DISCOVERING AND DOCUMENTING ENGLAND'S LOST JEWS

EDITED BY STÉPHANE GOLDSTEIN

pascal COMPANY theatre

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Front cover photo: Bevis Marks Synagogue

Back cover photo: a tombstone at the Novo Cemetery

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

By Julia Pascal

Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews emerged as an idea over several years. Perhaps even in primary school. Our first history lesson used us five year olds to reveal various waves of invasion. Miss Tickle – yes that really was her name – informed us that a redhead was a Celt. A dark haired boy was a product of the Roman invasion. A blonde was surely a descendant of the Anglo-Saxon period. When it was my turn, there was an awkward silence. Miss Tickle looked at the only girl in class with wild, curly hair. She found herself unable to say the word 'Jew'. She moved on.

> *"It is not the Sephardi Jews that were lost but a British history which chose to lose them from the pages of the book of national identity."*

A child wants to know about family identity and how she fits in to the grand historical narrative. School has an authority and offers the official story. At five, I felt this un/ease around the word 'Jew'. I did not know why. It took me years to understand that the British historical narrative was white and Christian. We Jews were difficult to place within this. The project is an attempt to address the absence of the Jewish story in England which is why it focuses on the return of Jews into a land which expelled them.

Those who came to England secretly in 1656 and before were Sephardi Jews whose origins are in the Iberian Peninsula. This is not my family history and therefore it was fascinating to discover a Spanish and Portuguese Jewish culture. My Ashkenazi family emigrated from Eastern Europe. This background was Central and Eastern European. My great grandparents moved to Romania to escape Russian pogroms. My grandparents emigrated from Bucharest to Manchester. Their English was a mixture of Yiddish

and Lancashire. This is a long way from some of the 'higher-class' Sephardi English experience. The gulf in culture, language and history between Sephardim and Ashkenazim is wide because the journeys of each group were so different. It is this ignorance of the Sephardi heritage that I wished to address when exploring this project.

The project has not delivered an easy answer to the absence of Jews in British history. Rather it has illuminated how the English court and establishment used some Jews to act as its agents and as international couriers to gain power. As history is mainly written by the powerful, what we found missing from the Sephardi narratives, was the stories of the women and girls living within the Sephardi community. This was something we address in our findings and in our presentation of this project.

The flowering in 2020 of the Black Lives Matter movement brought a poignancy to the work. Examination of power structures, the marginalisation of a person deemed to be 'different', the search for a land to live in safely and be buried in with dignity, the importance of a name on a gravestone, to be acknowledged and not ignored, these were the themes that jumped out in the research and which are still current for other marginalised people. The Sephardim have integrated into British life but their history is still largely unknown among the generations living in Britain today. It informs us of buried layers of life on this island.

Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews is aimed at exciting a new interest in the Jewish flight from Spain, Portugal and other diasporas to show how they, as a microcosm, reveal British life. It is not the Sephardi Jews that were lost but a British history which chose to lose them from the pages of the book of national identity. Our work is an attempt to reveal the importance of Sephardi Jewish life in Britain and to place Sephardim within the mainstream so that their story is not erased from history.

This e-book tells the story of *Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews.* It is the reflection of a collective effort, inspired from work undertaken during the life of the project from November 2018 to February 2021. It synthesises the resources and the activities set out on the project website, at www.lostjews.org.uk. The book is in three parts: the first is a broad overview of the history and heritage of Sephardim in England, their antecedents, the circumstances that brought them to these shores, their settlement and integration in the life of this country. It also includes a reflection on the place and role of women in Anglo-Jewish and Anglo-Sephardi history, which is often a neglected part of the accepted historical

narrative. And it briefly tells the story of the Mile End cemeteries, which have played such a part in the life of the Sephardi community over three centuries and which are a focal point of our project.

The second part of the e-book consists of a list of sources for further reading, from which our project has drawn extensively. It serves as a bibliography for this e-book, and for the project as a whole. The third and final part explains the project, describing how it came about, how it developed and what it has achieved, and it concludes with acknowledgements to all those who have contributed over the past two years.

On behalf of the talented team that has been involved in this work, I do hope that you will enjoy reading it and that it provokes even more questions.

February 2021

PART 1

THE HISTORY AND HERITAGE OF SEPHARDIM IN ENGLAND

WHO ARE THE SEPHARDIM?

Sephardi Jews, or Sephardim, are the descendants of Jews who settled in the Iberian Peninsula, from the time of the Roman Empire. The term 'Sephardi' is from the Hebrew 'Sepharad', meaning Spain. Sephardim subsequently scattered across much of the Mediterranean basin and Europe following persecution and mass expulsions particularly from the end of the fifteenth century. The Portuguese and Spanish Jews who settled in England in the seventeenth century formed the nucleus of the Sephardi community which marked the first Jewish presence in Britain since the total expulsion of the original, medieval Jewish community in 1290.

For some, Sephardi also has a broader meaning. It include Jews who, over the centuries, spread over the Middle East and North Africa, without ever living in the Iberian Peninsula, but who in more recent times have come to adopt Sephardic religious rites (see page 19 for further details).

The Kingdoms of Spain and Portugal, decorative map by Jean Janvier, 1775

PROLOGUE: JEWS IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

William the Conqueror invited Jews to settle in England after the Norman Conquest in 1066. These were Ashkenazim who, unlike their Sephardi counterparts, were the descendants of Jews who had moved north of the Alps and the Pyrenees during the Roman period and beyond. Here they quickly began to play an important role in the economy, lending money particularly to the king and royal court when Christians were forbidden to loan money at interest. They were an educated and skilled people also working also in professions such as medicine and gold-smithing. The community prospered, Aaron of Lincoln becoming one of the richest men in England during the second half of the twelfth century. At first, Jews and Christians lived together peacefully.

Miniature showing the expulsion of the Jews in 1290, from the Rochester Chronicle. The two individuals in the centre are wearing the distinctive tabula sewn on their garments

Jews were privileged by royal protection and English monarchs relied on their funding. Service to the Crown gave Jews some measure of nominal safety and money lending to the court, landowners and minor gentry, was conducted both by men and women. Jewish women were well educated, often speaking several languages, and able to do business and represent themselves in court. Dowries often helped Jewish women establish themselves.

From the middle of the twelfth century, however, attitudes towards Jews started to change. The accusation of the ritual murder of a 12 year-old boy in Norwich in 1144 prompted widespread fabricated allegations of 'blood libel' (Jews falsely accused of abducting and killing Christian children for ritual purposes). The crusades helped fire aggression against non-Christian communities and outbreaks of violence erupted around the country, culminating in an incident at Richard I's coronation in 1189. On the day of his investiture, some prominent Jews, despite

being barred from the ceremony, arrived to pay their respects to the new king. They were thrown out and, while Richard was away on crusade, rumour spread that the king had ordered the English to kill the Jews. Attacks on Jews followed. In York, the entire Jewish community, approximately 150 souls, took refuge from rioters in the royal castle where they should have been afforded royal protection. The mob, spurred on by local gentry and angered by their increasing debts to their Jewish moneylenders, maintained their attack. Most Jews chose to commit suicide rather than surrender. Those who surrendered and begged for mercy promising to convert were all murdered.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Jews in England suffered even more punishment. A royal mandate issued in 1253 stated that only Jews who served the king were permitted to remain in England. Henry III taxed them at extortionate rates in order to raise large sums of money. This new tax caused Jewish lenders to sell on debts which meant that those indebted to the Jews and these new lenders, came under increasing pressure to pay up. As a result hatred against Jews intensified and Jewish life in England became increasingly precarious.

The situation for Jews changed drastically when Edward I introduced the Statute of Jewry in 1275. This prohibited Jews from charging interest on loans and from granting mortgages. It cut off a major source of their income. Most shocking is the way the 1275 Statute limited where Jews were allowed to live, restricted in "the King's own Cities and Boroughs". They were also now obliged to wear a yellow badge, sewn on their garments, representing the shape of the tabula that bore the Ten Commandments. This reflected a papal obligation, dating from the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, for Jews across

"England's Jews escaped to Northern France and beyond. They left with only the bags they could carry. Many were murdered as they ran for boats, others were attacked and had their belongings stolen."

Christendom to wear distinguishing items of clothing. The Yellow Star enforced on Jews during the Third Reich originated with this Europe-wide medieval prescription.

This statute codified the Jew's status as being a person who is no longer privileged by the king but indentured to him. This resulted in many Jews trying to become merchants of labourers but they met with resistance and became impoverished. Some were accused of coin clipping and counterfeiting and, in 1278, 680 Jews were imprisoned in the Tower of London on charges of coin clipping. From a Jewish population, estimated to be around two to three thousand, around three hundred were executed. By 1290 Edward had run up large debts through his foreign wars but he needed Parliament's permission to raise a tax. In return for expelling the Jews, Parliament promised Edward £116,000 and the Edict of expulsion was signed on 18 July 1290. Jewish property was seized by the Crown and outstanding debts payable to them transferred to the King. England's Jews escaped to Northern France and beyond. They left with only the bags they could carry. Many were murdered as they ran for boats, others were attacked and had their belongings stolen.

There is fragmentary evidence of tiny numbers of Jews living in England between 1290 until the seventeenth century. Some converted, others practised their faith in secret. Even though England had no Jews officially after 1290, popular attitudes towards them were influenced by the perpetuation of myths and stereotypes. The medieval period was the seedbed for a flourishing English culture of art and literature but within it, Jews continued to be demonised as Christ-killers and child murderers in poetry, images and dramas. And beyond English shores, the rise and fall of Sephardi Jews in the Iberian Peninsula represented a hugely important facet of European Jewish history during the medieval period – one which was to have an impact on Anglo-Jewish history in subsequent centuries.

SEPHARAD AND THE IBERIAN HERITAGE

There is evidence that Jews lived in the Iberian Peninsula during the Roman Empire. After the departure of the Romans, Iberia fell under the control of the initially pagan Visigoths but, when their rulers converted to Catholicism in 587, living openly as a Jew suddenly became dangerous. Over the following 130 years or so, Jews faced successive waves of brutal persecution and a choice between conversion and expulsion. Many of those early converts to Catholicism maintained their Jewish practices secretly. Not surprisingly, when the Muslim Moors conquered almost all of Iberia between 711 and 718, re-naming it Al-Andalus, the Jewish population welcomed them, in some places, as liberators. They even provided aid to the invaders. For three and a half centuries the Jews lived under the Umayyad Caliphate where Jews and Christians benefitted from toleration. Prominent Jews participated in civic and intellectual life, sharing science, medicine and astronomy with Muslim elites. Arabic became the common language. Under various Muslim rulers, taboo subjects, such as the love of wine and erotic love reveal the intersections of freer Christian, Jewish and Muslim influences.

For the Jews of Sepharad, this period became known as the golden age, sometimes referred to as *convivencia*, or co-existence. But some historians have disputed the extent of the harmony and pointed to the limits of Moorish benevolence and to their deployment of violence to control their domains. During the Caliphate, Jews and Christians, even though they were accepted, were treated as second-class subjects. In 1066, a large-scale massacre of Jews took place in Granada. In 1098, Al-Andalus was overrun by a puritanical sect from Morocco, the Almoravids, who were hostile to Jews. By 1173, the Almoravids were themselves replaced by the even more fundamentalist and intolerant Almohads. At the same time, the Christian *Reconquista* (re-conquest) was gradually wresting most of the Peninsula from Moorish control and large Jewish communities found themselves transferred from Muslim to Catholic rule.

History repeated itself in reverse as initially, Jews found themselves tolerated and protected by the new Catholic rulers. Castilian gradually replaced Arabic as their principal spoken language. But this period of toleration did not last. Anti-Jewish sentiments that prevailed in much of Europe did not spare the Iberian Peninsula. Hostility towards Jews, provoked by prejudice, resentment and ignorance, grew

The Mudéjar panelled ceiling, Tránsito Synagogue, Toledo, Spain

over the fourteenth century. Consequently Jews felt intense pressure to convert to Christianity, as an act of self-preservation. This trend accelerated from the 1390s with increasing persecution and massacres, and 1391 was a particularly bloody year for Jews. In Seville, four thousand were murdered; in Cordoba, two thousand were slain. Butcheries were also carried out in Barcelona, Girona, Lérida, Jaén, Mallorca, Toledo and Valencia. Tens of thousands of Jews were baptised, frequently in mass baptisms because of the numbers involved (this is dealt with in more detail in the following section on Crypto-Jews). The pressure was building, slowly and inexorably, towards the 1492 expulsion of Sephardi Jews from Castile and Aragon and their forced mass conversion in Portugal five years later. Expulsion resulted in a scattering of Jews throughout the Mediterranean basin – see the section on the Sephardi diaspora.

The Sephardi spirit and heritage, born out of the turbulent history of Iberia under

both Muslim and Christian control, is exemplified by two great thinkers: Maimonides and Baruch Spinoza. Both were influenced by the overlapping scholarship of Christian and Muslim worlds.

Maimonides, also known as Rambam, was born Moshe ben Maimon in Cordoba in 1135 or 1138, although he and his family fled Al-Andalus in 1159 because of Almohad persecution. His genius as a scholar of Judaism, Islam, astronomy and medicine marks him as out as an intellectual giant in Jewish history. He codified Jewish law in 14 volumes and his *Guide for the Perplexed*, his treatise aimed at reconciling Judaism with the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato, provoked controversy among Jews and even resulted in book-burning. At the end of his life he was Sultan Saladin's physician in Egypt, where he died in 1204.

Dutch philosopher Baruch or Benedict Spinoza was born in 1632. He descended from a family of Portuguese Jews who were forcibly converted to Catholicism. His father and grandfather returned to Judaism. Spinoza is recognised as one of the first Rationalist philosophers and is a leading figure of the Enlightenment. In 1656 he was excommunicated by the Amsterdam Sephardic community for his radical views but, even after excommunication, Spinoza still remained close to many in the community. His wider network included Quakers and Mennonites. Shortly after his death in 1677, his treatise *Ethics* was published. Spinoza never renounced his Jewish identity but was buried in a Christian graveyard in The Hague. He is widely recognised as the first secular Jewish European philosopher.

CRYPTO-JEWS, PERSECUTION AND THE INQUISITION

Crypto-Jews is a term that refers to Jews who, having converted to Christianity to maintain outward appearances, have continued to practise all or part of their Judaism in secret. This was often at considerable risk to themselves. Crypto-Judaism is generally understood as relating initially to the circumstances of Jews in the medieval Christian Kingdoms of Castile and Aragon (the twin forerunners of the Spanish state), and later in Portugal.

As we described in the previous section, Jews in the Iberian Peninsula increasingly felt compelled to convert, particularly from the end of the fourteenth century. Tens of thousands of them were converted, frequently in mass baptisms. They became known as *conversos* or *cristianos nuevos* (new Christians) or, more derogatively, *marranos* (pigs). In parallel, *Morisco* was the term applied to Muslims who had converted, or been converted, to Christianity in similar circumstances

For some and perhaps for most, conversion eventually led to genuine and sincere adoption of Christianity, an abandonment of Judaism and complete assimilation in Christian society. Sometimes these Jews achieved high social status, as in the case of Paul of Burgos, born Jewish as Solomon ha-Levi, who in 1415 became Archbishop of Burgos. But for many others, conversion was opportunistic and they continued to practise their Judaism secretly. This might involve, for instance: observance of Jewish dietary laws; keeping of *Shabbat*; observing some Jewish funeral rites and keeping Jewish prayer books. There is some dispute among historians about the proportion of *conversos* who kept their Jewish faith. But notwithstanding this, within the contemporary population, there was a widespread view that the Christian convictions of *conversos* were not genuine. Consequently many *conversos* were accused of judaising, secretly engaging in Jewish practices. Throughout the fifteenth century, *conversos* faced scapegoating, attacks and pogroms. When there were poor harvests and tax rises this was seen to be the fault of the Jews. Secret Jews in particular were viewed with deep suspicion as threats to the Catholic social order. Jealousy and resentment were also factors: many *conversos*, attained positions of significant wealth and influence, thereby attracting the ire of 'old' Christians.

