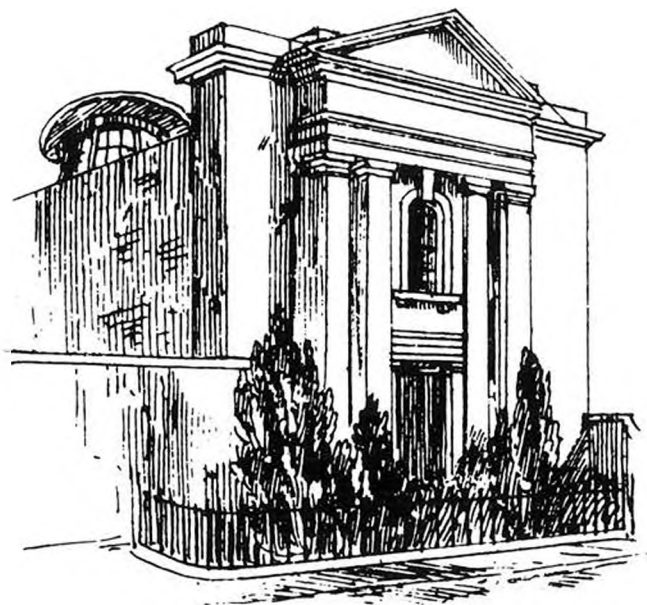


THE HEBREW COMMUNITY OF CHELTENHAM, Gloucester and Stroud



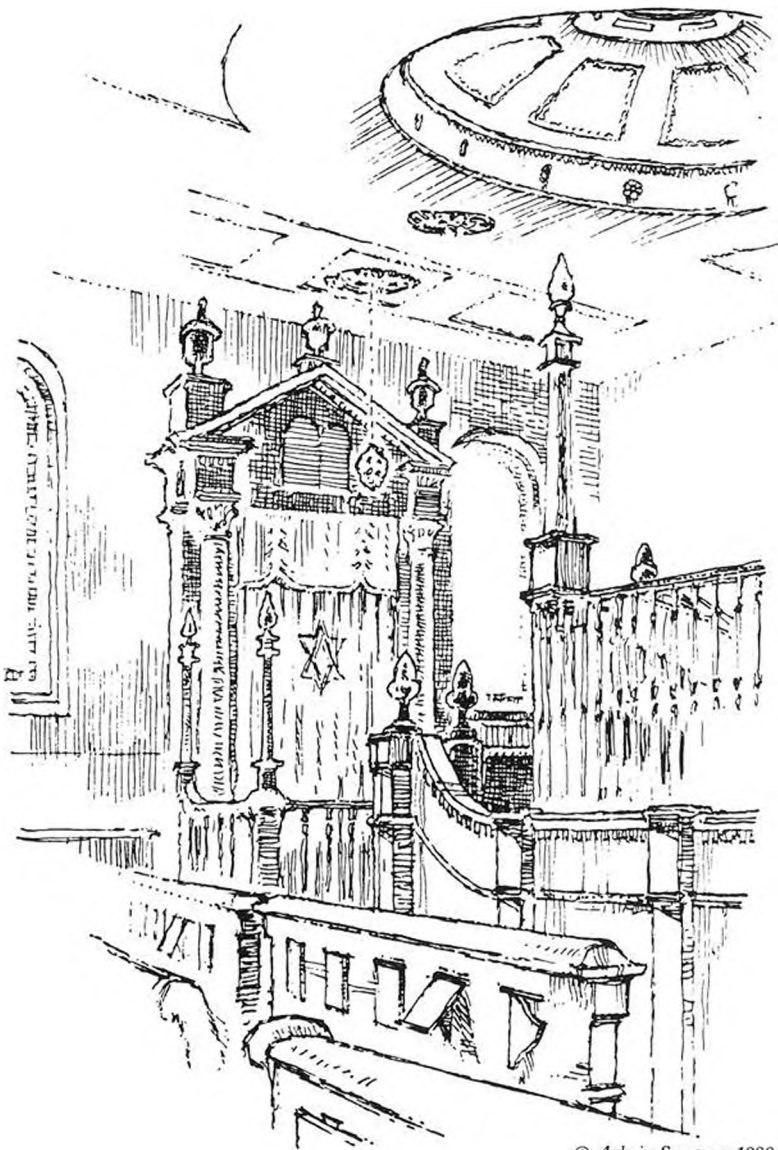
BRIAN TORODE

THE HEBREW COMMUNITY OF CHELTENHAM, Gloucester and Stroud



[George Rowe 1845]

BRIAN TORODE



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Interior, Cheltenham Synagogue

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FOREWORD

This short study of the Cheltenham Hebrew Community was begun as a souvenir memento of the ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH anniversary of the opening of the Cheltenham Synagogue on 14th May 1839. From the very start of his research into the history of the local Jewish community in the last century, the author, who is not a Jew, realised what an important part of Cheltenham's history had so far been ignored. True, there were no unsung heroes to be discovered, no great builders, speculators or inventors to be exposed. In reading this short book, it is to be hoped that the lover of Cheltenham's history will find herein a story of the ordinary folk of the town, those who went about their daily tasks with little or no publicity and yet were part and parcel of all that goes to make up any living community. Their work and hopes for the future did not fade and die as did so many other initiatives in the town. The Cheltenham Synagogue stands today, albeit somewhat hidden, as a proud reminder of the faith and determination of the past and as a witness to the continuing faith of the members of the Jewish Community in Cheltenham today.

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Special mention must be made of Judith Samuel of Bath, who gave so much help in the way of information, correction of wrong assumptions and encouragement to continue; also of Richard Barton who provided much help in the selection of sources and in editing. Finally the encouragement, advice and guidance received from Mr. Barry Green and Mr. Henry Bazar must not go unrecorded. Without their help and kindness in placing the archives at my disposal, much of Cheltenham's past as lived by the Jewish Community in the last century could so easily have been lost for ever.

Brian Torode, 1989.

CHAPTER 1

THE JEW IN PRE-ELIZABETHAN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The first reliable mention of the Jews in this country is made by Egbert, Archbishop of York, in 740, and a Charter of 833 also mentions them. However there is no real evidence to suggest that there was any sort of organised community of Jews in this country before the Middle Ages. Since the departure of the Romans from these shores, Britain had been isolated from the Continent as far as trade and travel were concerned, but with the arrival of the Conqueror, trade again began to flow freely. This no doubt encouraged the many Jews who were at that time living on Duke William's continental holdings, to seek a new life with him in his newly acquired kingdom. It is to 1096 or thereabouts, that we must look for the first real influx of Jews into this country. There had been a savage and barbarous massacre of Jews in Rouen in that year and those who did manage to escape, sought refuge in England. Though not actually despised, they were treated with some degree of suspicion. Thus they tended to keep very much to themselves and to congregate in the larger centres of population like Leeds, Lincoln, York, London and GLOUCESTER.

These immigrants were not allowed to work or own the land nor were they allowed to practise professions or crafts because they were forbidden to join Guilds. Their occupations were restricted to commerce and the peddling of goods which were easy to transport and which could be easily disposed of. Usury was forbidden to Christians, but later, the Conqueror's son William II, encouraged the Jews in the practice of money-lending and they acted as bankers to the Crown. In spite of the anger and hatred which this evoked from Christians, the Jews did in fact exercise a considerable influence on the financial and commercial affairs of the country and they were therefore treated reasonably fairly. However when special taxes were levied the cost to the English and Norman-French communities was far less than the Royal taxes of enormous amounts levied on the Jews. At one time, about one seventh of the total revenue of the Crown was produced from taxation on the Jewish community.

During the Middle Ages the number of Jews varied between 3,000 and 10,000 persons in this country. It was in Richard's reign (1189-1199) that the well chronicled massacres of the Jews in Norfolk and York took place, although it was before Richard's time that the barons

had first organised riots and stirred up anti-semitic feelings, so that, by causing the deaths of many of the Jewish community, they would be absolved from their debts. The anti-Jewish feeling was a result of charges being made against a Jewish community that a Christian boy had been murdered by them as part of their Passover ritual and in mockery of Christ's Passion. One such documented incident is retold by Counsel in his 'History of Gloucester' (1829) where we read that during the term of Hammeline as Abbot of Gloucester (1148-1179), the Jewish community supposedly stole a boy by the name of Herald whom they kept prisoner from 20th March until 16th April, when they put him to death with extreme torture. Counsel tells how the body of the boy was found by fishermen in the River Severn. On the following day the corpse was carried in procession to the Abbey Church of St. Peter where it was received by the Abbot. On the following day it was solemnly buried in front of the altar of St. Edmund, Archbishop, and St. Edward the Confessor, and honoured with the title of martyr, and this, many years after the atrocities of Richard's reign! Many such tales exist and did little to endear the Jews to the local community where they lived — which is just what the barons had planned. But requests by the Jews to leave the country were turned down by successive kings on account of their importance as money lenders to the Crown and as considerable contributors to the Royal Exchequer. Henry III at the beginning of his reign, in 1217, ordered the Sheriff of Gloucester to appoint 24 Burgesses to keep a careful eye on the Jews to make sure that they were not insulted by pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land. Henry, by this act of Royal Protection, recognised publicly the importance of the Jews to the nation and this, only a short time after his coronation in Gloucester. By 1255 taxes levied on them suggest that the Jews of Gloucester were among the eighteen leading Jewish communities in England. Jews authorised to levy taxes for Henry III were six in number:

Bonenfaund, son of Elye
Garsie Gener Belie
Isaac, son of Moses of Paris
Elias, son of Bonenfaund
Vives, son of Bonenfaund
Elias, son of Isaac

At this time, Gloucester had a thriving Jewish community, and its importance as a centre was emphasised by the fact that the city was chosen as the site for the establishment of an Archa — or deposit chest, one of only 27 such centres in the country. All documents concerning contracts made with the Jews had to be drawn up in duplicate and one copy had to be deposited in the nearest Archa. Deeds still exist in Corporation Records in Gloucester that relate to

Jews who seem to have lived in Eastgate Street, and all these deeds refer to money paid on behalf of the debtors — the chief barons. As early as 1192 we read of the heir of one, Moses le Riche, a prosperous member of the community in Gloucester, who owed the Crown 300 marks for the right to acquire his ancestor's debtors. Just after the arrival of the Jews in Gloucester in about 1168, we read of one, Jace by name, who was fined 100 shillings for furnishing the Irish with large sums of money. Much later in the reign of Henry III the Jews of Gloucester were still financing local barons such as Henry de Bohun, Earl of Hereford and Roger de Berkeley. Many such landowners were forced to sell their property to pay the large debts they owed to the Jews.

