue officially closed and was eventually sold to a local spiritual church in 1976.<sup>47</sup> The proceeds of the synagogue were eventually donated to the Swansea Hebrew Congregation.<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, Llanelli's Jewish population of 300 individuals in 1924 had slumped to 120 by 1945, eventually dropping to 40 in the 1960s.<sup>49</sup> During the latter period the town's Hebrew congregation had been without a resident minister for over fifteen years, and its synagogue was 'rarely used', according to the *JC*.<sup>50</sup> To help revitalise what was perceived to be a dying community, a group of Chasidim from Stamford Hill, London, discussed the possibility of moving to Llanelli to set up a *Yeshiva* in the town's synagogue in August 1966.<sup>51</sup> However, the scheme never materialised as members of Llanelli's dwindling community were concerned that the Londoners would take over the entire synagogue building. According to the *JC*, congregants thought 'it was not practical to allow [the synagogue] to be taken over completely...for Yeshiva purposes', as the congregation had recently reinstituted 'regular Friday night services'.<sup>52</sup> In hindsight, one former Jewish resident of Llanelli believed the wrong decision was made, as a Yeshiva would have attracted Jews to the town, and boosted numbers: 'if we started the Yeshiva and people came down, I actually think [Llanelli] would have been a big thriving community, which young boys would have come to learn'.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, Llanelli's Jewish population continued to dwindle in the latter decades of the twentieth century, and by 1980 the Jewish community was down to 20 persons, according to the *JYB*.<sup>54</sup> The small number of Jewish residents made it extremely difficult 'to maintain synagogue services', and with more and more attending nearby

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<sup>46</sup> *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), 67.

<sup>47</sup> *JC*, 14 March 1975; Draft letter from the Board of Trustees of the Aberavon and Port Talbot Hebrew Congregation to the Charity Commission, London, 19 March 1976, D/D SHC 23/1a, WGA; Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the Aberavon and Port Talbot Hebrew Congregation, 13 January 1976, D/D SHC 23/1a, WGA.

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the Aberavon and Port Talbot Hebrew Congregation, 2 February 1978, D/D SHC 23/1a, WGA.

<sup>49</sup> *JYB*, 1924-1965.

<sup>50</sup> *JC*, 5 August 1966. The congregation's last full-time minister was last listed in the 1947 edition of the *JYB*, see *JYB*, 1947.

<sup>51</sup> *JC*, 5 August 1966.

<sup>52</sup> *JC*, 2 September 1966.

<sup>53</sup> Renee Woolf, interview with author. This is precisely what happened in Gateshead. In 1929 a Yeshiva opened in the town, and it is now the largest institution of its sort in Europe. In the early twenty-first century approximately 1,500 Jews reside in Gateshead. For more on this, see Olsover, *The Jewish Communities of North-East England*; Rubinstein, Jolles, and Rubinstein, *The Palgrave Dictionary*, 314-315.

<sup>54</sup> *JYB*, 1980.



Swansea (approximately 15 miles away) for regular services, the congregation eventually decided to close the synagogue in 1982.<sup>55</sup> Llanelli's two *Sifrei Torah* were donated to the Cambridge Traditional Jewish Congregation, and its Edwardian synagogue was eventually sold in 1984.<sup>56</sup>

Although they are still active, after the Second World War both the Newport and Swansea Hebrew Congregations were added to the list of ever shrinking Jewish communities in Wales. At Newport, the Jewish population was recorded as 180 in 1939, dropping to 100 by the late 1960s, and to only 50 persons by 1985.<sup>57</sup> The decline of the community was reflected in the congregation's marriage register: in the twenty years between 1890 and 1910 there were a total of 41 recorded Jewish marriages, while between 1950 and 1994 there were just 7.<sup>58</sup> At Swansea, the golden years at the turn of the twentieth century, when the Jewish population of the town peaked at over one thousand persons, soon passed as the population fell to 450 persons in the early 1950s, and to 180 by the mid-1980s.<sup>59</sup>

### **The growth of Cardiff's Jewish community**

The only Jewish community in Wales which succeeded to stem the tide of decline, and in fact, witnessed a gradual increase in its population for most of the twentieth century was Cardiff. According to the *JYB*, the city's Jewish population increased from 1,250 to 2,300 persons between 1904 and 1940, and the number rose to around 3,500 individuals in the late 1960s. This increase in population was largely the result of an influx of Jewish families who migrated to the city from the declining coalfield communities of the south Wales valleys from the 1930s onwards, and the settlement of Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe, who, as we have seen, arrived in the city in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, in the immediate post-war decades, there was a palpable sense of optimism in Cardiff's Jewish community, and nothing better symbolised this optimism than the construction and opening of a new synagogue in the city. In 1951, for instance, a freehold site on Penylan Hill in Cyncoed was secured to erect a modern purpose-built synagogue for the

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<sup>55</sup> *JC*, 12 March 1982.

<sup>56</sup> *Llanelli Star*, 21 July 1984.

<sup>57</sup> *JYB*, 1939-1985.

<sup>58</sup> Newport Hebrew Congregation: registers of marriage 1866-1997, D5710, Gwent Archives.

<sup>59</sup> *JYB*, 1912-1984.

<sup>60</sup> *CAJEX*, 5, 1 (1955), 51; *Bimah*, 37 (December 2003), 31.

Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation.<sup>61</sup> The desire to build a new synagogue in Cardiff was sparked by both the aging and the approaching expiry of the lease of the Windsor Place synagogue.<sup>62</sup> It also reflected the shift that was taking place in Cardiff's Jewish population during this period. By the late 1930s and 1940s a number of Windsor Place's upwardly mobile and prosperous Jews were moving away from inner-city areas such as Canton and Riverside and settling in the new and salubrious suburb of Cyncoed. Since some members of Cardiff's United Hebrew Congregation adhered to the Orthodox principle of walking to the synagogue on the Sabbath, the Windsor Place synagogue (situated approximately two miles away from Cyncoed) 'had outgrown its geographical usefulness' and was deemed too far to travel. Consequently, a more conveniently located place of worship was needed.<sup>63</sup>

The foundation stone of the Penylan synagogue was laid by the then Chief Rabbi, Israel Brodie, on 2 November 1952, and the new house of worship, complete with a large social hall, was formally opened in January 1955 (see appendix A22).<sup>64</sup> In reference to the synagogue's opening, the then president of the Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation, Gershon Cohen, announced that the 'day was a great one in the history of the Cardiff Jewish Community', while the congregation's then *Rav*, Rabbi Ber Rogosnitzky, stressed that the opening of the Penylan synagogue celebrated a prosperous Jewish community in a prosperous city, and from that day onwards 'the congregation [would] go from strength to strength'.<sup>65</sup> Rogosnitzky's optimism was echoed five decades later by an anonymous author in Cardiff Jewry's quarterly magazine *Bimah*, who on reflection of the opening of the Penylan synagogue, wrote that:

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<sup>61</sup> *CAJEX*, 5, 1 (1955), 53. In 1951, Julius Skrek donated a freehold piece of ground to the Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation to commemorate his parents' golden wedding anniversary; Cardiff was not the only community to erect/establish a new synagogue in the post-war period. As noted in Chapter 2, in 1948 Llandudno Jewry left the Masonic Hall they had been using since the 1910s, and converted a private house in Church Walks for use as a synagogue, while Swansea Jewry, as a result of the destruction of the Goat Street Synagogue in the Swansea Blitz of 1941, erected a new purpose-built synagogue in Ffynone Road, which opened on 28 April 1955. See *JC*, 4 February 1955.

<sup>62</sup> *CAJEX*, 5, 1 (1955), 53

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* Between 1934 and 1955 a minyan was held in Penylan to accommodate Jewish residents in the area who were unable or chose not to walk to one of the two Orthodox synagogues in the centre of Cardiff (Windsor Place and Cathedral Road) on the Sabbath. According to Ron Silver of Cardiff (b. 1942), the front room of a house in Penylan Hill was used for communal prayer during this period. The minyan dissolved in February 1955 following the opening of the Penylan synagogue. See Ron Silver, interview with author; *JC*, 18 February 1955.

<sup>64</sup> The hall was named 'The Sherman Memorial Hall' in honour of brothers Abe and Harry Sherman, two well-known local philanthropists who sponsored the construction of the new synagogue's social hall.

<sup>65</sup> *JC*, 7 January 1955; *CAJEX*, 5, 1 (1955), 73.

when the Windsor Place Synagogue closed...it was a time of hope and progress. The new synagogue at Penylan was right in the middle of the new Jewish area, a district where all well-established members of Windsor Place—and even Cathedral Road—were already living, and a place where the young, aspiring accountants, doctors, solicitors, and the like were destined to establish their own homes....Windsor Place...closed with a tear, not with a whimper but with hope for the new synagogue at Penylan.<sup>66</sup>

While some of Wales' Jewish communities were defunct in their activity by the late 1940s, Cardiff Jewry witnessed the formation of another Hebrew congregation. In 1948, moves to establish a Reform congregation in the city were initiated by a small group of local professional men, including Max Corne, a cinema owner, and Myer Cohen, a solicitor. They were in revolt from the Orthodox ideology of the Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation, which became increasingly more conservative following the appointment of Rabbi Ber Rogosnitzky as the *Rav* of the CUS in 1945.<sup>67</sup> In June 1948, a meeting was held at Cardiff City Hall to canvass support for the establishment of a Reform congregation in the city, and despite strong opposition from leaders of Cardiff's long established Orthodox Jewish community, who maintained that religious reform diluted Judaism, it culminated in the formation of the Cardiff New Synagogue (henceforth CNS).<sup>68</sup>

In a similar vein to the foundation of other Hebrew Congregations in Wales, the CNS was originally too few in number to support a full-fledged synagogue, and services were initially held in the main hall of the Temple of Peace in Cathays Park.<sup>69</sup> Initially, a succession of reform rabbis came from London and elsewhere to lead services on festivals and Holy Days, but by September 1949 the young congregation had appointed its first fulltime minister, Rabbi L. Gerhard Graf of Berlin.<sup>70</sup> Seven months prior to his arrival, a burial ground was

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<sup>66</sup> *Bimah*, 34 (2003), 30-32.

<sup>67</sup> Liss, *A Short History*, 15. The reform movement came late to Cardiff, a city which was noted for its Orthodoxy. In 1940, London's New West End Reform Synagogue, the first Reform synagogue established in Britain, celebrated its centenary, and in the 1930s Reform congregations began to multiply with synagogues founded in Golders Green, Edgware and Glasgow. For more on the history of Reform Judaism in Britain, see Dow Marmur, ed., *Essays on Reform Judaism in Britain dedicated to Rabbi Werner Van der Zyl* (London: Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, 1973); Anne J. Kershen and Jonathan A. Romain, eds., *Tradition and change: history of Reform Judaism in Britain, 1840-1995* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995).

<sup>68</sup> *JC*, 11 June 1948. The Cardiff New Synagogue was renamed the Cardiff Reform Synagogue in 2004; the formation of a Reform synagogue was met with strong hostility from Cardiff's long established Orthodox community. The ill-feeling displayed was by no means universal, but was most prevalent among leading synagogue functionaries. For instance, the then rabbi of the Cardiff United Synagogue, Rav. Ber Rogosnitzky (1945-1984) was particularly hostile to the new Hebrew congregation. For more on this, see Ursula R.Q. Henriques, 'Epilogue', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 212-213; Liss, *A Short History*, 25-35.

<sup>69</sup> *JC*, 23 July 1948.

<sup>70</sup> *The Synagogue Review*, 23, 3(1948), 37; *JC*, 23 September 1949.

consecrated by the congregation at the public Western Cemetery in Ely, as the existing Jewish cemetery in Highfield Road was restricted for the use of members of the CUS.<sup>71</sup> With a permanent rabbi and burial facilities secured, congregants wished for a permanent place of worship. After several years of searching, an old Methodist Chapel in Moira Terrace was acquired in March 1952, and was converted and duly consecrated as a synagogue on 14 September 1952 (see appendix A23).<sup>72</sup>

During the first two decades of its existence, the CNS's membership increased apace. Between 1953 and 1962, for instance, the number of children attending its *cheder* grew from about 36 to over 90, while between 1949 and 1970 its affiliated membership increased from 220 to 319 persons.<sup>73</sup> The reasons for this increase are multifaceted. First, about a third of the original members were Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe, and since Reform Judaism had long prevailed in Germany, many found the CNS far more suited to their needs than the strict Orthodoxy of the United Hebrew Congregation.<sup>74</sup> Second, the CNS were accepting of religious Jews who married non-Jewish spouses, in contrast to the Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation whose constitution notes that 'Any member of either sex who shall marry a person who is not of the Jewish religion as accepted by the *Beth Din* shall forfeit all rights of membership and all privileges'.<sup>75</sup> But in addition to this, the Reform synagogue was more accepting and welcoming of Jewish converts.<sup>76</sup> Finally, in a similar vein to many of the original founders, a number of Jews became dissatisfied with traditional Orthodox services and practices, and found the more progressive services and attitudes of the CNS more modern and appealing. Michael and Sally Rosen, for instance, were both raised in Orthodox families in Dundee and Devon respectively, but when they moved to Cardiff in 1957 they joined the CNS as they were fond of the idea of men and women sitting and

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<sup>71</sup> Letter from Isadore Rapport, honorary president of the Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation to L. Corne of the CNS, 22 November 1949, in possession of the CNS' archivist, Stanley Soffa.

<sup>72</sup> *JC*, 19 September 1952.

<sup>73</sup> CNS, Summary of Annual General Meeting, 26 February 1953; CNS, Summary of Warden's Report, 18 March 1962; both documents in possession of the Cardiff Reform Synagogue's archivist, Stanley Soffa; Liss, 'A Short History of Reform Judaism in South Wales', 94.

<sup>74</sup> Henriques, 'Epilogue', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 213; Diana Soffa (b.1950) grew up with the CNS, and remembers that a large number of congregants in the first few decades of the congregation's existence were continental refugees who fled Nazi-occupied Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. See Diana Soffa, interview with Eve Lavine, 27 September 2011, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>75</sup> Constitution and Rules of the Cardiff United Synagogue, adopted on 17 May 1942, D/D JR 5/6/1, 2, GA. This rule still stands.

<sup>76</sup> Henriques, 'Epilogue', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 213.

worshipping together, rather than segregated as occurred in Orthodox congregations.<sup>77</sup> According to the *JC*, one former congregant of the CUS joined the CNS because he wished to be cremated when he died, a practice strongly deplored by the Orthodox community.<sup>78</sup> A number of Jews living in outlying parts of the city and the Vale of Glamorgan were also attracted to the CNS as, unlike Orthodox Judaism, the reform movement permitted driving to synagogue on the Sabbath.<sup>79</sup>

### **The decline of Cardiff Jewry**

Despite the self-confidence of the immediate post-war decades, by the 1970s it became apparent that Cardiff's Jewish population was gradually beginning to diminish. Writing in *CAJEX* in March 1972, the local Jewish historian, Maurice Dennis, headed the sixteenth instalment of his 'History of the Cardiff Jewish Community', 'A Community in Decline?'<sup>80</sup> His linear graphs depicting the total membership of the Cathedral Road and Penylan Synagogues showed that the former had dwindled from 402 to 297 members between 1959 and 1971, while the latter, despite rising from 326 to 355 between 1959 and 1964, had fallen to 323 members by 1971.<sup>81</sup> Evidently, these membership figures were not wholly representative of Cardiff's Jewish population, as the membership of the Reform Synagogue and the numbers of unaffiliated secular Jews in the city were not included. But, however speculative these population figures may be, the trend was unmistakable. According to the *JYB*, the overall Jewish population of Cardiff had fallen from 2,500 to 2,000 individuals between 1975 and 1980.<sup>82</sup> By 1995 it was down to 1,200.<sup>83</sup>

With a decline in population came the demise of certain Jewish communal facilities and institutions in Cardiff. As the total membership of the Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation continued to decline in the late 1970s (by 1977 it had fallen to 544 members) supporting two synagogues became less financially viable.<sup>84</sup> With around sixty per cent of congregants attending the Penylan synagogue for services, it became clear that the future of

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<sup>77</sup> Sally Rosen, interview with author, 25 July 2011, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>78</sup> *JC*, 20 October 1961.

<sup>79</sup> *JC*, 24 August 1962.

<sup>80</sup> *CAJEX*, 22, 1 (1972), 31.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>82</sup> *JYB*, 1975-1980.

<sup>83</sup> *JYB*, 1995.

<sup>84</sup> *CAJEX*, 28, 1 (1978), 16.

the congregation lay not in Cathedral Road, but in Penylan.<sup>85</sup> The closure and sale of the Cathedral Road's synagogue was discussed as early as 1970.<sup>86</sup> Yet the synagogue's closure was long delayed, with the final *shabbat* service taking place there in January 1989.<sup>87</sup> Then numbering around 150 individuals, a number of Cathedral Road's members continued for a short period to hold *shabbat* and high holyday services in improvised spaces in the immediate vicinity, including rooms in a house in Cathedral Road and the Angel Hotel in Westgate Street.<sup>88</sup> But with no secure plans for the future, members gradually began attending the Penylan synagogue for services.

The closure of Krotosky's kosher butchery in City Road in 1992, 'Wales' last kosher butcher' and food outlet, was another sign of Cardiff's diminishing Jewish population.<sup>89</sup> Although the store closed because of the owner's retirement, kosher butchers from across the United Kingdom were reluctant to take over the premises as a dwindling population of around 1,500 Jews did not provide enough of a clientele to make the venture financially worthwhile.<sup>90</sup> From then until 2013, Cardiff Jewry, and Jews living in south Wales more generally, made arrangements for Gee's Kosher Butchers and Delicatessen in Birmingham to open a mobile kosher shop at the Penylan synagogue once every week.<sup>91</sup>

Even for other Jewish communities in Wales that have not faced complete extinction, the general trajectory in the final decade of the twentieth century was one of decline. Newport's Jewish community, for instance, numbered 50 persons in the 1980s, but this number fell to 10 individuals by the late 1990s.<sup>92</sup> In 1994, the congregation was in financial crisis; it was so small that it was no longer deemed financially viable to keep the synagogue building in Queen's Hill open for services (see appendix A25).<sup>93</sup> The closure and sale of the building was eventually completed in July 1997, and the remaining congregants renovated the *Bet Tohorah* building in Newport's Jewish cemetery for use as a synagogue (see appendix

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *CAJEX*, 20, 2 (1970), 39.

<sup>87</sup> *JC*, 13 January 1989.

<sup>88</sup> Alan Schwartz, interview with author.

<sup>89</sup> *JC*, 17 January 1992.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* A limited stock of kosher products was also made available at Sainsbury's supermarket in Colchester Avenue, Cardiff. Kosher meat was/is not transported from Manchester as Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok suggests. See Cohn-Sherbok, 'Judaism', 243. At the time of writing, Cardiff Jewry has made arrangements with both Carmelli Bakeries Ltd and Yarden Kosher Deli in Golders Green, London, for kosher produce to be delivered to south Wales once every two weeks. See Stanley Soffa, e-mail to author, 11 August 2013 (in possession of author).