The degree of suspicion and mistrust had reached such a pitch that, in 1478, the Pope granted permission for the setting up of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of

the Inquisition in the realms of Castile and Aragon although in Portugal, this did not happen until 1536. Inquisition tribunals had existed sporadically in other parts of Europe since the twelfth century to deal with a variety of heretical practices but this was the first instance of its operation under royal rather than papal authority. Its initial rationale was to stamp out what was deemed to be heresy among converts from both Judaism and Islam. Crypto-Jews constantly risked being denounced for practices such as hand washing before prayer, changing clothes on the Jewish Sabbath and not eating pork. In 1483, the notorious Tomás de Torquemada, himself of *converso* descent, was appointed as the first Inquisitor General. His seething hatred of Jews and Muslims, secret or not, was a hallmark of his beliefs. By the end of the 1480s, Inquisition courts were well-established and in active operation throughout Castile and Aragon. They deployed torture and made extensive use of denunciations to extract confessions, meting out a variety of punishments ranging from confiscation of property to imprisonment to burning in effigy and, in a minority

“Crypto-Jews constantly risked being denounced for practices such as hand washing before prayer, changing clothes on the Jewish Sabbath and not eating pork.”

Auto-da-fé

An Act of Faith, better known by its Portuguese name as *auto-da-fé*, was an act of public penance imposed on those accused of heresy, including betrayed secret Jews claiming to be Catholics. The *auto-da-fé* was an integral part of the elaborate and bureaucratic processes of the Inquisition. These acts were huge staged theatrical spectacles held in main squares of cities, for example in Madrid’s Plaza Mayor which was even covered with a huge sun screen sheet. This made a dramatic spectacle of humiliation comfortable for Catholic audiences. Victims were paraded dressed in clownish, san-benito costumes and many were forced to walk with a noose around their necks.

'The Inquisition Tribunal', by Francisco Goya, c. 1812, depicting an auto-da-fé

of cases, execution. It is important to note that the jurisdiction of the Inquisition did not extend to Jews: its remit was limited to Christians, not least *cristianos nuevos*, including Crypto-Jews and *Moriscos*, suspected of apostasy and engagement in non-Christian practices.

By the end of the fifteenth century, it is likely that most of the hitherto large Jewish population of Castile and Aragon had converted. In 1492, under the terms of the Alhambra Decree, those Jews who had not done so were expelled from these realms. Five years later, Portuguese Jews (and also those Castilian Jews who had fled to nearby more tolerant Portugal in 1492) were forced into mass conversion. This suddenly created a significant *converso* community in Portugal. But even that did not prevent the 1506 massacre of hundreds of Jews in Lisbon. For the Crypto-Jews who remained in Portugal, the ferocious zeal of the Inquisition made itself felt (although in Portugal several decades after Spain). The Inquisition also attacked Jews in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in America.

For the first thirty or so years of its activity in Castile and Aragon, it is estimated that 25,000 to 50,000 *conversos*, both former Jews and Muslims, suffered some

form of punishment. Over roughly the same period in the diocese of Seville alone, there are accounts that 700 Jews were burnt at the stake. This terrible toll was a characteristic more specifically of the early and particularly energetic stage of the Inquisition. By the middle of the sixteenth century, in what by then had become the unified kingdom of Spain, Crypto-Judaism had largely disappeared. The Inquisition had been successful on its terms; those secretly-Jewish *conversos* not condemned to death eventually and for the most part had totally renounced their Judaism. They had assimilated, although cases were still to come up before Inquisition tribunals until well into the eighteenth century. Some Crypto-Jews fled, taking the secret Jewish practices with them. A few arrived in England during the sixteenth and especially the seventeenth century. And remarkably, small pockets of *converso* descendants were still clinging on to residual Jewish beliefs in isolated villages in northern Portugal until the early twentieth century.

The Inquisition was not permanently suppressed in Spain until 1834 and in Portugal in 1821. It remained fairly active until the mid-eighteenth century, although without the missionary fervour of its early decades; and over the years, its target had shifted to a variety of heresies and beliefs that took it beyond its original focus on Jewish and Muslim *conversos*. It is difficult to estimate the number of people who were executed by the Spanish Inquisition, as not all judicial records have survived. There is a view among historians that between 3,000 and 5,000 were killed over three and a half centuries, Crypto-Jews, *Moriscos* and others.

EXPULSION AND SCATTERING: THE SEPHARDI DIASPORA

The Kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, which, over the next few decades, were to become the unified Kingdom of Spain, changed Jewish history. In 1492, following the enactment of the Alhambra Decree, these kingdoms ordered the expulsion of their Jewish communities. Historians have long argued about the number of people who were thereby forced into exile, and there is no scholarly consensus about this, but a figure of between 50,000 and 150,000 seems realistic. In addition, large numbers chose to convert to Christianity rather than leave their ancestral lands. These New Christians joined the ranks of the tens of thousands of Jews who had become *conversos* in previous centuries.

A significant proportion, perhaps even a majority of those fleeing went to neighbouring Portugal, a country which had been relatively more tolerant. However, this proved to be no more than a brief respite. 1497, Jews living in Portugal were forced into mass conversion. They did not even have the option of leaving the country. Almost overnight, this created a large *converso* community in Portugal, which gradually became integrated into Christian society. However, small numbers of Crypto-Jewish *conversos* were able to leave and settle in cities such as Antwerp, Amsterdam, Hamburg and London and in parts of western France.

Others left for the Spanish and Portuguese possessions in the Americas, hoping for more quietude there, only to find that the long arm of the Inquisition stretched across the Atlantic. Jews who had established themselves in the Dutch colonies in Brazil, and who fled when these were taken over by the Portuguese, went on to settle in New Amsterdam, which later became New York. This laid the seeds for the most important Jewish community in the US. Jewish merchants and traders became part of the slave and sugar economies of the Protestant-held British as well as Dutch colonies. In the mid-seventeenth century, these Sephardi Jews formed one to two percent of the white settler populations in Barbados and Jamaica. Their work was mainly selling dry goods. It has been suggested that Oliver Cromwell's interest in the re-admittance of Jews (see below) was to have agents for England's colonial interests residing in London to strengthen English commercial ambitions.

The Sephardi Jews who departed for destinations other than Portugal and the

New World scattered across parts of the Mediterranean basin and beyond. Some crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and went to nearby Morocco and other parts of North Africa, still under Moorish control, where previous generations of Sephardim had taken refuge during the waves of persecution throughout the fifteenth century. Others settled in the various states that comprised Italy. However their existence remained precarious within the political and religious instability that prevailed in the Italian states It was in the expanding Ottoman Empire that Sephardim found by far the greatest hospitality. At the end of the fifteenth century, Ottoman domains covered not only what is currently Turkey but also stretched across most of the Balkans. Jews settled in trading cities such as Salonika and Constantinople, and later in Smyrna. They also lived in other parts of the Empire, throughout what is now Greece, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria. The Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II, who reigned at the time of the Iberian expulsion, encouraged and even assisted the settling of Jews in his domains, to an extent carrying on the policies of his predecessors. Jews persecuted in various parts of Europe had been migrating to Ottoman realms for over a hundred years prior to 1492. The Ottomans' generosity was motivated at least partly by expediency: the medical and technical knowledge of many Sephardim, their commercial, political and diplomatic expertise were recognised and valued. Bayezid is said to have stated that Spain had been impoverished, and Turkey enriched, by the expulsion of the Jews. True or not, these sentiments reflect the reality of Ottoman policy towards Sephardi exiles. Indeed, the Ottoman Empire continued to be a haven for Jews well beyond 1492 and the following three centuries might also be considered a 'golden age'.

Portrait of Bayezid II, by Levni

Arguably the most important cultural attribute of Sephardi settlers in the Ottoman Empire was the language they spoke. The exiles from 1492 mostly

Sephardi couple from Sarajevo in traditional clothing, photo from 1900

expressed themselves in Castilian. But, cut off over centuries from its geographical and cultural roots, Castilian evolved into something more distinctive that became known as Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish. It remained a Romance language, clearly related to Castilian, with some characteristics of Portuguese and Catalan, but with significant borrowing from the languages of host countries, including Turkish and Greek and also from Hebrew. The relative isolation of some Sephardi communities meant that distinct regional variations of Ladino also evolved over time. A different and less widespread form of Ladino, known as Haketia, was spoken by Sephardim who settled in Morocco; this too was derived from Castilian but with strong Arabic influences. Conversely, Ladino was rarely spoken by Sephardi Jews and Crypto-Jews who settled in Western Europe. This includes England where Sephardim continued to speak Portuguese or Castilian until, as a result of assimilation, this was replaced by English.

There is now little left of this Mediterranean and Balkan Sephardi world. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the political and military convulsions of the

A second expulsion from Spain?

During the Second World War, the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco handed over to Germany a list of 6,000 Jews living there at the time, some of whom were the descendants of exiled Hispanic Sephardim who had returned from the nineteenth century. Thankfully, they were not actually deported but, there is tragic irony that, though Jews had been expelled from Spain in 1492, they still faced persecution in the country of their origin four and a half centuries later.

Sephardim and Mizrahim

Mizrahi (the Hebrew word for 'Eastern') is the term used to describe the Jewish communities that had stayed in the Near East since biblical times and who therefore never migrated to Europe. The vast majority now live in Israel, having left the inhospitable environment of the Arab world especially in the 1950s and 1960s. Although they are culturally and historically distinct from Sephardim, they have tended to follow the religious customs and traditions of Sephardi Judaism. Consequently they often identify themselves, or are identified, as Sephardim. In the UK, a large majority of Jews affiliated at Sephardi synagogues are in fact Mizrahi, their families having migrated from countries such as Iraq, Egypt and Iran (see pages 38-41). Relatively few contemporary UK Sephardim are descended from the Portuguese and Spanish families who settled in England from the seventeenth century.

twentieth century in Europe largely destroyed this centuries-old culture. The Shoah decimated the Sephardi population in Yugoslavia and Greece; in Salonika, which for centuries had been at the heart of Sephardi culture, only 5,000 survived out of a Jewish population of 50,000. In Bulgaria, however, Jews were largely spared. The descendants of the Crypto-Jews who had settled in Amsterdam, and other parts of western continental Europe, also suffered hugely. In the years following the Second World War, many of the survivors emigrated to Israel. There is still a small Sephardi community in Turkey, and tiny fragments in a handful of countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Morocco.

The destruction of these communities led to the near-disappearance of Ladino by the second half of the twentieth century. In recent years, brave attempts have been made to revive and teach the language, not least in Israel. There has also been renewed interest in Ladino musical traditions and songs.

Today, it is estimated that there are 2.3 million Sephardim throughout the world, 1.4 million of which live in Israel. There is also a significant Sephardi community in France, with around 300,000 people who are the descendants of Jews who settled in North Africa and who came to France in the 1960s following the independence of Algeria and Tunisia. Other smaller but notable communities live in the US, Argentina and Brazil. Some have even returned to the land of their forebears in Spain.

RE-ADMISSION TO ENGLAND: AN UNSPECTACULAR RETURN

Following the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290, the traditional narrative is that they were allowed back by Oliver Cromwell in 1656. The truth is a little more complex. As we have seen, during the 1500s some Spanish and Portuguese Crypto-Jews chose exile rather than face the perils of the Inquisition. Many ended up in Antwerp and Amsterdam but throughout the sixteenth century small groups of Jews came to England. A few individuals achieved prominence, if not notoriety, such as the diplomat Hector Nunez and Elizabeth I's physician, Roderigo Lopez. Although the authority of the Inquisition did not extend to England, these tiny secret Jewish communities were not free from danger. In the middle of the century, during the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary, most felt compelled to flee the country. And in 1609, James I expelled a small number of Portuguese Crypto-Jews suspected of judaising. Nevertheless, during the first half of the seventeenth century, a small community of Spanish and Portuguese Crypto-Jews, largely merchants, managed to subsist. Antonio Fernandez Carvajal, arguably their most prominent and well-connected member, attended mass at the Spanish ambassador's chapel, whilst secretly practicing Judaism. In 1655, he was the first Jew in England to be endenizened (that is, part-naturalised).

The England in which Carvajal came to reside was in the throes of political and religious upheaval. With the Civil War and the advent of the Commonwealth, Protestant and Puritanical England read the Hebrew Bible. This meant a new reading of Jewish history and its connection to Christianity; in particular, Messianism required Jewish return to the four corners of the earth. There was therefore a widespread movement wishing for Jewish return to England in order to hasten the prophecy of the Second Coming of Jesus. But others took the opposite view and saw Jewish religious practice as a subversion of Christian values and a danger to Christianity. The parliamentarian, lawyer and polemicist, William Prynne, a rabid Puritan, exemplified this view, with his virulent anti-Jewish pamphleteering. At the same time, Crypto-Jewish merchants became enmeshed in tangled relationships between the competing ambitions of England, Spain, Portugal and Holland. Sephardim were Iberian Jews, pretending to be Catholics while living in England but trading and travelling to Spanish and

Portuguese territories where they risked arrest by the Inquisition. Anti-Jewish feeling in England could easily provoke expulsion. Even in 1655, denunciations of secret Jews were taking place. In London, Francis Knevett, a scrivener, apparently betrayed a *converso* community and the secret Jews were forced to confess their identity to the authorities.

There was a major figure in this story who is central to the Jewish wish to settle in England. In 1650, the Amsterdam-based rabbi Menasseh Ben Israel published *Spes Israelis,* 'The Hope of Israel', which he dedicated to Oliver Cromwell. In 1655, Ben Israel came to England to petition for formal, open Jewish return and he duly presented his Petition to the Council of State. This document asked for Jews to return as ordinary citizens and for any anti-Jewish law to be repealed. He pleaded for a public synagogue, the right to Jewish education, religious toleration and a cemetery. He asked for Jews to be granted the privilege of trading freely, to try their legal cases according to Mosaic law and take appeals to the English civil courts. In return, Jews would promise to swear fidelity to England.

Cromwell was keen for Jewish re-admission and he had met with Ben Israel after the rabbi had arrived in London. But re-admission was not his decision to take, and in December 1655, he convened the Whitehall Conference with a view to addressing the question. The Conference, made up of lawyers, clerics and merchants, rapidly concluded that there was no legal impediment to the return of Jews. However, it did not reach a view about the desirability of re-admission and there were Conference voices opposing a sanctioned Jewish presence. Some feared mercantile competition; others proclaimed that Jews were Christ-killers and that they would want to covert Christians to Judaism. Prynne was one of those who sought to influence the Conference with his vociferous opposition to re-admittance. As there was no agreement on Jewish return, the Conference was dismissed.

In the event, the inconclusiveness of debates proved immaterial. The following year, another prominent member of the Crypto-Jewish community, Antonio Rodrigues Robles, brought a case against the seizure of his property. England was at war with Spain and the goods belonging to Spanish merchants had been confiscated. However, Robles argued that he was a Jew rather than a Spaniard; he won his case, his property was returned to him, which implicitly recognised a Jewish presence in England. This paved the way, later in the year, for the tacit agreement to allow the opening of a small, albeit discreet, synagogue in Creechurch Lane, in the City of London; and in 1657, of the first graveyard in

Menasseh Ben Israel, etching by Rembrandt, 1636

Mile End. This subsequently became known as the Velho or Old Cemetery. At that point there were around 100 Jews living in London.

After the restoration of the monarchy, resistance to a Jewish presence in England continued sporadically. Nevertheless, in 1664 Charles II granted Jews religious toleration (but not yet full rights). Crypto-Jews became openly-practising Jews. Whereas in Spain and Portugal, Crypto-Judaism withered through conversions and the work of the Inquisition, in England it disappeared because toleration rendered it unnecessary. By the end of the century, there were around 600-700 Jews living in London, mostly Sephardi, but also joined by an embryonic Ashkenazi community.