The Jewish centre at the time was from the Cross to where the East Gate stood, near the present Boots the chemist, although a Jew named Elias, who died c1216, and one named Jacob Coprun, who died c1265, both had acquired property outside the Jewish quarter in their life time. Eastgate was called by many different names over the years and nearly all the names recalled Jewish connections — Jewry Street, Iuwenestreet (1309-1310), Juereystreet (1314), until it achieved East Street by 1467. There are many references in contemporary and later documents to the number of Jews in this area in the Middle Ages, but historians differ as to the site of the mediaeval Synagogue. Counsel in 1829, quotes a Mss Collection which, he claims, states that there was a synagogue near St. Kimbro's Chapel at the time of the Abbacy. Rudge writing some years earlier than Counsel, sets the pattern which is perpetuated in most later accounts: 'Eastgate was formerly called Jewry Street either because they had a Synagogue in the reign of Henry II or a school in that of Henry III. There is a building on the North side of the street, which is supposed to have been the Synagogue or the school. Built with pointed arches, it corresponds in style to that age . . .' Mr. Fullbrook-Leggatt writing in the 1950s about some excavations which had taken place in 1936 near to number 11 Eastgate Street, says, 'Just beyond the Passage was the Jewry, (Synagogue?) and opposite it on the South side of the Street was a tenement which was called the Jews' School in the time of Henry III'. While Eastgate was obviously the business centre at the time, it is more than likely that Counsel's reference to the synagogue being near to St. Kimbro's Chapel, which was just inside the city's South Gate, near today's Kimbrose Way, is more accurate. Then it would probably have been outside the city wall, which Fosbrooke believed was the law at the time of Henry III. He had issued a decree in 1253 setting out the conditions which the Jews would have to accept if they wished to remain in this country — conditions which were in fact no different from those which had existed, unwritten, since their first arrival here:

... no Jew shall dwell in England unless he do the King's service... and there be no communities of Jews in England save in those places where such communities were in the time of the Lord King John, the King's father.

... that in the synagogue the Jews one and all worship in subdued tones... so that Christians hear it not.

... no Christian man or woman serve any Jew or Jewess nor eat with them, nor dwell in their house.

... no Jew shall disparage the Christian faith nor publicly dispute concerning the same.

... that every Jew wear on his breast a conspicuous badge.

... that no Jew enter any church nor chapel save in passing through.

... that no Jew hinder another Jew willing to be converted to the Christian faith.

An interesting and somewhat amusing story exists from this period concerning two Jews of Gloucester. The story revolves around two heads of family, Abram Gabbay and Solomon Turbe. In the Spring of 1220 Gabbay laid a complaint before the Justices for the Jews at Westminster that he had been wounded by Turbe, 'contrary to the peace of our Lord the King'. The hearing was settled for the fifteenth day of the Trinity term. Gabbay's securities were well known Jews of the time — Abraham of Warwick, Benedict his brother-in-law, Samuel Cornes and Isaac of Paris whom he met earlier as one of the Jews of Gloucester authorised to levy tallage for the King. The Sheriff of Gloucester was granted permission to arrest Turbe, and to take him into custody until the date fixed for the hearing. However Gabbay was also arrested for some misdemeanour and found himself in prison with his 'enemy' Turbe. Gabbay plotted to dispose of Turbe himself and to make it look like suicide. Turbe's wife found out about the plot, reported it to the Jewish Tribunal in London and she also implicated Isaac of Gloucester in the plot. Turbe's wife wasted no time in making as many accusations as possible and even accused the Sheriff of being party to the plot. The sad fact of the story is that Turbe did eventually die in prison, in somewhat sinister circumstances, but just before he died, by jumping from the prison walls, he exclaimed that he had jumped in imitation of King Saul 'who had jumped to save himself from ulterior circumstances.' Nevertheless on seeing his wife approaching, he shouted, 'Be gone. It was your advice that killed me.' On the following day, while making his dying deposition he retracted and accused Gabbay and only Gabbay of causing his death. But each

witness questioned agreed that death was due to suicide. Suspicion must lie with Gabbay who two years later was accused of the murder of the sister of Abraham Folet, a Jew of Bristol.

It is sad that only stories of violence and discreditable conduct exist for this period, but these were the stories the barons would have encouraged in order to provoke hostility towards the Jewish community.

Whether there were any Jews living in Tewkesbury at the time is a matter of conjecture. A. M. Hyamson in 'History of the Jews in England' claims that pre the Expulsion of 1290, Gloucester and Tewkesbury were the two Jewish centres in the county. James Bennett writing in 1830 says that there had been a synagogue formerly in St. Mary's Lane, Tewkesbury. Leland writing 1530-1540 states that 'Sum say that Theocus' Chapelle was about the place where syns the Jues' synagogue was.' Some remains of an ancient stone building existed in Bennett's time near the entrance to St. Mary's Lane, but there is no record to prove for what purpose it existed. The only documented story of Jewish connections with Tewkesbury of this period is that concerning one Solomon, who in 1259 fell into a sewer on a Sabbath, and refused all offers of help for fear of profaning his Sabbath.

By 1260 Henry III was desperate for money and in that year he sent officers to Gloucester to make an inventory of all the Jews' effects of every kind and some profit for the royal coffers was thus gained. By this time a 'middle class' was developing in England and an influx of foreign bankers was beginning to take over the business responsibilities previously reserved for the Jews. By 1275 Edward I was able to introduce a statute forbidding the Jews to engage in usury, thus all but destroying their chief source of income. Taxes raised on them were so high that they soon became impoverished and then were of no use to the King nor to the country. Locally, the Jew in Gloucester disappeared in this same year for the Lady of the Borough, Queen Eleanor, had been promised that any town which she received in dower would not contain any Jews. Gloucester was such a town, and the Jews were all moved to Bristol.

With the diminishing usefulness of the Jews in this country, Edward decided in 1290, to expel all Jews from the realm, except those who would convert to the Christian faith. The law was to take effect immediately and All Saints' Day, November 1st, was the deadline for their departure. Any found in the country after this date were to be hanged. It was commonly known that those who embarked at the Cinque Ports were robbed of whatever money they had on them, when out at sea, and then barbarously butchered by the ship's master and thrown overboard. Others were marooned on a sandbank uncovered by the ebbing tide and subsequently drowned when the

tide came in. However, when the king heard of this, he condemned many of the murderers and robbers to be hanged.

Thus for nearly 400 years the entry of Jews into England was forbidden, although a few did manage to enter because of their reputation — such a person being Rodrigo Lopez, Physician to Queen Elizabeth I.

CHAPTER 2

THE RETURN OF THE JEW TO GLOUCESTERSHIRE

In the sixteenth century refugees from Spain and Portugal who had been persecuted under the Inquisition managed to gain entry into England in the guise of Protestant refugees. These Jews known as Marranos, managed to avoid baptism for their children and secretly held Jewish services in one another's homes. Under Mary's rule they were again forced to leave the country out of fear of being exposed to the cruel tortures which she inflicted on Protestants. In the reign of Elizabeth they were unofficially allowed to return in small numbers but it was not until the time of Cromwell that Jews were informally tolerated in England.

In the 1630s, Menassah ben Israel, a member of the Marrano community then living in Amsterdam, began to promote the cause for the legal readmission of Jews into England. Menassah was of Portuguese origin and in 1650 he led an exploratory mission into England to test Cromwell's reaction to his plan. At this time there were about 100 Marrano families living in England and Cromwell, it would seem, had a fairly tolerant attitude towards them. He was in favour of the repeal of the Act of Exclusion of 1290 albeit on economic rather than religious grounds. Menassah's petition was however turned down in 1655, on the advice of Cromwell's advisers, but at the same time, to the great relief of the Marrano community who feared that too much publicity might force them into revealing their true identity and thus draw attention to their hitherto illegal existence. However no official statement was made by the Council of State as to the status of Jews and their presence came to be accepted as legitimate. Menassah returned to Holland somewhat disappointed at not having been instrumental in bringing about the situation. Thereafter Anglo-Jewry began a period of steady expansion preparing for the gradual entry into this country of Jews from the Mediterranean regions.