<sup>92</sup> *JYB*, 1985-1999.

<sup>93</sup> *JC*, 17 June 1994.

A26).<sup>94</sup> Although one congregant described the synagogue's closure as 'sad', it was considered 'a joyous sadness, because [the congregation was] carrying on'.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, Swansea Jewry numbered 180 individuals in the mid-1980s, but fell to 65 by the late-1990s/early 2000s, while Llandudno and Colwyn Bay's Hebrew Congregation stood at around 85 individuals in 1985, but only 45 in the mid-1990s.<sup>96</sup> Despite the fall in numbers, both Swansea and Llandudno Jewry were able to hold onto their synagogues during this period. Although the latter community was down to four men at the close of the twentieth century, the synagogue remained open because the presence of holidaying Jews from Manchester, particularly during the summer months, helped to augment the number of those able to attend religious services.<sup>97</sup> The Manchester Lubavitch movement also sent representatives to Llandudno during *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, so that High Holy Day services could be observed with a full *minyan*.<sup>98</sup>

### **Why did the communities decline?**

The numerical decline of Welsh Jewry throughout the twentieth century, particularly after the Second World War, was not a unique phenomenon to the principality, but simply reflected a similar diminution in most, if not all, Jewish centres in the United Kingdom and the United States.<sup>99</sup> However, such a steep a rate of decline from the 1920s onwards in a land virtually free from overt anti-Semitism gives rise to questions regarding the catalyst behind why Wales' Jewish population decline so drastically.

In trying to account for the decline of Wales' Jewish communities, the starting point must be the downturn in the industrial economy of the south Wales valleys and the consequent rise in unemployment in the region during the interwar period. As we have seen, coal mining was the main industry of the south Wales valleys, and during the 1920s the region's mining economy had been particularly hard-hit by the decline in foreign demand for Welsh coal, and the change from the use of coal to fuel oil in the shipping industry.<sup>100</sup> According to John

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<sup>94</sup> *JC*, 13 June 1997.

<sup>95</sup> *JC*, 25 July 1997.

<sup>96</sup> *JYB*, 1984-2001.

<sup>97</sup> *JC*, 21 April 2000.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> See, for instance, Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*; Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*; Shevitz, *Jewish Communities*; Weissbach, *Jewish Life*; Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora*.

<sup>100</sup> The decline in the foreign demand for Welsh coal was caused by a number of factors, including an increase coal production elsewhere such as the United States which captured the South American markets; the emergence of more efficient coal producing nations, notably Poland, who invested heavily in mechanisation in contrast with

Davies, the amount of coal exported from the ports of south Wales fell from 35.76 million tons in 1923 to 16.36 million tons in 1936.<sup>101</sup> As coal output declined, unemployment in the industry rose. Between 1920 and 1936, employment in the coal industry was cut by over fifty per cent—from 271, 161 to 126, 233 men.<sup>102</sup> In 1929, 45.6 per cent of the miners in south Wales were unemployed, and in some valleys over 80 per cent of those formerly employed in coal mining were on the dole.<sup>103</sup>

The fate of the coal industry mirrored that of the steel industry. Briefly expanded by war-time demand, by the 1920s the Welsh steel industry found itself unable to compete with countries such as Poland and the United States who, with their modernised industries, were able to produce steel more cheaply.<sup>104</sup> Consequently, the Cyfarthfa works near Merthyr Tydfil closed in 1921, to be followed by Dowlais in two stages in 1930 and 1936.<sup>105</sup> The Monmouthshire valleys were also badly hit with the works at Tredegar closing in 1922, and steel-making ceasing, for a period, at Ebbw Vale in 1929.<sup>106</sup> The social and economic consequences were catastrophic. In the mid-1930s, for instance, unemployment in Dowlais reached 80 per cent, while the number of employed men in the borough of Merthyr Tydfil fell from around 32,000 to 17,500 between 1921 and 1931.<sup>107</sup> In 1934, unemployment in Ebbw Vale stood at around 54 per cent.<sup>108</sup> As levels of unemployment soared, a total of nearly half a million people emigrated from south Wales in the 1920s and 1930s, in order to find employment in more prosperous parts of the United Kingdom.<sup>109</sup> In just one decade, south Wales' vibrant coalfield society was turned on its head, when one of the most dynamic industrial regions in Europe was transformed into one of the most economically deprived.

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the un-modernised labour-intensive production methods that existed in south Wales; the loss of European markets because Germany was paying 'reparations' in coal. According to Kenneth Morgan, by the mid-1920s the use of oil in the shipping industry had far outstripped that of coal as the new fuel was cheaper. For more on this, see Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 211-216; Davies, *A History of Wales*, 532-535.

<sup>101</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, 534.

<sup>102</sup> Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed*, 33.

<sup>103</sup> Arthur H. John, *Glamorgan county history: Industrial Glamorgan from 1700-1970* (Cardiff: Glamorgan County History Trust, 1980), 525-538.

<sup>104</sup> Pope, *Religion and National Identity*, 145.

<sup>105</sup> Jones, *Modern Wales*, 187.

<sup>106</sup> Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 217. In 1934 the government financed a new steel works at Ebbw Vale, which opened in 1937.

<sup>107</sup> Jones, *Modern Wales*, 187.

<sup>108</sup> David Hall, *Working lives: the forgotten voices of Britain's post-war working class* (London: Bantam Press, 2012), 225.

<sup>109</sup> Robin Reeves, 'Multiculturalism in Wales', in Eberhard Bort and Neil Evans, eds., *Networking Europe: Essays on Regionalism and Social Democracy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 304-305.



As we have seen, the Jewish population of the south Wales valleys had grown with the region's industrial growth, and there is no doubt that the deterioration of the coal and steel industries in the first half of twentieth century played a fundamental role in the decline of the region's Jewish communities. As noted in chapter one, the majority of Jews who lived in the south Wales valleys worked in the service and retail sectors, and their economic success largely depended on the prosperity of the indigenous Welsh working class. Thus, while Jews were not directly affected by industrial decline in terms of employment, the high levels of unemployment in the south Wales coalfield in the 1920s and the depression that followed simply dried up the local consumer market on which so many Jewish retailers depended for their livelihoods. The obituary of Phyllis Glick, for instance, reveals that her parents, Isaac and Ellen Barnett of Bargoed, 'ran a successful [auctioneering] business in South Wales until hit by the effects of the 1926 General Strike', while Mordecai Boone notes how his father, who 'had a little shop' in Rhymney, 'went broke more or less' after 'the General Strike (1926)' when 'all the miners were out on strike'.<sup>110</sup>

Although Ursula Henriques acknowledges that 'in the 1920s the industrial economy of the South Wales valleys collapsed' she wrote that 'there was probably still a demand for what the Jewish shops had to sell or lend on pledge'.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, not every Jewish business in the region collapsed during the 1920s and 1930s, and a number of Jewish pawnbrokers likely profited for a period from the pledging of valuables. However, a letter sent from Gustave Abrahams of Ebbw Vale to the Board of Deputies in 1929 reveals that the poor economic climate did drive many Jews away from the area. In reference to Ebbw Vale, Abrahams wrote that:

the adverse economic conditions prevailing here for the last ten years, have had the effect of denuding this town of its Jewish inhabitants, until there are now only six Jewish families left.<sup>112</sup>

Indeed, as with the general population, a large number of Jews left the south Wales coalfield during the 1920s and 30s and relocated to larger nearby towns and cities such as Cardiff or other parts of the United Kingdom where greater economic opportunities existed. Reflecting on her childhood in Tredegar, Minnie Harris (b.1897) wrote that 'after the First War, many

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<sup>110</sup> *JC*, 12 December 2008; *CAJEX*, 27, 1 (1977), 79.

<sup>111</sup> Henriques, 'Epilogue', in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 214.

<sup>112</sup> Letter from Gustave Abrahams to J.M. Rich, Board of Deputies, 22 July 1929, ACC/3121/B/04/EA/011, LMA.

[Jews] left [Tredegar] for the larger towns because of the depression of the '20s'.<sup>113</sup> Although Merthyr Tydfil and Pontypridd's synagogues remained open up until the last quarter of the twentieth century, both communities lost a significant amount of congregants during the interwar period, which was undoubtedly linked to economic depression in the region. In 1919, for instance, Merthyr Tydfil was home to around 400 Jews, but by 1937 only 175 Jews remained in the town, while Pontypridd's Jewish community numbered around 150 individuals in 1922, but by the 1950s it had dropped to 40 persons.<sup>114</sup>

While the pattern of economic decline and out-migration is useful for explaining the deterioration of most, if not all, of the south Wales valleys' Jewish communities, it does not explain the overall decline of Welsh Jewry more generally. In fact, the reasons for Welsh Jewry's overall decline are complex and can be explained by the factors that have affected other Jewish communities in the United Kingdom beyond London and Manchester, including an aging population; emigration, as the younger generations moved away to university, either in search of employment, and/or to find a Jewish partner; families relocating to a community with a larger Jewish infrastructure; intermarriage; and a lower birth rate.

A significant problem was that the first generations of Jewish settlers in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Wales had few successors. Whereas Jewish immigrants in Wales worked in trades and occupations that they had brought with them from Eastern Europe, their children and grandchildren were educated in local primary and secondary schools in Wales. Although it was certainly not unheard of for children or grandchildren to take over their family businesses once they had finished school, a significant number went to university and did not return afterwards.<sup>115</sup>

The motivations that drew Welsh-Jewish graduates away from their small communities in Wales varied. Having experienced new opportunities and a world of new ideas, a number of graduates developed a taste for the wider world and decided against returning to their

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<sup>113</sup> *CAJEX*, 24, 4 (1984), 26.

<sup>114</sup> *JYB*, 1919-1958. This would not have been the first time Jews left Merthyr Tydfil because of economic decline. An article which appeared in the *JC* in July 1885, for instance, noted that wealthier members of the Merthyr Tydfil Hebrew Congregation left the town in the 1870s/early 1880s because the closure of a number of ironworks in the region, including the Ynysfach and Plymouth ironworks in 1874 and 1882 respectively, had a negative impact on the amount of trade they conducted. See *JC*, 10 July 1885.

<sup>115</sup> Examples of those who went into the family business after finishing school included Moses Stein of Amlwch (1928-1997), who took over his father's drapery business in the town; Isadore Cohen (1910-1980), who ran his father's clothing store in Ammanford. See Joyce Arron, interview with author; *Yr Arwydd*, 156 (Chwefror, 1997).

childhood communities to take over their parents or grandparents' businesses. After studying at the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts in London, for instance, Bennett Arron (b. 1963) wanted to become an actor and showed little interest in returning to his hometown of Port Talbot to take over the family glazing business.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, Oxford graduate Bernard Pollecoff (1931-1984), chose not to return to his native Pwllheli to run his father's drapery business because he wanted to pursue a career in the chemical industry.<sup>117</sup>

However, the most frequent cause of departure was a sense that the economic climate was better elsewhere. While the Welsh economy in the period 1880-1914 was well-suited to the needs of Jewish immigrant traders and artisans, the same cannot be said for their university-educated and professionally-trained children and grandchildren. In fact, for most of the twentieth century the Welsh economy was dominated by heavy industry and manufacturing, which offered few opportunities for aspiring Jewish professionals to find employment that would utilise their skills.<sup>118</sup> And while the latter half of the twentieth century saw a growth in the service sector in Wales, it was largely confined to roles in public administration, education, health, and consumer services.<sup>119</sup> As a result, a large number of Welsh-Jewish graduates, and non-Jewish Welsh graduates more generally, had to leave Wales if they wanted to find work in their chosen fields.<sup>120</sup> Many relocated to the south-east of England, a region which offered employment in a wide-range of comparatively high-growth and high-profit industries such as financial and legal services.<sup>121</sup>

Indeed, as the career profiles and obituary columns of the *JC* show, a great deal of Welsh-Jewish graduates did leave their hometowns, as well as Wales more generally, to take up employment elsewhere in Britain, particularly London. One case in point was Derek Prag of

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<sup>116</sup> Charles Arron, interview with author.

<sup>117</sup> Eve Pollecoff, interview with author.

<sup>118</sup> Dave Adamson, 'Work', in Mackay, ed., *Understanding Contemporary*, 67; Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 257; Ralph Fevre, 'The Welsh Economy', in Dunkerley and Thompson, eds., *Wales Today*, 65.

<sup>119</sup> Adamson, 'Work', 61; Johnes, *Wales*, 403; Fevre, 'The Welsh Economy', 64.

<sup>120</sup> In his 1936-39 survey of Jewish University Students, Geoffrey Block found several cases of unemployed Jewish teachers in Wales, and noted that 'there existed a very real problem of unemployment for all University graduates' in Wales during this period. See Geoffrey D. M. Block, 'Jewish Students at the Universities of Great Britain and Ireland - Excluding London 1936-39' *Sociological Review*, 34 (1942), 191. According to Gareth Elwyn Jones, more than half of Welsh-trained teachers, Jewish and non-Jewish, migrated across to England between 1920 and the 1970s to take up teaching posts. See Jones, *Modern Wales*, 183.

<sup>121</sup> The industry tables of the 1951 census for England and Wales show that 69,497 people were employed in professional services in Wales, compared with 461,380 in London and the south east of England, revealing that there were greater job opportunities for professionals in the latter region. See General Register Office, *Census 1951: England and Wales. Industry Tables* (London: HMSO, 1957), 11.

Merthyr Tydfil (1923-2010), who graduated from the University of Cambridge with a degree in economics, before working for an international news agency in London. In 1965 he opened his own public affairs consultancy, and later directed the European Committee Press and Information Office in London.<sup>122</sup> There are many other examples, including Aron Owen of Tredegar (1919-2009), who trained as a barrister and became a Judge in London; Edward Conway of Llanelli (1911-2000), who was appointed head teacher of the Liverpool Hebrew School in 1944, before serving as the head teacher of the Jews' Free School in London from 1958 until his retirement in 1976; and Ronald Bernstein (1918-2004), who left his childhood hometown of Swansea to read law at the University of Oxford, before training as a barrister in London.<sup>123</sup> In a sense, a large number of second and third generation Jews in Wales simply followed the example of their immigrant parents and/or grandparents, since all three generations left their birth-places to seek 'new worlds' and new economic opportunities elsewhere.<sup>124</sup>

Of course, it would be misleading to claim that every Welsh-Jewish professional left the principality to find employment elsewhere since some were able to carve out successful careers in Wales. They included Ben Hamilton of Dowlais (1896-1979), who worked as a solicitor in Merthyr Tydfil and was appointed a coroner for the Merthyr County Borough in 1961; his brother Isaac Hamilton (1898-1967), who trained as an optician and 'had the leading business in Merthyr' during the mid-twentieth century; Eli Reuben of Bangor (1897-1954), who worked as a dentist in the High Street; and Port Talbot-born David Factor (b.1940) who worked as an accountant in the town.<sup>125</sup> A number of Jewish professionals also migrated from other parts of the United Kingdom and settled in Wales. They included Gerald Brinks (1933-1991), who came to Cardiff from Hemel Hempstead in 1961 to work as a quantity surveyor; Glaswegian-born Louis Saville (1914-1992) who worked as a general practitioner in the ex-mining village of Nantymoel between 1940 and 1991; and London-born Colin Heyman (b.1956), who moved to Cardiff in 1980 to work as a computer programmer.<sup>126</sup> However, despite their presence, given the substantially lower proportions of

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<sup>122</sup> *JC*, 5 March 2010.

<sup>123</sup> *JC*, 6 November 2009; 12 May 2000; 4 June 2004.

<sup>124</sup> Weissbach, *Jewish Life*, 302.

<sup>125</sup> Ben Hamilton, interview with David Jacobs; *Bimah*, 62 (2010), 20; 1. *The Dentists Register* (General Medical Council, 1945), 251; Draft Letter to the Charity Commission, 19 March 1976, D/D SHC 23/1, WGA.

<sup>126</sup> *CAJEX*, 31, 5 (1985), 55; *JC*, 3 May 1991; Colin Heyman, interview with Eve Lavine, 11 April 2012.

private sector employment in Wales compared to England, there has certainly been a net loss of Jewish professionals from Wales.<sup>127</sup>

Also emerging from Welsh-Jewish communities was an array of prominent rabbis who made their mark not in the principality, but in larger Jewish communities in the United Kingdom and across the globe. These included Isaac Cohen, Chief Rabbi of Ireland from 1959 to 1979, born in Llanelli in 1914; Swansea-born Yisroel Fine (b.1948) who was rabbi to the United Hebrew Congregation of Newcastle and the Wembley Synagogue before being appointed rabbi of Cockfosters and North Southgate Synagogue in 1987; Solomon Goldman, rabbi of St. John's Wood Synagogue between 1950 and 1976, born in Tredegar in 1909; and Harry Ritvo of Llanelli (1907-1958), minister of the Luton Hebrew Congregation between 1929 and 1958.<sup>128</sup> In fact, in an article in the *JC* in March 1955, Llanelli Jewry boasted that the community, despite numbering no more than three hundred individuals at its greatest, had 'produced almost a dozen rabbis and ministers' since its inception.<sup>129</sup> Similarly, a *JC* article from February 1955 noted the 'small isolated [Jewish] community' of Tredegar 'produced several well-known ministers', including Rev. S. Wolfson of Liverpool's Greenbank Drive Synagogue, and Rev. M. Bloch of Finchley's Kinloss Gardens Synagogue in London.<sup>130</sup> Although such appointments were certainly proud occasions for Wales' small Hebrew congregations, they served to drain the communities of congregants.

Throughout the twentieth century, the number of Jews proceeding to higher education in Wales, and Britain as a whole, was disproportionately high for the size of the population.<sup>131</sup> Although no records have been made or kept, it is possible to gain an idea of the extent of Welsh-Jewish university attendance in other ways. For example, according to Nay Joseph, the small Jewish community of New Tredegar numbered only ten families in the 1910s and 1920s, but produced twelve medical doctors, four chemists, and three teachers in one generation, while in his 1926 sociological study of 'foreign nationalities' in Merthyr Tydfil, J. Ronald Williams commented that the town's Jewish community was 'imbued with high ideals...proved by the number of Jewish children who go to our secondary schools and

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<sup>127</sup> Fevre, 'The Welsh Economy', 59.

<sup>128</sup> *JC*, 25 January 2008; 27 May 2010; 5 July 1991; 27 June 1958.

<sup>129</sup> *JC*, 25 March 1955.

<sup>130</sup> *JC*, 4 February 1955.