Menasseh ben Israel and the longing for identity

Manoel Dias Soeiro, better known as Menasseh Ben Israel, was born in Portugal in 1604, but his family moved to the Netherlands in 1610, where he later became established as a leading rabbi. In 1655, while hosting William of Orange in the Amsterdam Sephardi synagogue, he said 'Our fatherland is no longer Portugal or Spain'. This became a prophetic declaration of what we would now call multiculturalism. He described himself as being Portuguese with a Batavian (Dutch) soul.

A shift in political allegiance from the Iberian Catholic aristocracy to the new Protestant order of Holland and England was seen as expedient. However, juggling multiple identities produced some contradictions. Sephardi Jews, who had every reason to fear Spanish or Portuguese monarchical and Catholic persecution, were proud of their Iberian culture and connections, including the trading connections which many of them maintained. Wealthy Portuguese *converso* merchants brought with them to London, Amsterdam and elsewhere the refined manners and erudition of a well-educated bourgeoisie steeped in philosophy, the sciences and even Christian theology (the latter did not prevent them from returning openly to the Jewish fold once they had settled their new host societies). Castilian, and especially Portuguese, continued to be spoken and written by English Sephardim for long after the 1650s. At Bevis Marks Synagogue official business was conducted and sermons delivered in Portuguese until well into the nineteenth century. However, the Sephardi philosophical or radical culture appears not to have permeated the host country. Sephardim did not broadcast their Iberian legacy. Rather there was a desire to keep a low profile and to assimilate. Scholars have questioned whether this complex Sephardi multiple identity was rooted in a fascination with Iberian aristocratic values, expressed through a notion of 'racial' purity or, they ask, was it a search for common roots or an open-minded cultural mixing? The Sephardi Jews' loss of land, language, culture and safety was a form of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Inquisition. This loss is still apparent within that residual part of English Sephardi society which traces its origins to Spain and Portugal. Somewhere within this small community exists an inchoate memory of a distant land, culture, language, food, entertainment and literature.

GRADUAL ACCEPTANCE: ANGLO-SEPHARDIM IN THE AGE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The acceptance of a Jewish presence in England from 1656 was based on a tacit understanding rather than through legislation or decree. England's small Sephardi community could rightly assume its members were now free to practise their Judaism, as long as they did so discreetly. But their status in English society nevertheless remained ambiguous: here, but not quite officially recognised.

Although Sephardi Jews were no longer bound to hide their identity, they were in a precarious situation as foreigners with limited legal rights. When Charles II was crowned in 1660, Christian merchants petitioned him to expel the Jews. They demanded a re-opening of the Whitehall Conference and urged the imposition of heavy taxes on the Jews and their complete expulsion without a license to reside in the country. Jews were also accused of exporting cloth at lower prices. This petition failed, partly, it is believed, because Maria de Carvajal, widow of Antonio, petitioned Charles II, praying for 'His Majesty's protection to continue and reside in his dominions' (further details about Maria de Carvajal are in the section below on gender and identity).

Such attitudes illustrated the lack of legal security experienced by the Sephardim. Archives reveal how they felt obliged to 'pay' the host country to retain favour. In 1678 the Jewish community presented the Lord Mayor of London with a silver dish or goblet including a consignment of sweetmeats. By 1716 the 'gift' was 50-60 pounds of chocolate. Bevis Marks records reveal that this practice did not end until 1780.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 brought Protestant rulers back to the English throne, in the form of Mary, daughter of James II, and her Dutch husband William of Orange (William III). In 1689, a landmark in Anglo-Jewish history was the mention of Jews by the House of Commons when Parliament resolved to raise funds through a poll tax: 'That every Merchant Stranger and Jew residing within this Kingdome shall pay the Summe of Ten Pounds'. Mentioning Jews in a parliamentary Bill appeared to legally validate their presence. Sephardim reacted with a petition where they defined themselves as a landless nation that had not paid Oliver Cromwell for their 'establishment in this Kingdom' nor any Stuart kings for the right to remain. This petition argued against the destruction of the Jewish community by such a tax, claiming that they 'have always lived

Peaceably, Quietly and Dutifully under the Established Government'.

The Bill did not succeed, but that was not the only problem facing the Jewish community in 1689. Thomas Pennington, a customs official, had demanded that Jews should no longer be exempted from paying the aliens' duty. Denizens awarded to Jews by previous monarchs, Charles II and James II, were to be considered void. Pennington was supported by the king who told him to estimate the amount of uncollected alien duty owed by the Jews; this amounted to £58,000. In October 1690, William III levied duties on all English exports effected by foreign merchants but two months later Parliament abolished alien duties and the attempt to tax Jews, as a distinct minority, failed.

A Harlot's Progress, plate 2, by William Hogarth, 1732. The depiction of a wealthy Sephardi merchant in a famous series of Hogarth engravings underlines how well-to-do Sephardim had, by then, 'made it' in fashionable London society

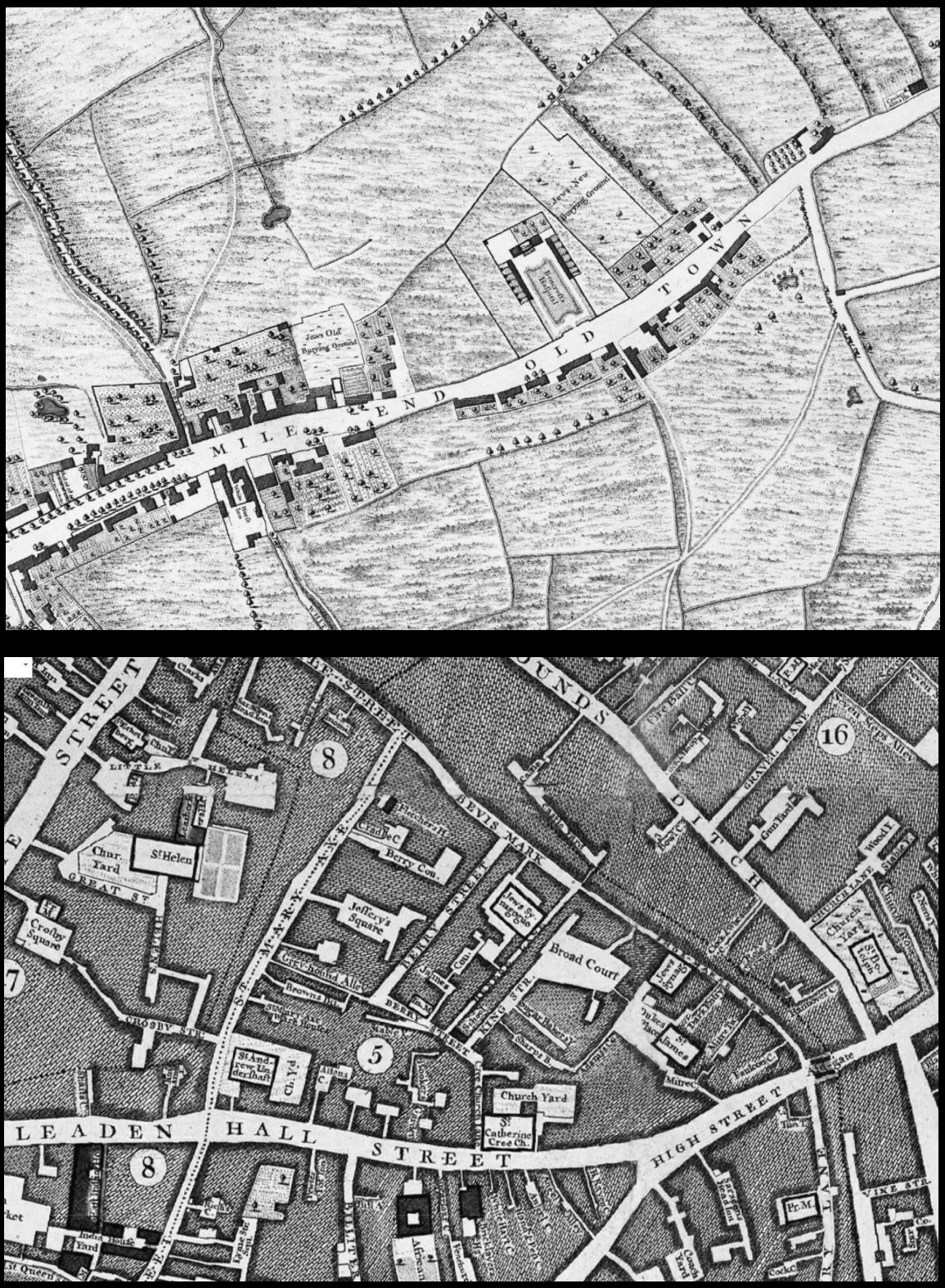
The 1689 Toleration Act was an early marker of the English Enlightenment but it excluded 'any person that shall deny in his preaching or writing the doctrine of the blessed Trinity'. Even during the joint reign of William and Mary, Jews were constantly pressured to demonstrate their financial support of the monarchy and were threatened with increased taxes, forced loans and aliens' duties. And tricks were still being made to exploit them. For example, Jews were elected to London parishes but fined for refusing to take the Christological oath. In 1702, despite opposition from the Sephardi community, Parliament passed an Act to oblige Jews to maintain and provide for their Protestant children when these had converted to Christianity.

But despite these uncertainties, integration into English society was gradually taking place. The wide-ranging Sephardi diaspora networks were advantageous for English commercial interests. In the 1695 census, organised to finance rates and taxes, there are 853 Jewish names of which 589 are Sephardi, living mostly in the City of London. Slowly, Sephardi elites were becoming part of the English establishment. In 1670, Solomon de Medina was the first Jew to be knighted. Historians suggest that this honour was afforded because King William owed de Medina a large sum of money.

Significantly, Jews were no longer systematically scapegoated for disasters. Unlike the Black Death in fourteenth century Europe, Jews were not blamed for The Great Plague of 1665. Charles II and his Portuguese wife, Catherine of Braganza, fled to Oxford with Catherine's Sephardi doctor Fernando Mendes, a Portuguese *converso*. Along with other affluent members of society, richer Jews escaped the city. Rabbi Jacob Sasportas, the community's rabbi, decamped to Hamburg. Poorer Sephardim remained and burial records suggest that six identifiable individuals died of the plague, with possibly a further fifteen buried in unmarked graves. This was a relatively low toll, given that up to a quarter of London's total population died of the disease. The epidemic was followed by the Great Fire of 1666 but, luckily for the Sephardi community, the Creechurch Lane synagogue and the areas in which they lived were spared from the flames.

Another major and growing development took place during the second half of the 17th century: the gradual arrival of Ashkenazi Jews, largely from Germany. By the 1690s, the Ashkenazim formed their own community, whose centre was the Great Synagogue in Duke's Place. The Ashkenazi burial ground was separate from yet adjacent to the Sephardi graveyard in Mile End. But these 'foreign poor' were seen by the more established Sephardim as indigent Jewish immigrants. Protective of their emerging status in English society, the Sephardi elites regarded Ashkenazim as impoverished cousins who would bring the community into disrepute. In 1678, the council of the Sephardi community, the Mahamad, ruled that no Tudesco (German, i.e. Ashkenazi) should ever hold synagogue office, vote at members' meetings, receive any honour whatsoever or even be allowed to pay the income tax or make donations to charity. And yet, within half a century, increased immigration meant that Ashkenazim were to overtake Sephardim in numbers.

By the end of the century, the small, discreet synagogue in Creechurch Lane was no longer sufficient to accommodate the growing community. In 1694, an appeal



Extracts from John Rocque's 1746 map of London, showing (top) the Velho and Novo cemeteries in rural Mile End, indicated as Jews' old and new burial grounds; and (bottom) the North-East corner of the City of London, with the Sephardi Synagogue at Bevis Marks and the Ashkenazi Synagogue at Duke's Place clearly marked

was announced to raise funds for a larger place of worship. Permission was given by the City Fathers on condition that the building be erected far from the main road to avoid offending Christians. Henry Ramsay was commissioned to design the building and, after his death, it was constructed by the Quaker Joseph Avis. The 1699 contract estimated a budget of £2,650 but the final spend was £4,946. A 99 -year lease was granted in 1699 and the freehold purchased in 1835. Opened in 1701, this elegant building was located in Bevis Marks, where it still stands, close to Creechurch Lane. It is the only synagogue in Europe that has held regular services continuously for over 300 years, and remains as a tribute to the Sephardi community and as a testament of their eventual secure position in England.

The original Mile End burial ground was also running out of space. Consequently, new land was acquired nearby in 1725 for a second cemetery. This became known as the Novo, or new, Cemetery. In 1790, a Sephardi hospital, Beth Holim, was established also in Mile End, moving there from its previous location in Whitechapel, where it had been founded in 1748. Further details about the Mile End cemeteries are in the section below.

Seventeenth and eighteenth century English Sephardim controlled their own society through a strict social hierarchy. In his 2017 essay, *Discipline, Dissent and Communal Authority in the Western Sephardic Diaspora,* Yosef Kaplan writes of rigid class differences within the London Sephardi community. He notes that it "found special expression in the punishments levied for transgressions of this kind. Poor people who insulted members of the leadership were liable to lose their monthly stipend from the charity fund".

In *The Jews in the History of England*, the historian David Katz writes that the Sephardi community was proud of its success but "unhappy about Jews who spoiled their image and self-image as substantial and almost aristocratic English Nonconformists". Katz notes that as well as 'wayward Jews', the Sephardi leaders were also concerned about members of the community converting to Christianity. Learned converts from Judaism to Christianity were attractive to Christian scholars who were seen as rich resources of Hebraic knowledge for theology students. However, intermarriage and conversion posed occasional judicial problems. An example is Sephardi widow, Kitty Villareal who, after legal battles, was able to use her inherited fortune to pursue her own way as a Christian convert and marry William Mellish. Her prosperity is said to have helped him gain a parliamentary seat in 1741. Her daughter Sarah Elizabeth

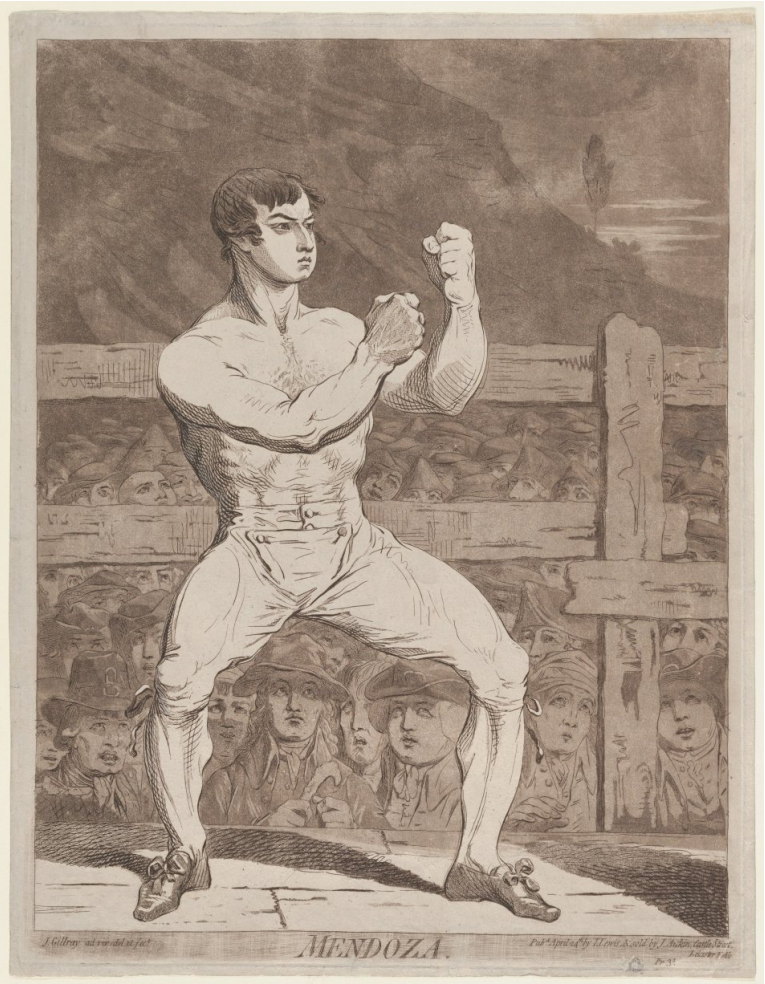
Villareal was the first Jew to marry into the peerage.