It is not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that we can refer definitely to the history of Jews in England outside London. Sir Robert Atkyns, in 1712, expressed the opinion that in his day there were no Jews living in Gloucestershire, and that the only Jewess residing in the county lived in Tewkesbury. Nevertheless in the Parish registers of Oxenton Parish, there is recorded the death of a Jew of Tewkesbury who died in 1685. He is described as a cordwainer.

In the London Gazette for 1749 mention is made of Moses Myer of Cheltenham, a pedlar, and it is implied that these Jews were of the wayfarer class, not residents.

The first organised Jewish groups appeared in the provinces about 1740, many of them in places where there had been communities before the Expulsion of 1290. Where no synagogue existed services were held in members' homes. These settled communities would have consisted of watchmakers, jewellers, silversmiths and money lenders. From time to time these small local communities would have been augmented by travellers from London and the Home Counties or by immigrants who arrived from the continent. There is no doubt that the Gloucester community dates back to the mid eighteenth century, for a report in the Gloucester Journal of 26th March 1764 describes how, 'Yesterday morning three fellows were committed to Northgate gaol on suspicion of stealing watches. A farmer had bought one from a Jew who had bought it from one of these fellows. The Jew discovered him, and they were arrested. A colony of the sons of Israel have lately taken up their abode here . . .' Hyam Barnett, on his death in 1815, was reputed to have been well known in the counties of Hereford, Monmouth, Gloucester and South Wales for nigh on 40 years. In 1775 and 1776 the London Gazette mentions Isaiah Abraham Zachariah a silversmith of Gloucester, and Sampson Levy also of Gloucester who, according to Cecil Roth, may have been the Levy admitted to the Great Synagogue in 1801. An even earlier member of the community in Gloucester was Isaiah Abrahams who died in 1821. His family had lived in the city since about 1686 and Isaiah had lived in his house in Southgate Street since 1765. Another 'though distant link with the local population, who had Jewish connections, was David Ricardo (1772-1823). His father was a Jew who had come to England early in life. He made a great deal of money but was highly respected for his integrity and ability. He was a strict adherent to the faith of his ancestors and when his son David abandoned this faith at about the same time as his marriage to Priscilla Wilkinson in 1793, family ties were severed. In 1813, David bought Gatcombe Park Estate in Gloucestershire and was Sheriff of Gloucester in 1818. He is described as a most agreeable and least formal person. He supported a school and an almshouse near Gatcombe and it was he who financed the building of the church at Amberley.

Most of the Jews at this time were pawnbrokers but their astuteness as dealers helped them with other trades as well. Isaiah Abrahams mentioned above, was a dealer, travelling jeweller and money changer, the latter being a thriving trade in a port like Gloucester. He was also minister of the Gloucester Synagogue, and baked the Matza for the Passover. Proof of the family's long

association with the city is kept in the City Library in the form of a Jewish calendar compiled for the Gloucester Jews in 1811-1812 by Isaiah's father.

The Gloucester Guide for 1792 states that on the 'south side of Barton Street is a Jewish synagogue, and nearly opposite is the Presbyterian Meeting House'. The synagogue was at that time, therefore, on the site now occupied by the present Co-op, as the chapel referred to was demolished as recently as the 1960s. By 1802 the synagogue had moved to new premises nearly opposite the site of the recently demolished Royal Infirmary. Fosbrooke tells us that this was in fact in Mercy Place. Rudge describing this building says, 'The Jews have a Synagogue opposite the infirmary, but it has nothing interesting or worthy of particular note.' Bond (1840) says that 'the synagogue has been for an indefinite period near the site upon which the Independent Chapel now stands.' This Chapel, Southgate Congregational, was demolished in 1983. Therefore, although we are in no doubt as to the site of the nineteenth century synagogue, we have no knowledge about its appearance and size. The Gloucester Journal of 3rd March 1823 advertises to be sold, 'Four dwelling houses opposite the Infirmary in Lower Southgate Street, in the occupation of . . . Also excellent Malt House with small Brewhouse and Warehouse adjoining, and a large room over the same, now used as a Jews' Synagogue, and a walled garden behind the same.' By 1840, Bond says the Synagogue 'is closed due to lack of a congregation,' although in 1842 services were still being held in a room over an Inn near to, if not on, that same site. Slater's Directory of Gloucestershire, 1852, infers that the Synagogue is still functioning, although this may have been a reference to the actual building rather than to a congregation.

The eighteenth century cemetery was in Organ's Passage or Gardner's Lane off Barton Street and served persons from Ross, Hereford, Stroud and of course Gloucester. This land had been bought in 1780 from the then rector of St. Michael's Parish and measured about 12x9 yards. The first burial there was of a boy who had died in the Autumn of 1794. A translation of the tombstone inscriptions is given by J. T. Fowler, MA, FSA, in Gloucester Notes and Queries, 1890. In this article, Mr. Fowler describes a visit he made to the Burial Ground in 1889. The plot was almost wholly occupied by headstones bearing Hebrew inscriptions. The remains of the fireplace for the Watch House, where the dead were washed before burial, and where the watchman kept guard to protect the body from bodysnatchers, was still visible. The last dated stone, of the thirty five in existence, was for 1887. The Burial Ground was closed in 1938 and the bodies re-interred and the tombstones re-erected, at Coney Hill Cemetery.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were many Jews living in Gloucester. The 1820 Directory names Isaiah Abrahams, whom we have met already, his son Michael, a shopkeeper, also of Southgate Street, and Isaac Levi, a clothes dealer of Bolt Lane. He died in Ross in 1842 aged 60, and was buried in the Organ's Passage Cemetery. Another Jew mentioned is Moses Levi a travelling jeweller, of Westgate Street, and his wife Abigail.

Although there is no evidence to suggest the presence of a synagogue, there were small clusters of Jews living at Ross, consisting mainly of the Levi family, and at Hereford and Worcester. But Gloucester was the 'parent' community which reached its peak in the 1820s. A shochet was licensed to practise in Gloucester as late as 1830 but after this date things appear to have entered a period of steady decline. The Jewish Chronicle of 18th March, 1842, writes what amounts almost to an obituary:

The Jews have formed a congregation here (Gloucester) for upward of seventy years. The late Sampson Levy, Hyam Barnett and Henry Moses were the founders: but we regret to say that the affairs of our brethren are not now in a very flourishing condition there being but six families residing here. Divine Service has for many years been held in a room in Southgate Street. The Burial Ground is in Barton Street, the Trustees of it are Messrs. Jacob Moses of Gloucester and Coleman Levy of Ross. At present there is no Reader.

In sharp contrast to the demise of the Gloucester congregation, we have in the 1820s the beginning and in the 1830s the blossoming of the Cheltenham community. What caused the decline in the Gloucester community's membership can only be guessed at but Isaiah Abrahams, when asked to comment on the decline, said that, 'When the Quakers come in at one end of the town, the Jews leave at the other.' The Quakers' reputation for business expertise was a very real threat to the Jews. In spite of the fact that in the 1850s there were several Jewish families living in the town, such as the Jacobs, and the Josephs, no attempt was made to revive the Gloucester community, and the synagogue archives have disappeared completely. When the Chief Rabbi visited the Burial Ground in 1871, the independent existence of the Gloucester congregation had ended, the few remaining members having affiliated themselves to the Cheltenham synagogue. The last survivor of the old Gloucester community was Miss Amelia Abrahams, daughter of the aforementioned Isaiah and his wife Sarah. Amelia died in 1886 in the house her father had first lived in, in Southgate Street in 1765. She was buried in Organ's Passage Burial Ground. Many years previously she had been in

receipt of financial help from Sir Moses Montefiore, Sir Francis Goldsmidt and Professor Marks. Until her death she had received a weekly allowance from the Cheltenham congregation of 13/- which was always delivered to her personally by one of the officers and which she always acknowledged by letter. At the time of her death Amelia was 92. Thus ended a long association between the Cheltenham and Gloucester communities, and so passed one of the Anglo-Jewish community's living legends, born in the eighteenth century and surviving almost into the twentieth.

A Mss collection compiled by H. Y. J. Taylor c1938 held in Gloucester City Library Local Studies' Collection, lists all the tombstone inscriptions from the Jews' Burial Ground before the removal of the bodies to the Coney Hill Cemetery. A Plaque at the entrance to the Jewish Burial Ground at Coney Hill perpetuates the memory of the former Organ's Passage graves and burials:

Here lies the remains of a number of persons of the Jewish faith formerly interred in the old Jewish cemetery adjoining St. Michael's School, and removed here in April 1938, when that cemetery was given by the Jews of this country as a playground for the children of Gloucester.

CHAPTER 3

THE ARRIVAL OF THE JEWS IN CHELTENHAM

Until the discovery of the spa waters, Cheltenham was no more than a sleepy little market town. It was about the time of the visit of George III in 1788 that Jewish pedlars were first attracted to the town. With the visit of the King, the streets 'were crowded with people of every rank, a pastoral scene of noble Lords and Ladies who had followed their sovereign to this sweet spot, surrounded with lofty hills, to share with him, the benefit of its healing waters,' and a ready market was found for all sorts of new trades and commodities.

From a resident population of just over 3,000 in 1800, the town had grown to the size of a small city by 1826, with 20,000 inhabitants. Between 1810 and 1840, the fashionable areas of Lansdown, Montpellier, Bayshill and Pittville had been erected to attract people with either or both, title and money. The competition from places such as Bath meant that the social requirements and comforts of Cheltenham's visitors needed to be catered for and the services which they were used to in the big cities had to be provided. Thus there arrived in the town, in the early years of the century, doctors and dentists to look after the health of the visitors; solicitors to deal with the legal problems of the aristocracy and the financial needs of the many speculators who were pouring money into the enormous building developments which were springing up all over the town; and of course there were business people eager to make what money they could from such a promising financial climate.