<sup>131</sup> Kahn-Harris and Gidley, *Turbulent Times*, 1; Thomas M. Devine and Jenny Wormald, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 503; Collins, *Go and Learn*, 81-97.

proceed to the Universities'.<sup>132</sup> The reasons why a large number of the children and grandchildren of the first Jewish settlers gravitated towards higher education are multifaceted. First, Jewish immigrants in Wales, and Britain more generally, perceived higher education and a professional career that followed as a tool of upward economic mobility. This was stressed by the late Channah Hirsch of Llanelli, who remarked in her memoir that:

You must remember that our parents were first-generation immigrants, who came to this country penniless, unable to speak the language, and who got married and had to start from scratch completely on their own...Yet they wanted their children to have an education because...schooling was considered very important as the route out of poverty...Parents' concern in those day—and I'm talking about Jewish parents—was to see that their children got an education that would get them to university, and then on to good English professions. They wanted their children to be accountants, solicitors, doctors, pharmacists.<sup>133</sup>

Second, as we have seen, in many parts of Eastern Europe, Jews were discriminated against by laws that restricted them access to higher education and a long list of trades and professions.<sup>134</sup> Thus, having been denied such opportunities themselves, many of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants who settled in Wales, and Britain more generally, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were eager for their offspring to take advantage of the expanding higher educational and employment opportunities that were open to them in the United Kingdom. As one former Jewish resident of Pontypridd recalled in 1978, the immigrant Jewish parents wanted their children to reach 'positions in life' that had previously 'been denied to them' in Russia.<sup>135</sup>

Third, Jewish cultural tradition has always incorporated a respect for literacy and learning. Indeed, in the East European *shtetl* no one had more prestige than the Talmudic scholar, who devoted himself with religious intensity to sacred texts.<sup>136</sup> When Eastern European Jewish

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<sup>132</sup> *CAJEX* 25, 1 (1975), 31-32; Williams, 'The influence of foreign nationalities', 150.

<sup>133</sup> Hirsch, *My Llanelli*, 75.

<sup>134</sup> Jeanne E. Abrams, *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail: a History in the American West* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 22.

<sup>135</sup> Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs; this was also stressed by the late Channah Hirsch of Llanelli. In her memoir she noted how the first Jewish settlers in Llanelli 'had been deprived of every avenue of higher education...every avenue of making a respectable living [in Eastern Europe]. For the next generation, though, there were opportunities, open doors. You were allowed to enter university...to make a respectable living'. See Hirsch, *My Llanelli*, xv.

<sup>136</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at home: antisemitism and the American Jewish experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 43; Stephanie N. Robinson, *History of Immigrant Female Students in Chicago Public Schools, 1900-1950* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 55.

immigrants came to Britain in vast numbers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century they brought these values and traditions with them. Some encouraged their sons to become rabbis, and sent them to train in British *Yeshivot* in towns and cities such as Manchester and Gateshead, while others translated the traditional respect for learning and religious scholarship to secular education so that their children could advance socially and economically in Britain.<sup>137</sup> As Leonard Minkes remarked in his memoir of Jewish life in 1920s and 1930s Cardiff:

Jews attach very great importance to education...In my family, at least, it was so: when at the age of 4 ½, I entered Splott School, my Mother informed me that when I grew up I would go to Oxford, a heroic statement given by the family finances...In the old days, in Eastern Europe, education had meant religious study but already, in the nineteenth century, there was growing pressure for secular education, too, and that was certainly so in Britain.<sup>138</sup>

Another factor that led to the decline of Jewish communities in Wales was the desire for endogamous marriage. Although there are numerous examples of marriages taking place between two Jews in the same community in Wales, in most of the principality's smaller Jewish communities the pool of eligible Jewish singles was often not large enough for hometown matches to be made. The result was that many young Jews in Wales had to go, or be sent, to larger Jewish centres in the United Kingdom to find their marriage partners (London and Manchester especially). Reflecting on her childhood in Bangor, Lili Silvera (née Meyers) (b.1914), for instance, noted that:

There were no marriages from within the [Bangor] community—why? Not enough choice and also there were no new people coming in—it was a static community—but people did not marry out. The youngsters...met their future spouses away...<sup>139</sup>

Similarly, one former Jewish resident of Merthyr Tydfil recalled that during the 1960s 'there was nothing' when it came to Jewish dating in the town, and at the age of sixteen his sister

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<sup>137</sup> As noted, Llanelli Jewry had produced a number of rabbis, all of whom had been sent to *Yeshivot* in Britain for their rabbinical training. According to the *JC*, this was because the first generation of Llanelli Jewry possessed 'a strong Jewish tradition' of religious learning and scholarship 'that had been brought there, detail by detail from East European ghettos'. Indeed, Llanelli's Jewish community was considered to be so religious that it gained the nickname 'The Gateshead of Wales' (Gateshead being a town traditionally known throughout the Orthodox Jewish world for its religiosity). See *JC*, 25 March 1955; Hirsch, *My Llanelli*, viii.

<sup>138</sup> Minkes, 'A Jewish Boyhood', 57.

<sup>139</sup> Transcript of meeting between Lili Silvera and Sara Gremson, 8 November 2002, in possession of author; Lili married Lelio Silvera (1911-1994) of Manchester in 1937 and while the newlyweds lived in Llandudno for a period, they eventually settled in Lelio's native Manchester.

‘was shipped off to a relation in London’ to find a Jewish partner.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, in her study of courtship and weddings in south Wales, anthropologist Diana Leonard noted that in the post-war decades most of Llanelli’s Jewish young ‘met their spouse outside the town and...held their weddings in, for example, London’.<sup>141</sup> Indeed, it was not uncommon to find announcements of engagements and marriages between Welsh and non-Welsh Jews in the *JC*. More often than not, one would read examples such as the marriage in 1926 of Jessie, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. L. Goldfoot of Brynmawr, to Sydney Taylor from Leeds; or the marriage in 1939 of Flora, the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. Wartski of Llandudno, to Bernard Green from London.<sup>142</sup> Although such marriages were joyous occasions for the families involved, they served to drain Wales’ Jewish communities of congregants, as the newlyweds rarely settled in the principality. Typically Welsh-Jewish women who married Jews from outside their communities moved to their husbands’ hometowns. Two examples are representative here: Ida Albiston of Wrexham, who married Alfred Martin of Liverpool in 1930, and Phyllis Croop of Llandudno, who was engaged to Harry Ruben of Birmingham in 1935.<sup>143</sup>

Although a number of Welsh-Jewish men, particularly those who had businesses in their hometowns, brought their spouses to live in their small communities, many also moved to the hometowns of their wives. Following his marriage to Miriam Cohen in 1912, for instance, Louis Michaels of Port Talbot moved to his wife’s native London, while Sydney Lazar of Llandudno also moved to London following his marriage to London-born Elizabeth Morell in 1947.<sup>144</sup> The precise reasons are not entirely clear, but perhaps their wives wished to live near their families, or having been raised in a larger and predominantly urban Jewish community, they found small-town Jewish life in Wales too confining. The latter was true for Lionel Bernstein of Merthyr Tydfil (b.1946), who moved to his wife’s native Cardiff following their

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<sup>140</sup> Lionel Bernstein, interview with Nicola Tucker.

<sup>141</sup> Diana Leonard, *Sex and Generation: a Study of Courtship and Weddings* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1980), 29. Such examples included Michael Glynne of Llanelli who married London-born Barbara Gard in London in 1958; the engagement of Freda Landy of Llanelli to Wraner Bakerman from Liverpool in 1960. See *JC*, 13 January 1950; 15 April 1960.

<sup>142</sup> *JC*, 9 July 1926; 9 December 1938.

<sup>143</sup> *JC*, 25 April 1930; 15 November 1935.

<sup>144</sup> *JC*, 5 January 1912; 28 June 1946.



marriage in 1967, as she found Merthyr's small Jewish community too confining in terms of a Jewish lifestyle.<sup>145</sup>

Indeed, up until the last quarter of the twentieth century, a number of Jews living in south Wales' smaller Jewish communities married Jews from the region's larger Jewish centres such as Cardiff and Swansea, which, for a time, had a sufficient number of eligible Jewish singles to provide opportunities for matches. While some newlyweds settled in the region's smaller Jewish communities, including Rebecca Levi of Swansea, who settled in Brynmawr after her marriage to Jacob Cammerman in 1931, the majority appear to have settled in Cardiff or Swansea, either because their spouse, most often the husband, had an existing business in the cities and/or because they desired to live in a larger community with a greater Jewish infrastructure.<sup>146</sup> Such examples included Gertrude Clompus (née Bloch) of Bridgend, who moved to Swansea following her marriage in 1933 because her husband, Samuel, ran a successful antiques business in the town; and Renee Landy of Llanelli, who settled in Cardiff following her marriage to David Woolf in 1965 because her husband owned an optometry business in the city, and wanted to raise their children in a fully-functioning Jewish community.<sup>147</sup> While regional marriages such as these did not contribute to the overall decline of south Wales' Jewish population, the general movement of Jewish newlyweds, particularly the brides, from the smaller to the larger Jewish centres of the area certainly contributed to the decline of the former.

The Jews of Wales generally observed the traditional rabbinic laws and regulations with regard to endogamous marriage, but this is not to imply that Welsh Jewry has been immune to exogamy, that is, intermarriage between a Jew and a non-Jew. Although impossible to quantify with any precision, intermarriage certainly contributed to the decline of Welsh-Jewish communities. This is because intermarried couples, as elsewhere, often disassociated themselves, or, as we have seen from the example of the CUS's constitution above, were excluded, from Wales' Orthodox Hebrew congregations, and reared their offspring as non-Jews. Indeed, a number of Jews in Wales who married outside the faith chose to raise their children as non-Jews. In 1928, for instance, Marcus Gubay of Llandudno, an Iraqi-born Jew,

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<sup>145</sup> Lionel Bernstein, interview with Nicola Tucker. In 1967 Merthyr Tydfil's Jewish community numbered around 180 individuals, while Cardiff's Jewish population was around 3,000 persons, see *JYB*, 1967.

<sup>146</sup> *JC*, 17 July 1931; an article from 1960 reveals that the couple were living at 99 Bailey Street, Brynmawr. See *JC*, 20 May 1960.

<sup>147</sup> *JC*, 25 November 1932; Renee Woolf, interview with author. In 1965, Llanelli's Jewish population numbered no more than forty individuals, and as noted previously, its synagogue was 'rarely used'.

married an Irish immigrant named Margaret Clarke in Caernarfon, and converted to Roman Catholicism. All three of their children were raised as Roman Catholics.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, Cardiff-born Leo Abse married a non-Jewish Welsh woman named Marjorie Davies in 1955, and although he retained his Jewish identity, none of his children were raised as Jews.<sup>149</sup> As we have seen, the small size of Wales' Jewish communities meant that young Jews often had to look elsewhere for potential husband or wives, but in some of Wales' smaller Jewish communities the relative scarcity of potential Jewish marriage partners occasionally led to the selection of non-Jewish mates. Reflecting on his childhood in Pontypridd's Jewish community in the 1910s and 1920s, a community then numbering around 150 Jewish individuals, one former Jewish resident noted that:

There was a good deal of mixing, in my time, with the general community, and a lot of my friends were non-Jewish, as was many other Jewish boys. There was some intermarrying taking place then because of this mixing with the population in general.<sup>150</sup>

Although such cases were exceptional, intermarriage was such a concern for some of the principality's Jewish communities that their organisations and ministers often addressed the issue, highlighting the dangers it posed to the survival of their Hebrew congregation. For example, in a sermon delivered at the Cathedral Road Synagogue, Cardiff, in 1936, the then minister, Rev. H. Jerevitch denounced:

the attitude and conduct of young [Jewish] men [in Cardiff] who preferred to 'keep company' with non-Jewish girls instead of those of their own faith. It was deplorable to see at dances Jewish young men choosing...Christian girls and deliberately ignoring the Jewish ones...Why go gleaning in a strange field...when there [is] so much beautiful harvest to be had in their own field?<sup>151</sup>

Similar concerns about intermarriage were later expressed in the pages of *CAJEX* in the 1950s and 1960s. One cartoon, which graphically illustrated the point, appeared in a 1951 article entitled 'Wither Youth?' It depicted two Jewish youngsters from Cardiff who faced a stark choice between the cathedral and the synagogue, as the community leadership, portrayed as an ostrich, ignored the issue by burying its head in the sand (see appendix

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<sup>148</sup> One of their sons is Albert Gubay (b. 1928), who founded Kwiksave in 1965. See *Daily Mirror*, 22 March 2010.

<sup>149</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 20 August 2008; *JC*, 29 August 2008;

<sup>150</sup> Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs.

<sup>151</sup> *JC*, 5 June 1936.

B2).<sup>152</sup> Fearing a rising rate of intermarriage and disaffiliation, a number of communal leaders from Cardiff's Orthodox community believed that a decline in the local Jewish population could be averted if more resources were spent on communal institutions and amenities, as a means of preventing Jewish youngsters from turning to the non-Jewish world for leisure pursuits and love interests.<sup>153</sup>

Nevertheless, as Amy Shevitz reminds us 'assimilation can go both ways'.<sup>154</sup> That is, far from being linked to the demise of a Jewish community, intermarriage can also be a factor in a community's survival and growth. This has been particularly true in the case of Cardiff's Reform community, which, in keeping with other Reform congregations in the United Kingdom, accepts patrilineal descent as a basis for claiming a Jewish identity. For Orthodox Judaism, intermarriage is an anathema, directly contravening *halakha*; but for Reform Judaism it is a reality affecting an increasing amount of Jews, and the best way of rectifying an undesirable situation is to reach out to intermarried couples, fully supporting those who wished to affiliate with a Jewish community and raise their children Jewish.<sup>155</sup> One such example in Cardiff was Myer Cohen (1905-1997), who was driven away from the Cathedral Road Hebrew Congregation (Orthodox) when he married a 'devout Catholic' named Betty Heath in 1934.<sup>156</sup> He was brought back into the fold in 1948, following the establishment of the Cardiff Reform community. Although his son Jeffrey did not have a Jewish mother, he was raised Jewish and celebrated his *bar mitzvah* at the Temple of Peace in April 1949.<sup>157</sup> Jeffrey was an active member of the Cardiff New Synagogue, and remained so up until his death in 1987.<sup>158</sup>

As we have seen in Chapter Two, a number of Wales' small Jewish communities lacked the Jewish infrastructure that was to be found in typically larger Jewish centres in Britain such as a resident kosher butcher or a purpose-built synagogue. While many Jews lived with these limitations, and made compromises, others found such an environment un-conducive to the intensive Jewish lifestyle they wished for themselves and their families. Thus the decline of

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<sup>152</sup> *CAJEX*, 1, 3 (1951), 25.

<sup>153</sup> *CAJEX*, 4, 3 (1954), 17; 4, 4 (1954), 65; 23, 4 (1973), 36; 24, 3 (1974), 9; 26, 2 (1976), 32-33.

<sup>154</sup> Shevitz, *Jewish Communities*, 198.

<sup>155</sup> Kershen and Romain, *Tradition and Change*, 340.

<sup>156</sup> Alan Schwartz, interview with author.

<sup>157</sup> Letter from W. Van Der Zyl to Leslie Corne, undated, document in possession of the Cardiff Reform Synagogue's archivist, Stanley Soffa; *JC*, 3 July 1987.

<sup>158</sup> *JC*, 3 July 1987.

Wales' Jewish communities was also attributable to the desire of some Jews to relocate to a location with a more developed Jewish infrastructure. The biography of Kate Loewenthal provides a case in point. As mentioned above, Loewenthal was appointed a Psychology lecturer at the then University College of North Wales in Bangor in 1966. By 1968, however, she and her husband decided to leave Bangor and relocate to Stamford Hill, London, as 'it was too difficult keeping kosher' in north-west Wales without a resident kosher butcher or kosher meat supplier.<sup>159</sup> They also wanted their daughter to attend a Jewish day school and experience a Jewish community with an extensive infrastructure.<sup>160</sup> Similarly, despite a fondness for her hometown, Swansea-born Deborah Giladi (née Glass) (b. 1965) relocated in the 1980s to the larger and more developed Jewish community in Manchester because she 'wanted [her] children to have...the opportunities associated with a Jewish lifestyle that [she] didn't have when [she] was growing up' in south Wales, such as attending a Jewish day school. The relocation of Monty Liss and his family from Bridgend to Cardiff in the late 1950s was also motivated by a search for surroundings in which their Jewishness could be accommodated more easily. According to Liss' eldest son, Alan (b.1948), the family moved to Cardiff because his parents 'got fed up of having kosher meat sent' and with no functioning synagogue in Bridgend they craved a more intensively Jewish environment for their young children.

As noted in Chapter Five, a sense of exile has been part of the psyche of a number of Welsh Jews, and some have left the principality and settled permanently in the Promised Land—Israel. A small number of Jews from Wales, including Lily Tobias of Ystalyfera (1887-1984); and Max Seligman of Cardiff (1902-1987), relocated to Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s, and others have followed since the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948.<sup>161</sup> In 1954, Vivian Lipman speculated that 'emigration to Israel...may have a significant quantitative effect' on the population of British Jewry 'in the future'.<sup>162</sup> Nevertheless, recent studies have shown that the number of British Jews that have made *aliyah* since 1948 has not been extensive. According to a report conducted by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research

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<sup>159</sup> Quoted from the *Jewish Telegraph* website: [www.jewishtelegraph.com/prof\\_34.html](http://www.jewishtelegraph.com/prof_34.html) (last accessed 11/06/2013).

<sup>160</sup> Kate Loewenthal, e-mail to author, 3 November 2011.

<sup>161</sup> *JC*, 8 June 1984; *CAJEX*, 11, 4 (1961), 61.

<sup>162</sup> Lipman, *Social History of the Jews*, 167.

in 2013, approximately 32, 594 Jews from Britain (about 1-2 per cent of Britain's Jewish population) emigrated to Israel between 1948 and 2011.<sup>163</sup>

Unfortunately, the lack of extant figures specifically to Wales means that it is impossible to quantify the number of Welsh Jews that have made *aliyah* with any precision. Despite this, some scholars have claimed that Welsh Jews have emigrated in large numbers to Israel. Grahame Davies, for instance, once wrote that *aliyah*, particularly post-1948, was one of the principal factors that led to the numerical decline of Welsh Jewry. Yet, he provides no evidence to support his assertions.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, David Morris has argued that the number of Jews leaving Wales for Israel in the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries was 'significant' and 'accelerated the decline of the Welsh Jewish communities'.<sup>165</sup> To support his argument, Morris draws on the number of Welsh-Jewish expatriates that attended an exhibition of Welsh synagogue lithographs by non-Jewish artist Olwen Hughes in Jerusalem in December 1987. Although not entirely representative of the number of Jews in Israel of Welsh birth, the presence of less than a hundred Welsh-Jewish ex-pats at the event certainly does not suggest that the number of émigrés has been 'significant'.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, between the 1950s and early 1990s *CAJEX* magazine frequently announced the departure of Jews and Jewish families from Cardiff, and south Wales more generally. While the magazine may not have reported on the departure of every Jewish family, it rarely announced the emigration of local Jews to Israel. For instance, between 1951 and 1993, only fourteen announcements were made.<sup>167</sup> Furthermore, in trying to account for the demographic decline of Welsh Jewry, an article which appeared in the *JC* in November 1975 noted several major factors, including the movement of young Jewish graduates to British cities such as London. No mention was made of emigration to Israel, however, which further suggests that *aliyah* was and *has* not been considered by the Jewish community as a 'significant' factor in the decline of Wales' Jewish population.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Laura Staetsky, Marina Sheps and Jonathan Boyd, 'Immigration from the United Kingdom to Israel', Institute for Jewish Policy Research Report (October 2013), 2; Rubinstein, Jolles, and Rubinstein, *Palgrave Dictionary*, 213.