Notwithstanding the growing prosperity of much of the Sephardi community, and its outward confidence, barriers to complete integration in English society remained. By far the biggest illustration of these was the controversy surrounding the Jewish Naturalisation Bill of 1753, commonly known as the Jew Bill.

As non-English aliens, foreign-born Jews were prohibited from owning land or other real property. Denization, which many Sephardim had enjoyed since the mid-seventeenth century, helped to remove some of these restrictions. However, only naturalisation allowed for the acquisition of full economic rights (political, as opposed to economic, rights were not achieved until the nineteenth century). In 1714, the philosopher John Toland had already argued that, for the good of the country, Jews should be treated on the same footing as other subjects. This was the rationale behind the Jew Bill, introduced in the House of Lords in April 1753. It was to give foreign-born Jews the right to apply to Parliament for naturalisation without the obligation to receive the Holy Sacrament. Each naturalization would still require an individual Act of Parliament which meant that only the wealthy could take advantage of it. Consequently, the scope of the legislation was limited. Nonetheless, it provoked a huge anti-Jewish backlash, and although the Bill was passed in May, it was repealed in December. The writer and politician Horace Walpole commented that "the Jew Bill which superstitious bigots in the Commons repealed under the influence of a fanatical mob, thus demonstrating how much the age, enlightened as it is called, was still enslaved to the grossest and most vulgar prejudices".

"Notwithstanding the growing prosperity of much of the Sephardi community, and its outward confidence, barriers to complete integration in English society remained."

By the time of the Jew Bill, there were 7,000 to 8,000 Jews in the country. Between a quarter and a third of them were Sephardi, illustrating how they had become a minority among English Jews in the space of the half century since the opening of Bevis Marks. The rise in the Jewish population was fuelled by immigration rather than natural growth. Those arriving were poor Ashkenazi migrants from the German states, Poland and to a lesser extent from Holland; the latter were mainly Dutch Jews of German origin. There were also some Sephardi immigrants, but unlike their seventeenth century predecessors, these were mostly impoverished, sometimes even destitute. Renewed activity by the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal in 1720 and 1735 provoked a new arrival of *conversos*. It is estimated that around 3,000 Sephardim arrived directly from the Iberian Peninsula during the eighteenth century. Smaller numbers of Sephardim



Daniel Mendoza, the father of modern boxing,
engraving by James Gillray, 1788

also arrived from the Italian states, including the grandfather of Benjamin Disraeli. Others came from North Africa, Gibraltar and the Ottoman Empire. But by 1800, Sephardi arrivals were negligible.

Among these Sephardim were skilled craftsmen, shopkeepers, small-scale merchants and brokers. However during the second half of the century, the Jewish population – Sephardi or Ashkenazi – was increasingly composed of unskilled individuals with few material resources. They were often pedlars and hawkers, itinerant traders selling goods frequently of poor quality or dubious provenance. They worked as street traders selling oranges, lemons, spectacles, costume jewellery, sponges, dried rhubarb, lead pencils and inexpensive framed pictures. These Jews often lived on the margins, experiencing a life that was quite different from that of the merchant Sephardi elites who still sat at the pinnacle of the Bevis Marks community.

Poverty inevitably became associated with a degree of criminality, including the dealing in stolen goods. It was not unknown for Jews to be sentenced to death or transportation to the colonies. The Chelsea Murders of 1771, committed by a group of Yiddish-speaking and therefore mainly Ashkenazi Jews, was an infamous example. A robbery went wrong and a manservant was shot. The accused individuals were hanged at Tyburn, which provided another occasion for anti-Jewish sentiments. But even those who were not philosemites, such as encyclopaedist William Jackson, were critical of the way Jews were treated, Jackson wrote that "There is something wantonly cruel in affronting the whole body of a people because a few individuals of that people have rendered themselves obnoxious by the atrocity of their guilt".

Perhaps the most telling symbol of the social shift of English Sephardi society was the life of Daniel Mendoza (1765-1836). Mendoza, the son of Sephardi artisans, was a successful and hugely popular bare-knuckled fighter known as the inventor of 'scientific pugilism'. He is considered the father of modern boxing. In his long career, he styled himself 'Mendoza the Jew' and through his popularity, helped challenge antisemitism. At the cusp of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, just before Jews gained political rights, his pugilism and popular success shifted the image of the Sephardi male from one of merchant and financier to that of working class hero.

The Bevis Marks aliens register of 1803

One of the measures of the Aliens Act of 1793 was the registration of foreigners. Bevis Marks Synagogue drew up one such register from 1803, relating specifically to Jewish aliens who had landed in Britain from 1716, and especially from the 1760s onwards. There are 142 names on the register, providing a credible snapshot of Sephardi life at the time. It confirms notably that, by then, Sephardim mostly did not come from the Iberian Peninsula, as these place of birth figures show:

Holland	41	(29%)
Italy	27	(19%)
North Africa	23	(19%)
Ottoman Empire	12	(8%)
Portugal and Spain	12	(8%)
Germany and Austria	12	(8%)
France	9	(6%)
Other and unknown	6	(4%)

However, many of these individuals went elsewhere before coming to England. Thus for instance three quarters of those born in the Ottoman Empire settled first in Holland, Italy or other places in Europe.

The reasons for coming to England were essentially either economic (44% of those on the register) or for family purposes (43%). Only 6% were refugees fleeing from persecution or political turmoil. The register lists a range of occupations too. Excluding those whose professional status is unknown, around two-fifths were without a profession: 18% were married women, 14% were pensioners and 10% were widows or spinsters. 27% were listed as tradesmen, including dealers in spices, old clothes and hardware, as well as hawkers and pedlars. A further 8% were merchants (although the register isn't specific about the exact nature of the merchandise); 6% were craft workers or artisans, 6% were in clerical professions and 6% also were teachers or students. It is clear that a large majority of Sephardim were not engaged in affluent trades.

Finally, as to their geographical location in London, a large majority of the listed Sephardim lived either in the North-East corner of the City in the vicinity of Bevis Marks or in nearby Whitechapel.

A tabular summary is available on the project website at www.lostjews.org.uk/1803-aliens-register/

DECLINE AND REVIVAL: 1800 TO PRESENT DAY

In 1800, according to Hyamson in *The Sephardim of England*, there were 4,000 Sephardim living in London. This was possibly the highest number ever reached, at least until the mid-twentieth century, representing about a fifth of the total Jewish population of the capital. Until about 1825, almost all London Jews, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, lived in the City and the area immediately to the East. But they were not immune from the general pattern of social spread that was taking place within the metropolis, and from around that time, increasing numbers of more prosperous members of the community moved to districts to the north and west of the City, for instance Islington, Bloomsbury and Marylebone. From the middle of the century, they moved further out to newly-urbanised areas such as Bayswater and St John's Wood. But nevertheless, a majority of Jews remained in the City and in the immediate vicinity.

By the 1820s, the better-off Sephardim were mostly English-born (as outlined in the previous section, Sephardi immigration had almost ended by then). They were well integrated in British society, identifying increasingly with the values of the host middle-classes, and interested in the political liberalism that was growing in Britain at the time. But well-off, middle class families represented no more than a portion of the Jewish population. Jewish poverty was endemic in the nineteenth century, even before the mass Ashkenazi migration from Eastern Europe, roughly in the same proportion as the general population. In 1829, 1,200 of the 2,500 Sephardim in Britain were receiving regular or occasional relief from communal funds. It is estimated that around 1850, 25 to 30% of London Jews were in receipt of occasional or regular poor relief, with a further 35 to 40% of men dependent on street trading, market trading or artisanal work. These figures do not distinguish between Sephardim and Ashkenazim but it is likely that both communities were similarly affected. And even those that were not poor were often engaged in modest trades; records from Bevis Marks, between 1841 and 1850, described 22% of bridegrooms as general dealers, including hawkers; 21% as cigar makers; but only 8% as merchants. As quoted by Todd Edelman, and as was the case during the previous century (see previous section), Jews remained active in socially-marginalised occupations – dealers in battered odds and ends, worn-out clothing, rags and rubbish; as keepers of brothels, wine-rooms, saloons, gambling dens, billiard rooms and sponging houses. Such activities almost inevitably implied a degree of criminal activity, and served to stigmatise the

Print ridiculing a Jewish rag dealer and a Sephardi Jew (in Turkish garb) trying to enter Parliament, c. 1830, showing that antisemitism was alive and well in Britain at that time

entire Jewish community.

Dealing with such poverty, however, also revealed some foibles of Sephardi communal attitudes. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Joshua van Oven, a prominent Ashkenazi surgeon and educationalist, devised a scheme to set up a Jewish poor relief organisation. This was to address endemic poverty within the community and, as noted by Todd Edelman in *The Jews of England 1656-2000*, to expel foreign-born Jews viewed as idle or troublesome. It was to be paid for in part through levies raised from Jewish communal organisations. The idea was met with some approval among Ashkenazim but the Sephardi community refused to be associated with it. They feared they would pay a disproportionate proportion of the cost, and probably also, for reasons of status, some Sephardim were unwilling to associate themselves with Ashkenazim. The scheme was eventually abandoned in 1802. In the following decades, Jewish poor relief was often dealt with separately by the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities. Sephardim preferred to make use of their own institutions and resources, particularly the Beth Holim Hospital, which by the early 1800s was operating more as a home for the elderly and infirm than as a hospital.

In the religious sphere, the traditions and practices at Bevis Marks seemed stuck in another period. Communal leaders were wedded to a conservative interpretation of liturgical tradition and community practices. Power remained

concentrated in the hands of a few families, as had been the case since the seventeenth century. Transgressions and minor offences were severely reprimanded, for instance through fines or even expulsion from the community and ostracism. In these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that two of the greatest names of nineteenth century Anglo-Sephardism, the economist David Ricardo and the statesman Benjamin Disraeli (see next page), left the Jewish fold. When change did occur, it was slow; thus it was not until 1819 that English replaced Portuguese for the minutes of community meetings; and not until 1848 that English was finally used for announcements in the synagogue.

This conservatism was to have consequences, and from around the 1820s, tensions emerged between the authorities at Bevis Marks and many of the more assimilated, affluent elements of Sephardi society. For the latter, arcane and lengthy religious services did not reflect their self-image as well-mannered, propertied individuals. A particular source of frustration was a still-enforced 1664 by-law that prevented the establishment of any Sephardi place of worship within six miles of Bevis Marks. For many of the wealthy Sephardi families who had moved away from the City, this was impractical for the attendance of Sabbath religious services. Things came to a head in 1840 when, unhappy at Bevis Marks' intransigence, a number of Sephardi families broke away from the congregation and joined with some Ashkenazi counterparts to found the West London synagogue. Even though this retained a fairly orthodox liturgy, the decision was met with outrage by both the Sephardi and Ashkenazi religious establishment, and the new congregation was shunned and not recognised by the Board of Deputies. It was a schism from which Anglo-Sephardim took a long time to recover.

It took a while for the Sephardi authorities to recognise that their attitude to new places of worship was detrimental. By the middle of the century, they finally saw the need to open a new synagogue outside the City of London, albeit still under the authority of Bevis Marks. In 1853, on an experimental basis, a branch synagogue was initially established in Wigmore Street, in the West End. When this venture proved successful, a permanent synagogue was commissioned and consecrated in 1861 in Bryanston Street, near what is now Marble Arch. And in 1896, an imposing synagogue was built in Lauderdale Road, Maida Vale. Eventually, this was to replace Bevis Marks as the centre of Sephardi communal life in London.

The conservatism of Sephardi community leaders manifested itself in another

Three Sephardi greats

Three Anglo-Sephardi individuals stand out as towering nineteenth century figures in three rather different domains – although the first two did so outside the realm of the Sephardi community, having abandoned the faith of their forebears.

David Ricardo (1772-1823) was one of the great political economists of the age, a hugely influential representative of the classical economic tradition. Born into a family of Portuguese origin, he converted to Unitarianism in his early twenties, and consequently became estranged from his parents, cutting all links with Judaism. By the end of the Napoleonic wars, his banking and speculating activities had made him extraordinarily wealthy, allowing his to retire and to concentrate on what had been a growing interest in economic theory. His published output covered areas including taxation, trade and monetary policy, as well as the distribution of wages and profits.

Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) was a politician, statesman and novelist, serving as Prime Minister in 1868, and then most notably between 1874 and 1880. He was from a Sephardi family of Italian origin, but his father broke with Judaism following a dispute with Bevis Marks Synagogue, and the young Benjamin was baptised as an Anglican at the age of 12. He is credited with creating the modern Conservative Party and as well as his terms as Prime Minister, he was Chancellor of the Exchequer on three separate occasions and Leader of the Opposition. He was an enthusiastic proponent of Britain's imperial role and established a reputation as a leading European statesman during the international crises that characterised much of the 1870s. He also found the time to write several novels. Queen Victoria,

with whom he enjoyed a warm relationship, created him Earl of Beaconsfield in 1876.

Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) also came from an Italian Sephardi family. He was arguably the leading figure of his time within British Jewry. Like Ricardo, he made a fortune on the Stock Exchange at a relatively early age, allowing him to retire in 1824 and to devote the rest of his long life to a variety of philanthropic causes. As well as his generous financial support for a wide variety of Jewish causes, he deployed his diplomatic talents as a champion of Jewish human rights in Europe and beyond, and Jewish works in Palestine. Unlike Ricardo and Disraeli, he was a pillar of the Sephardi community and an active, senior member of Bevis Marks; he remained President of the Board of Deputies for a remarkable 39 years. He was knighted in 1837 and made a baronet in 1846.

way, through their reluctance to support the cause of Jewish political emancipation. This remained an issue in a country where suspicion and dislike of Jews was still rife. After the Jews' Emancipation Bill of 1830 was rejected by the House of Commons, Sephardim were for many years reluctant to join in efforts led by other parts of the Jewish community to advance Jewish political rights. Hyamson attributes this to a deep-rooted fear of jeopardising the Jewish presence in Britain by taking any sort of political position. He sees its roots lying in the seventeenth century attitude of keeping a low profile. When Lionel de Rothschild was elected as the first Jewish MP in 1847 (in spite of restrictions which, technically and until the 1858 Jews Relief Act, still prevented practising Jews from sitting in Parliament), a formal vote of congratulations from the Sephardi community was barely approved. And, as late as 1855, Sephardi leaders declined to congratulate David Salomons upon his election as Lord Mayor of London.

By1880, the Jewish population in Britain was around 46,000. This number increased hugely after then, as a result of pogroms in the Russian Empire, which

sent waves of poor East European Ashkenazim to this island. By the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish refugees were entering the country without limitation and Sephardim were no more than a very small minority. Sephardi elites considered these Yiddish-speaking newcomers as essentially foreign and even a threat to their own position as sophisticated, assimilated English or British Jews.

At the same time, those families who could trace their ancestry to the seventeenth and early eighteenth century had become a minority among Anglo-Sephardim**.** Iberian names, such as Lopez and Nunes, were now exceptional among members of the community. Moreover, by the mid-nineteenth century, the Sephardi community was in serious decline, notably as a result of assimilation and the 1840 schism. In 1887, Bevis Marks even found that, for want of suitable Sephardi candidates, it had to appoint an Ashkenazi Haham (senior rabbi). During the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth centuries, the community was saved from withering away by subsequent waves of immigration from the Balkans, the Near East and other parts of Asia. The size of this influx was modest in comparison with the much larger numbers of contemporary Ashkenazi immigrants. Many if not most of these were not Sephardi in the strict sense but, as suggested earlier, came to adopt the Sephardi liturgy and religious practices.

“During the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth centuries, the community was saved from withering away by subsequent waves of immigration from the Balkans, the Near East and other parts of Asia.”