Although there is no evidence to suggest that the Gloucester traders immediately made a mass exodus and headed for Cheltenham, there is no doubt that travelling Jewish merchants took full advantage of the many business opportunities which they found in the new town, as did many established circuit traders and professionals. As early as 1814 the Cheltenham Chronicle for June-August carried the following advertisement:

Emanuel and Levy, from Oxford and Union Street Bath,
now at 83, High Street, Cheltenham, opposite to the
Colonnade. Foreign and Toy Warehouse.

Among the early professionals of the day, who included Cheltenham in his circuit, was Jacob Abraham, who although not of great importance within the Cheltenham congregation, yet is a fine

example of a respected Jew who saw the opportunities to be gained in the town and who, through his contact with the nobility, earned for himself a place in the social 'gossip' of the day. Mr. Abraham, formerly of St. Andrew's Terrace, Bath, may have been visiting Cheltenham since 1791 but with the rapid growth of the town he decided that permanent premises at the Spa would be profitable. He first practised from '105, near Stiles' Boarding House, Cheltenham' until 1814, when he respectfully announced 'to the Nobility and Gentry and the Public that he has opened an eligible shop adjoining Mr. Thompson's Pump Room, Cheltenham'. The present building was constructed during the twelve months after September 1825 on land bought from Pearson Thompson in that year, and was until recently Miss Amina Chatwyn's Elston Boutique.

The Duke of Wellington was a regular visitor to the Spa and the Cheltenham Journal, 21st July 1828, records that, 'The Duke of Wellington . . . during his stay . . . regularly went to the Royal Wells every morning soon after 7.30 a.m. At about half past eight the Duke would go homewards, sometimes turning into the shop of Mr. Abraham the optician, then adjoining the Pump Room, where he would look at the barometer, and speculate with the old gentleman as to the sort of weather that was to be expected.'

In September of the same year, the Journal again reported: 'The Duke during his stay repeatedly visited Mr. Abraham's Emporium where he not only inspected the chief novelties and recent improvements, but condescendingly made some very large purchases.' This provided a marvellous testimonial for the optician and showed with what esteem he was held in the town. Mr. Abraham later moved to 1, Queen's Circus, which after 1844 appears to have been run by his son Maurice. In the Bath Directory of 1829, Jacob is listed as being Warden of the Bath Hebrew Congregation but was a regular contributor to the Cheltenham Synagogue between 1833 and 1837. His second son, Maurice contributed between 1839 and 1854 although he paid more in fines than he made in donations.

Other early arrivals in Cheltenham who assisted at the birth of the local congregation and in some instances contributed towards its funds, included Solomon Abraham Durlacher, who was born near Karlsruhe in 1757. He appears to have worked in Cheltenham prior to 1808 as the Bath Chronicle for November of that year records, 'Dr. Durlacher, Surgeon Dentist and Corn Operator, recently returned from Cheltenham to No. 2 Union Street, Bath . . .' Dr. Durlacher's wife also practised as a corn cutter for ladies, and their son Lewis became chiropodist to George IV, William IV, and Queen Victoria. Another early Jewish 'resident' was the Reverend S. Lyon, Teacher of Hebrew, who had a 'genteel apartment at No. 2 St. James' Street, Cheltenham'. This gentleman was advertising in the Cheltenham

Chronicle as early as 1815. He also advertised his scholarship for a while in Bath and in 1815, he had had published, in Liverpool, a 'Theological Grammar and Lexicon.' But not all the early residents were professionals. 'Mrs. Samuel . . . begs leave to most respectfully inform her friends that she has returned from Cheltenham (opposite Mr. Thompson's Well,) and looks forword to receiving their custom at her umbrella, parasol and Haberdashery Warehouse at 11, York Street, Bath.' (Bath Chronicle 1819).

The presence of people such as these, together with the other professional and business people who had come to the town, no doubt provided the impetus needed to start a local congregation which would probably have met for worship in one another's homes as was the case in Bath. Elias Myers, Lewis Isaacs and Isaiah Alex were responsible for establishing the Cheltenham Congregation in 1823 but only Myers and Isaacs remained to see the opening of the present synagogue in 1839.

CHAPTER 4

THE BUILDING AND CONSECRATION OF THE SYNAGOGUE

Writing in 1842, the editor of the 'Strangers' Guide to Cheltenham', said that, 'Previous to the new synagogue, the descendants of Abraham worshipped the God of their fathers in an apartment appropriated to that purpose in Manchester Place'. All the evidence in fact points to the first meeting place being in Manchester Walk which was an extension of Manchester Place. Here the Jews established their first synagogue in a small upper room in premises rented by the congregation, situated on the corner of St. George's Place and Manchester Walk (today's Clarence Street). This building would have been on the corner of what is now the Shaftesbury Hall car park, almost at the crossroads. This temporary synagogue was certainly in use by 1826 and continued to be used for worship until the erection of the present building in 1837-1839. Although the room was rented the congregation immediately bought a piece of land for use as a burial ground. This was in Elm Street and was in use in, or even before, 1826, having been purchased in 1824. The room rented for worship belonged to Mary Boodle, widow of James Boodle, a publican of the town. Rent receipts are still preserved, the earliest being:

1826 Received from Mr. Alex £2.00 being a Quarters rent for the synagogue.

The room was obviously furnished as a synagogue for there was a Prayer Board on the wall containing a prayer for the Royal Family, made especially for the synagogue in 1826. This board is now in the Jewish Museum in London. The earliest recorded official was Joseph Koppel Hyman who received his authorisation as Shochet from the Chief Rabbi in the Spring of 1825. In 1832 Mr. Alex paid John Knight £3.00 for making new seats and bookboards for the 'chapel' and for making good the plastering on the walls. However, as the town attracted more visitors and the accompanying tradespeople, business men and professionals, the room in Manchester Walk soon proved too small for the expanding congregation. In September the following year negotiations began for the purchase of a plot of land off St. James' Square opposite the new Infants' School, where it was hoped to construct a synagogue.

As late as 1837 the Committee considered purchasing the original Quaker Meeting House in Manchester Walk but they did not proceed with this venture. In 1836 the Chief Rabbi paid a visit to Cheltenham to greet the congregation and presumably to inspect the site of the proposed new synagogue where excavation work had in fact been started. On 11th June, in the following year, a firm decision was at last made to proceed with the erection of the new synagogue and this decision was witnessed as follows:

We the undersigned, being the major part of the Cheltenham congregation, have this day, 11th June 1837, unanimously agreed to grant full powers as a committee to Mr. E. Myers, Mr. I. Moses and Mr. J. Davis, to undertake to lay out the money now in hand, in building the synagogue and in any other way they may think beneficial to the congregation.

(signed by)

M. Levin

Lewis Isaacs

Samuel Solomon

A. Durlacher

J. G. Collins

The designs first submitted by R. Paul & Sons were evidently not acceptable for the contract was awarded to William Hill Knight, whose private address was in Portland Terrace. The late David Verey described the synagogue as one of the best nonconformist chapels in the area. On Tuesday 25th July 1837:

“ . . . between six and seven a.m. in the morning was laid with due and masonic ceremonial the first stone of the new synagogue for members of the Hebrew persuasion, from the design of W. H. Knight, Mr. Elias Myers acting as President and Mr. Lewis Isaacs as Vice-President on the occasion. The congregation which was numerous and respectable was appropriately addressed by Mr. I. Levy in Hebrew, who afterwards translated the same into English’

(Cheltenham Free Press 5.8.1837)

Three months after the above event, it was resolved to raise the sum of money needed to complete the synagogue and to deposit the title deeds into the hands of the person who ‘will cash a bill for the amount required’. Mr. Lewis Levason, of 2 Painswick Lawn, offered to advance the money and the committee was asked to prepare the promisory note and to collect all the necessary papers to forward the above proposal. The actual building must have been completed by December 1838 for in September of that year the then President, Mr. J. Davis, sent the following letter to the owners of the Manchester Walk premises:

‘In the name of the Jewish congregation, I give you notice of our intention to quit possession of the premises now in our occupation, situated in Manchester Walk, Cheltenham, used by us as a synagogue from and after 25th December next ensuing!’

The 14th May 1839 was the date chosen for the actual consecration of the new synagogue which had cost between £1,400 and £1,500 to build. The Cheltenham Free Press of that month describes the scene thus:

‘On Tuesday last, the members of the Jewish persuasion assembled at four o’clock to consecrate the new synagogue. . . . Mr. Abraham of the Gloucester Synagogue officiated as Reader and the Psalms were chanted by Mr. Lewis Isaacs of Cheltenham and his assistants. The Reader followed by Mr. Davis, President, and Messrs. Isaacs, Samuels and Plaite carrying the Rolls of the Pentateuch, walked in procession seven times around the Synagogue, chanting a Psalm during each circuit, after which they deposited the Rolls in the Ark . . . The Synagogue was erected by Mr. Hastings and the plans were drawn by Mr. Knight, both of this town. The exterior is plain but the interior is fitted up with the Ark, the body of which is imitation jasper, and the pediment is supported by elegant corinthian columns, the capital and bases which together with the vases above the pediment are chastely gilded, and the doors are hid by a rich Indian curtain; the reading desk is painted in imitation of bird’s eye maple. The synagogue is furnished with two brass chandeliers, eight large candle sticks, besides small sconces, which were filled with wax candles. Besides this there are two frames upon the wall, one containing a prayer in English for Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and the other a prayer in Hebrew repeated on the days (sic) of Atonement. The dome is one of the principal ornaments of the place and is finished in a superior manner with cornice and fretwork.”