<sup>164</sup> Davies, *A Chosen People*, 15.

<sup>165</sup> Morris, 'The History of the Welsh Jewish Communities', 214.

<sup>166</sup> *CAJEX*, 38, 1 (1988), 28-42.

<sup>167</sup> *CAJEX*, 19, 1 (1969), 36; 22, 1 (1972), 29; 30, 1 (1980), 42; 31, 1 (1981), 42; 32, 1 (1982), 34-59; 32, 2 (1982), 31; 32, 3 (1982), 29-83; 33, 4 (1983), 62.

<sup>168</sup> *JC*, 28 November 1975.

More significant in explaining the decline of Wales' Jewish population has been the 'demographic transition' of Jewish family sizes in the principality, and Britain more generally, throughout the twentieth century.<sup>169</sup> Whereas the predominantly poor Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe brought with them a more traditional Jewish pattern of early marriage, and a tendency for large families, their children and grandchildren developed a pattern of marrying at a later age and having fewer children or not marrying at all.<sup>170</sup> The reasons behind this shift in Jewish fertility patterns are many and varied, but the absorption of British middle-class behaviour and values by the second and third generations was arguably one of the main triggers.<sup>171</sup> Indeed, as more and more Jews, both male and female, entered higher education and became more career-minded, the decision to get married and have children was often postponed until later in life.<sup>172</sup> Socially mobile Jews also favoured smaller families because fewer offspring allowed them to invest more in their children's education and ensure a higher level of material comfort for their families.<sup>173</sup> Moreover, the development of contraceptives through the course of the twentieth century meant that Jewish couples, as well as non-Jewish couples more generally, could control the number of children they wished to have.<sup>174</sup> Thus, while many immigrant Jewish families in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Wales had as many as five to ten children, by the mid-twentieth century, having two or three children became the norm for Welsh-Jewish families.<sup>175</sup> The average number of children per Jewish family in Aberavon in 1901, for instance, was 3 in comparison to 1 in 1951, while Bangor's Jewish families fell from an average of 4.6 children in 1901 to

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<sup>169</sup> Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, 418.

<sup>170</sup> ChaeRan Y. Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia* (Hanover: University Press of New England [for] Brandeis University Press, 2002), 51-54; Judith R. Baskin, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Judaism and Jewish Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 627.

<sup>171</sup> Another reason for smaller Jewish families may be found in the progressively diminishing influence of religious tradition in British-Jewry. Judaism, in common with many other religions, traditionally fosters a high-birth rate and regards fertility as a blessing. This is discussed further in Barry A. Kosmin, 'Nuptiality and Fertility Patterns of British Jewry 1850-1980: an Immigrant Transition?' in D. A. Coleman, ed., *Demography of Immigrants and Minority Groups in the United Kingdom* (London: Academic Press, 1982), 245-261.

<sup>172</sup> Hannah Neustatter, 'Demographic and other statistical aspects of Anglo-Jewish population', in Freedman and Parkes, eds., *A Minority*, 107. As Michael A. Little and Jere D. Haas remind us, 'Those who married later, had smaller family sizes because they spent a shorter period of their reproductive careers in the married state'. See Michael A. Little and Jere D. Haas, eds., *Human Population Biology: a Transdisciplinary Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 58.

<sup>173</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 246.

<sup>174</sup> Kate Fisher, *Birth Control, Sex, and Marriage in Britain 1918-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-2.

<sup>175</sup> Commenting on the Jewish community of Pontypridd in the early twentieth century, Harry Cohen noted that Jews in the town 'had large families, four, five, six, seven children, were quite commonplace'. See Harry Cohen, interview with David Jacobs.

1.5 in 1951.<sup>176</sup> Similarly, the average number of children in each Jewish family in Pontypridd and Tredegar decreased from 3.2 and 5.6 respectively to 2 between 1901 and 1951.<sup>177</sup> Since the long term survival of any ethnic/religious group lies ultimately in the hands of their offspring and their ability to reproduce their numbers, the decline in Jewish birth-rates has been one of the most significant factors in explaining the decline of Wales' Jewish population. Whatever the reasons, Welsh Jewry has unquestionably witnessed a dramatic demographic decline throughout the twentieth century.

### **Endurance**

By the turn of the twenty-first century, in a number of towns across Wales, only Jewish cemeteries, visited on occasion by the children or grandchildren of those buried there, provide evidence of once thriving Jewish communities. In other places there are also purpose-built synagogue buildings empty of Jews, which serve as poignant reminders of Hebrew congregations that have since faded away. Although the last member of the long-defunct Merthyr Tydfil Hebrew Congregation passed away in 1999, the town's synagogue in Church Street still stands, but has since been converted into apartments.<sup>178</sup> Pontypridd's synagogue has also been transformed into apartments, while both Llanelli and Port Talbot's synagogues have become churches.<sup>179</sup> Similarly, both Tredegar and Brynmawr's synagogues have been converted into houses.<sup>180</sup> No longer serving their original purpose, Jewish cemeteries and synagogues in Wales have, in the words of Lee Shai Weissbach, become powerful 'places of memory'.<sup>181</sup> This is because 'they are not only sites where actual events transpired, but also places that have been suffused with a larger meaning because they have come to be reminders of an entire historical experience that has reached its end'.<sup>182</sup>

All this is not to say, of course, that Welsh Jewry has completely disappeared. Indeed, a Jewish presence persists in many places in Wales, and Hebrew congregations are still viable, though smaller than in the past. The 2011 census returns recorded 2,064 people in Wales

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<sup>176</sup> Based on 1901 census returns and the Welsh returns to Hannah Neustatter's 1951 survey of the British-Jewish population, in Neustatter, 'Demographic and other statistical aspects', 249.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *JC*, 23 November 2009.

<sup>179</sup> Kadish, *Jewish heritage in England*, 203; Swansea Hebrew Congregation Minute Book, 9 October 1978, D/D SHC 1/5, WGA; <http://www.peoplescollection.org.uk/Item/4553> (last accessed 05/06/2013).

<sup>180</sup> Colin Bennett, 'Synagogue', [http://www.francisfrith.com/brynmawr,gwent/photos/the-bus-station-c1965\\_b730100/](http://www.francisfrith.com/brynmawr,gwent/photos/the-bus-station-c1965_b730100/) (last accessed 05/06/2013); *JC*, 28 November 1975.

<sup>181</sup> Weissbach, *Jewish life*, 309

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

putting ‘Jewish’ as their religion. Nonetheless, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the census is not entirely reliable as a numerical guide for those Jews who identify and affiliate with a Jewish community. This is because not every member of a Hebrew congregation defines their Jewishness in religious terms, and not all Jews choose to join their local Hebrew Congregation.<sup>183</sup> Thus, while the 2011 census recorded 159 people in Swansea who put their religion as Jewish, active membership of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation was no more than twenty individuals.<sup>184</sup> Similarly, the 2011 census recorded 99 people in Newport as Jews by religion, but the number of Jews who paid the membership fee of the Newport Hebrew Congregation was only thirty.<sup>185</sup>

As mentioned above, the Newport Hebrew Congregation downsized their synagogue in 1997, and despite the lack of Jewish men in the city to form a regular *minyan* for religious services, a handful of dedicated and aging congregants continued and *continue* to hold weekly Shabbat services in their small synagogue in Risca Road.<sup>186</sup>

During the late 1990s/early 2000s Swansea Jewry, then numbering around sixty-five members, still possessed its 1950s synagogue building in Ffynone Road, but as the congregation continued to dwindle congregants were forced to sell their house of worship in September 2009.<sup>187</sup> However, despite the synagogue’s closure, the community refused to die out. While the synagogue was sold to the LifePoint Church group, and its stained glass windows were transferred to the Cockfosters and North Southgate Synagogue in London, congregants continued and *continue* to meet in the building for religious services.<sup>188</sup> An agreement was made with the LifePoint Church that the Lewis Palto Hall adjacent to the main prayer room, once the centre of Swansea Jewry’s social activities and celebrations, could be rented by the Hebrew congregation and transformed into a synagogue.<sup>189</sup> The downsized Ffynone Road synagogue opened in November 2009, and despite insufficient

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<sup>183</sup> Additionally, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, some Jews, especially older members of the community, may feel reluctant to volunteer their identity to any government list.

<sup>184</sup> Joyce Arron, interview with author. According to Joyce, there are forty members on the Swansea Hebrew Congregations mailing list, but around a half of members live away from the city, and retain membership for burial or sentimental reasons.

<sup>185</sup> Harry Poloway, interview with author. According to Harry, many of those who pay the membership fee live ‘out of town’ and are not active congregants. Like the Swansea Hebrew Congregation, a number retain membership for burial rights or sentimental reasons.

<sup>186</sup> Harry Poloway, interview with author.

<sup>187</sup> *JYB*, 2001-2003; *JC*, 3 September 2009.

<sup>188</sup> *JC*, 23 December 2008; 3 September 2009; 27 May 2010.

<sup>189</sup> Norma Glass, interview with author.



numbers to form a regular *minyan*, congregants met and *continue* to meet every week at the synagogue for Friday evening and Shabbat morning services.<sup>190</sup> With most active members now over the age of seventy, many congregants believe that the Swansea Hebrew Congregation is a dying community and will wither away in the not so distant future.<sup>191</sup> Other members are more optimistic, however, believing that the community's ability in recent years to attract a constantly changing stream of Jewish visitors, as well as Jewish students and staff recruited to higher education in the city—to Swansea University and Swansea Metropolitan University—will allow the Swansea Hebrew Congregation to survive for many years to come.<sup>192</sup> Since the early 2000s, for instance, the numbers attending summer services at Swansea's synagogue have been swelled by holidaying Jews from London who stay at Swansea University's campus on an almost annual basis, while in 2009 the congregation welcomed the arrival of Itshak Golan, who was appointed a researcher in immunology at Swansea University.<sup>193</sup> Both he and his wife, Ira, have played, and *continue* to play an active role in the community, and in January 2013 they celebrated their son's *bar mitzvah* ceremony at the Swansea synagogue, the first to be held by the community for twenty years.<sup>194</sup>

Although Cardiff has seen its overall Jewish population decline from around 3,500 persons in 1968 to 802 individuals in 2011, the city is still home to two Hebrew Congregations—the CUS and the Cardiff Reform Synagogue.<sup>195</sup> Nevertheless, the decline in numbers did bring some changes to the infrastructure of the two congregations. In 2003, for instance, the Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation's synagogue in Penylan was sold and replaced by a new and smaller house of worship in Cyncoed Gardens (less than half a mile away) (see appendix A24).<sup>196</sup> As we have seen in the past, the consecration of a new synagogue usually indicated a growth in the size and prosperity of a congregation. However, this was not the case at this point in the history of the Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation, which now numbered no more than 300 members.<sup>197</sup> Despite the decline in membership, Friday night and Shabbat

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<sup>190</sup> Charles Arron, interview with author.

<sup>191</sup> Joyce Arron, interview with author; Norma Glass, interview with author; *JC*, 23 December 2008.

<sup>192</sup> Charles Arron, interview with author.

<sup>193</sup> Charles Arron, interview with author; 'Jews Targeted', 7 August 2002, Newspaper Clippings, D/D SHC 20/1, WGA.

<sup>194</sup> Joyce Arron interview with author; Charles Arron, interview with author; *JC*, 9 April 1993.

<sup>195</sup> *JYB*, 1968; 2011 census returns.

<sup>196</sup> *Bimah*, 36 (2003), 35.

<sup>197</sup> *JC*, 15 October 2004. According to the late Alan Schwartz, Penylan's synagogue was considered 'too large' for the dwindling congregation and a smaller house of worship was needed. See *Bimah*, 35 (2003), 20.

morning services were and *are* held weekly at Cyncoed Gardens, and morning *minyanim* are held three times a week.<sup>198</sup>

The congregation is also numerous enough to afford the services of a full-time rabbi, but in a similar vein to other Welsh Hebrew congregations in the past, Cardiff's declining Orthodox community has experienced great difficulty in securing the lasting services of a spiritual leader. Between 1992 and 2012, for instance, the congregation has had five rabbis.<sup>199</sup> The reasons why the community has had trouble holding on to its rabbis are multifaceted, and are similar to those discussed in Chapter Two. Some rabbis treated Cardiff as a stepping stone in their career and had their sights set on moving to a more prestigious and larger Hebrew congregation in Britain, while others wished to settle in a community with a greater Jewish infrastructure. Thus after five years at Penylan, Rabbi Daniel Levy left for Leeds in 1999 because he and his wife, Naomi, wanted their children to attend a Jewish Day School, while Rabbi Yossi Ives left Cardiff in 2003, after three years of service, to take up a pulpit at Richmond's Synagogue in London.<sup>200</sup>

Cardiff's Reform community employed a full-time rabbi up until the departure of Rabbi Rachel Montagu for London in 1988.<sup>201</sup> From then onwards the dwindling congregation found it could no longer afford the services of a full-time spiritual leader and has relied on the services of two part-time rabbis—Elaina Rothman, who served the community between 1990 and 2002; and Charles Middleburgh, who was formally inducted into office in 2005 and is the congregation's spiritual leader at present. The congregation celebrated its Diamond Jubilee in 2008, and an important source of continuity for the community is its synagogue in Moira Terrace, which, at the time of writing, continues to be used for religious worship and social gatherings, serving approximately 230 adult congregants.<sup>202</sup>

Casual reading of the available literature on Welsh Jewry would lead one to believe that in the early-twenty-first century Wales is home to only three Jewish centres—Cardiff, Newport, and Swansea. Hal and David Weitzman, for instance, once wrote that 'a landscape dotted

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<sup>198</sup> Website of the Cardiff United Hebrew Congregation: <http://www.cardiffshul.org/Services.htm> (last accessed 22/06/2013).

<sup>199</sup> *JC*, 9 September 1994; 17 December 1999; 15 October 2004; 18 May 2012.

<sup>200</sup> *Bimah*, 21 (1999), 16-17; *JC*, 27 June 2003.

<sup>201</sup> *JC*, 15 July 1988.

<sup>202</sup> *Bimah*, 57 (December 2008), 31; Kevin Sleight, treasurer of the Cardiff Reform Synagogue, e-mail to author, 19 July 2013.

with small but vibrant [Jewish] communities [has become] barren, with only Cardiff, Swansea and Newport surviving’, while Grahame Davies noted in 2002 that ‘there [were] around 1,000 Jews in Cardiff....and small communities in Swansea and Newport’.<sup>203</sup> Similarly, Paul Chambers suggested that the Jewish experience in early twenty-first-century Wales was limited to Cardiff and Swansea.<sup>204</sup> However, all three scholars are guilty of propagating certain myths as other Jewish centres continued and *continue* to function in other parts of the principality, beyond Wales’ three largest cities.

According to Hal and David Weitzman, religious services in Llandudno were last held in 1997.<sup>205</sup> However, as mentioned above, the dwindling Llandudno Hebrew Congregation continued to survive in the late 1990s and early 2000s thanks to the dedication of four men, who, regardless of a *minyan*, held weekly Friday evening services at the town’s synagogue.<sup>206</sup> At the time of writing, Llandudno’s synagogue is still open for worship, but in 2004 ownership of the building was transferred to the Manchester Lubavitch, which uses the premises as a retreat centre for families and school groups.<sup>207</sup> Although no longer run by the Llandudno Jewish community, congregants continue to use the synagogue as when is needed. In fact, in Llandudno, rather than seeing religious observance as an all or nothing proposition, congregants do what is feasible. As is suggested by congregant Michael Lee in an interview in 2007:

...the Llandudno Hebrew Congregation still have use of the synagogue as when we need it, and can join in services on Friday evenings or Saturdays when one is being held. We always try to arrange services for special festivals such as Hanukkah and the Jewish New Year and Day of Atonement.<sup>208</sup>

As we have seen from the example of the Rhyl Jewish community in Chapter Three, in the right circumstances defunct Jewish communities can be revived. This also appears true of Bangor’s Jewish community, which officially dissolved in 1985, but was described in 2009

<sup>203</sup> Weitzman and Weitzman, ‘Jews in Wales’, 28; Grahame Davies, *The Chosen People*, 15.

<sup>204</sup> Chambers notes that in 2003 ‘Wales [had] only three operating synagogues’—two in Cardiff and one in Swansea. See Chambers, ‘Religious Diversity’, 126.

<sup>205</sup> Weitzman and Weitzman, ‘Jews in Wales’, 28.

<sup>206</sup> *JC*, 21 April 2000; Holidaying Jews from the North West of England also helped to boost the number of worshippers able to attend religious services during the summer months.

<sup>207</sup> ‘A shrinking population,’ [http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/northwest/sites/faith/pages/mike\\_lee.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/northwest/sites/faith/pages/mike_lee.shtml) (last accessed 08/12/2012). At the time of writing, Plas Gogarth in Church Walks offers self-catering kosher accommodation for Jewish visitors to Llandudno.

<sup>208</sup> ‘A shrinking population’.

as undergoing ‘a mini-revival’.<sup>209</sup> The origins of this ‘mini-revival’ can be traced back to 2006 after the appointment of Londoner Nathan Abrams as a lecturer at the then University of Wales, Bangor. Having been raised in north London’s extensive Jewish community, Abrams was eager to find other Jews living in north-west Wales.<sup>210</sup> After discovering that 361 people in north Wales put Jewish as their religion in the 2001 census, he set about contacting Jews in the region and bringing them together. With the aid of a £10,000 grant from the Clore Jewish Development Fund in London, Abrams established ‘The North Wales Jewish Network’ in 2007.<sup>211</sup> Centred in Bangor, the network is not a ‘congregation’ as such, since it has no dedicated place of worship. Rather, it seeks ‘to provide a focal point...for communal meeting’ and ‘to raise awareness of the Jewish experience of North Wales...for the Jews of Gwynedd, Anglesey and surrounding areas’.<sup>212</sup>

The network currently has between fifty and sixty members who have celebrated Passover together, participated in Shabbat services, and received kosher meat and other foodstuffs from a kosher deli in Manchester.<sup>213</sup> Following the efforts of the late Bernard Blank of Llandudno (1927-2011), the network secured north Wales’ first Jewish burial ground in 2010 by persuading Conwy County Borough Council to make a Jewish plot available in Llanrhos cemetery. A dedication ceremony took place on 8 August 2010, and was conducted by Rabbi Brian Fox of Manchester’s Cheshire Reform Synagogue, who spoke of the importance of a cemetery as a ‘cornerstone of Jewish community life’.<sup>214</sup> Many of the network’s members have little or no formal Jewish background, and it is because of this openness that the network continues to grow, creating a community ‘which is largely virtual’

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<sup>209</sup> *Jewish Renaissance*, 9, 1 (October 2009), 3.