Arguably, the diversification of the community started with Jews from India, particularly Bombay (current-day Mumbai) and Calcutta (Kolkata), with the initial arrival in 1858 of the wealthy and influential Sassoon family. They rapidly became actively involved in the Sephardi community, as well as being well-connected members of the upper echelons of London society. Their descendants included the poet Sigfried Sassoon

Lauderdale Road Synagogue in 2020; erected in 1896 in a Byzantine style, it is now the major Sephardi synagogue in Britain

and the politician Sir Philip Sassoon. Other families from India followed, and migration to Britain continued steadily for several decades, peaking after Indian independence in 1948.

There was diversification outside London too. In 1872, the small Sephardi community in Manchester set up a congregation of their own, distinct from the longer-established Mancunian Ashkenazim. These were Jews who had come from North Africa, Turkey and the Near East, attracted by the growing trade between Britain and the lands of their origins. Their synagogue was consecrated in Cheetham Hill, North Manchester, two years later, with the support of Bevis Marks. A larger synagogue was opened in Queen's Road, South Manchester, in 1927.

Jews from Baghdad started arriving in small numbers from the 1880s, first in Manchester, then in London. As Ottoman subjects, they were considered suspect at the outbreak of the First World War. Later, during the interwar period a small but steady flow of them settled in London and Manchester. Violence against Jews in Iraq in the 1950s provoked a mass exodus of Baghdad Jews who now form one of the most important components of the 'new' Anglo-Sephardi world.

The Balkan Wars, which ended in 1913, led to the beginnings of the exodus from the once thriving Sephardi community of Salonika. Some of these emigrants came to London, initially settling around Shepherd's Bush. By 1928, they had

built a permanent synagogue in nearby Holland Park. Their ranks were swollen by further Sephardi migrants not just from Salonika, but also from the ancient Jewish communities of Istanbul and Izmir (formerly Smyrna), a result of the dismembering of the Ottoman Empire. Also in the 1920s, a small settlement of Jews from Meshed, in northern Persia (Iran) and Bokhara (nowadays Bukhara, in Uzbekistan) came to reside in Stamford Hill, North London. The numbers of Iranian Jews in London was greatly swelled by arrivals following the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979.

Iraq was not the only Arab country from which Jews settled in Britain. An anti-Jewish pogrom in 1947 led to an initial small influx of Jews from Aden. When Aden became independent from Britain twenty years later, part of the small remaining community settled in London. Rather larger numbers came from Cairo and Alexandria, in Egypt, following the Suez crisis in 1956. Many of these either joined the existing Sephardi congregation in Maida Vale, or contributed to the life of the new Sephardi synagogue that opened in Wembley, North West London, in 1977. From the 1960s, small numbers of Moroccan Jews also came to Britain, largely for economic reasons, settling in London and, to a lesser extent, in Manchester.

Immigration and acceptance

The appearance of the Jew in literature testifies to the absorption of Jewish characters into the English novel most famously portrayed as the villainous Fagin in Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist and more sympathetically by George Eliot in Daniel Deronda. Onstage, Henry Irving's 1878 portrayal of Shylock in The Merchant of Venice was a huge success. Was the Jew moving from 'tolerance' to acceptance on the Christian street? It might have been thought so until the 1905 Aliens Act once more raised the issue of the Jewish presence in Britain and, for the first time, brought in immigration restrictions on those considered as 'undesirable'. Restrictions against foreign-born Jews and their acceptance as equal citizens continued into the twentieth century, not least in the face of persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

In Britain, during the 'Swinging Sixties', Sephardim were part of a fashionable celebrity scene. Playwright Harold Pinter hinted that his family was originally Sephardi, as the family name Pinto might have been Spanish. Vidal Sassoon's geometric hairstyles and Peter Sellers' zany humour epitomised a radical artistic chic. By the end of the 20th century, Sephardim were prominent in the media. These include Egyptian-born cookbook writer and cultural commentator Claudia Roden, Turkish-French fashion designer Nicole Farhi, merchants and gallery owners Charles Saatchi and his brother Maurice, of Iraqi parentage and historian Simon Sebag-Montefiore. In an age of identity politics, a Sephardi background could be seen as cool. The discovery of what we now call intersectionality seems to transmit a transnational, secular Mediterranean spirit with, perhaps, a romanticised vision of an epicurean lifestyle boasting fine dining, excellent wine and sunshine.

This world is far removed from the Iberian founders of the community during the second half of the seventeenth century (although in spite of this, S&P – Spanish and Portuguese – remains part of the community's official title). These various groups, from different parts of the world and often of Mizrahi origin, make up what is now the Anglo-Sephardi community, numbering several thousand people. These numbers are not completely insignificant, but all the same, they represent no more than a tiny proportion of the UK's estimated 290,000 Jews. To an extent, these groups maintain some of the cultural identity of their countries of origin but with assimilation, it is difficult to know how or even whether these links can be sustained. It is also the case that there is no longer a reservoir of countries from which Sephardim might emigrate to Britain. Outside Israel and to a lesser extent France and a handful of other countries, the once thriving communities in the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa have become almost extinct. There is therefore little scope for further immigration to provide another boost to the number Anglo-Sephardim.

However, the results of the 2016 UK referendum on EU membership awoke an interest in Sephardi history. Concerns about Brexit led a number of British Sephardi Jews to request Spanish or Portuguese citizenship if they could prove the distant Iberian origins of their families. For some, the discovery of how, and why, their ancestors had left disinterred a terrible past. They read documents revealing burnings at the stake, they read of torture and humiliation suffered at the *auto-da-fé*. Grief that had been suppressed for centuries became apparent when this old-new identity was reclaimed.

GENDER AND IDENTITY

In traditional Judaism the woman's role was mainly centred on the household. Her primary identity was that of mother and wife. It is she who was charged with keeping a kosher home. If we consider the entry of the Jews into England with the Normans we are aware of the way Jewish women from Caen brought with them the rituals surrounding Jewish Purity Laws. This is detailed in the London Jewish Museum's reconstruction of a ritual bath or mikveh.

Daughters traditionally learned from their mothers. Their required knowledge was to welcome in the Sabbath by lighting candles, understand what must be done in the household for the many festivals and help their mothers in the weekly Sabbath meal. Women were seen as mothers, daughters, wives, sisters whereas men were traditionally seen as scholars and heads of the household. The Edenic image of a woman made from Adam's rib remains as a strong trope and endorses the idea of the Jewish woman as being secondary to the Jewish man. In Jewish law, a woman's testimony is worth half that of a man's. Within mainstream orthodox Sephardi or Ashkenazi Judaism (that is, in Jewish religious practice other than for the liberal and reform traditions), divorce for women has always been dependent on a husband's legal agreement. Although this is generally no longer the case, for most Jews, for centuries, a husband did not require his wife's consent for a divorce. But within orthodox Judaism, a wife seeking freedom from religious (as opposed to secular) marriage must await a 'get', a legal document that her husband can refuse, which can leave her as an 'agunah' – chained to him against her will.

Historically, Jewish women's submission was tempered by their economic role. Throughout the medieval period, in times of economic need, women were often the ones to work. Of course, there were male teachers and artisans but, traditionally, Jewish men were also expected to be scholarly and therefore unlikely to earn much. If the male imperative was to study Talmud and be far from the temporal world, this often gave women a place in public arena as wage earners.

Within the medieval Jewish community, Charlotte Newman Goldy suggests possible unrecorded, social interactions between Jewish and Christian women. This is likely as, in England, Jews were not ghettoised and they shared the same social geography. Goldy writes about Muriel of Oxford whose husband David

wanted to divorce her as she bore no living child. He demanded intervention by the royal court which granted his divorce and superseded the rabbinical court. After his divorce, David married Licoricia of Winchester who became a hugely important moneylender after David's death. A dynamic woman as a powerful public figure is not in contravention to medieval Jewish practice where women were allowed a public position in the public arena.

Judaism traditionally offers women notable legal rights. From the biblical period to today a woman about to marry has a contract called a ketubah, which outlines human and financial guarantees that a husband gives to his wife. In the twelfth century, Maimonides challenged some patriarchal practices. He was critical of tyrannical husbands, writing in defence of the chained wife that "she is not a prisoner so that she may be forced to have intercourse with a man she cannot abide". He also writes that "a woman is at liberty to refuse intercourse with a man, even if he is her husband".

Within mainstream orthodox Judaism, a man can divorce an infertile woman as the primary role of marriage is to produce children but a woman can request a divorce if her husband does not satisfy her sexually. Therefore, although Judaism is patriarchal it nevertheless speaks about the importance of female orgasm. Another area of inconsistency is that Judaism, which was previously patrilineal, became matrilineal during the Roman period, and the religious identity is consequently inherited through the mother's line.

Judaism has undergone many changes since its distant origins. As Judaism is a religion of debate and not of absolute authority – there is no pope or archbishop – Talmudic argument has split hairs over women's role for centuries. Jewish practice was also affected by the host culture. The Torah does not prevent polygamy, although it has been abandoned by Jews to comply with prevailing social norms. Israel Abrahams, writing in *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, reveals how in Spain, under the Moors, monogamy was never formally recognised by the Jews. But Jewish sages did not always agree, and in Moorish Spain, rabbis discouraged bigamy and sometimes the husband was forced to pay back his wife's dowry before another marriage was allowed

The history of Sephardi women in English life is minimal in the archives compared to that of men. Women were clearly as polylingual as Portuguese and Spanish-speaking brothers and fathers and some would have known Hebrew. Shakespeare gives us Jessica, his imaginary Jewish daughter of the infamous creation Shylock. Marlowe offers us Abigail, daughter of the villainous Barabas.

Both women 'redeem' themselves by becoming Christians. Real Jewish women appear in the figure of Emilia Bassano who is believed to have been the first woman of Jewish identity to have published poetry in England.

Emilia Bassano, miniature portrait by Nicholas Hilliard, c. 1590

Emilia Bassano was born in 1569. Her father, Baptista, was a Sephardi Venetian musician invited to play at Henry VIII's court. In 2017, Morgan Lloyd Malcolm wrote the play *Emilia*, which was produced in London at the Globe Theatre and in the West End. Malcolm, whose Jewish father had been an actor, suggests, and many academics agree, that Bassano was both Shakespeare's lover and possibly, his occasional co-writer. The unusual name 'Emilia' occurs in several of Shakespeare's plays. Bassano was the first Englishwoman to identify herself as a professional poet with her 1611 *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum / Hail God King of the Jews*. Within this volume, *Eve's Apology* refuses to damn Eve for provoking the Fall. Bassano proclaims that Adam is the sinner not Eve and, in her stunning punchline, declares that men's 'superior' knowledge is stolen from women:

> Yet Men will boast of Knowledge, which he took
> From Eve's fair hand, as from a learned Book

Another famous (unknown) stage name is Hannah Norsa. Norsa was born in 1712 and her mother was believed to have been Esther de Aharon de Chaus, who married Ishac de Jehosuah Norca (Isaac) at Bevis Marks Synagogue. Norsa, claimed to be the first Jewish actress to appear on the English stage, starred as Polly Peachum in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* at the Covent Garden Theatre in 1732. She also took leading roles in works by George Farquhar and Thomas Otway. Norsa was the mistress of Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford and lived with him in Norfolk. A local clergyman's wife wrote of the actress, "She is a very agreeable Woman, & Nobody ever behav'd better in her Station, she has every

Hannah Norsa, by R. Clamp, after Bernard Lens, stipple engraving, 1794

body's good word, and bears great Sway at Houghton." When Norsa died in 1784 she was buried in St Mary Abbots Kensington. She left £4,300 invested in Treasury stock. Engravings and prints of her are kept in the British Museum and the National Portrait Gallery.

Ida Romanzinin, another Sephardi woman in the arts, worked under her married name of Maria Bland. Born in 1770, she performed from the age of four. An image of her in the travesty role of Madelon in George Coleman's *The Surrender of Calais* testifies to her charismatic quality. Bland was baptised but her 'Jewish appearance' was mocked and satirised in stories of her sewing in front of her window in the presence of a pig each Saturday.

The lives of Bassano, Norsa and Bland were far from the norms of traditional orthodox Sephardi society. However, there was another prominent woman, who lived in the heart of the Sephardi community. Maria de Carvajal, widow of Antonio Fernandez de Carvajal (see page 20), was one of the most prominent Jews at the time of the Commonwealth. When Jews were threatened with re-expulsion after Cromwell's death, Maria called a meeting at her house in Leadenhall Street in Aldgate. A woman's voice is still not allowed to be heard during Bevis Marks Synagogue services but, in the seventeenth century, it had political heft. In 1660, Maria petitioned Charles II pleading for "His Majesty's protection to continue and reside in his dominions". She was supported by the Sephardi male establishment and heard by the king.

In 1770, when Isaac Coronel was accused of the 'theft' of Rebecca, the 13-year old daughter of Aaron Pereira, he was excommunicated. His fiancée Rebecca was later married to a wealthier man. Whether Isaac was to Rebecca's taste is unrecorded. As Kaplan writes in another essay, *The Abduction of A Girl In Order To Marry Her*, it is likely that Rebecca Pereira was complicit in her choice of Isaac and chose to run away with him but, Kaplan notes that, "the community register took care to erase any sign of cooperation on the girl's part".

It is sad that so many women's experiences are untold and that only the narratives of successful men remain. Virginia Woolf wrote in her 1928 essay *A Room Of One's Own* that, had Shakespeare had an ambitious actor-writer sister, she would have been raped and murdered. It is not surprising, therefore, that feminists celebrate Emilia Bassano as a symbol of ambition and its partial realisation. Although Bassano was forbidden to act in, or publish, plays, she used her pen to deconstruct the central myth of Abrahamic patriarchy and Eve's supposed sin. Whether Rebecca Pereira could read, write or live the life she wanted, is doubtful. Maria de Carvajal is to be admired for her political agency but, although there are reams written about her husband, the reader must search hard to find more than a few sentences about the political activism of his widow.

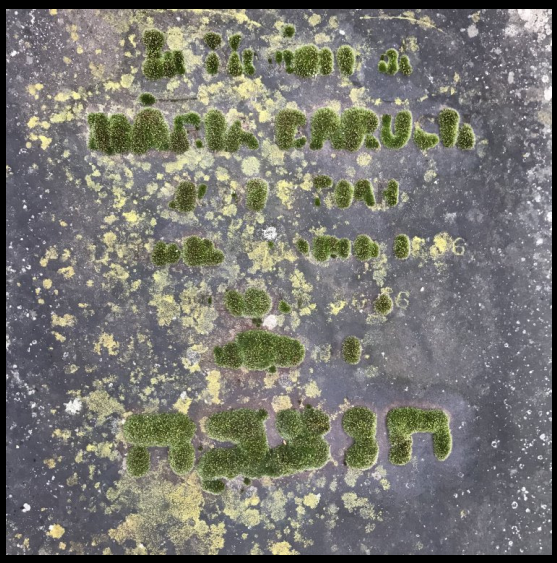
THE MILE END CEMETERIES

The Novo Cemetery in Mile End is, along with Bevis Marks Synagogue, the embodiment of the history of the Anglo-Sephardi community. Generations of Sephardim were laid to rest there over nearly two centuries. It has huge importance as the burial ground of thousands of individuals whose memory it recalls. This is why the Novo Cemetery has formed a central focus of 'Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews'.

In 1656, the presence of Jews in England became tacitly accepted, even if not formally recognised. A small and discreet synagogue, in Creechurch Lane, in the City of London, was opened that year. But the tiny Sephardi community, of about a hundred people, needed a burial ground as well as a place of worship. For this purpose, a plot of land was leased in Mile End, then a rural hamlet about a mile and a half east of the city limits, and the cemetery was inaugurated in 1657. Over the following decades, it was gradually extended to cope with growing demand. But by the end of the century, it was clear that an additional site would be needed. At that point, the London Jewish population was around 600-700, most of whom were Sephardi, but with a small Ashkenazi community too, which had opened its own adjacent cemetery in 1696. Consequently, a new and larger 3-acre plot of land was leased in 1726 about 400 metres to the east of the original site. This became known as the Novo ('new' in Portuguese) Cemetery, as opposed to the Velho ('old'), as the original site was now designated. The contemporary location of both sites is shown in Rocque's map of 1746, on page 27.