(The Cheltenham Free Press, Saturday 18th May 1839.)

Most of the contractors were local men such as Mr. Hastings the builder and carpenter; William Dangerfield who used only ‘hard burnt bricks’; William Clifford, slater and plasterer; Joseph Baker, mason and Thomas Goodingham signwriter. Nicholas Adam was the maker of the elegant dome which still surmounts the building and which it would seem cost a mere £15.10.0. This skylight was installed by Mr. Gore who was also the contract plumber. The interior was

doubtless furnished with some of the fixtures from the temporary synagogue in Manchester Walk as the carpenter's account suggests:

May-September 1838. Altering floor joists and repairing and fixing Altar Piece: new moulding to surbase, new skirting etc.; risers under steps, new elbow to Warden's seat and general wood repairs, £12.8.8.

Repairing old seats and making and fixing keys to the locks of the seats; making forty new oak bookboards; taking down framing in old synagogue, making good and fixing in gallery;

fixing iron and brasswork to gallery, Altar and Reading Desk; £40.2.11

Plus labour, making good and fixing old fittings, making a total bill of £153.13.10½d

However much of the furniture came from a synagogue in Leadenhall Street, London. One bill at least shows that local tradespeople were used to effect the transfer of the London furnishings:

7.9.38 Tanner and Baylis Warehouse, to carriage one case of pictures from London £2.1.6d
and one waggon load of fittings for the synagogue £86.0.0d

The purchase of the site had been made with the help of a loan from the bank and from William Buckle, a local attorney. A legal technicality meant that the deed of purchase was not in fact finalised until after the completion of the Synagogue. The signatories throw light on the active membership of the congregation at the time:

Between John Packwood of Cheltenham and:
Isaiah Alex, late of Cheltenham, Surgeon Dentist,
Andrew Isaacs of Stroud, Pawnbroker,
Lewis Isaacs, Gentleman of Cheltenham,
Abraham Levy, Watchmaker of Cheltenham,
Ephraim Moseley, Boot and Shoe Maker, Cheltenham,
Israel Moses, Pawnbroker, Cheltenham,
Paid £110.0.0 to John Packwood for the absolute purchase,
herein described, hitherto part of Lateram Meadow and of
allotment 173 in the Cheltenham Enclosure Award.

20th September 1839.

No doubt the Cheltenham committee requested financial support from other congregations as well as individuals. One of the lists of donations received 'in aid of erecting a new synagogue in Cheltenham', in 1838, includes the following donors — Lazarus of Hereford, Levy

of Ross, J. Abraham of Bath, B. Isaacs of Stratford, Mr. Mier of Swansea, Mrs. Davies of Woolwich, A. Cohen of Kent Road and many other persons who contributed from London addresses.

With the consecration of the Synagogue in 1839 the congregation now had a permanent focus for religious and community life within which to develop and consolidate its identity in the still popular and expanding resort.

CHAPTER 5

PERSONALITIES IN THE EARLY COMMUNITY

Although the 1837 decision to proceed with the building of the synagogue was signed by 'the major part of the Cheltenham congregation,' five names only are affixed. However between the years 1833-1839 the Members' subscription book contains twenty nine names, although not all were paying for the entire period. The Strangers' (visitors) accounts for the same year make very interesting reading and give one insights into the many nationalities to be seen in the streets of Cheltenham at this time:

Blackbeard; Mr. David, (Turk); Levy the Turk; the Hollander, (Mr. Collins' friend); Noha Portigo; Shrior's countryman; Mordecai no Beard; Moses Junior of Frankfurt; and Dr. Woolfe.

In addition visitors are listed as coming from Bath, Gloucester, Malmesbury, Stratford, Bristol, London, Abergavenny, Oxford and Hereford. Several of the listed strangers — Lousada, da Silva, Alex, Karo and Isaacs, later took up residence in the town and became full members.

'A Statistical Account of the Principal Jewish Communities Throughout England,' published by the Jewish Chronicle in 1842, gives the following information about Cheltenham's Hebrew community:

There are only eighteen families of Jews resident here who are chiefly occupied as shopkeepers and form a very united and intelligent body, inferior to none in this country for religious zeal and devotion . . . The Rev. Isaac Pulver is Reader and is universally respected by both visitors and his fellow townsmen. The Wardens for the present year are Lewis Levason, and Montague Alex.'

The Alex family was associated with the local synagogue from its earliest days and this connection continued well into the 1870s. Ephraim Alex, Founder of the London Board of Guardians of British Jews and its first President from 1859-1869, is reputed to have been born in Cheltenham circa 1800. By 1834 he had moved to London. In 1853 he was elected Cheltenham's representative to the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Another member of the family and a

Founder Member of the local congregation was Isaiah Alex who had set himself up in the town as a Surgeon Dentist. In 1830 he was advertising in the Cheltenham Journal, his newly invented 'anodyne metallic cement.' The Cheltenham Free Press of 1835 bears witness to Isaiah's popularity and philanthropy:

Advice and Attendance to the Poor, Gratis

Mr. I. Alex, Surgeon Dentist to His late Royal Highness, Duke of Gloucester, from the many applications he has had for advice and attendance, during professional hours, now informs these persons that they can only receive the same, gratis, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, from eight to ten o'clock.'

When or why Isaiah left Cheltenham is not clear but, in July 1834, he took out an Insurance with Sun Assurance. He is therein described as a dentist of 90, High Street, Cheltenham, and he insured his personal property for £750. In addition he insured 12, Gloucester Place, occupied by Richard Hogue, painter, for £400. By 1843, Isaiah was sending donations to Cheltenham from Brussels, a custom which continued well into the 1850s.

Montague Alex appears in the Members' lists from 1838. He was born in London in 1817 and followed the profession of surgeon dentist in Cheltenham from 1839. In 1841 he formed a partnership with Joseph Levason but this had been dissolved by 1843. Montague served several terms as President, Secretary or Treasurer. He married twice and his two daughters were married in Cheltenham's Masonic Hall. By 1845, Montague's surgery was at 21, Rodney Terrace. Joseph Levason, his partner, was the son of Lewis Levason of Painswick Lawn, a benefactor and former President of the synagogue. Joseph was admitted to membership in 1839, but withdrew from active support when he moved to Hereford in 1843. The Levason's were obviously a well respected family for the Cheltenham Examiner records his death in Hereford where he had died on 29th December 1853, aged forty two. 'He is survived by a wife and five children to lament his loss'. Joseph was buried in Cheltenham.

Founder member, Lewis Isaacs, was no doubt a prosperous member of the community. He was a jeweller and pawnbroker of 164 High Street, in 1826, when he insured his household effects — furniture, clothes and books — for £300, glass and china for £50, pledges for £850 and stock on sale for £300. In the Deed of Purchase of the synagogue he is described as a gentleman, and was Vice President of the Congregation in 1837. He died and was buried in Cheltenham in 1841.

Another well known resident in the early days of the synagogue

was Elias Myers who was elected President in 1836. Up to 1847 he is described in local Directories as a Pawnbroker and Silversmith, of 191 High Street. He also appears in the Roll of Electors. By 1853 he had moved to 13, Manchester Walk, and is thereafter described as 'gentleman'. In January 1841 an interesting account appears in a Cheltenham Examiner which describes how Elias took action in the Courts against a former tenant of his, a Mr. James Jackson. 'Mr. Myers is what is described as well to do, having bought some property among which is a cottage in Manchester Place.' It would seem that Elias let this cottage, furnished, to Jackson who soon fell behind with the rent and ran off with some of the contents. Elias died in Cheltenham in 1870 aged eighty five. In his will, among other bequests, he left money to the Cheltenham synagogue and £100 to the Cheltenham Hospital and Dispensary on condition it be made known that the bequest was made by a Jew. Elias also made bequests to his two nephews David and Samuel Sternberg. Samuel was, from 1842, a Pawnbroker in St. George's Street, and from the 1860s until his death in 1885, he lived at Norfolk House, Chester Walk. He was a full member of the Synagogue from 1849 and served three terms as President. His wife Hester, who was the daughter of Abraham Yoell, died at 11, Clarence Square in 1909.

In 1871, Samuel Sternberg was Warden of the Cheltenham Synagogue and his co-Warden was another tradesman, Mr. Hertz Karo. Hertz had started as a Perfumer and Toy Dealer with goods insured for £800 in 1842. His shop and bazaar was in Montpellier Avenue in that year but two years later he was also trading from Montpellier Walk. He was first elected President of the synagogue in 1850 and served several terms as Secretary and Treasurer. In 1853 he moved to Montpellier Promenade from where he ran a Fancy Repository until he died in 1879.

Another family which played an important part in the establishment of the Cheltenham Synagogue was the Moses family. Israel Moses was one of the signatories of the Deed of Purchase and served many times as Treasurer. He was the son of a well established Gloucester pawnbroker, Moses Moses, who in 1820 had a business in Eastgate Street and, by 1823, in King Street, Gloucester. Moses contributed to the Cheltenham synagogue until his death in 1858 at the age of ninety and he was buried in the Cheltenham Jewish Burial Ground. Israel, the eldest child of Moses, was born in Gloucester in 1805 and married Maria Abraham about 1838. His insurance for 1838 and 1839 with Sun Assurance, gives his address as 199 High Street, from where he traded as a pawnbroker and salesman. He must have been a very popular pawnbroker for his pledges were insured for £3,000. Upon the death of his wife, in 1873, he moved to Hereford where he died two years later.