<sup>210</sup> It should be noted that not all Jewish academics appointed to positions in Welsh universities have been as proactive as Abrams. William Rubinstein, Professor of Modern History at the University of Aberystwyth since 1995, and Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Professor of Judaism at the University of Wales, Lampeter between 1997 and 2009 are two good examples in recent decades. There is no clear reason as to why both academics did not affiliate with Jews in their vicinity, but there are several likely explanations. With only 64 Jews listed in Ceredigion in the 2001 census, they may have been unaware that there were Jews living in their locality. Additionally, the establishment of the Welshpool group in 1996, which serves Jews living throughout mid Wales, may have been seen as sufficient. It is also possible that they did not consider their appointments as being long-term and thus decided not to put down roots in their respective towns.

<sup>211</sup> *JC*, 27 July 2007; ‘Rejuvenating Jewish Life in North Wales’, <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/research/fullnews.php.en?Id=331> (last accessed 20/06/2013).

<sup>212</sup> Quoted from the North Wales Jewish Network’s website: <http://www.northwalesjewishnetwork.org> (last accessed 20/06/2013). In December 2011, member Maurice Landman wrote that the network aspires to have their own place of worship so that they can hold monthly services, see <https://sites.google.com/site/nwalesjews/Community/our-staff> (last accessed 20/06/2013).

<sup>213</sup> See, for instance: *JC*, 7 December 2007; 25 April 2008; 2 May 2008; 3 April 2009; 24 April 2009; 9 April 2010.

<sup>214</sup> *JC*, 13 August 2010.

with members remaining ‘in contact with each other through an email list’, as well as meeting in person from time to time.<sup>215</sup>

A similar Jewish community sprung up in Welshpool in 1996. In a move to help outlying members of Birmingham’s Progressive Synagogue sustain religious observance, a Friday night service was held at the home of Anthony Solomons in Welshpool in July 1996. Twenty or so Jews from across mid-Wales and the England–Wales border attended, and having found the gathering ‘worthy in the religious sense and satisfying socially’, they decided to form mid-Wales’ first Jewish community.<sup>216</sup> Named the Welshpool Jewish Group, the community was listed in the *JYB* for the first time in 1999, and currently has between fifteen and twenty members.<sup>217</sup> Voluntarism appears to be the backbone of community life, and since its formation members have been circulating around each other’s homes once every six weeks for Friday night services, which are conducted in the Liberal tradition, and led by the owner of the house.<sup>218</sup> Annual communal *Seder* services are hosted by Mark and Sue Michaels at their hotel in Montgomery, while two members often bring a carload of kosher produce from Birmingham for those who observe the laws of *kashrut*.<sup>219</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In less than a hundred years, the Jewish presence in Wales has declined substantially. According to the *JYB*, in 1918 the principality was home to approximately nineteen Jewish centres and around 5,000 Jews. By 2011, however, there were only five Jewish centres left in Wales and an estimated Jewish population of 2,064 persons. Nonetheless, while most of Wales’ Jewish communities may have disappeared, others are on-going or are being re-established/established in the principality in the early twenty-first century. The future of Welsh Jewry remains uncertain, but the prospects for some Jewish centres, particularly north Wales, are brighter than they have been for many years. Welsh Jewry may have declined in numbers but its evolution is on-going.

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<sup>215</sup> *JC*, 2 May 2008.

<sup>216</sup> *JC*, 19 July 1996.

<sup>217</sup> *JYB*, 1999; The community is called a ‘group’ rather than a ‘congregation’ as there is no dedicated place of worship and most members retain membership of the Birmingham Progressive Hebrew Congregation for burial reasons.

<sup>218</sup> Mark Michaels, interview with author, Montgomery, 23 April 2012.

<sup>219</sup> Mark Michaels, interview with author.

## Conclusion

In writing the history of the Jewish Diaspora in Wales, this thesis differs fundamentally from previous studies on the topic. First, unlike existing written histories, it is the first, and only, study, to date, to have explored and examined the history of Welsh-Jewish communities as a geographical whole, from their foundation in the mid-eighteenth century to their current position in the early twenty-first century. Second, this thesis differs from previous studies by moving away from the formal histories of religious leaders and synagogue functionaries, and drawing our attention to the everyday experiences and histories of ordinary Jews in Wales. By doing so, it is hoped that the voice of Welsh Jewry has been restored to its people, and that we now have a better understanding of what it was and *is* like to be Jewish in Wales. As well as filling a historiographical gap, this thesis has brought our attention to how particular aspects of Jewish life in Wales differed from other parts of the United Kingdom, and how a study of Welsh Jewry is important in widening our understanding of British-Jewish history in particular, and both Welsh and British history as a whole.

To return to a theme raised in the introduction of this thesis, the term ‘Anglo-Jewry’ has shaped the study of the Jewish communities in Britain by either incorporating the histories of the non-Anglo communities into the larger English ones, or by excluding their studies altogether. As we have seen, one of the chief proponents of this approach to British-Jewish studies is Todd Endelman, who once stated that ‘since the number of Jews who lived in Wales...was never large, folding them into “Anglo”-Jewry does not distort the overall picture’.<sup>1</sup> This proclamation, however, contradicts an earlier statement made by Endelman, who, in defence of the study of Jews in Britain noted that small ‘numbers do not...justify the marginalization of Britain in modern Jewish historiography’.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, if this is the case for Britain in the context of international Jewish history, then why should the case of Wales be different with regards to modern British-Jewish historiography? After all, as Endelman reminds us, Welsh-Jews ‘were not, in a strict sense, “English” Jews’.<sup>3</sup>

British-Jewish historiography has long recognised the role of ‘place’ in determining the way history unfolds, and in this context many historians have considered the impact of

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<sup>1</sup> Endelman, *The Jews in Britain*, 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

Anglicisation on Jews living in Britain.<sup>4</sup> As Lloyd P. Gartner once wrote in reference to British Jewry, ‘no form of Anglicisation was more advantageous to the immigrant [Jew, than] learning English’.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the use of the terms ‘Anglicisation’ and ‘integration’ must evidently differ in Wales from their use in England. Unlike their English counterparts, Jews in Wales faced a dual or triple pressure to integrate into British society. Whether in the anglicised towns and cities of the north-east and south coast or in the heartland of Welsh-speaking Wales, Jews had to integrate into both Welsh and wider English society and, within Welsh society itself, had to negotiate a relationship both with its Welsh-speaking and its anglicised cultures.

Esther and Rudi Reisel once wrote that the dispersion of Jews to different countries around the world has led to a variety of divergent traditions, lifestyles and cultures; and one of the key aims of this thesis was to explore the relationship between Welshness and Jewishness.<sup>6</sup> Although Jews in Wales have undoubtedly shared and continue to *share* commonalities with their English, Scottish and Northern Irish counterparts, they did and *do* exhibit features that are unique to the Welsh-Jewish diaspora. As we have seen, the works of Jewish writers and artists in Wales have been heavily influenced by their Welsh upbringing and/or their exposure to Welsh life. Moreover, Jews in Wales have identified with Welsh cultural traditions such as *eisteddfodau*, and have integrated elements into their own culture and customs. Thus, having explored the particularity of the Welsh cultural context, it is hoped that future historians will ignore Endelman’s statement, and also that of Ursula Henriques, who once described the ‘cultural’ activities of south Wales Jewry as ‘typical of provincial Jewries all over Great Britain’.<sup>7</sup>

The Welsh-Jewish experience was also unique in many other ways. The migration patterns of Wales’ Jewish immigrants during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for instance, differed greatly to their counterparts in England and Scotland. This is because they did not arrive in their country of settlement directly. As mentioned in Chapter One,

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<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, David Englander, ‘Anglicised not Anglican: Jews and Judaism in Victorian Britain’, in Gerald Parsons, ed., *Religion in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press in association with the Open University, 1988), 236-73; Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*; Sharman Kadish, ‘*A Good Jew and a Good Englishman*’: the Jewish Lads’ & Girls’ Brigade 1895-1995 (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914*, 2nd ed. (London: Simon Publications, 1973), 239.

<sup>6</sup> Esther Reisel, and Rudi Reisel, eds., *Modern Jewish Identity: a Rationalistic Motivation for Remaining Jewish* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2000), 65.

<sup>7</sup> Henriques, ‘The Jewish Community of Cardiff’, in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 38.

established shipping routes during this period meant that the vast majority of Eastern European Jewish migrants entering Great Britain from Continental Europe did so via the eastern English ports of Hull and Grimsby. Smaller numbers also arrived via London and the port of Leith in eastern Scotland. Thus, in order to get to Wales, Jewish immigrants had to travel first via England.<sup>8</sup> As we have seen, chain migration brought large numbers straight to the principality from English ports, while others migrated in steps, living first in one of England's larger Jewish centres before deciding to settle in Wales.

Moreover, exploring the history of Jewish communities in Wales provides a new perspective on the way geography has helped condition the Jewish experience in the United Kingdom. As noted in Chapter One, the Jewish communities in the south Wales valleys were unique to British Jewry because in no other part of the United Kingdom were so many Hebrew congregations established in such a small geographical area. As we have seen, in an area stretching approximately thirteen miles across and in length, an estimated sixteen Hebrew congregations were founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The number of congregations established did not reflect a high population of Jews since there were no more than around 1,260 Jewish individuals in the region at its peak in the early 1920s.<sup>9</sup> But the mountainous landscape of the south Wales coalfield essentially divided and scattered the region's Jewish population into numerous small Jewish communities. If the region was flat, it would have been easier for Jews to reach each other and it is likely that a smaller number of Hebrew congregations would have been established, as occurred in the Durham coalfield which was home to only two synagogues—Bishop Auckland and Durham.<sup>10</sup>

The sharp decline of the south Wales coalfield's Jewish population during the interwar period—from approximately 1,260 persons in the early 1920s to 496 individuals in 1939—was also a unique feature of Welsh Jewry, since no other region in the United Kingdom witnessed such a dramatic decrease in its Jewish population during this period.<sup>11</sup> As we have seen from Chapter Six, the economic depression that hit the south Wales coalfield

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<sup>8</sup> This was also true for many of Scotland's Jewish immigrants, but unlike the Welsh-Jewish experience, large numbers of Jewish migrants came directly to Scotland via the Scottish port of Leith. See, Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*.

<sup>9</sup> *JYB*, 1920; *JYB*, 1921.

<sup>10</sup> Rubinstein, Jolles, and Rubinstein, *The Palgrave Dictionary*, 96, 698.

<sup>11</sup> *JYB*, 1920; *JYB*, 1921; *JYB*, 1939.



during the 1920s and 1930s was the main instigator for this decline, and the exodus of Jews simply reflected a wider pattern of emigration from the region when nearly half a million people left the valleys for employment and economic opportunities elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Situated on the western side of Great Britain, Wales' geographical position had a significant impact on the makeup of British Jewry between 1939 and 1945. As discussed in Chapter Three, during the Second World War the majority of Wales was designated a 'safe area' from enemy bombings, a factor which resulted in an influx of over 200,000 evacuees from England, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Wales was not entirely unique in this instance as 'safe areas' in England and Scotland also saw the arrival of Anglo-Jewish evacuees during this period. In a similar vein to Wales, England also witnessed the establishment of wartime Jewish communities such as the Amersham United Synagogue Membership Group in Buckinghamshire.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, unlike Scotland and England, the majority of Wales was designated a reception area and thus the principality arguably received the largest numbers of Jewish evacuees in Britain during this period. Exact numbers are unknown, but their presence certainly led to a dramatic increase in the population of Welsh Jewry for a brief period, a unique phenomenon that was not experienced by other Jewries in the United Kingdom.

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the mountainous landscape of mid-Wales has effectively divided the principality into two, and alongside poor transportation links and distance, it is one of the main reasons accounting for the isolation between Wales' Jewish communities in north, mid-, and south Wales. As we have seen, the communication links of Welsh-Jewish communities mirrored that of Welsh society more generally, by running from west to east rather than north to south. Thus smaller Jewish communities in south Wales looked mainly towards the larger Jewish communities of the region—Cardiff, Swansea, and Newport—; north Wales' Jewish communities enjoyed close relations with nearby Liverpool and Manchester Jewry; and mid-Wales with Birmingham.

Indeed, the relations of north Wales' Jewish communities with the larger Jewish centres of north-west England are an interesting dimension of this study. As mentioned in Chapter One, north Wales' Jewish communities, with the exception of Colwyn Bay, emerged in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries as a result of internal migration within

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<sup>12</sup> Rubinstein, Jolles, and Rubinstein, *The Palgrave Dictionary*, 154.

Britain with Jewish pedlars looking for locations from which trade could be conducted with less competition than could be found in Liverpool and Manchester. Furthermore, in Chapter Two we have seen how with the aid of Jewish organisations and individuals from Liverpool and Manchester, Jews in north Wales were able to maintain their Jewish identities and were encouraged to do so. Indeed, so reliant were north Wales Jewry on north-west England's larger Jewish centres, that if the latter did not exist, it would have been highly unlikely that the former would have prospered. The history of north Wales Jewry is therefore a part and parcel of the histories of Liverpool and Manchester Jewries, and on this score, historians writing on the Jewish metropolises of north-West England can learn a great deal from Welsh-Jewish historiography, however marginal events in north Wales may appear to them.

Additionally, exploring the history of all of Wales' Jewish communities, both large and small, as well as those Jews who lived away from organised centres, has permitted us to appreciate the complex character of Welsh Jewry, and British Jewry as a whole. Indeed, as we have seen, the smaller Jewish communities in Wales were not simply miniature versions of larger Jewish centres, but, rather, alternative types of settlement in many respects. Evidently, the histories of Wales' smaller Jewish settlements are in some ways similar to that of larger Jewish centres in the principality, and Britain as a whole. In both small and large communities, for instance, migration was the key to growth and development; Jewish communal social activities were organised and maintained; and religious concerns were central. But Wales' smaller Jewish communities were also fundamentally different in many respects. As we have seen in Chapter Two, the Jewish infrastructure of Wales' small Jewish communities was not as extensive as the principality's larger Jewish centres. While the situation varied from community to community, smaller Jewish communities typically lacked the necessary population base and resources to support purpose-built synagogues, long-serving ministers and Jewish facilities such as a resident kosher butcher. Yet, despite the difficulties they faced, each of Wales' smaller Jewish communities was able to maintain an observant Jewish lifestyle.

Moreover, the conspicuous absence of multiple or dissident congregations, which often occurred in other, typically larger, Jewish centres in Britain such as Cardiff, Glasgow, Manchester and Swansea was also a feature of Wales' smaller Jewish settlements. This was primarily because of a lack of numbers, but also because unlike most British-Jewish communities they were not the product of successive waves of immigration from varying

parts of Europe throughout the nineteenth century. As we have seen, most of Wales' small Jewish communities were founded in the latter half of the nineteenth century and composed entirely, or almost entirely, of East European Jewish immigrants. As a result, there was no need to form a break away congregation to rival the differing liturgical traditions practised by an already established community. Although the small Jewish communities of Llanelli, Wrexham and Port Talbot are exceptions in this case, their rival congregations were short-lived, lasting no more than a few years, because they lacked the resources to sustain more than one synagogue. All three communities thus had to make compromises and accommodate the differing religious needs of its members in a single congregation. This was a unique feature of small Jewish community life, which corresponded with the experience of other smaller Jewish centres in the United Kingdom such as Dundee in Scotland.<sup>13</sup>

While historians of British Jewry can learn much from Welsh-Jewish history, the same can be said for Welsh historians. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, in the context of religion, Welsh historians have tended to ignore Jews altogether or marginalised their histories in favour of the nonconformist experience. Of course, this scholarly focus is to a great extent justified, for nonconformity was the largest single group of religious bodies in Wales between the late eighteenth and mid-twentieth centuries.<sup>14</sup> Still, in all the scholarly attention paid to Christian institutions, something essential has been missed for, as we have seen, Judaism, the oldest non-Christian faith to be established in Wales, has been a fundamental feature of the Welsh religious landscape since the mid-eighteenth century. Indeed, in post-devolutionary Wales, where pluralism has become an undoubted characteristic of the religious life of the principality, it would be a mistake to think that the full story of the Welsh religious experience can be told without considering the histories of Jews and other religious minorities in Wales.

For many historians, Welsh-Jewish history makes up a sad chapter of British-Jewish history, and is nothing more than a tale of persecution and suffering, what the great Jewish historian Salo Wittmayer Baron called the 'lachrymose conception of Jewish history.'<sup>15</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, it will be recalled, declared that 'anti-Semitism in South Wales' during

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<sup>13</sup> Abrams, *Caledonian Jews*, 65-94.

<sup>14</sup> Simon J. D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, c.1920-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 41.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Liberles, ed., *Salo Wittmayer Baron: Architect of Jewish History* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 117.

the early twentieth century ‘was widespread and had a long history’ and that Jewish immigrants were unfortunate to have ‘entered a land seething with religious bigotry’.<sup>16</sup> In writing such a negative statement, Alderman was specifically referring to two particular events in Welsh-Jewish history— The Tredegar Riots of 1911 and the purportedly forcible conversion case of Esther Lyons in 1869—which, rather frustratingly, have been used by himself and others to both generalise and summarise the attitudes displayed by non-Jews in Wales to Jews and the Jewish experience in Wales as a whole. As mentioned in my introduction, in almost every published study, the sole mention of Welsh Jewry has been in reference to short entries or brief sentences on the ‘Anti-Jewish Riots of 1911’. Indeed, as has been shown, this is not the whole story.

The argument about whether the Tredegar Riots were an indicator of widespread Welsh anti-Semitism or whether their causes lay elsewhere and their anti-Jewish character incidental has been debated for decades, and as Paul O’Leary reminds us they ‘have been scrutinized so assiduously [by historians] precisely because they were not a common occurrence’ in Welsh-Jewish history.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the alleged Jewess Abduction Case of 1869 has received much attention by scholars because of its peculiarity, and has been used by historians such as Geoffrey Alderman to make wider unfounded claims that there was a strong tradition of nonconformist anti-Semitism and forced conversionism in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Wales.<sup>18</sup> Yet, as we have seen, Esther Lyons herself admitted to embracing Christianity voluntarily, and there is no other extant evidence to suggest that Welsh Christians practised forced conversions on Jews, as was the case in parts of Catholic Europe at that time.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, in comparison to the histories of Jews in other European countries, the Welsh-Jewish experience, as was true of the British-Jewish experience more generally, was remarkable by virtue of its freedom from overt persecution. As we have seen from Chapter Four, Jews have generally faced little, if any violence, in Wales and social and occupational discrimination, while certainly not absent, was neither systematic nor pervasive.

In economic terms, Welsh-Jewish history is a positive story. Most Jews who settled in Wales during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were poor immigrants, who

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<sup>16</sup> Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat?’, 66-68.