The first burials at the Novo took place in 1733 and, for over a century and a half, nearly all Sephardi burials in London were carried out there. Eventually, space ran out there too, and in 1855 the Novo was expanded with the acquisition of a further 1.7 acres to the east of the site. By the end of the nineteenth century, the enlarged Cemetery comprised over 9,000 graves. Eminent individuals buried there included Diego Pereira, Baron Aguilar (1699-1759), financier and adviser to the Austrian Empress Maria Theresa; the merchant Benjamin D'Israeli (1730-1816), grandfather to the Victorian Prime Minister, and Daniel Mendoza (1764-1836), the celebrated prize fighter. Those who were laid to rest in the newer, post-1855 expansion included the comic actor David Belasco, alias David James (1839-93); Joseph Elmaleh (1809-86), chief rabbi of Mogador and Austrian


NOVO CEMITERY 1733



The Novo Cemetery,
photos taken in 2019

Body-snatching at the cemetery

The snatching of recently-interred cadavers from cemeteries was a common occurrence in the 18th century. Although illegal, the practice was carried out to feed the growing demand for corpses in medical schools, for the purpose of anatomy lessons. The Novo Cemetery was not immune to this and, after a spate of body-snatchings in 1786, it employed night watchmen. A carefully drawn up document written in Portuguese, precisely set out what was required to keep the graves safe. This is the English translation:

Obligations of the guard of the Beth A-Haim Cemetery

That every morning and evening, you must examine the graves for any alterations.

To observe carefully for any unknown person frequently visiting the burials in a way that seems suspicious, in which case you must report this to the elders at the Mahamad [the synagogue Council], giving an exact description of the person.

To ensure that the burial pits are no less than five feet deep.

To ensure that no trees grow near the cemetery walls or are not at a distance where their branches could allow others to scale the wall.

You are, aside from members of their family or parents or anyone accompanying them, not to allow anyone to rent parts of the house or assist you without first obtaining permission from the elders of the Mahamad.

To be careful not to leave the tools which are used to lift the stones, outside on any night within the walls of Beth A-Haim.

That these or any other instructions which appear legitimate were looked at in the books of the Mahamad and signed by it to ensure obedience.

In accordance with the resolution of the elders, it was ordered that a copy of said regulations be written on good paper and put in a glass box at the burial so that people can read it and be well complied.

consul in Morocco and several prominent members of the wealthy and prestigious Montefiore family.

In due course, demographic change caught up with the Novo. By 1900, wealthier members of the Sephardi community had long migrated away from the City and the East End, and a new Sephardi cemetery was opened in 1897 in Hoop Lane, Golders Green, effectively superseding the Novo. A section of this remained open for adult burials until 1906, and for child burials until 1918, with a dwindling trickle of ad-hoc interments continuing into the 1970s.

Today, all that remains of the Novo is the post-1855 section, consisting of about 2,000 graves, with their characteristic absence of headstones, less than a quarter of which have fully or partly legible inscriptions. Mile End has long ceased to be a rural area, and in the 1960s, Queen Mary College – now Queen Mary University of London – was occupying much of the area to the west of the Novo, and wanted to acquire land to expand its campus. In the early 1970s, a deal was reached between the Sephardi community and the College, whereby the pre-1855 part of the Novo (two-thirds of the site) was to be sold and built over. The remains of the deceased were disinterred under religious supervision in 1973-74, with around 7,000 people reburied in a mass grave on Queen Mary College land near Brentwood in Essex. Memorial plaques with the names of the deceased were put up there but the actual gravestones were not relocated. It is not known what happened to them. What is left of the Novo is now marooned within the campus, overlooked by modern buildings, including the University library. It is an eerily quiet area, surrounded by the bustle of academia, very mineral in appearance, with little vegetation. The boundary of the site was re-landscaped in 2011 to make it more accessible and welcoming. In contrast, the Velho remains intact, in a lusher, greener setting, although hidden from view behind walls and closed to the public.

Further information about the Novo Cemetery, including a schematic plan of all the graves and an extensive photo gallery, can be found on the project website at www.lostjews.org.uk/oneloststone/history/novo-cemetery/ .

Finding the cemeteries on Google Maps:

Velho Cemetery – Mile End Road, Google Maps plus code: GXF4+5C
Novo Cemetery – Mile End Road, Google Maps plus code: GXF6+Q8

PART 2

FURTHER READING

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews' has uncovered a wide variety of sources relating to Sephardi history and heritage in England and beyond, many of which have been used to inform the work of our study, including the contents of this e-book. The reading list below, covering books, journal articles, primary sources and online resources, gives a good insight for anyone wanting to find out more about what we have encompassed. It is not an exhaustive list but we hope it provides a taste of the rich seams of information covering the centuries-old story of the Sephardim. For convenience, we've structured the list by broad theme. Where possible, and in most cases, we've indicated the relevant URL (as of September 2020) and/or DOI.

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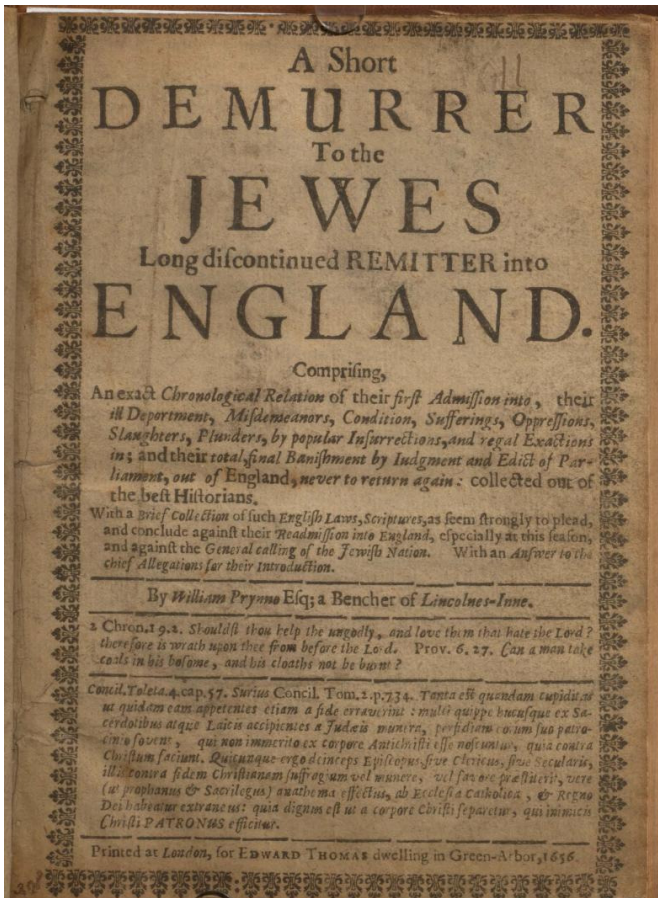

A Short
DEMURRER
To the
JEWES
Long discontinued REMITTER into
ENGLAND.

Comprising,
An exact *Chronological Relation* of their *first Admission into*, their *ill Deportment, Misdemeanors, Condition, Sufferings, Oppressions, Slaughters, Plunders, by popular Insurrections, and regal Exactions in*; and their *total, final Banishment by Judgment and Edict of Parliament, out of* England, *never to return again*: collected out of the best Historians.
With a *brief Collection* of such *English Laws, Scriptures*, as seem strongly to plead, and conclude against their *Readmission into England*, especially at this season, and against the *General calling of the Jewish Nation*. With an *Answer to the chief Allegations for their Introduction*.

By *William Prynne* Esq; a Bencher of *Lincolnes-Inne*.

2 Chron. 19. 2. *Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.* Prov. 6. 27. *Can a man take coals in his bosome, and his cloaths not be burnt?*

Concil. Toleta. 4. cap. 57. Surius Concil. Tom. 2. p. 734. *Tanta est quendam cupiditas ut quidam eam appetentes etiam a fide erraverint: multi quippe hucusque ex Sacerdotibus atque Laicis accipientes a Judæis munera, perfidiam eorum sub patrocinio fovent, qui non immerito ex corpore Antichristi esse noscuntur, quia contra Christum faciunt. Quicunque ergo deinceps Episcopus, sive Clericus, sive Secularis, illos contra fidem Christianam suffragium vel munera, vel favore præstiterit, vere (ut prophanus & Sacrilegus) anathema esse fiat, ab Ecclesia Catholica, & Regno Dei habeatur extraneus: quia dignum est ut a corpore Christi separetur, qui inimicis Christi PATRONUS efficitur.*

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Sephardi music

The Sephardi musical repertoire is vast, but these are just a few snippets to illustrate this tradition, starting with selected musicians and musical ensembles specialising in Sephardi /Ladino music:

La Roza Enflorese - A Belgian group which has been interpreting the Sephardic repertoire since 2000. Originating in an oral tradition, these songs are open to a wide range of interpretative possibilities. Made up of five musicians with a variety of backgrounds, the ensemble presents these songs as an encounter between early, traditional and modern music, drawing both on instrumental techniques inspired by popular music and on improvisation. http://roza-enflorese.be/en/

Los Desterrados - a north London ensemble bringing new life to the ancient music of the Sephardim. Fusing Spanish Flamenco Gypsy melodies of the Balkans and Greece with the rhythms of North Africa and Turkey, Los Desterrados have created a Mediterranean sound with a repertoire sung mainly in Ladino. http://www.losdesterrados.com/

Yair Dalal - Israeli composer, violinist, oud player and singer of Iraqi origin. A prolific ethnic musician, over the last decade he has put 12 albums, covering wide and varied cultural territory, representing Israeli, Jewish and Middle Eastern cultures and fusing them through music as whole. https://www.yairdalal.com/

Yamma Ensemble - a leading Israeli world music ensemble which presents original contemporary Hebrew music, but whose repertoire includes the traditional music and material of the various Jewish diasporas. Songs of the Jewish communities from Yemen, Babylon, and Sepharad, as well as Hasidic music, with the forms and rhythms that have been preserved by generations of Jewish traditions. http://www.yammaensemble.com/

And a few examples of Sephardi / Ladino song recordings:

La Roza Enflorese - by La Roza Enflorese (musical ensemble of the same name as the song - see above), from the album 'Séfarad'. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aU947GrXYCc

Morena me Yaman - by Isaac Levy, from the album 'El Kante de una Vida' (The Song of a Life). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35G4B3NmUZg

Sien Drahmas Al Dia - by the Yamma Ensemble (see above), recorded in concert. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2siNjpiyKY

Luna Sefardita - by Ana Alcaide, from the album 'La Cantiga del Fuego'. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSM8K0yC_Lw

Non Komo Muestro Dyo - the Ladino version of Ein Keloheinu, the well-known Jewish hymn, by Flory Jagoda, in the album La Nona Kanta (The Grandmother Sings). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1MXuZUWOJQ

The 18th International Sephardi Music Festival in 2019, in Córdoba, Spain;

PART 3

DISCOVERING AND DOCUMENTING ENGLAND'S LOST JEWS: THE STORY OF THE PROJECT

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews was an educational project with a strong performance component, undertaken by Pascal Theatre Company and funded through a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, that ran from November 2018 to February 2021. Led by Julia Pascal and produced by Susannah Kraft Levene, the project was born out of the desire to explore and expose the little-known history and heritage of the Anglo-Sephardi community and to heighten public awareness of this. As we have shown in the first part of this e-book, this is a history that stretches from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century, with antecedents going back to the Norman conquest and medieval England. The reason for the project was to expose the history of the return of the Jews to England in the seventeenth century. It was developed with the knowledge that very few people are aware of the Anglo-Sephardi history except the small number who descend from persecuted Iberian Jewry. It was clear to us that, even among Ashkenazim, who form the overwhelming majority of British Jews, knowledge of this Anglo-Jewish history was minimal. Helping to fill this knowledge gap was therefore the premise of the project. As Julia Pascal pointed out in the introduction to the book, the work undertaken was an attempt to show how Sephardim, over the centuries, have revealed British life and intersected with it. *Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews* sought to defy the myth that Jews are new immigrants. The project also aimed to challenge prejudices between communities that are estranged from one another in British society. And crucially, it exemplified how immigration has been a feature of British life over the centuries, and therefore

"It was clear to us that, even among Ashkenazim, who form the overwhelming majority of British Jews, knowledge of this history was minimal."

how the experiences of Sephardim, in the distant and more recent past, resonate with contemporary issues around immigration, identity and integration.

The project has necessarily been multi-layered. It has revealed complex cultural, social, political and philosophical facets within the context of English, British and European – Christian, Jewish and Muslim – history. The disparate element of the research offered us a variety of overlapping and intersectional areas. These diverse impulses that interconnect are examined in greater detail in this third part of the book. They are as follows:

- Oral histories: through a series of interviews, recording the memories and experiences of current members of the Sephardi community in London and Manchester. Seventeen interviews were conducted, mostly by volunteers, in the middle of 2019 and during the first half of 2020.
- One Lost Stone: originally billed as an open-air, site-specific performance at the Novo Cemetery in Mile End. The circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic obliged us to abandon the idea of a live event. We adapted to the restrictions of lockdown by reconfiguring it as a lively, interactive part of the project website launched in July 2020.
- Educational activities: throughout 2019 and 2020, the project ran a series of educational workshops for both adults and young people. These featured a strong performance and participatory element to bring to life facets of Sephardi history and heritage. The workshops were run at Bevis Marks Synagogue and at a variety of other venues. Associated with these activities, the project also produced viewable/printable material in the form of an education pack and an engaging audio-visual presentation, 'A-Z of England's Lost Jews'.
- Research: much of the historical research was undertaken by project team members but there was also some valuable input from volunteers, who had the opportunity of working with online resources or sifting through archival material in the British Library and at the London Metropolitan Archive.
- Outreach: this is the window for the project, including its website, social media presence and the activities undertaken to promote it with interested parties.

A significant feature of the project was the use and training of volunteers, who made a vital contribution to our work. This was particularly important in light of the project's commitment to outreach and engagement and to enable volunteers

learn and acquire new skills. The acknowledgement section at the end lists all the volunteers who were involved, as well as the project team members and organisations that provided support.

Finally, the project's rich and interactive website provides a major legacy for all the activities undertaken over two years, with a commitment by Pascal Theatre Company to maintain it for at least five years after the project formally ends. It follows that this e-book also forms part of the legacy.

Here, Susannah Kraft Levene, Producer for *Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews*, provides her insights into the development of the project:

I have worked with Julia Pascal on many productions and projects for nearly 20 years. We complement each other in the way we work. As artistic director, Julia's approach is seemingly haphazard, effortlessly freewheeling through different thoughts, ideas, and plans. Inevitably the seeming mess of thoughts comes together after her forensic application of research and nailing of the main ideas. My work is to bring to life, organise and give structure to these proposals.

Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews began several years ago with planning and plotting out the approach, followed by many meetings with helpful officers at the National Heritage Lottery Fund. The excitement was palpable when Julia was informed that the application had been successful for this project. And the first thing to do was to set about recruiting the whole creative team that would embark on this journey for over two years.

The team came together quickly, and we have been fortunate to work with a brilliant group of people from diverse backgrounds.

My role was to interpret and make sense of thoughts, concepts, reflections and ideas of this project, to keep it in hand and refocus where necessary. Regular meetings ensured good communication among the group and even when Covid-19 struck, miraculously the project seamlessly transferred from live performance to a major online resource. We have welcomed far more people to this exciting website than we could have dreamed of and are delighted with the hit rate of those visiting the site.

In coordinating the various elements of the project, I was supported by brilliant professional colleagues who managed their own part of the project while contributing creatively to other strands as well. The education component started

off in extraordinary fashion in the setting of the magnificent Bevis Marks Synagogue in early 2019. Coordinating workshop participants from all over London with an age range from 8 to 80 years old provided a terrific springboard and start to the project.

We trained volunteer interviewers and then went on to record the oral histories. The part of the project that was meant to be a live installation and performance at the Novo Cemetery rapidly had to be re-examined in March 2020. Covid-19 meant that we had to rethink fast. And we did. The large public performance we had anticipated was called One Lost Stone and became an online success, reaching numbers that have exceeded expectations. In another element of our activities, Manchester JSoc welcomed us and we delivered a lecture on the project to the Jewish Society while engaging in a lively Q&A afterwards.