One of the more affluent members of the early days must have been Solomon Mendes da Silva who lived between 1837 and 1843 at Rioho Lodge, Park Place. This was then one of the principal residences in the town. Solomon was born in Jamaica in 1781 and, although moving to Cheltenham, he maintained estates at Moucaque, St. Anne's, on the Island. He was a member of the local congregation from 1839 until his death in 1861, at which time he was living at Blenheim Parade, Pittville. Another wealthy family who lived in Cheltenham were the Misses Lousada, who lived at 1, Lansdown Terrace with their father Mr. I. B. Lousada, who was a member from 1834. A Jamaican Jew who arrived in Cheltenham in 1834 to live in Winchcomb Place was Moses Quixano Henriques who was born in Spanish Port, Jamaica, in 1799. He later became a gentleman publisher and bookseller of the Royal Library, 384 High Street, although he lived at 4 Oriel Place. He was never a member of the local congregation although when he died, in 1866, his brother bought his grave in the Jewish Burial Ground.

Mr. Henriques was not the only Jewish publisher in the town. Lewis Assher Dight was a member of the synagogue from 1836 until his sudden death in 1852 at the age of forty six. He worked from his premises at 170 High Street and is variously described as stationer or pencil, pen and quill maker. His tombstone records that he was survived by his wife and ten children.

Because the congregation was never that large and consisted of relatively few families, generally of the same social standing, marriages took place within the community bringing together so many families at one time that it looked as though each member of the community was related to another. Such marriages took place between the Sternberg and Moses families, the Myers and Davis families and the Karo and Levason families. Such then was the nucleus of the Cheltenham Hebrew Congregation in its early days but names in the 1841 Census indicate that there may have been upward of sixty Jewish families living in the town at that time. Many of these, it would seem, were not members of the Synagogue and showed no apparent interest in the faith of their fathers. Amongst these were several who eventually succumbed to the efforts of the Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews. In March 1834 we read in the local press:

‘On Sunday morning at the Parish Church, two Austrian Polish Jews, Samuel David Margoschis and Jacob Wolfsberg were baptised having been converted to Christianity. Baptismal names taken were Thomas and James. The congregation was numerous and respectable’.

David Margoschis was the son of Samuel, a dealer of Hereford Cottage. Jacob was the son of Wolf and Jehude Wolfsberg of North Street, again dealers. Three similar conversions were reported in the local press in 1843. The Jewish community was always on its guard against societies like the one mentioned above. As late as 1873 Cheltenham's Hebrew minister was requested to visit Mr. & Mrs. Oliver, two Jews, in the County Prison. The matter was urgent 'otherwise the prisoners will fall into the hands of missionaries'.

The number of Jews was naturally augmented by casual visitors to the town although they did not necessarily attend the Synagogue. In January 1841 it was reported that two Jews, hawkers named Abraham Possimore and Fergus Keiro, were tried in Cheltenham Court for enticing a dog away from its owner at Gretton. The dog was traced to 60, Burton Street, where the two Jews were living with a Frenchwoman.

Other newspaper reports at this time provide flesh and bones on those whom one would remember as just names. In June 1841 the President, Mr. J. Davis, was summonsed by a Private J. Wellington of the 98th Foot Regiment for taking more interest than he was entitled to under the Pawnbroker's Act. In court it was confirmed that Mrs. Davis had in fact served Wellington and the case was dismissed 'as a mistake'. Later in the same year the Synagogue was broken into and the Cheltenham Free Press of the 9th October gave considerable space to the matter. It appears that two silver pointers in the shape of a hand and an arm and a silver filigree basket, a silver chalice and the contents of the poor box were stolen. It was stated that the key was left in the door by one of the congregation. Some of the stolen property was pawned at the shop of Mr. Myers and some at Samuel Sternberg's shop. When the suspects were arrested, however, Mr. Sternberg was unable to swear they were the guilty party. Part of the stolen property was recovered.

REMOVED TO No. 21, RODNEY TERRACE.

ARTIFICIAL TEETH AND PALATES.

MR. MONTAGUE ALEX,
SURGEON DENTIST,

IN announcing his Dissolution of Partnership with Mr. LEVASON, begs to inform his numerous Friends that he may be consulted daily, at his Residence, 21, RODNEY TERRACE. He takes this opportunity to acknowledge the very distinguished patronage conferred on him during the many years of his residence in Cheltenham, also to state that, from the facilities afforded him, he is enabled to REDUCE HIS CHARGES to the lowest possible scale compatible with the proper exercise of his Profession, so as to render the Dental Art more extensively useful. Mr. M. ALEX's system of Practice combines all the improved methods adopted in London, and being practically conversant with every Mechanical principle applicable to the Mouth, he will guarantee all cases of Artificial Teeth, from one to a complete set, supplied by him to answer all the purposes of the original, and which for durability, beauty of finish, and accuracy of fitting cannot be surpassed.

☞ Children's Teeth regulated upon an unerring principle.

A VACANCY FOR AN ARTICLED PUPIL.

Removed to 21, Rodney Terrace.

MONTPELLIER BAZAAR,

Montpellier Walk, Three Doors from Davies's Library.

HERTZ KARO

RETURNS his most grateful thanks to the Gentry of Cheltenham and its vicinity, for the favours which have been conferred upon him since opening the above Establishment, and ventures to hope, by tendering Articles of the Best Manufacture, at the lowest remunerating profit, to merit a continuance of that patronage which he has hitherto received.

He has always on hand an extensive STOCK of CABINET GOODS, consisting of every variety of Ladies and Gentlemen's Dressing, Writing, Work, and Netting Boxes, Envelope Cases, &c. &c ; Jet Articles, Musical Boxes, Papier Mache Goods, and Modern Jewellery, (French and English), of the best description, with every other kind of Fancy and Useful Articles, as cheap as any other Shop in the town. [65

CHAPTER 6

THE YEARS OF CONSOLIDATION

Although initially the congregation was small it was certainly enthusiastic and every effort was made to ensure that the future of the Synagogue and its congregation was built on a firm foundation. A temporary Constitution to guide them through the early years of their development was drawn up in 1838/39. In 1840 a complete revision of the Constitution was published by Lewis Dight. According to Cecil Roth the 'Laws of the Hebrew Congregation of Cheltenham', reflect a 'devout, charitable and eager communal life; the authority assigned to the Chief Rabbinate and to the practices of the Great Synagogue, London, is noteworthy'. This observation is justified by the fact that the Cardiff congregation borrowed these Laws when in the process of revising their own Constitution in 1859.

Hyam Levy was Reader from 1837 until 1839 when Isaac Pulver was appointed as first Minister at the new Synagogue. Mr. Pulver's initial salary was £5.16.8d monthly but he also advertised his services as a teacher of Hebrew and Rowe's 'Illustrated Guide to Cheltenham' describes him as 'Professor of the Hebrew and German Languages'. He resided in Carlton Street and later Henrietta Street. By 1845 he had intended resigning his appointment as his salary was insufficient to support himself and his family. But, in the event, he remained until May 1849 at the increased monthly salary of £6.5.0d. In that same year he was sent to organise the nascent community in Cape Town. Mr. Pulver was one of the longest serving Cheltenham ministers. Writing to the Chief Rabbi, Montague Alex took great care to extol the benefits which the congregation had received from Mr. Pulver's valuable service and advice: 'It will be long before we become reconciled to a change'.

Mr. Pulver was not replaced at once, possibly because the requirements of the community were very demanding. The salary would be £60 per annum and the successful applicant would be required to read prayers and act as Mohel when required. He would also be required to devote two hours each week to the education of the children, in Hebrew, with English translations. If parents could not afford to pay he would have to give his services gratuitously. Mr. Alex did stress that there were only two or three children in that category in Cheltenham. Further qualifications required were that he had to be married and 'without a family would be perfect'. By not having an immediate replacement for Mr. Pulver the congregation had to rely on a locum, usually a Mr. Nathan Jacobs from Oxford, but others

were also engaged from Birmingham. Applications were received from Leeds, South Shields and Newcastle but no appointment was made. Eventually the Chief Rabbi confirmed the appointment of Mr. Raphael Jacobsohn on 29th June 1849, as Shochet and Reader. He had been born in Prussia and was coming with his wife from Glasgow. He assumed his duties immediately taking up residence at 22 Henrietta Street before moving to St. George's Street in 1852. One of the earliest expenses he placed before the Committee was for the provision of a new hat, at the cost of twelve shillings. Mr. Jacobsohn's salary was £1.3.1d weekly which remained the same until his resignation in July 1854.

Besides the minister's salary the congregation also had to provide for the daily running expenses such as candles, insurance, coke for heating and of course repairs to and maintenance of the building. In 1850 a request for a contribution for the Hannah Rothschild Scholarship had to be refused as 'repairs to the synagogue require all our funds'. In fact at some periods the annual contribution of £5 towards the expenses of the Chief Rabbi's Office had to be withheld. This contribution had been started in 1844 and was paid at the same rate until 1873 when it ceased. During the 1850's and 1860's much repair work was undertaken which included re-slating the roof, re-cementing defective brickwork to the 'privy' and painting woodwork and some walls. Interior work included filling in the cracks which had appeared beneath the dome and on the walls; repairing all unsound plastering and making good defective joiner's work. Money for some of these repairs had to be borrowed from members. 1853 saw the installation of a new synagogue floor costing £33 and during the 1860's gas lighting was introduced and a new heating and ventilating system installed. £39 was again absorbed in exterior repairs. However, in spite of all this necessary expenditure the congregation maintained its traditional and unstinting support of charities both local and national, entries for which are to be seen in the account books from the early days of the congregation. Small donations were made to poor individuals in need of food or transport and larger amounts were given, when funds allowed, to institutions such as the Cheltenham Hospital and Dispensary.