<sup>17</sup> O’Leary, ‘Foreword to the New Edition’ in Henriques, ed., *The Jews of South Wales*, 2nd ed., xv.

<sup>18</sup> Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat?’, 67-68.

<sup>19</sup> The most notorious case in the nineteenth century was the Mortara Affair of 1858, which involved the kidnapping and forced conversion of a Jewish child to Catholicism in Italy. For more on this, see Levy, *Antisemitism*, 470-471.

came to the principality to flee persecution in Eastern Europe and/or to seek economic betterment. They began life in Wales in low-status occupations such as market trading or peddling, but typically their descendants did not remain poor for more than a generation or two. At the end of the nineteenth century, those who traced their origins in Wales to immigration during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were, for the most part, middle-class, and their social mobility was eventually repeated by most of their counterparts who arrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As we have seen, Russian-born Philip Pollecoff began life in north Wales as a drapery pedlar in the late nineteenth century, but by the mid-twentieth century he and his family owned four drapery businesses in north-west Wales.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, in the first decades of the twentieth century Russian-born Solomon Zeidman worked as a pedlar and owned a small outfitters shop in Pontypool before opening a larger store in Cowbridge Road, Cardiff.<sup>21</sup> During the 1930s, Jewish refugee businessmen fleeing from persecution in Nazi Germany and Nazi occupied-Europe arrived in south Wales with little capital, but helped transform the region's poor economic climate by establishing several successful firms and factories on the Treforest Industrial Estate. By all means, not every Jewish immigrant who settled in the principality prospered, but many did. In material terms, then, Wales' Jews, as was true of Britain's Jews more generally, were successful.

Outside the economic sphere, Welsh-Jews have contributed greatly to the cultural and intellectual life of both Wales and British Jewry, which is a remarkable achievement given that Welsh Jewry constituted no more than around 0.2 per cent of the overall population of Wales and 1.67 per cent of the British-Jewish population at its peak in 1918.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, there appears to be no 'lack of brilliance' in Welsh-Jewish cultural and intellectual life, as Endelman once suggested in a generalisation of British-Jewry as a whole.<sup>23</sup> Despite being unable to support a broad array of cultural and educational institutions such as a *yeshiva* and a Jewish day school, the Jewish communities of Wales produced a number of individuals who have left their mark on British Jewish society. The important contribution made by many Welsh-Jews to 'the main currents' of British Jewry has been celebrated in the *Palgrave*

<sup>20</sup> Shirley Goldsmith, interview with author; Eve Pollecoff, interview with author.

<sup>21</sup> Judy Hornung, interview with Diana Soffa.

<sup>22</sup> According to the *JYB*, approximately 5,000 Jews lived in Wales in 1918. The population of Wales was estimated at around 2,500,000, while the population of British-Jewry as a whole was estimated to be around 300,000. See *JYB*, 1918; Davies, Jenkins, Baines, and Lynch, *The Welsh Academy*, 696; Rubinstein, Jolles, and Rubinstein, *The Palgrave Dictionary*, 213.

<sup>23</sup> Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, 266.

*Dictionary of Anglo-Jewish History*, but as its introduction admits the work is ‘doubtless guilty of omitting many worthy of inclusion’.<sup>24</sup> As noted in Chapter Six, Llanelli’s small Hebrew congregation produced almost a dozen rabbis and ministers, including a Chief Rabbi of Ireland, while two Welsh-born Jews—Swansea-born, Louis Barnett Abrahams (1839-1918), and the already mentioned Edward Conway of Llanelli—have served as head teachers of the Jews’ Free School in London.<sup>25</sup> As well as the artists, writers, and thinkers mentioned in the preceding chapters, Welsh-Jews take great pride in the fact that one of its sons, Cardiff-born physicist Brian D. Josephson (b.1940), is the second Welsh person to have won a Nobel Prize.<sup>26</sup>

The record of social and political integration was also remarkable. As we have seen from Chapter Four, Jews in Wales mixed to an unprecedented degree with non-Jews, in informal and formal settings, and faced no obstacles in accessing positions of honour and influence in Welsh society. For example, Masonic Lodges in Wales, bastions of male establishment privilege, admitted Jews in sufficient numbers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to obviate the need for Jews to establish their own, as happened in the United States. Neither was the case, as happened elsewhere in Britain such as London and Manchester, that Jews formed their own societies as a result of their exclusion from social and sporting clubs in Wales. Another measure of their successful integration and toleration is that Jews from all across Wales were involved in the civic life of their towns and cities in which they settled and met little or no problems in being elected to, and taking up public positions as, councillors, mayors, Justices of the Peace and Members of Parliament for Welsh constituencies.

Toleration, however, is never absolute, and while the Welsh record of tolerance toward its Jews has generally been good, the principality’s acceptance of Jews has never been unconditional. As Jasmine Donahaye points out with reference to non-Jewish Welsh attitudes to Jews in Welsh literature, ‘tolerance...denotes a conditional acceptance’ which can be

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<sup>24</sup> Rubinstein, Jolles, and Rubinstein, *The Palgrave Dictionary*, vii.

<sup>25</sup> Isidore Singer and Cyrus Adler, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia: a Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, 1 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1916), 123; *JC*, 12 May 2000.

<sup>26</sup> Monmouthshire-born, Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) was the first Welsh person to win a Nobel Prize. Russell was awarded The Nobel Prize in Literature. Brian D. Josephson won a Nobel Prize in Physics in 1973 for his discovery of the ‘Josephson effect’. For further information, see Mauro Dardo, *Nobel Laureates and Twentieth-Century Physics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 327-329.

revoked if ‘the culturally or ethnically different “other”...wields perceived power within the framework of the dominant culture’.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, toleration depends on external circumstances, and as Neil Evans reminds us, in the context of Wales it is important to ask ‘in which circumstances were Welsh people likely to be tolerant and in which intolerant?’<sup>28</sup> Thus, Jewish immigrants were generally tolerated in nineteenth and twentieth century Wales because the majority of them worked as merchants and traders, and avoided competing directly with the native Welsh and others in the labour market. Nevertheless, as we have seen from the events in Dowlais in 1903, when Jews did compete for employment in Wales, they faced the same workplace intimidations suffered by other immigrant workers such as the Irish. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter Four, periods of great social unrest and uncertainty such as an economic depression or a war often ignited feelings of resentment and hostility towards the culturally or ethnically different ‘other’, especially if they appeared to be performing well or were perceived to be benefiting from such circumstances. It can be argued that this is precisely what happened in the case of Jewish immigrant shopkeepers in the Monmouthshire Valleys in August 1911, whose business premises were attacked as they were seen to be excelling and profiting at a time when native Welsh workers were suffering from economic hardship.

In his examination of Jewish and non-Jewish relations in nineteenth and twentieth century Wales, William Rubinstein concluded that the relationship was generally harmonious since ‘philo-semitism’—defined as ‘admiration and support for Jews by gentiles’—was ‘a recognizable and distinctive part of Welsh culture’.<sup>29</sup> This, according to Rubinstein, was a consequence of both ‘the rise of nonconformity’ and the diffusion of liberal religious values in the principality during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While Rubinstein is correct in noting that Welsh Nonconformists, having been oppressed themselves for their religious beliefs, both empathised with Jewish religious persecution and shared an affiliation with the Hebrew bible, it is too simplistic and rigid to conclude that this identification equated to a ‘love of Jews’.<sup>30</sup> This is because the toleration of religious difference is not the same as the toleration of ethnic and cultural difference. In this instance, we are reminded of Lloyd George, whose admiration and respect for the Jewish religion and the ‘people of the Book’

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<sup>27</sup> Donahaye, *Whose People?*, 160.

<sup>28</sup> Neil Evans, ‘Comparing Immigrant Histories’, in O’Leary, ed., *Irish Migrants*, 165.

<sup>29</sup> Rubinstein, ‘The Anti-Jewish Riots’, 669.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 670.

did not prevent him from subscribing to age-old racial stereotypes concerning Jews. Indeed, such attitudes were too deeply embedded in modern Western culture, in its way of thinking and imagining, to be easily swept away. In general, these sentiments did not find expression in overt discrimination, but surfaced mainly in off-hand comments and representations of ‘the Jew’ in literature and the media—what the historian Yossef Eisen referred to as ‘polite anti-Semitism’.<sup>31</sup> While this may seem trivial when compared to the physical and violent persecution suffered by Jews in Central and Eastern Europe, they were certainly hurtful and offensive to those Jews on the receiving end. Thus viewing Welsh-Jewish history with these considerations in mind complicates any one-dimensional conclusion with regards to the Jews’ treatment.

In sum, the history of the Jews in Wales is not a sombre tale of failure and enervation as Alderman has claimed.<sup>32</sup> Nor, however, is it the opposite—a successful and peaceful story—as Rubinstein would like to suggest.<sup>33</sup> Stark, one-sided characterisations of the Welsh-Jewish past like these, which see the proverbial glass as either half-full or half-empty, are not illuminating. This is because historians who focus solely on the good fortune of Welsh Jewry, as well as those who only dwell on its shortcomings, fail to confront the ambiguity of its past. They draw an image that is at once too neat and too one dimensional, largely, because they bring their own agendas and commitments to the task. By forswearing the urge to pronounce Welsh-Jewish history as a success or a failure, it has been the hope of this thesis to restore balance and complexity to the Welsh-Jewish experience. In doing so, some historians may argue that this thesis has taken a ‘safe’ route, but both sides of the coin have to be taken into consideration if we are to develop our historical understanding of Jewish life in Wales.

Although the population of Welsh Jewry has severely declined since the 1930s, it is hoped that the overwhelming pessimism in which this aspect of Welsh-Jewish history has been treated with in the past can be replaced with a sense of optimism. In 1999, David Morris concluded that at the turn of the new millennium ‘the future of Welsh Jewry must surely be in doubt’ and ‘seems sealed’.<sup>34</sup> However, as the preceding chapters of this thesis have demonstrated, given the right conditions, not only can dwindling Hebrew congregations

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<sup>31</sup> Yosef Eisen, *Miraculous Journey: a Complete History of the Jewish People from Creation to the Present* (Southfield: Targum Press, 2004), 345.

<sup>32</sup> See Alderman, ‘The Jew as Scapegoat?’; Alderman, ‘The Anti-Jewish Riots’; Alderman, ‘Into the Vortex’.

<sup>33</sup> See Rubinstein, ‘The Anti-Jewish Riots’.

<sup>34</sup> Morris, ‘The History of the Welsh Jewish Communities’, 218.



continue to function, but extinct centres can also revive themselves, and even thrive. The revivals of both the Rhyl Hebrew Congregation in the mid-twentieth century and Bangor Jewry in the early twenty-first century are living proof of this thesis.

Morris' pessimistic proclamation has been, and *continues* to be, shared by many Welsh-Jews in the early twenty-first century. Reflecting on the future of Cardiff Jewry, the late Alan Schwartz commented in 2011 that 'in twenty years time it's very unlikely you'll be speaking to a bona fide member of a Jewish community', while in Swansea, the most pressing question for congregant Norma Glass in recent years has been how to die with dignity.<sup>35</sup> Other Jews are more optimistic about the future, however. While she predicts that the Cardiff Reform community will have to downsize its synagogue in the not so distant future, congregant Louis Fuller believes that the Reform tradition will continue to be supported by future generations in Cardiff.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Frances Waldek of Cardiff believes that Jewish congregations will continue to exist in the principality in the future, but they will adapt to reflect the specific needs of that particular time.<sup>37</sup> Although he described the future of the Newport Hebrew Congregation as 'bleak', Harry Poloway noted in 2011 that with the right circumstances the city might once again prove to be attractive to Jews:

...you could have an influx. I mean Jewish people came to Newport because of the coal trade along the valleys. And everybody came, the Jewish people came, a lot of glass replacement people came, tailors came, lot of tradesmen came to Wales from abroad because of the trade here. You never know...It might have a revival...I don't know.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, we are unable to predict the future, but what remains clear is that the future of Welsh Jewry and its communities are not predestined, as David Morris and others have claimed. In 1997, for instance, Paul Corrick of the Swansea Hebrew Congregation proclaimed that the community was 'rapidly approaching the time when the Ffynone Synagogue in Swansea will be no more'.<sup>39</sup> Although a decline in membership led to the synagogue's downsizing in 2009, sixteen years after Corrick's woeful prediction congregants continue to worship at Ffynone, albeit in a room adjacent to the former prayer hall. Similarly, in reference to the *bar mitzva* of the last boy to attend Swansea's *cheder*, the then chairman, Harry Sherman, noted in 1993

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<sup>35</sup> Alan Schwartz, interview with Charlotte Dubenskij: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-15103910> (last accessed 07/09/2013); Norma Glass, interview with author.

<sup>36</sup> Louise and Barry Fuller, interview with Eve Lavine, Cardiff, 25 July 2011, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>37</sup> Frances Waldek, interview with Trudy Browning and Diana Soffa, Cardiff, 2010, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>38</sup> Harry Poloway, interview with author.

<sup>39</sup> *The Swansea Hebrew Congregation Magazine* (September, 1997), 36, D/D SHC 21/11, WGA.

that ‘10 years will see the end of the Swansea community’.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, as we have seen, twenty years later the congregation continues to function, and a *bar mitzvah* was celebrated at the Ffynone synagogue in March 2013.

Although Wales’ Jewish communities have certainly not managed to stem the tide of decline, it is important to note that the overall population of Welsh Jewry remains over 2,000 individuals in the early twenty-first century. As previously noted, 2,064 individuals in Wales wrote ‘Jewish’ as their religion in the 2011 Census. However, as mentioned in the thesis’ introduction, the figure does not include Jews who identify ‘by ethnicity only’ or those Jews who for various reasons choose not to answer the question. Thus there are likely to be more Jews in the principality than the results suggest.

With ninety-nine Jews ‘by religion’ living in Newport in 2011, and only five active members attending the city’s small synagogue for services, it becomes apparent that a significant number of Jews living in Wales in the early twenty-first century choose not to be involved in local congregational life. This is nothing new to Welsh-Jewish history since not all Jews who came to the principality in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were affiliated with their local Hebrew congregations. We do not know precisely why these individuals do not affiliate, but we can speculate that some are married to non-Jews and identify little with their nearest Hebrew Congregation, while others have become too preoccupied with their careers and domestic lives to be active congregants. A number of the Census’ so-called Jews ‘by religion’ may also be secular Jews, who described their religion as Jewish to compensate for the lack of a question on Jewish ‘ethnicity’. Whatever the reason, the 159 Jews living in Swansea would certainly bring a boost to the city’s small Hebrew congregation, which, as we have seen, has no more than around twenty active members in 2013. Indeed, if the principality’s Jewish communities are to continue as active congregations then they must invest in people, and attract non-participating Jews in the locality into communal activity. As Keith Kahn-Harris and Ben Gidley once noted, the future of any Hebrew congregation depends on the community ‘punching above its weight’ through providing sources of innovation.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *JC*, 9 April 1993.

<sup>41</sup> Kahn-Harris and Gidley, *Turbulent Times*, 166.

As previously noted, the Llandudno Hebrew Congregation has survived by making compromises and adapting to changing conditions, while the North Wales Jewish Network and the Welshpool Group continue to attract members by accommodating for the religious desires and social needs of all its members and not just an exclusive few. Although the relationship between the Cardiff Reform Synagogue and the Orthodox CUS has improved over the last few decades it is unlikely that they will ever agree on congregational unity as their members are persistent in supporting their own religious ideologies and assemblies. However, if the membership of Cardiff's two Hebrew congregations continues to decrease, there may be greater cooperation in years to come. To avoid the financial burden of running two synagogues, some religious leaders and congregants have proposed the idea of both congregations sharing one house of worship, where Reform and Orthodox services can be held simultaneously in different parts of the same building.<sup>42</sup>

Although Wales has not received a significant influx of Jews since the arrival of Nazi refugees and English evacuees during the 1930s and early 1940s; in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries the principality has attracted and *continues* to attract a small trickle of Jewish migrants from other parts of the United Kingdom, many of whom settle while others are transient. Wales, particularly the north Wales coastline, has long been a popular retirement destination for both Jews and non-Jews in Britain because of the relatively low cost of housing, clean air, beautiful scenery, and slower pace of life. North Wales' relative proximity to the Jewish communities of Liverpool and Manchester also means that Jewish retirees who wish to remain observant can easily rely on these larger centres to provide them with essential Jewish provisions lacking in the region, such as kosher produce. Indeed, technological advances in the latter half of the twentieth century such as the spread of domestic freezers and the internet has made it easier for Jews to remove themselves from the mainstream of Jewish life and maintain their Jewishness. Although not a retiree, nutritionist Jan Walker moved from Leeds to Rhydwyn, Anglesey in 2001, 'for the beauty of [the] area' and the slower pace of life on offer.<sup>43</sup> Despite living approximately forty-seven miles away from her nearest synagogue in Llandudno, maintaining a Jewish identity in rural Anglesey is 'not an issue' for Walker. Although she does not attend synagogue, she secures her

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<sup>42</sup> Elaina Rothman, interview with author, London, 10 October 2011, Hineni, BHAC.

<sup>43</sup> *JC*, 2 May 2008.

Jewishness at home by lighting Sabbath candles every Friday night, reciting parts of the *siddur*, and ordering kosher food on the internet.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, Wales' diverse landscape and tranquillity has long drawn Jewish holidaymakers to the principality. As we have seen from Chapters One and Six, the seaside resort of Llandudno attracted Jewish holidaymakers from Liverpool and Manchester throughout the twentieth century and following the establishment of a retreat centre for the Manchester Lubavitch in Llandudno's synagogue in 2004, and more recently self-catering kosher accommodation at Plas Gogarth in Church Walks, this trend looks set to continue. In recent years, the number of Jews attending summer services at the Swansea synagogue has been bolstered by Orthodox Jewish holidaymakers staying at the university, while hundreds of Orthodox Jewish families from London and Manchester have held annual summer holidays at Aberystwyth since the early 1990s. Renting student houses in Aberystwyth University's Pentre Jane Morgan, the holidaying Jews use a marquee for synagogue services, and thus form a temporary Hebrew congregation in the seaside town. Although numbers have severely declined since 2012, following Aberystwyth University's controversial decision to prohibit the lighting of Sabbath candles on health and safety grounds, the temporary Jewish community of Aberystwyth has not come to an end, as the *Western Mail* suggested.<sup>45</sup> While a large number of Jewish families were 'very disappointed and upset' by the decision and have since decided not to return to their 'summer home', a smaller number of Jewish families continue to holiday in Aberystwyth as they have developed a real affection for the town and its surrounding area.<sup>46</sup> Rather than staying in university accommodation, at the time of writing, the remaining families rent caravans at the Bryncarnedd Caravan Park.<sup>47</sup>

As we have seen, Welsh universities have attracted Jewish students and academics to Wales in the past, and with the growth of higher educational institutions in the principality it appears that this trend is set to continue. As the capital city of Wales, Cardiff has long attracted a sprinkling of Jewish hospital workers, civil servants, university staff and students, and young professionals, and as one of the 'fastest growing economies in Europe' in the early twenty-first century, there is hope that employment opportunities will continue to attract

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Western Mail*, 30 May 2013.