The research that has gone on for over two years has produced some golden nuggets of information and detail. It is testament to the dogged determination of the researchers that this wealth of knowledge has been made accessible to the widest public gaze. Access to the historical documents outlined in part 2 of this e-book has been circuitous at times.

We hope that you enjoy reading this e-book and navigating your way round the project's website which brings to life the Jewish and particularly the Sephardi presence in English history throughout the centuries.

ORAL HISTORIES

Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews is not just about charting centuries old history. The oral histories strand of the project, led by Polly Rodgers, sought to address this. We identified and interviewed a range of individuals of Sephardi heritage, mostly descendants of families who had settled in England during the course of the twentieth century but, in three cases, people who could trace their ancestry to Iberian Jews who arrived several centuries ago. Some of the interviewees were born outside the UK and migrated here some years back. The range of family backgrounds illustrates the point made earlier (see page 19) on the relationship between Sephardi and Mitzrahi Jews.

Interviews were conducted informally and, although the interviewers had a crib-sheet of possible questions, the tone of the discussions was invariably conversational and relaxed, to put the individuals at ease and help them to tap into their recollections. Topics covered included life in the country of family origin, reasons for relocation to Britain, language(s) spoken, religious practice (if any), observance of family customs and, topically, the impact of Brexit. In advance of these conversations, we stressed to the interviewees that the project was more interested in human stories, emotional content, sensory detail and family anecdotes than in historical accuracy – so that it wasn't so important for them to remember precise dates. Instead the focus was on what given events meant to them, how particular incidents made them feel, and what significance these had in their lives. Most of the interviews were face-to-face but, after Covid-19, three took place virtually via Zoom audio-visual link. They lasted an hour or more, were filmed and for the most part, were recorded in interviewees' homes (although one of them was conducted in the open, at the Novo Cemetery). Full written consent was obtained to make the recordings available publicly and to comply with GDPR requirements.

Eighteen interviews were carried out in all, mostly in the summer of 2019, with a few more in early 2020. One further subject provided a written statement, rather than taking part in an interview, bringing the total number of testimonies to eighteen. In alphabetic order, our interviewees were:

- Andrew Abdulezer: he was born in the UK, his family came from Iraq.
- Haim Algranati: his grandparents and parents were born in Turkey, direct descendants of Sephardim who fled Spain. He has traced his family to

Granada in 1306.

- George Anticoni: his grandparents came from Constantinople and were Ladino speakers and his father moved to London in the 1920s. George was born there, whilst other family members migrated to France.
- Ros Anticoni: she is Sephardi on both sides of the family. She was born in the UK but her father was from Salonika and her mother from Istanbul. Ros' parents emigrated to London early in the 20th century. Ladino was the language of her childhood, and she feels a strong affinity to Spain.
- Nadia and Ralf Arditti: interviewed separately by Zoom: Turkish Jews of Sephardi background living in England, with Ladino-speaking parents.
- Raya Brody: she was born in Israel and moved to the UK in 1991. Her father was Bulgarian Sephardi, her mother non-Sephardi French; Ladino was the main family language in her childhood.
- Elliot Cohen: his family was from Alexandria; they left Egypt for Britain at the time of the Suez crisis in 1956-57 when he was 7 years old.
- Shirley Goodman: she descends on her father's side from Spanish Sephardim who settled in England in the 17th century, via Amsterdam; she is directly descended from a brother of Daniel Mendoza, the famous boxer.
- Enid Jenshil (written statement rather than interview): she is Ashkenazi on her mother's side, but her father is descended from Portuguese Sephardim who settled in England in the 18th century; she has traced her family tree back to Portugal in the 1670s.
- Basil Jeuda (by Zoom): he is a Manchester Jew of Greek parentage with Italian-Sephardi ancestors.
- Ray Kann: he is Ashkenazi on his father's side. His mother was born in Amsterdam and he can trace her ancestry to the Sephardi community there in the 18th century.
- Ronen Kozokardo: he was born in Israel, of mixed Ashkenazi and Mizrahi heritage. His father was from Romania, his mother from Libya.
- Sylvia Manasseh: her family came from India and Singapore, with some possible Middle Eastern and Spanish origins. She was vague about this in the interview, so in this instance, it was difficult to know whether she is actually Sephardi.

- Maisie Meyer: her family originated from Baghdad and Aleppo, before moving to India and then emigrating to Britain in 1960.
- Alec Nacamuli (by Zoom): his family came from Alexandria and moved to the UK in 1966.
- Guy Sasson: he was born in Alexandria. His family was originally from Constantinople; some of them spoke Ladino. The family was forced to leave Egypt in 1959.
- David Tachauer: he was not born Jewish, but is of distant mixed Sephardi and Ashkenazi origin. He converted to Judaism as a result of meeting his Jewish-Yemeni wife Mimi, and subsequently became fascinated with Sephardi culture.

Recordings and transcripts from the interviews are available on the website at www.lostjews.org.uk/oral-histories/

Whilst the major purpose of this element of the project was to collect thoughts and reminiscences from members of the Sephardi community, another aim was to provide opportunities for volunteers to conduct interviews and learn about oral history interviewing techniques. Although some of the interviews were conducted by project team members (Julia Pascal and Stéphane Goldstein), most were done by a team of volunteers: Melvyn Altwarg, Carey Armstrong, Anne Krisman Goldstein, Jess Hatton, Eli Keren, Gabrielle Levy, Moses Seitler, Clare Shinebourne, Lisa Thompson and a group of young people from Edgware and Hendon Reform Synagogue. Volunteers took part in a training session in June 2019, facilitated by the Oral History Society, and covering the basics of research, interview methodologies, transcription, ethics, and legal considerations. Interviewees were then paired with the volunteers.

The filming, recording and editing of the interviews would not have been possible without project team members Yaron Lapid and Mark Norfolk, who were responsible for the audio-visual aspects of oral histories recordings. And crucially, the transcribing of the interviews represented a heavy burden, spread out between Amber Barrow, Alix Lee, Maxwell Levy, Sally Mijit, Cindy Mindell, Sally Mitchell, Simrun Nijar, David Prashker, Alice Riley, Freyde Sayers and Aviva Spitzer.

Finally, it is worth noting the synergy between this part of the project another significant piece of closely related oral history, the Sephardi Voices UK project (www.sephardivoices.org.uk/) . Since 2009, this has been developing a growing

archive of recorded interviews with Jews from North Africa, the Middle East and Iran, resident in the UK. There are currently over a hundred recordings, housed at the British Library and at Beit Hatfutsot, the museum of the Jewish diaspora, in Tel Aviv.

Snippets from interviews

Here are a few, selected quotes from some of our Oral Histories interviews:

"As a child my dad used to use all sorts of, I would, now I would call them spells, to ward off, let's say if I had a nightmare." (Haim Algranati)

"So, my grandparents spoke Ladino between them and my father was raised purely in Ladino. I spoke in Ladino until I guess I was six years old and I started going to school and, by then, I didn't want to speak Ladino I wanted to be like everybody else." (Raya Brody)

"In Manchester the Sephardi and Portuguese community did not mix with us Syrians. They thought they were a better class and more educated. We were astonished to see that in synagogue they wore bow ties and top hats." (Emily Jacobs)

"Although geographically a very short distance from the East End of the Ashkenazi immigrant community who came to escape the pogroms of Eastern Europe, the Da Costa family that my father and his brothers and sisters were born into, was a very anglicised one." (Enid Jenshil)

"My parents were snobbish and steered me to mix with those from a similar middle class background. Later I joined the Labour Party to work for a fairer and more equal society. I felt that, being brought up as a Sephardi in a comfortable background, and being provided with a good start in life, forced me to consider those less fortunate and privileged than myself ." (Basil Jeuda)

"Well certainly if you talk about Lauderdale Road or Bevis Marks, those were the classic English, you know, Sephardi families and originally, I'm sure they might have looked down upon the Mizrahim except that now you go to Lauderdale Road and the immense majority are Mizrahim."
(Alec Nacamudi)

ONE LOST STONE

In this section, Thomas Kampe, Artistic Director of *One Lost Stone*, sets out his thoughts on this central and engaging component of *Discovering and Documenting England's lost Jews*:

One Lost Stone was initially designed as an immersive performance event – a guided tour- around the Sephardi Novo Cemetery in Mile End, London, inviting audiences into a participatory journey inspired by Sephardi legacies in England.

The changing Covid-19 pandemic circumstances created an obstacle for me as *One Lost Stone* Artistic Director. How could I envisage an alternative journey through history as appropriate form of artistic and educational expression? We had enough resources to create a mosaic-like web-resource to journey across historical timelines and cultures. Had I not just learnt that many Sephardim around the Mediterranean had been excellent navigators who could respond with speed, skill and intelligence?

One Lost Stone grew into an exciting and complex multi-media resource, a digital travel guide. It offers written texts, podcasts, collages, videos, soundtracks and paintings by Sephardi artist Anne Sassoon. It synthesises a poetic and entangled world of inter-cultural discovery and documentation. It is freely accessible at www.lostjews.org.uk/oneloststone/

Two of Anne Sassoon's paintings, as displayed on the One Lost Stone web pages

Our research reveals Sephardi immigration to England as a vital part in the building and consolidating of the modern British Empire and its colonial heritage. How can we respond to this complex history through artistic means today, in 2020? The persecution and expulsion of the Jews in the Iberian Peninsula marks the beginning of a modern globalised world when emerging rivalries between empire-building European powers struggle for dominance. The enforced culture of Crypto-Judaism, emerging from centuries of relentless terrorising of Jews by Catholics in Spain and Portugal, leaves us with difficult histories of Jewish assimilation and survival. The Sephardi diaspora and the arrival of Sephardim in England and Britain tell stories of pain, confusion, anxiety, betrayal, solidarity, hope and renewal.

Above and opposite page: two of Thomas Kampe's collages for One Lost Stone

As artists we have the means and sensitivities to re-imagine and re-embody the stories of the marginalised. As historians we offer nuanced interpretations of hidden histories at a moment when the English and British histories of 'The Great and The Good', mainly the white, wealthy male, are being scrutinised. *One Lost Stone* goes further than traditional narratives by revealing the diversity of journeys and cultures that shape the fabric of current British Sephardi heritage. Jews from Arab cultures, also known as Mizrahi, are consequently a crucial part of our study. This is revealed through Ronen Kozokaro's inspiring sound compositions and the oral histories of Sephardi immigrants living in England today.

Sephardim were part of my own life before this project started, without me being aware of this hidden history. I collect guitars and, searching for an instrument builder to examine one of my guitars, I went in to the workshop of Haim Agranati in North London. There he shared stories of the Alhambra and of his ancestors in Muslim Granada. With Haim I discovered a shared friendship with London-based musician and composer Ronen Kozokaro who brought his knowledge of Mizrahi and Eastern-Sephardi cultures to this project. Both of them

were among the individuals interviewed as part of the oral histories component of the project (see above, page 73). A central influence on my own work is philosopher Edgar Morin, born in 1921 as Edgar Nahoum. Morin's family emigrated to France from Salonika in Ottoman Greece at the turn of the 20th century. Morin asks us to celebrate 'the genius of diversity' in embodied, affective and poetic ways (1).

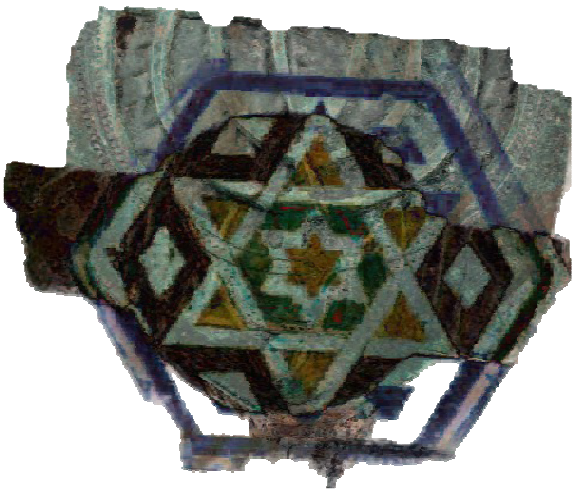
The poetically layered material produced for this project gives voice to the disenfranchised, the poor and to women. It has been a privilege to layer our texts with Anne Sassoon's artwork. These beautifully raw and starkly atmospheric paintings are balanced with collaged graphics and videos which give a distinct identity to each page. Anne Sassoon also has a gallery of her own paintings at www.lostjews.org.uk/oneloststone/index/ .

The website offers a multi-facetted resource for contemplation in evocative, thought-provoking and often entertaining ways. It is advised to perhaps visit one or a few pages a time, and then to return to another 'chapter'.

Each page has a central focus of a summary text accompanied by a recorded spoken version and there are satellite recordings and contextual pages with more information.

Working on this complex project in collaborative ways with an extraordinary creative team assembled around visionary company director Julia Pascal has been a great pleasure, and a unique experience in times of great uncertainty, disruption and disconnection – highly informative, stimulating and challenging.

(1) Morin, E. (1999) Homeland Earth; Hampton Press: Cresskill, New Jersey



EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Here, Del Taylor, who has managed the educational strand of *Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews*, gives an overview of her work on the project.

When I signed up to deliver the project I knew absolutely nothing about this period of Jewish history or the origins of the Novo Cemetery at Queen Mary University even though I was a student at this university and walked past the site numerous times. This all meant that my first task was research, research, research, to try and find out as much as I could about the history. Thankfully this was supported by the brilliant team at Pascal Theatre Company who have unearthed and collated a vast amount of fascinating and in-depth information covering a wide range of historical areas. The idea of undiscovered and hidden history, not on school curricula or part of common knowledge, really took hold for me and I used this as the basis for designing and delivering a series of drama workshops to creatively explore aspects of Sephardi Jewish history.

Tucked away amongst modern buildings in the city, with the Gherkin towering over it, is the oldest synagogue in the UK – Bevis Marks. I ran a series of three open access drama workshops there with the youngest participant aged four and the oldest well into their 80s. We used drama to explore Sephardi history in an accessible, practical and fun way, to try and reveal and explore the lives and stories of Sephardi Jews arriving in London. Each workshop focused on a different element of Sephardi history with participants responding creatively through improvisation, creating images and scenes, using props and objects and exploring and developing characters. The first workshop examined the need for secrecy and hiding as Jews returned to England without official permission. The second focused on creating stories about those buried in the Novo Cemetery and the third was about creating a 3D human historical timeline of Sephardi Jewish history. These workshops were a great success and it was wonderful to see people of all ages and backgrounds coming together to creatively learn, share and embody the history. There was a wonderful moment when participants improvised how they would persuade Cromwell to give them land for a Sephardi cemetery. The group came up with a huge variety or reasons, with responses being historical, emotive, imaginative, religious and personal. I also gained a huge amount from both visiting the synagogue and also the people I met there who generously shared their stories and knowledge.

The content of these workshops was then condensed into one workshop which I delivered in different settings to a range of children and young people across London, including: High Trees Community Development Trust (Tulse Hill), Resources for Autism (Finchley), Studio 3 Arts (Barking) and Edgware and Hendon Reform Synagogue. It has been satisfying to see so many children and young people engage in and learn about a hidden area of history that it's unlikely they would ever have come across without the *Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews* project. I was touched to see how they linked this history to their own lives and how they found parallels in the modern world. I have gained so much knowledge from working on this project. It has proved a real insight into a hidden world.

A further feature of the educational work, and a real legacy of the project, is the online material produced in parallel to the workshops, freely available at www.lostjews.org.uk/education-pack/. Firstly, there is an education pack, designed for young people but which is also an easy entry for curious adults. It illustrates, in an engaging way, some key moments and features of the Sephardi presence in Britain. Secondly, an A to Z of *Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews* is a video recording, spoken by children, where each letter of the alphabet represents an aspect of this Sephardi experience.