Income was derived from several sources including members' and seatholders' fees although reminders had to be sent frequently to some individuals: 'Please send the fees now due or you will have to be classed as a seatholder'. Those who failed to pay the full membership fees technically became seatholders and rather than suffer this loss of 'status' some withdrew completely from the congregation. Seats in the synagogue were arranged so that those nearer the ark were the most expensive and free sittings would have been right at the back. Other sources of income were rents for the

1833 W. Alex

	T. Nels delo	3. 10 -
19 Feb	offering	2. -
23	do	2. 8
2. 10. 20	do	2. 8
	Bills delo	<u>2. 10 -</u>
23 -	offering	1. -
7 Mar	do	1. 6
14	do	1. 10
21	do	1. -
	Bills delo	<u>3. 2. 7</u>
20/24	offering	1. -
24/25	do	1. -
	Bills delo	<u>2. 2. 10</u>
10	offering	4. 6
1 Feb	do	0
14	do	1. 6
1 Aug	do	10
	do	6
11	do	1. 2
23	do	2. -
25. 10. 16	do	12. 6

15. 10. 18	offering	2. -
19	do	2. -
	Bills delo	<u>4. 0. 4</u>
14. 11. 18	do	14. 6
26 -	do	2. 6
1. 12. 18	do	6. -
2	do	1. 2
10	do	1. -
17	do	1. 1
21	do	1. 2
1. 1. 19	do	1. 1. 6
20 -	do	1. -
	Bills delo	<u>5. 4. 11</u>
14. 1. 19	do	10. 5
19	do	1. 5
26	do	5. -
28. 1. 19	do	16. 6
9	do	1. -
16	do	5
	Bills delo	<u>4</u>
		1. 15. 2

An early subscription book, 1833



Jacob Abraham(s) of Bath and Cheltenham 1829. (Private collection of Mr. A. Ruben)



Ephraim Alex, Esq.

1839. Marriage solemnized at St. James in the Town of Cheltenham in the County of Gloucestershire

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
1	5 th June 1839	Abraham Davis Louisa Davis	24 22	Single Single	Teacher Housewife	High Street 44 High Street Cheltenham	Samuel Meyer Jacob Davis	Esq. Banker Housewife

Married in the 5th June according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by me, Hyacinthius Klein

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Abraham Davis in the Presence of us, Lewis Isaacs

1840. Marriage solemnized at St. James in the Town of Cheltenham in the County of Gloucestershire

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
2	1 st June 1840	Samuel Montagu Sarah Jacobs	24 22	Single Single	Teacher Housewife	High Street High Street Cheltenham	Isaac Montagu Jacob Jacobs	Esq. Banker Housewife

Married in the 1st June according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by me, Hyacinthius Klein

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Samuel Montagu in the Presence of us, Lewis Isaacs

Page 1 of the earliest known Marriage Register, 1839 and 1840

THURSDAY JULY 20, 1815.

לשון הקודש עם דקדוקו

7116
HEBREW LANGUAGE

GRAMMATICALLY TAUGHT IN IMAGINE LESSONS,

BY TWO BOOKS PAGE, BY

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TEACHER OF HEBREW

In the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Eton College, and several Christian Schools, both in Town and Country.

M^r. L. begs leave to say, that, from a late notice there thirty years in the above profession, he has discovered a method of teaching Hebrew, whereby he will enable his Pupil to read Hebrew accurately by One Lesson in the most essential Hebrew Grammar, necessary for the acquirement of that sacred and most desirable Study, and he recommends the above mentioned number without any further assistance, except that of a Lexicon.

For the accommodation of his Pupils, M^r. L. has taken a general and private Apartment at

No. 2, St. James's Street, Cheltenham.

By giving Notice to the Private Families attended at regular times, the most respectable references can be given if required.

At the Institution of a Theological Hebrew Grammar and Lexicon, with English, is made in the Presence of M^r. J. Vaux, Esq. of the University, London.

Books and Gentlemen attended at their own Apartments.

L A W S

HEBREW CONGREGATION

Cheltenham.

REVISED AND ENACTED, 25th NISAN, A.M. 5600.

CHELTEHAM:

LIGHT PRINTER AND STATIONER.

1840.

Advertisement in Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucestershire Advertiser 1815



The earliest surviving Gloucester Headstone — J N 1809



Headstone in Cheltenham Jews' Burial Ground; Elias Myers, died 1870



The former Stroud Synagogue, Lansdown



The Hearse in the Watch House, Cheltenham Jews' Burial Ground. On the wall is a Grave Plan of the Burial Ground



*I Nestor Schnurmann, Esq.,
Cheltenham College Staff Photograph,
1907*



*Daniel Lipson, Esq., former Mayor,
MP and Honorary Freeman of
Cheltenham*

two cottages near the Burial Ground (up to 1860, 1/6d per week each) and for the market garden adjoining these cottages. Donations and legacies also helped to increase funds.

One of the earliest bequests was ten guineas from the estate of the late Alexander Lindo Esq., a nephew of Mr. da Silva, which was given in 1852. A further bequest was made in 1860 by Samuel Solomon, a founder member, who left four guineas to the congregation. In 1861 Mr. da Silva had left fifty pounds to the Synagogue and in the early 1870's nineteen guineas was received from the estate of the late Elias Myers. Legacies such as these proved most welcome to a congregation which was in desperate need of funds. There were also bequests and donations from absentee seatholders who subscribed to obtain burial rights or access to a Kosher supplier. Further revenue came from people who had had connections with the Cheltenham community in the past such as Ephraim and Isaiah Alex.

One of the main reasons for the insecure financial state of the congregations was the fact that there were so few Jews resident in Cheltenham. Between 1845 and 1850 there were no new members and many of the original ones had died or moved away from the town. The image of the Jew in Cheltenham was that of a pawnbroker, dealer or warehouse proprietor, in other words a very trades-orientated community. By the 1860's there were few of the professional class resident in the town. Though not of this class, as such, Sir Francis Goldsmidt was perhaps the only person of consequence to subscribe at length to the Synagogue, which he did from 1865 until his death in 1878, as a result of an accident on Waterloo Station. During this period Sir Francis lived most of his time at Rendcomb and his annual contribution of twelve guineas remained unchanged. The Rendcomb Estate was in fact bought by Sir Francis in 1863. He demolished the seventeenth century manor house and built a completely new one on the same site. In 1867 he constructed a new drive down to the Cirencester Road and this necessitated two bridges and a lodge. The bridge over the village road has Sir Francis Goldsmidt's monogram inscribed upon it. Sir Francis was first attracted to the Cheltenham congregation by the provision of Kosher meat although the local butcher, Mr. Turner of the High Street, was not an asset to the community. Members frequently complained about the poor quality of the meat and the butcher's failure to deliver on time. Sir Francis was the first Jewish baronet in England and his family, together with the Rothchilds and others, created University College, London, to fill the gap until other universities opened their doors to Jews.

The Jews' struggle for emancipation had been long and hard and they experienced long opposition to their participation in public life and office. In 1723 Jews were first given the right to be called British

subjects and were allowed a specially worded oath in court. But oaths for other purposes remained unchanged. David Solomons fought the oath in the City of London to become Sheriff, which enabled other cities to elect Jews to their governing bodies. Up to 1833 no Jew could be a barrister and not until 1845 could a Jew become an alderman or mayor. Municipal office could be held by a Jew after 1845 provided an oath was sworn not to use the office or influence to weaken the Protestant Church. This proviso was removed in 1858 and in the following year an amendment was made to the Law which enabled the first Jewish Member of Parliament to sit in the House of Commons, although the Jewish Emancipation Bill had been passed as early as 1833. The last hurdle was passed in 1871 when Jews were allowed to enter Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

Locally financial problems were a major concern but of almost equal magnitude was the frequency with which Ministers seem to have left Cheltenham especially between 1850 and 1874. This may have been partly due to the fact that the congregations were very small. The 1851 Religious Census shows that at the morning service on 30th March there were only sixteen persons present.

Between the resignation of Raphael Jacobsohn and the appointment of Hyman Levin in 1874 there were eight other ministers. Jacobsohn resigned in 1854 as he could not survive on the current salary and synagogue funds could not allow an increase. Between his resignation and May 1855 his place was filled by Rev. Mr. Kirchbaum who caused some embarrassment while he was with the congregation in his role as Shochet which probably indicates why his stay was not of a longer duration. Mr. Kirchbaum was succeeded by Rev. Samuel Hoffnung who wrote of his departure for Cheltenham in the following manner:

April 29th 1855

Glasgow

I leave for Cheltenham tomorrow and arrive Tuesday afternoon. We still have to take lodgings in Cheltenham for a few weeks until we take a house. I do not know whether my dear wife and daughter will be able to accompany me as our household has not all left the house. . . . I have sent off a cottage piano to be left at the station to be called for.

Yours
S. Hoffnung.