<sup>46</sup> *Cambrian News*, 29 May 2013.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from Elizabeth A. Jones to author, 31/08/2013. In possession of author.

Jewish workers in years to come.<sup>48</sup> Whether they will identify with their local Jewish community is impossible to predict, but the continuing in-migration of British-Jews to Wales could be a valuable asset to the continuance of congregational life in the principality. The future of Welsh Jewry has yet to be written, and only time will tell what will become of the principality's Jewish population. What remains clear, however, is that the fate of Welsh Jewry is not sealed.

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<sup>48</sup> Alan Hooper and John Punter, ed. *Capital Cardiff 1975-2020: Regeneration, Competitiveness and the Urban Environment* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 231.

## **Appendix A: Photographs and Etchings of a Number of Wales' Synagogues**

### **1. Exterior of the Goat Street Synagogue, Swansea (opened in 1859).**

Date of photograph unknown. Obtained from Neville H. Saunders, *Swansea Hebrew Congregation, 1730-1980* (Swansea: Swansea Hebrew Congregation, 1980), 45.



### **2. Exterior of the old Cathedral Road Synagogue, Cardiff (opened in 1897).**

Photograph taken 12th July 2007. Obtained from the website of the Royal Commission of Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales:  
<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/11778/images/CARDIFF+UNITED+SYNAGOGUE%2C+CATHEDRAL+ROAD%2C+CARDIFF/>.  
(last accessed 04/09/2013).



**3. Exterior of the Francis Street Synagogue, Newport (opened in 1871).**

Date of photograph unknown. Obtained from *The Newport Pictorial*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Newport: Cambrian Printing Works, 1907), 63.



**4. Exterior of the old Church Street Synagogue, Merthyr Tydfil (Opened in 1877).**

Photograph taken by Cai Parry-Jones on 06th May 2012.





**5. Exterior of the old Queen Victoria Road Synagogue, Llanelli (opened in 1909).**

Photograph taken by Iain Wright on 12th July 2006. Obtained from the website of the People's Collection of Wales: <http://www.peoplescollection.org.uk/Item/4553> (last accessed 22/07/2013).



**6. Exterior of the old Cliff Terrace Synagogue, Pontypridd (opened in 1895).**

Photograph taken by Cai Parry-Jones on 15th September 2012.





**7. Exterior of the Morgan Street Synagogue, Tredegar (opened in 1884).**

Photograph taken in early 1950s. Obtained from Wyndham Scandrett, *Old Tredegar, Volume 1* (Risca: Starling, 1990), 65.



**8. Exterior of the Bailey Street Synagogue, Brynmawr (opened in 1901).**

Photograph taken between 1907 and 1908. Obtained from Edwin Jones and Trevor Rowson, *Old Brynmawr, Nantyglo & Blaina in Photographs, Volume 2* (Barry: Stewart Williams, 1981), 1.



**9. Exterior of the Tŷ Draw Place Synagogue, Port Talbot (opened in 1921).**

Date of photograph unknown. Obtained from Sally Robert Jones, *The History of Port Talbot with Photographs* (Goldleaf Publishing: Port Talbot, 1991), 121.



**10. Exterior of the Arvonja Buildings, High Street, Bangor (extreme right. The synagogue was situated on the first floor and opened in 1894).**

Photograph taken c. 1955. Obtained from [http://www.francisfrith.com/bangor,gwynedd/photos/high-street-c1955\\_b14090/](http://www.francisfrith.com/bangor,gwynedd/photos/high-street-c1955_b14090/) (last accessed 04/09/2013).



**11. Exterior of the old Tabernacle Chapel, Garth Road, Bangor (The church's porch opened as a synagogue in 1964).**

Photograph taken by Cai Parry-Jones on 13th March 2011.



**12. Exterior of the Masonic Hall, Mostyn Street, Llandudno (the synagogue was situated on the first floor and opened in 1909).**

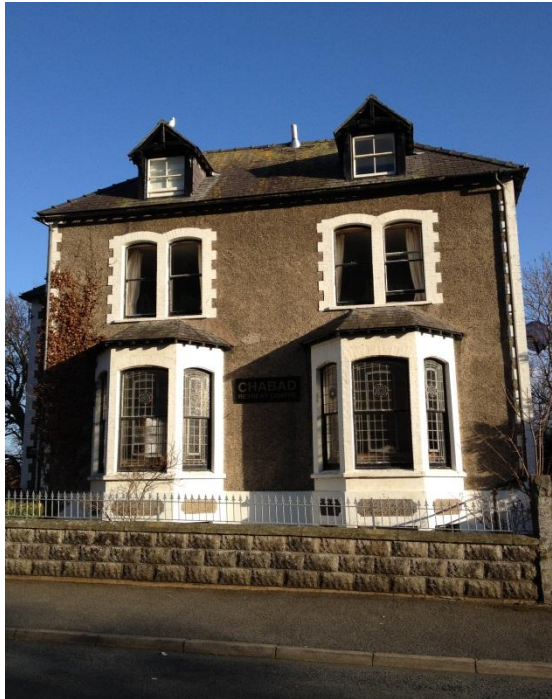
Photograph taken by Cai Parry-Jones on 21st July 2012.





**13. Exterior of the Church Walks Synagogue, Llandudno (opened in 1948).**

Photograph taken by Cai Parry-Jones on 21st July 2012.



**14. Exterior of the Rhosddu Road Synagogue, Wrexham (the synagogue was situated on the first floor and opened c.1930).**

Photograph taken by Cai Parry-Jones on 22nd April 2012.



**15. Exterior of the Seymour Street Synagogue, Aberdare (opened c.1877).**

Date of image unknown. Obtained from *CAJEX*, 9, 2 (1959), 88.



**16. Exterior of Edward Place Synagogue, Cardiff (opened c. 1888).**

Photograph taken in 1918. Obtained from *CAJEX*, 1, 4 (1951), 30.



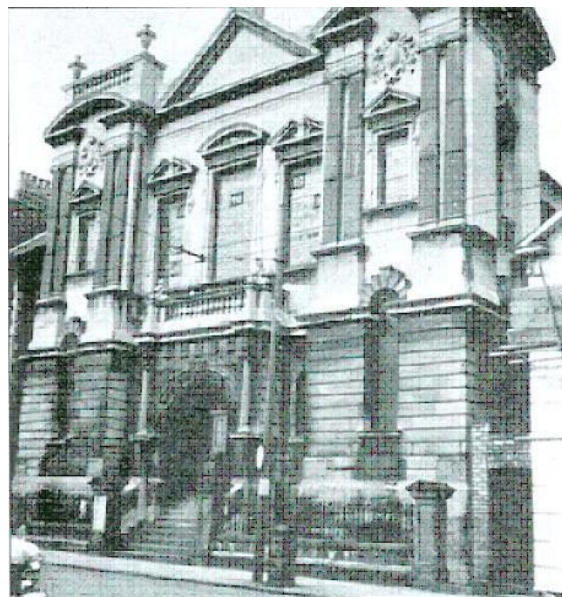
**17. Exterior of the old *Beth Hamedrash and Talmud Torah* building, Merches Place, Cardiff (opened in 1900).**

Photograph taken by Cai Parry-Jones on 09th December 2011.



**18. Exterior of Windsor Place Synagogue, Cardiff (opened in 1918).**

Date of image unknown. Obtained from *CAJEX*, 4, 2 (1954), 43.



**19. Façade of the Prince of Wales Synagogue, Swansea (opened in 1907).**

Photograph obtained from the *South Wales Daily Post*, 3 October 1907.



**20. Exterior of the Ffynone Road Synagogue, Swansea (opened in 1955)**

Date of photograph unknown. Obtained from the website of the Royal Commission of Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales:

<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/408696/images/FFYNONE+SYNAGOGUE%2C+FFYNONE+ROAD%2C+SWANSEA/> (last accessed 04/09/2013).





**21. Exterior of Lloyd's Bank, Queen Street, Rhyl (a synagogue opened on the first floor of the building in 1941).**

Photograph taken in the 1980s. Obtained from the website of the Rhyl History Club: <http://rhylhistoryclub.wordpress.com/page/10/> (last accessed 04/09/2013).



**22. Exterior of the Penylan Synagogue, Cardiff (opened in 1955).**

Etching by Olwen Hughes. Obtained from *CAJEX*, 38, 1 (1988), 36





**23. Exterior of the Moira Terra Synagogue, Cardiff (opened in 1952).**

Date of photograph unknown. Obtained from the website of the Cardiff Reform Synagogue: <http://www.cardiffreformsyn.org.uk/> (last accessed 04/09/2013)



**24. Exterior of the Cyncoed Gardens Synagogue, Cardiff (opened in 2003).**

Photograph taken by Gerard Charmley (date unknown). Obtained from the website of the Churches of Britain and Ireland:

[http://www.churches-ukireland.org/images/cardiff/cardiff/cyncoed\\_syn.jpg](http://www.churches-ukireland.org/images/cardiff/cardiff/cyncoed_syn.jpg).  
(last accessed 04/09/2013).



**25. Exterior of the old Queen's Hill Synagogue, Newport (built as *cheder* classrooms in 1922, and opened as a synagogue in 1934).**

Photograph taken by Cai Parry-Jones on 22nd September 2011.



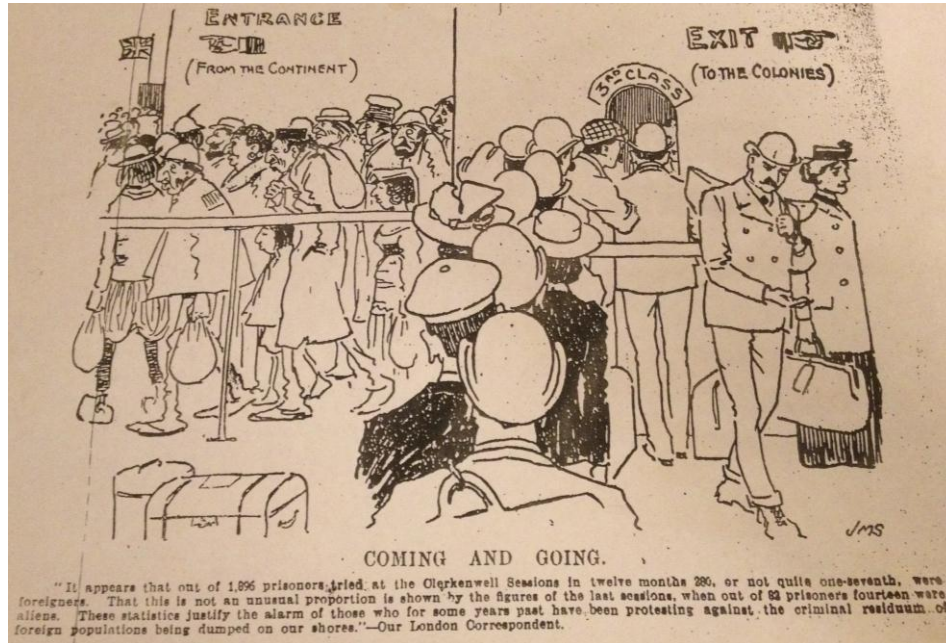
**26. Exterior of the Risca Road Synagogue, Newport (built as a *Bet Tohorah* for the Old Jewish Cemetery in 1928, and opened as a synagogue in 1997).**

Photograph taken by Cai Parry-Jones on 22nd September 2011.

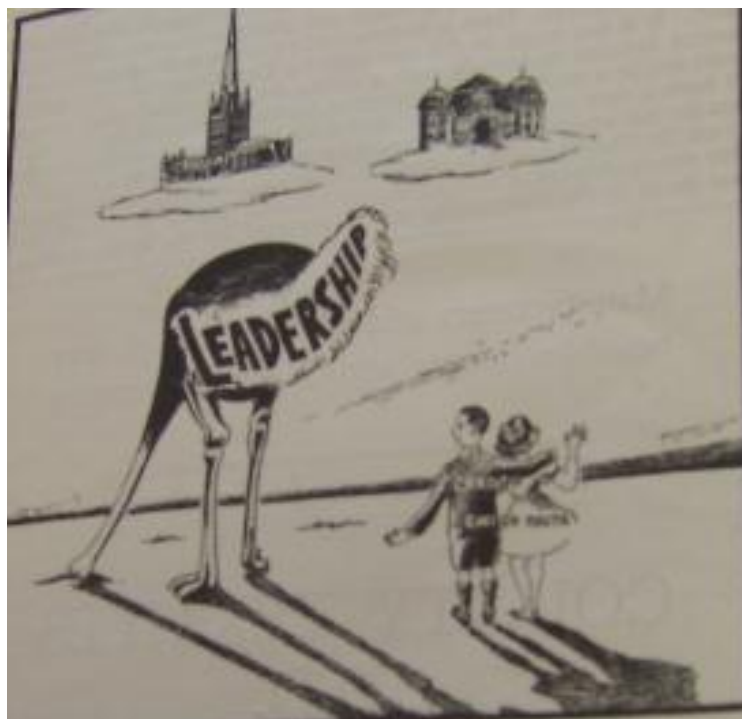


## Appendix B: Images from Newspapers and Periodicals

### 1. 'Coming and Going', *Western Mail*, 11 February 1903



### 2. 'Wither Youth?', *CAJEX*, 1, 3 (1951), 25.



### Appendix C:

#### Figures for the Size of the Communities Drawn from the *Jewish Year Book*, 1896-2013

Year	Aberavon and Port Talbot	Aberdare	Abertillery	Bangor	Bargoed	Barry Dock
1896				30		
1897				40		
1898				100		
1899				100		
1900				100		
1901				50		
1902				50		
1903				50		
1904		20*		50		
1905		20*		75		
1906		20*	60	75		
1907		20*	60	75		
1908		20*	60	20**		
1909		90	60	75		
1910		90	80	75		
1911		90	109	70		
1912		90	100	70		
1913		90	100	70		
1914		90	100	70		
1915		90	100	70		
1916	99	90	100	70		38
1917	99	90	100	70		36
1918	99	90	100	70		36
1919	99	90	100	70		36
1920	99	90	100	65		36
1921	22*	20*	100	65		8*
1922	20*	20*	100	65		8*
1923	20*	20*	100	65		8*
1924	22*	20*	100	40		8*
1925						
1926	99	90	100	40		36
1927	99	90	100	40		36
1928	99	90	100	40		36
1929	99	90	100	40		36
1930						
1931						
1932						
1933						
1934						
1935	99		100	40		36

Year	Bridgend	Brynmawr	Cardiff	Colwyn Bay	Ebbw Vale	Llandudno
1896		12*				
1897		18*				
1898		18*				
1899		18*				
1900		30*				
1901		30*				
1902		30*	250*			
1903		30*	250*			
1904		150	1,250			
1905		135	1,250			
1906		135	1,250			
1907		30*	250*			
1908		30*	250*			
1909		135	1,125			
1910		135	1,125			
1911		135	1,800			
1912		135	1,800			
1913		135	1,800			
1914		135	2,025		90	
1915		135	2,025		90	
1916		135	2,025		90	
1917		135	2,025		100	
1918		135	2,025		80	
1919		135	2,025		80	
1920		135	2,025		80	
1921		30*	450*		80	
1922		30*	450*		80	
1923		30*	450*		80	
1924		30*	450*		80	
1925						
1926		135	2,225		80	
1927		135	2,225		80	
1928		135	2,225		80	
1929		135	2,225		80	
1930						
1931						
1932						
1933						
1934						
1935		135	2,225		80	



Year	Llandudno***	Llanelli	Merthyr Tydfil	Neath	Newbridge	Newport	New Tredegar
1896							
1897							
1898							
1899							
1900							
1901							
1902			300			120	
1903			300			120	
1904		70	300			120	
1905		70	300			130	
1906		70	300			130	
1907		70	300			130	
1908		70	300			130	
1909		70	300			200	
1910		70	300			200	
1911		70	300			200	
1912		70	300			250	
1913		70	300			250	
1914		70	300			250	
1915		70	300			250	
1916		70	300			250	
1917		70	300			250	
1918		200	350			250	
1919		200	400			250	
1920		250	400			250	
1921		250	400			250	
1922		250	400			250	
1923		250	400			250	
1924		300	400			250	
1925							
1926		300	400			250	
1927		300	400			250	
1928		300	400			250	
1929		300	400			250	
1930							
1931							
1932							
1933							
1934							
1935		300	400			250	

Year	Penrhiwceiber	Penygraig	Pontypridd	Porth	Porthcawl	Rhyl	Swansea
1896			150				300
1897			150				300
1898			40				300
1899			40				300
1900			100				200
1901			100				200
1902			100				200
1903			100				400
1904			100			55	400
1905			100			55	400
1906			100			55	400
1907			100			55	400
1908			100			55	400
1909			100			55	800
1910			100			55	800
1911			100			55	800
1912			100			55	1,000
1913			100			55	1,000
1914			100			55	1,000
1915			100			55	1,000
1916			100			55	1,000
1917			100			55	1,000
1918			100			55	1,000
1919			100			55	1,000
1920			100			55	1,000
1921			100			55	1,000
1922			150			55	1,000
1923			150			55	1,000
1924			150			55	1,000
1925							
1926			150			55	1,000
1927			150			55	1,000
1928			150			55	1,000
1929			150			55	1,000
1930							
1931							
1932							
1933							
1934							
1935			150			55	1,000

Year	Treorchy	Tonypandy	Tredegar	Wrexham
1896			102	40
1897			102	40
1898			102	34
1899			102	43
1900			102	66
1901			102	66
1902			102	66
1903			80	66
1904			80	33
1905			100	30
1906			100	30
1907			100	30
1908			100	30
1909			100	67
1910			150	67
1911			150	69
1912			160	69
1913			160	69
1914			160	69
1915			175	69
1916			175	69
1917			175	69
1918			175	69
1919			175	69
1920			175	69
1921		180	175	69
1922		180	175	69
1923		180	175	69
1924		180	175	69
1925				
1926		180	175	69
1927		180	175	69
1928		180	175	69
1929		180	175	69
1930				
1931				
1932				
1933				
1934				
1935		180	175	69



Year	Aberavon and Port Talbot	Aberdare	Abertillery	Bangor	Bargoed	Barry Dock
1936	99	90	100	40		36
1937	99	90	100	40		36
1938	99		100	40		36
1939	46	63	14	20		
1940	46	63		20		
1941						
1942						
1943						
1944						
1945	46	63		20		
1946	46	63		20		
1947	46	63		30		
1948	44	63		45		
1949	44	63		30		
1950	44	63		45		
1951	44	63		54		
1952	44	63		54		
1953	37	63		54		
1954						
1955	25	42		34		
1956	25	35		34		
1957	25	35		34		
1958	21	24		34		
1959	19	24		34		
1960	26	24		34		
1961	24	24		34		
1962	20	15		34		
1963	20	15		12		
1964	20	15		12		
1965	18			12		
1966	17	14		20		
1967	19			20		
1968	18	8		20		
1969	18	8		16		
1970	18	8		16		
1971	18	8		16		
1972	18	8		16		
1973	18	8		16		
1974	18	8		16		
1975	18	8		16		