Below and overleaf: photos from the educational workshops at Bevis Marks, January and February 2019

Feedback from workshops

For each workshop, we sought feedback from participants, who scored their experience according to different criteria, including content of the events, their facilitation and whether expectations were met. Invariably, average scores were high, indicating an impressive level of participants' satisfaction with their experience. We also received a range of comments, for the most part positive (although with a few pointers about how we might have improved on the content and presentation of the events). Here are a few selected comments:

"Loved all the discussion aspects and how they melded with the workshop drama." (second Bevis Marks workshop)

"I managed to learn a lot without it feeling like a lecture or a bore." (third Bevis Marks workshop)

"The children in this group really had absolutely no idea about the history and were really engaged throughout and certainly learned new facts, ideas and knowledge." (workshop at Tulse Hill)

"I've never seen the children work so well together." (workshop at Tulse Hill)

"[Participants] were also fiery and passionate in their responses to the injustice of people telling others what they can and cannot believe." (workshop at Edgware and Hendon Reform Synagogue)

"They all got so much out of it. So did we, the staff. Particularly one young person who has been really unsettled. We are particularly concerned but he managed to focus." (workshop at Resources for Autism)

RESEARCH

It is both inevitable and proper that a project such as *Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews* should involve a significant amount of research, particularly historical research. It was important for us to ensure that the information we set out across the different strands of the project, on the website, for *One Lost Stone* and indeed in this e-book, is supported by evidence and scholarship. We have therefore been punctilious about documenting ourselves, not only with regards to Anglo-Sephardi history and heritage, but also by examining the Iberian antecedents of Sephardim, and their spread in different parts of the world beyond Spain and Portugal from the end of the fifteenth century. Our research thus covered a span ranging from the Middle Ages to the current day, taking in social and cultural factors as well as the historical narrative. The circumstances relating to the readmission in the 1650s, and the period just after that, receive much attention in this narrative, not least because it is such a pivotal period in the Jewish history of England – but also because it is so fascinating, given the extent to which the readmission was enmeshed in the turbulent events for the Cromwellian period and the Restoration.

The second part of this e-book, with its list of nearly 120 sources, provides a flavour of the extent of the research undertaken. Most of it consists of secondary sources, but we also looked at primary material: the Thomason archive of pamphlets and other printed material from the mid-seventeenth century, kept at the British Library; and the archive of the S&P (Spanish and Portuguese synagogue) Sephardi Community, curated at the London Metropolitan Archive (LMA). In this last respect, we are grateful for the assistance of the S&P Archivist, Miriam Rodrigues-Pereira, with whom we stayed in contact for much of the duration of the project.

The oral histories strand of the project (see page 73) represented another crucial pillar of our research effort. As we have already outlined, in this case, we were drawing from family history and experiences, and their relationship with the events and circumstances that brought our interviewees' families to Britain.

Most of the research was undertaken by project team members: Stéphane Goldstein (who also coordinated the research effort), Sally Mijit, Julia Pascal and Thomas Kampe. However, it was important for the project also to make us of volunteers, a small number of which contributed to the development of our

knowledge base. Not only did this allow us to extend our research 'reach', but crucially, it gave the volunteers an opportunity to develop research and investigative skills, and to discover areas of interest to them. For this reason, we were not prescriptive about which particular themes they might investigate. We provided them with general guidance about the sort of areas they might look at, and some suggested reading material. On that basis, some of them conducted research using online sources, while others visited the LMA to view the S&P archives. A few of the volunteers also took part in an informal meeting that the project organised in July 2019 to help them determine their interests and answer any questions.

The volunteers who contributed were Miranda Fina, Emma Finnerty, Anne Krisman Goldstein, Gabrielle Levy, Andreas Salcedo and Lisa Thompson. We are grateful to all their input, and particularly also to Kevin Martin, whose longstanding interest in the history of the Anglo-Sephardi community has been very valuable. His photographic record and documentation of every grave in the Novo Cemetery is particularly noteworthy, and the outputs of his work can be found on the project website at www.lostjews.org.uk/oneloststone/history/novo-cemetery/ .

OUTREACH

The *Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews* website at https://www.lostjews.org.uk/ , has been the principal window for the project since Spring 2019. Over time, it has developed into a well-documented and comprehensive web presence, covering all aspects of our work. A significant component of the site is the suite of pages devoted specifically to One Lost Stone, with its striking visual features and its rich set of multimedia and interactive resources. We are particularly grateful to Frog Morris (and, before him, to Liza Frank) for having put together the site. We are committed to maintaining the site for five years from the end of the project, i.e. until the beginning of 2026, so that it remains as a live, valuable resource for all to consult and use.

From a marketing perspective, the focus was to bring Sephardi and Jewish history in England into mainstream awareness. To do this, we targeted mainstream, Jewish, historical and arts press to give the launch of *One Lost Stone* in July 2020 an initial boost. This was further supported by an ongoing social media campaign and blog, which offering regular updates on the site's content, any new press and perspectives from the project's team.

The project's social media campaign, led by Natalie Beech, included sharing research, videos, soundbites, images and facts from the website itself that aimed to engage a wide audience - both those within the Sephardi community and those outside of it – as well as young people and educators. We also developed partnerships with other Jewish, arts and historical organisations, allowing us to engage with other organisation's networks.

Alongside this we engaged with community groups through direct outreach; from contacting synagogues around the UK, to schools and university societies, to Facebook groups and blogs. The response has been fascinating and insightful, prompting discussion online and securing us press such as four-page print features in major historical magazines, BBC Radio interviews and podcast appearances.

We've received much positive feedback on our work, much of it highlighted how *Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews* has opened eyes to a lesser-known history. The feedback is described in more detail on the website at www.lostjews.org.uk/oneloststone/blog/ but we've included below a couple of

touching testimonies from two people whose perusal of the website has prompted them to reflect on their own experiences and family histories.

Jacob's Chair, by Sally Mitchell

Jacob's chair now sits in my oldest daughter's bedroom.

I am the oldest daughter of the oldest daughter of the oldest daughter of Samuel Garcia - son of Jacob. Our matrilineal line is a strong one - no sons or brothers since Jacob fathered Samuel - who not only doted on his four daughters but believed in them, fostered their education and enabled them to become 20th century women. This in turn has enabled subsequent generations to become 21st Century women. My first grandchild - a girl - was born in November 2020.

Thanks to the inspiration of this project, our link to the past will never be lost as our family moves forward.

Sephardi Jews are so often seen historically as the wealthier Jews but my family history definitely challenges that idea. This recount is based around a simple wooden chair which I have in my home and sit on often. It belonged to my great grandfather's father, Jacob Garcia and found its way to me when I had to clear my grandmother's flat after her recent death at the age of 96. She kept it in by her bedroom window, books piled on it, clothes draped over it. Every time one of us perched ourselves on it she would recount the same tale. She went by many names: Nana, Mummy, Jill, Esther, Mrs P, but ultimately: Juanita Estrella Garcia. Her memory of family history was extensive so as I write this, I feel her loss keenly as I try to piece together the snippets I recall from so many conversations with her in her flat in one of the Barbican's iconic towers - Cromwell Tower. Cromwell, she proudly told us on countless occasions, had given Sephardi Jews the freedom to live, conduct business, worship and bury their dead in England. From this chair, we had spectacular, hi-rise views over the city our forefathers were finally able to call home once they settled from the Iberian peninsula via Amsterdam (as an aside, the only clue, other than the surname, to our heritage being Spanish rather than Portuguese is a saying which was used when referring to a show off: 'who does he think he is prancing around like he's the Prince of the Asturias?').

She told the same tale told by her father, my great grandpa Samuel Garcia. He was a loyal and active, lifelong member of Bevis Marks. His loyalty was based

primarily on faith but also the support the synagogue had provided our family in his childhood. Support which had enabled him to continue with his schooling to become an apprentice tin plater – the first family member to learn a 'proper trade' and have security of employment. His father, Jacob Garcia was a cigar roller, piece-working in warehouses in Spitalfields along with all his extended family and Brady Street neighbours on the tobacco leaves which arrived in the Docklands. If no ship docked, or if leaf quality was compromised en route, no work was available making livelihoods precarious. Jacob's was even more so: he became blind at the age of 36, and was deemed unable to work. With seven children to support, Bevis Marks stepped in.

Jacob's chair in 2020, in Bournemouth

My great grandpa Samuel Garcia (late 19th C) - perhaps his boots were a donated pair

My grandpa Sam wrote this in 1976 in the 275th anniversary commemorative edition of *The Bevis Marks Gazette*:

> At school (the Gates of Hope School in Thrawl Street), those who belonged to needy families were given shoes and stockings which in those days were

very much appreciated by our parents. On Thursdays, Mr Piza and Mr Edward Porter were very busy in the Vestry paying to the poor the weekly pension given by the gentlemen of the Mahamad. Coals and blankets were also given to the needy and before Yom Tob there was an extra allowance such as a matsot for Pesach and some gifts for Hagadah. The Rev David Bueno de Mesquita did great deeds for the poor and sick in a quiet and unobtrusive manner. I can still see him and the happy way he had of giving everyone hope for the future. Another outstanding memory I have is of the distribution of boots to the children and the look of happiness on the faces of my parents when we arrived home with new boots hanging from our necks tied by their laces." (Extract from *Looking Backwards*, by Samuel Garcia)

The chair? Blind Jacob, my grandpa Sam and Nana recounted, spent his days sitting in the chair while busy family life carried on around him. We have a family photograph – safely stowed away in San Francisco with my aunt – of him sitting proudly, smartly upright, one hand on his white cane the other on the arm of the chair, hand curled around the wooden handrest. The rest of the family all sombrely stare down the camera lens, in typical Victorian family photograph style, but Jacob stares sightlessly into the middle distance. He lost his sight, but thanks to Bevis Marks, his children's futures were secured and as a father, he lost neither hope nor dignity.

How is *Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews* perceived in Ashkenazi eyes? Below, Jacqueline Hopson provides a personal view on the project and its outputs. Jacqueline is the daughter of a German Jewish mother and British father. Her grandparents fled Germany for Israel in 1934, her mother coming to England in 1947. A lifelong psychiatric patient, she has intermittently worked as seamstress, typist and assistant English examiner. At the end of 2020, she completed her PhD thesis in English Literature at the University of Exeter.

I felt a strong need to uncover my Jewish heritage quite late in my life, at the time when my mother died. There had always been a tacit but rigid understanding that it was forbidden to probe the secrets of place and identity that my mother had hidden. Finding the *Lost Jews* project was enticing. I entered the mysterious world of its website.

Immediately I was struck by the familiarity of the Novo Cemetery. I had surely been to this strange place! Some years ago, during the lunch break of a day conference at Queen Mary University of London, I had wandered outside. The rather disappointing academic event seemed to have been barely worth the train journey from Devon. Finding the Novo Cemetery changed that. Who were these Jews with Portuguese and Spanish-sounding names? Why this enclave in this particular spot? I placed a pebble on each of a couple of graves that appeared particularly desolate and abandoned. This act, acknowledging the permanence of memory symbolised by the stone, should have been the spark that awakened my search for the secrets of my family, but that search was again buried and had to wait until 2019 and my mother's death.

The *Lost Jews* website made plain my ignorance of Jewish history in England. It pointed me to the fact that the Jews came as early as 1066 to serve a particular purpose for William the Conqueror. I have discovered that, following atrocities and libel, the Jews were expelled in the late thirteenth century, when considered to be no longer of use. And (a link to the Novo Cemetery here) a number of Jews who had fled the Iberian Peninsula in the late fifteenth century because of the Catholic Inquisition had settled in England, a country which officially contained no Jews. This group (outwardly perceived as Christian) were, it appears, the Sephardim, and it seems their descendants' graves were in the Novo Cemetery in the grounds of Queen Mary University of London, on the Mile End Road.

That the Jewish people consists of two groups is fairly well-known. My family come from the Eastern European Ashkenazi line, my grandparents having fled Poland and Germany. I knew almost nothing about the Sephardi experience before exploring the *Lost Jews* website. Familiar with the scattering of Yiddish words in my parents' vocabulary, I was entirely ignorant of Ladino, the language composed of a mix of Castilian Spanish and Hebrew, used by the Sephardim. The website informed me that Ladino remains a recognised language in many countries. The Sephardim not only had their own language but also had clearly established a major presence in London.

Among its many threads, the *Lost Jews* website highlights the way in which Oliver Cromwell welcomed Jews into England for an extraordinary reason; how the Bevis Marks Synagogue was established while also being hidden away, allowing the practice of Judaism to be tolerated but obscured; and that several culturally prominent Sephardi Jews have been English. Further, it draws attention to the admirable but neglected seventeenth century poet, Emilia Bassano, whose

feminist contribution is strikingly powerful. Discovering the astonishing curse directed at the 23-year-old Baruch Spinoza - later to become a major philosopher of the Enlightenment but anonymously damned for his "abominable heresies" - I recalled the stunning statue of Spinoza that I had photographed in Amsterdam a few years ago. Moving to contemporary times, the *Lost Jews* project contains much of the work of artist Anne Sassoon, whose vivid images are used to indicate pathways into a wide territory of information. The explorer of the great range of resources contained in the website will learn much about the Sephardi in England, especially in London. There are many links to fascinating documents. (I was particularly engaged by Blunt's *A History of the Establishment and Residence of the Jews in England, With an Enquiry into Their Civil Disabilities*, one of the many digitised works now freely available; details on page 53).

The website pointed to the great significance of having land where the community's dead could be buried. This brings me back to the Novo Cemetery. This new burial ground extended the old Velho Cemetery, established in 1657 but full by the 1730s. It is of note that the Jewish presence in England was not officially recognised at the time of the Velho's founding. Apparently, Jews were tolerated as long as their lives were guardedly low-key. This burial of the dead, leaving a lasting sign of the community's existence, provides an interesting metaphor for the secrecy with which this piece started. To be a Jew has often meant living with secrets to avoid persecution, whether casual or murderous. It is of note that the official Sephardi archives, held among the vast range of documents at London Metropolitan Archives, still do not have open access. Secrets are not always plainly laid bare for the interested person to find. Effort may be required to uncover what has been obscured. I intend to continue to explore this community and follow the many paths of discovery in the *Lost Jews* website.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Discovering and Documenting England's Lost Jews was a huge collective effort, with input not just from the project team members, but also from our impressive team of volunteers who were involved in virtually all aspects of the project. Below is the list of everyone involved, with members of the project team indicated in bold.

Project Director: **Julia Pascal**

Producer: **Susannah Kraft Levene**

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One Lost Stone, Artistic Director: **Thomas Kampe**

One Lost Stone, Assistant Director: **Matt Emeny**

One Lost Stone, Compositions & Sound Design: **Ronen Kozokaro**

One Lost Stone, Paintings: Anne Sassoon

One Lost Stone, Actors: Tiran Aakel, Atilla Akinci, Jessica Claire, Norma Cohen, Tiago Gambogi, Max Griffiths, Gillian Harris, Jonathan Hansler, Ags Irwin, Ruth Lass, Fiz Marcus, Jeanette Maykels, Samanatha Pearl and her baby Pearl Knoop, David Ricardo-Pearce, Miguel Ron, Xavier de Santos, Anna Savva, Delicia Sefiha, Ruth D'Silva, Peter Silverleaf, Roger Sloman, Saria Steyl, Sam de la Torre

One Lost Stone Workshop Performers: Tiran Aakel, Deborah Beale, Rob Bellamy, Jasmine Chiswell, Fraser Clark, Norma Cohen, Caitlin Daly, Seer Dindial, Sam Edwards, Maeve Elmore, Odette Gaba, Isidore Gaba, Anne Goldstein, Jess Hatton, Laura Higgins, Pablo Laguna, Julia Langley, Gabrielle Levy, Fiz Marcus, Billie-Jo Rainbird, Zoe Reeve, Aso Sherabayani, Clare Shinebourne, Ruth D'Silva, Saria Steyl, Astrid Swenson, Mattea Thomas-Gray

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Bevis Marks Synagogue in 2019. Its appearance has barely changed since the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the wooden fixtures are mostly the original.

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