Year	Bridgend	Brynmawr	Cardiff	Colwyn Bay	Ebbw Vale	Llandudno
1936		135	2,225		80	
1937		135	2,300		80	
1938		135	2,300		80	
1939	19	49	2,300		9	
1940	19	49	2,300			
1941						
1942						
1943						
1944						
1945		49	2,300			
1946		49	2,300			
1947		49	2,300			
1948		49	3,000			
1949		49	2,300			
1950		49	3,000			
1951		49	3,000	24		
1952		45	3,000	24		
1953		30	3,000	24		
1954		30	3,000	24		
1955		30	3,000	24		
1956		30	3,000	24		
1957		30	3,000	24		50
1958		26	3,000	24		50
1959		26	3,000	24		50
1960		26	3,000	24		50
1961		21	3,000	24		50
1962		20	3,000	24		50
1963		25	3,000	24		50
1964		23	3,000	24		50
1965		17	3,000	24		50
1966		17	5,000	24		45
1967		10	5,000	24		45
1968		16	3,500	23		45
1969		16	3,500	23		45
1970		16	3,500	23		45
1971		16	3,500	23		45
1972		16	3,500	23		45
1973		16	3,500	23		45
1974		16	2,500	23		45
1975		6	2,500	23		45

Year	Llandudno***	Llanelli	Merthyr Tydfil	Neath	Newbridge	Newport	New Tredegar
1936		300	400			250	
1937		300	175			250	
1938		300	175			250	
1939		100	175	15		180	
1940		100	175	15		180	
1941							
1942							
1943							
1944							
1945		120	175			180	
1946		120	175			180	
1947		120	175			180	
1948		120	175			180	
1949		120	175			180	
1950		120	185			180	
1951		120	200			180	
1952		120	198			180	
1953		100	198			180	
1954		100	198			180	
1955		100	198			180	
1956		100	198			180	
1957		100	150			180	
1958		100	125			180	
1959		100	100			180	
1960		75	95			180	
1961		70	95			180	
1962		60	80			180	
1963		50	78			180	
1964		44	78			180	
1965		40	50			180	
1966		40	45			180	
1967		40	40			100	
1968		38	40			100	
1969		38	40			100	
1970		38	40			100	
1971		38	24			100	
1972		38	24			100	
1973		38	24			100	
1974		38	24			100	
1975		38	20			100	

Year	Penrhiwceiber	Penygraig	Pontypridd	Porth	Porthcawl	Rhyl	Swansea
1936			150			55	1,000
1937			150			55	1,000
1938			150			55	1,000
1939			147				565
1940			147				565
1941							
1942							
1943							
1944							
1945			147				565
1946			147				565
1947			147				565
1948			120				500
1949			120				500
1950			120				450
1951			120				460
1952			110		25*		460
1953			110				460
1954							460
1955			80				460
1956			80				460
1957			80				510
1958			40				510
1959			37		105		520
1960			35		80		520
1961			35		80		490
1962			24		30		460
1963			21		20		450
1964			20		20		440
1965			18		18	60	425
1966			18		18	60	424
1967			22			60	420
1968			22			60	418
1969			22			60	418
1970			22			60	402
1971			22			60	381
1972			22			60	360
1973			22			60	360
1974			22			60	250
1975			22			40	240

Year	Treorchy	Tonypandy	Tredegar	Wrexham
1936			175	69
1937			175	69
1938			175	69
1939			39	69
1940			39	69
1941				
1942				
1943				
1944				
1945			39	69
1946			39	69
1947			39	69
1948			39	69
1949			39	69
1950			27	69
1951			28	
1952			27	
1953			19	
1954				
1955				
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1972				
1973				
1974				
1975				

Year	Aberavon and Port Talbot	Aberdare	Abertillery	Bangor	Bargoed	Barry Dock
1976	18	8		16		
1977	18	8		16		
1978	18	8		16		
1979	18	8		16		
1980						
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2008						
2009						
2010						
2011						
2012						
2013						

Year	Bridgend	Brynmawr	Cardiff	Colwyn Bay	Ebbw Vale	Llandudno
1976		6	2,500	23		45
1977		6	2,500	23		45
1978		6	2,500			45
1979		6	2,500			45
1980			2,000			
1981			2,000			
1982			2,000			
1983			2,000			
1984			2,000			
1985			1,700			
1986			1,700			
1987			1,700			
1988			1,700			
1989			1,700			
1990			1,700			
1991			1,400			
1992			1,400			
1993			1,400			
1994			1,200			
1995			1,200			
1996			1,200			
1997			1,200			
1998			1,200			
1999			1,500			
2000			1,200			
2001			1,200			
2002			1,200			
2003			1,200			
2004			940			
2005			940			
2006			940			
2007			940			
2008			940			
2009			940			
2010			940			
2011			501-1,000			
2012						
2013						

Year	Llandudno***	Llanelli	Merthyr Tydfil	Neath	Newbridge	Newport	New Tredegar
1976		38	20			100	
1977		38	20			100	
1978		38	20			100	
1979		38	20			100	
1980	85	20				100	
1981	85	20				100	
1982	85	20				100	
1983	85	20				100	
1984	85	20				100	
1985	40	20				50	
1986	30	20				50	
1987	20	10				60	
1988	20	10				60	
1989	20					60	
1990	20					60	
1991	45					110	
1992	45					110	
1993	45					110	
1994	45					110	
1995	45					110	
1996	45					110	
1997	45					110	
1998	45					20	
1999	45					10	
2000	45					10	
2001	45					10	
2002	45					10	
2003	15					10	
2004	15					39	
2005	15					39	
2006	15					39	
2007	15					39	
2008	15					39	
2009	15					39	
2010	15					39	
2011	under 100					under 100	
2012							
2013							



Year	Penrhiwceiber	Penygraig	Pontypridd	Porth	Porthcawl	Rhyl	Swansea
1976			22			40	240
1977			22			40	240
1978			22			40	240
1979			22			40	240
1980							240
1981			20				240
1982			20				240
1983			20				240
1984			20				180
1985							180
1986							180
1987							160
1988							150
1989							150
1990							150
1991							245
1992							245
1993							245
1994							245
1995							245
1996							245
1997							245
1998							245
1999							245
2000							245
2001							65
2002							65
2003							65
2004							170
2005							170
2006							170
2007							170
2008							170
2009							170
2010							170
2011							101-250
2012							
2013							

Year	Treorchy	Tonypandy	Tredegar	Wrexham
1976				
1977				
1978				
1979				
1980				
1981				
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2008				
2009				
2010				
2011				
2012				
2013				

\*Families

\*\* Seat Holders

\*\*\*Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and Rhyl Hebrew Congregation

## Glossary

**Aliyah:** lit. 'going up' in Hebrew. The emigration of Jews to Israel or being called up for a mitzvah in the synagogue.

**Ashkenazi:** Jews originating in Central, Western and Eastern Europe whose common vernacular language was Yiddish.

**Bar mitzvah:** ceremony marking the thirteenth birthday of a Jewish male, the age at which he achieves religious responsibility.

**Bat mitzvah:** ceremony marking the twelfth birthday of a Jewish female, the age at which she achieves religious responsibility.

**Bet Tohorah:** lit. 'house of purification' in Hebrew. A covered room in a Jewish cemetery where the corpse is cleansed before burial.

**Beth Din:** lit. 'house of judgement' in Hebrew. An ecclesiastical tribunal which decides cases of Jewish law.

**Beth Hamedrash:** lit. 'house of instruction' in Hebrew. A place of study where the *Talmud* and other subjects of Jewish erudition are taught.

**Chalutz:** lit. 'pioneer' in Hebrew. A member of a group of Jewish immigrants to Palestine after 1917 who worked in agriculture or forestry.

**Chanukah:** an eight-day Jewish festival commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple (the Second Temple) in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt of the second century BCE.

**Chazzan:** lit. 'Cantor' in Hebrew. The name applied to the Reader at public service.

**Cheder:** lit. 'room' in Hebrew. The Jewish school in which children are taught the elements of Hebrew and Religion.

**Daven:** To recite Jewish liturgical prayers.

**Davening:** from Yiddish daven lit. 'To Pray'. The prayer recitations that form a part of the religious observance of Judaism. These prayers, often with instructions and commentary, are found in the siddur, the traditional Jewish prayer book.

**Galut:** lit. 'exile' in Hebrew. *Galut* refers to the exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel.

**Gemara:** a rabbinical commentary on the *Mishnah*, forming the second part of the *Talmud*.

**Goyim:** lit. 'Gentiles' in Hebrew and Yiddish. The plural of Goy. This term is applied in the Bible to the surrounding nations, but in modern Jewish parlance it simply means a non-Jew.

***Hachshara***: a Hebrew word meaning ‘preparation’, *hachshara* was a training programme for would-be immigrants to Palestine, particularly youth. The course prepared its trainees for life in a kibbutz and involved forging bonds of group solidarity via instruction in Hebrew and agricultural training. The term *hachshara* was also used to describe an agricultural training centre.

***Hachsharot***: plural of *hachshara*. Agricultural training centres.

***Halakha***: lit. ‘direction’ in Hebrew. A name applied to the legislative portion of Talmudic and Rabbinic literature.

***Hanoar Hatzioni***: lit. ‘The Zionist Youth’ in Hebrew. An international Zionist Youth Movement first established in Britain in 1956. Its three main pillars are Judaism, Pluralism, and Zionism. The main objective of the *Hanoar Hatzioni* is *Hagshama Atzmit* (personal actualisation), which among other things means to live a full Jewish life in Israel.

***High Holydays***: the festivals of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* and the period of repentance in the first ten days of the Jewish new year. Also called *Yamim Nora'im* (‘Days of Awe’).

***Jahrzeit***: lit. ‘Year Time’ in German. *Yahrzeit* in *Yiddish*. The Jewish anniversary of a relative’s death, observed with mourning prayers and the recitation of religious texts.

***Kaddish***: a prayer recited in daily synagogue services and by mourners after the death of a relative.

***Kashrut/ Kashrus/Kashres***: the set of Jewish dietary laws.

***Kehillah***: lit. ‘Community’. The Hebrew term *kehillah* applies to the administrative body of Jewish communities, and originates from the word *kahal* (assembly). Jewish communal representative organisations have been in existence since the time of the Jewish dispersion, but between the sixteenth and nineteenth-centuries, the *kahal* became an important authoritative administrative body for Jews living in Eastern European countries such as Poland and Lithuania. One of the chief functions of the *kahal* during that period was the collection of taxes for the government from members of the Jewish community. Eastern European *kahals* eventually evolved into autonomous communities where Jews had their own religious buildings, school systems and law enforcements. Although many of the functions of the *kahals* began to diminish in the nineteenth century, particularly following their suppression in the Russian Empire by Tsar Nicholas I in 1844, most, if not all, Jewish settlements throughout the world continue to maintain some form of voluntary community organisation. Today, the term *kehillah* is used by a number of Jews to describe Orthodox Jewish communities.

***Kibbutz***: a community settlement in Israel, usually agricultural, organized under collectivist principles.

**Kiddush:** a blessing recited over a cup of wine or over bread on the Sabbath or on a festival.

**Kol Nidre:** a prayer recited in the synagogue at the beginning of the evening service on Yom Kippur.

**Kosher:** lit. ‘fit’ or ‘clean’ in Hebrew. The term applied to food properly prepared according to Jewish law and custom.

**Maftir:** lit. ‘one who concludes’ in Hebrew. In addition to the regular number called up to read sections of the Torah each Shabbat, an additional person is summoned, to whom the last portion is read.

**Magen David:** ‘The Shield of David’ in Hebrew, but commonly translated into English as ‘The Star of David’. The *Magen David* is an ancient symbol of Judaism made up of two triangles interlacing to form a six-pointed star.

**Magen David Adom:** lit. ‘Red Shield of David’ in Hebrew. The *Magen David Adom* is Israel’s national emergency medical, disaster, ambulance and blood bank service.

**Mechitzah:** a partition to separate men and women in Orthodox synagogues.

**Megila:** The scroll containing the biblical narrative of the Book of Esther, traditionally read in synagogues to celebrate the festival of *Purim*.

**Menorah:** a nine-branched candelabrum used on the Jewish festival of Chanukah.

**Meshummad:** lit. ‘destroyed one’ in Hebrew. One who has abandoned his or her faith.

**Mikvah:** lit. ‘gathering’ in Hebrew. A pool or ‘gathering’ of water designed for the Jewish rite of spiritual purification. A *mikvah* is primarily used by married Orthodox Jewish women who obey the laws of family purity. According to the biblical book of Leviticus, a woman cannot engage in sexual relations with her husband during or after menstruation until she immerses her entire body in a *mikvah*. Orthodox Jewish men often use a *mikvah* as spiritual preparation for *Shabbat* services or festivals such as *Yom Kippur*. Immersion in a *mikvah* also forms a part of the ceremony for conversion to Judaism. Since water is the primary source of all living things and has the power to purify, to restore and replenish life, a *mikvah* must contain a certain amount of living waters from a flowing source that has never been dormant, such as fresh spring water, rainwater, or even melted snow.

**Mikvaot:** plural of *mikvah*.

**Minyan:** lit. ‘to count’ in Hebrew. Refers to the quorum of ten male Jewish adults over the age of thirteen required for an Orthodox communal religious service.

**Minyanim:** plural of *minyan*.

**Mishnah:** an authoritative collection of exegetical material embodying the oral tradition of Jewish law and forming the first part of the *Talmud*.

**Mohel:** The trained official who performs the rite of circumcision.

**Pesach:** Hebrew for ‘Passover’, a Jewish festival that commemorates the exodus of the Jews from Egypt which is chiefly marked by the Seder ritual and the eating of unleavened bread.

**Porge:** a verb meaning to make meat kosher by removing the forbidden fat, veins and sinews, from the hindquarters. ‘Unporged meat’ is therefore meat which still includes the forbidden fat and blood vessels of an animal.

**Purim:** a Jewish festival held in spring (on the 14th or 15th day of Adar) to commemorate the defeat of Haman’s plot to massacre the Jews as recorded in the Biblical book of Esther.

**Rav:** lit. ‘master’ in Hebrew. The title *Rav* is used to designate Orthodox rabbis, especially to distinguish them from those who bear the title Rabbi but have not yet received rabbinical ordination (*semicha*).

**Rebbe:** a Yiddish word derived from the Hebrew word Rabbi. Its plural form is *Rebbes*.

**Rosh Hashanah:** lit. ‘head of the year’ in Hebrew. Festival of the Jewish New Year.

**Seder:** a Jewish service and ceremonial dinner for the first night (in Israel) or first two nights (in the Diaspora) of Passover.

**Sedarim:** plural of *Seder*.

**Sedrah:** weekly readings from the Scriptures as part of the Sabbath service. Each week a portion, or sidra, of the *Torah* is read aloud in the synagogue. It takes a full year to complete the reading.

**Sefer Torah:** lit. ‘Book of *Torah*’ or ‘*Torah* Scroll’ in Hebrew. A handwritten copy of the *Torah* mainly used in the ritual of *Torah* reading during Jewish services.

**Semicha:** Rabbinical diploma. Loosely translated as ‘ordination’, the word *semicha* literally means the ‘laying (of hands)’ in Hebrew. In ancient times, rabbinic ordination was granted in a ceremony in which the high priest placed his hands over the initiate’s head, blessing him. This tradition comes from when Moses chose Joshua as his successor by placing his hands on Joshua’s head.

**Sephardi:** Jews originating from Spain and Portugal, and from south-eastern Europe, north Africa and the Middle East. They possess their own ritual, vernacular language (Ladino) and distinctive pronunciation of Hebrew.

**Shabbat/Shabbos:** the Jewish day of rest, observed from sunset on Friday evenings until sunset on Saturday evenings.

**Shechita:** lit. ‘slaying’ in Hebrew. Jewish method of ritual slaughter in which the animal is killed by one stroke of a very sharp knife across the throat, completely severing the trachea, carotid arteries and jugular veins.

**Shochet:** lit. ‘butcher’ in Hebrew. Someone who has been specially trained and licensed to slaughter animals in accordance with the laws of *shechita*.

**Shochetim:** plural of *shochet*.

**Shomer:** a Jewish legal guardian, entrusted with the custody and care of another's object. In the context of kosher foodstuff, a shomer is one who supervises the sale, manufacture or cooking of kosher food.

**Shtetl:** a small town or village with a large Jewish population formerly found throughout Eastern Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Shtetls* were mainly found in the areas which constituted the nineteenth century Pale of Settlement in the Russian Empire, the Congress Kingdom of Poland, Galicia and Romania.

**Shuirim:** plural of *shuir*, lit. ‘measurement’ in Hebrew. A lesson in which a passage of the *Talmud* is studied together by a group of people.

**Shul/Shool/Shule:** lit. ‘school’. Yiddish for synagogue.

**Sifrei Torah:** plural of *Sefer Torah*.

**Succoth:** a harvest festival commemorating the booths in which the Israelites resided during their 40 years in the wilderness, lasting for either 8 or 9 days and beginning on the eve of the 15th of Tishri (The first month of the year in the Jewish calendar).

**Talmud:** lit. ‘learning’ in Hebrew. The collection of ancient Rabbinic writings consisting of the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara*, constituting the basis of religious authority in Orthodox Judaism.

**Talmud Torah:** lit. ‘learning of the Law’ in Hebrew. Institute for Jewish religious instruction, usually larger and more formally organised than the *cheder*. These are preparatory to the *Beth Hamedrash*.

**Torah:** consists of the five books of the Hebrew Bible—known more commonly to non-Jews as the ‘Old Testament’—that were given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai and include within them all of the biblical laws of Judaism.

**Treiber:** Yiddish for *porcing*— the process of removing the sciatic nerve, certain fats, and blood vessels from a slaughtered animal.

**Tzedakah:** lit. ‘righteousness’ in Hebrew. Charitable giving; philanthropy. *Tzedakah* is more than simply charity; it embraces a larger principle of doing good to ensure that the needs of others are met.

**Yeshiva:** lit. ‘session’ in Hebrew. The Rabbinic colleges in which the *Talmud* is studied and taught.

**Yeshivot:** plural of *yeshiva*.

***Yiddish***: The term is applied to the language used by Ashkenazi Jews. It was originally a German dialect with words from Hebrew and several modern languages, and still has some 200,000 speakers, mainly in the US, Israel, and Russia.

***Yom Kippur***: lit. ‘Day of Atonement’ in Hebrew. The holiest day of the year for Jews. Jews traditionally observe this holy day with a 25-hour period of fasting and intensive prayer.

***Zemiros***: traditional religious songs that are sung by Jews during the evening meal on Friday and the afternoon meal on Saturday.



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