Mr. Hoffnung took up residence at Town Hall Cottage, Regent Street, and his salary was £6.13.4d monthly, rising to £7.10.0d in 1857. In that year Mrs. Hoffnung died and was buried in Cheltenham. At the time of her death they were living at Rosemere Cottage, Ormond Place. Mr. Hoffnung did not remain in Cheltenham and in 1866 he sent from Melbourne, Australia, a donation of two guineas to the Cheltenham congregation. There were many

applications to fill the vacancy created by his departure and Rev. Abraham Goldsmidt was appointed Reader from 20th December 1857. However, things did not go at all well for, in July of the following year, the committee decided that 'The Rev. Abraham Goldsmidt, at present Reader, has notice from this date for six months, to expire in January 1859, to vacate the situation'. Mr. Goldsmidt was replaced by Mr. Joshua Levi of Liverpool at a salary of £7.10.0d per month. He was given a contract of employment — a revision of Rule 67 of the Constitution — as Reader, Mohel and Collector (of subscriptions for which he received a commission) and to perform all the duties which the committee should require of him. This contract makes very interesting reading:

Duties of Reader in Lieu of Rule 67

The gentleman engaged in this congregation is to officiate as Reader, Mohel and Collector and to do all duties required of him by the Committee. It is his duty to see that the synagogue is kept in proper order for Divine Service and be in attendance there at least a quarter of an hour before the service commences and see it properly secured after the Divine Service. As also, in the event of a death in the family, to attend the funeral in his robes of office, likewise to be in attendance to deliver a discourse at the house of the mourner during the seven days.

He is to visit the Burial Ground once a month and report on such visit to the Treasurer.

He is to receive annually the sum agreed upon by the committee as his salary, to be paid quarterly or monthly according to his wishes.

He must attend at least one in three days at the house of a sick member and to the casual poor should it be required.

He must also be regular in his attendance at the butcher's for the purpose of killing porger from half past nine until half past ten in the morning. He must at least once during each week arrange the weekly portion of the Sacred Law.

He shall not be allowed to celebrate a marriage without the permission of the Chief Rabbi, and no other person but him shall be allowed to celebrate a marriage in the congregation without the permission of the committee.

He must also act as Shochet should any other member of the congregation require the services of one — with the permission of the Committee. For the above services he shall receive the amount of £90 per annum without further perquisites unless in cases of marriages and circumscisions, when the person requiring the services shall not pay him a less sum than 10/6d.

In case of negligence in the above duties the committee has the power to call him before them and to levy a fine for each offence.

In conformity with the above, six months notice on either side must be given should his services be no longer required, but in the event of gross misconduct on the part of the said officer he may be discharged immediately on proof of such misconduct to the majority of the Committee. All disputes between this officer and the congregation shall be referred to the Chief Rabbi. The duties of the above officer to commence on 5th February 1859.

Mr. Levi resided at 4 Andover Terrace until he left Cheltenham in 1863. In spite of his sudden departure and sacking in 1859 Rev. Abraham Goldsmidt was engaged as Reader on a temporary basis for just under a year. He was succeeded by Rev. Berthold Albu who remained for two years at a salary of £1.18.6d weekly. Nathan Aaron of Oxford acted as locum until the Rev. Philip Phillips from 12, Bevis Marks, Houndsditch, was appointed in May 1866 on the recommendation of Dr. Adler, the Chief Rabbi. He was married and 'a native'. He was immediately supplied with two clerical bands at a cost of two shillings. He resided first at Sherborne Terrace and from 1871 in St. George's Square. During his term of office there occurred the much publicised confrontation between Henry B. Samuelson, the local Liberal Party candidate and the Jewish community. In one of his electioneering speeches, in 1868, Samuelson implied an anti-semitic insult which was taken exception to by the local Hebrew community. Later in the year Samuelson wrote to them promising to put an apology into print. This never happened and he lost the votes of the local Jewish electorate — and the election!

The Rev. Philip Phillips must not be confused with another applicant at the same time, the Rev. I. Phillips of Spitalfields, son of L. Philips an ostrich feather manufacturer. By 1870 there were less than twenty fully paying members and by 1875 only fifteen. The Rev. Mr. Phillips dared to ask for an increase of salary in 1872 but to no avail — 'I appeal to your kind feelings. I should not have written on this subject, knowing that you have lost some good members . . .' and he went on to explain that his private resources were exhausted and that the request was prompted by the increased cost of the necessities of life. The need for stringent economies was a recurring theme. Fourteen years previously, rather than buy a new hat for the new minister, Mr. Levi, the previous incumbent's hat had been 'altered by Plants at 2/-'.

Faced with declining membership, lack of funds and frequent changes of minister the morale of the congregation was given a boost in 1871 with a visit from the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Nathan Adler.

CHAPTER 7

PASTORAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Dear Sir,

We have much pleasure in informing you that the Reverend Dr. Adler will pay his Pastoral Visit to the Congregation on 7th inst.

Divine Service at the Synagogue will commence

on Friday at 7 p.m.

on Saturday { at 8.30 a.m.

{ at 2.00 p.m.

{ at 9.00 p.m.

on Sunday at 7.30 a.m.

Samuel Sternberg

Emanuel Samuels

Wardens.

This was the invitation sent to all members and seatholders of the Cheltenham Hebrew Congregation on 4th July 1871. The following is a summary of the account published by the Cheltenham Examiner immediately following the visit.

‘The Reverend Dr. Adler Chief Rabbi of the Jews has just paid a Pastoral Visit to the Jewish congregation worshipping in Cheltenham and as it is now 35 years since Dr. Adler’s predecessor paid a similar visit to the town, it may be imagined that the occasion was looked upon as a memorable one by the Jewish members of the community. The Rev. Dr. Adler attended by his son, the Rev. Dr. Hermann Adler, arrived in Cheltenham from London on Friday afternoon, and was met at the terminus by the wardens of the Congregation, (Messrs. S. Sternberg and E. Samuels) and by the Rev. P. Phillips and Messrs. M. Alex and I. Moses who accompanied him to the Residence that had been taken for him, 18, Imperial Square, where he was conveyed in a carriage and pair which was in waiting. On arrival at his destination he found other members assembled to receive him and on their behalf Mr. Alex read an address of welcome. The address gave some interesting particulars of the history of the congregation . . . Dr. Adler in his reply expressed his high sense of the very kind reception he and his son had met with at the hands of the congregation. During the 26 years he had been in office, he had been anxious to visit the community and he rejoiced that he was now in their midst . . . It had always been a subject of profound gratification to him that a spirit of peace and union had ever animated the members of the congregation

. . . At the hour of Sabbath, the wardens again waited on the Chief Rabbi and conducted him to the Synagogue and thence after the service back to his residence.

On Saturday morning he was escorted in the same way a second time to the Synagogue where the Sabbath morning Service was impressively read by the Rev. Mr. Phillips in the presence of a congregation of which few of the stated members were absent. Though the Service was as is usual in Jewish Synagogues entirely in the original Hebrew, even a person unacquainted with that language could not but be struck by the mellifluous intonation of the service, and with the devotional spirit which appears to pervade the congregation . . . the Reverend Dr. Adler ascended the steps of the Ark and delivered a brief and earnest address to the congregation . . . With the usual additional prayers, the Service having occupied three hours, concluded. On Sunday after the Service in the Synagogue, Dr. Adler visited the Jewish Burial Ground, examined the children with great care, and subsequently addressed the members of the congregation who waited upon him at his residence.'

The Jewish Chronicle, also reporting this visit, wrote that after leaving Cheltenham he visited en route to Newport, the Burial Ground at Gloucester 'which is one of the oldest in the Provinces,' and he also visited several Jews living in Gloucester.

The Chief Rabbi's visit was as much one of encouragement to a small congregation as it was routine. True there were children in the congregation on whom one put hopes for the future, and they met regularly at the Sunday School, for which Bibles and class books were ordered in 1871. The Chief Rabbi exhorted the congregation to work together for the future and to organise a special room for the school meetings. These were words of faith in the community, but the financial situation was giving rise for real concern. The expenses of the Chief Rabbi's visit amounted to £14.3.10d and by the end of the year the financial balance of the congregation stood at just £9.10.0d, in spite of the fact that Miss Sarah Lousada had died earlier in the year and had left the Synagogue £15 in her will. Nevertheless the less fortunate were not forgotten and donations to deserving causes were still made. The contribution to the Office of the Chief Rabbi was continued although during the next two years only a part contribution could be paid and after 1873 no further payments were made.

It would seem that 1874 was the first year in which real financial troubles had to be faced. Cheltenham had always tried to support a representative on the Board of Deputies, and to pay his expenses of office. He did not have to be resident in Cheltenham but he spoke on the congregation's behalf at meetings. Ephraim Alex was Cheltenham's first representative in 1853 and in 1874 Gabriel Lindo, of 12, King's Arms Yard, London was elected to serve on behalf of the local

members. Upon election he received a copy of a survey carried out by the Board of Deputies for 1873 but this refers chiefly to the condition of the Registers and their contents. Very little information is given concerning the community itself and bills and receipts, as well as brief entries in Minute Books, give a truer picture.

1874 saw the need for more repairs to the Synagogue where work had to be carried out to the ceiling, walls and balustrade internally, as well as to several items of urgent external defects. Further outlay had to be made later in the year when a bill was received from the Town Council for work it had carried out on the roadway outside the Synagogue. A further shock came in September of that year with the resignation of the Minister, the Reverend Phillips. A purse containing collected money and a Testimonial on vellum was presented to him in appreciation of his duties over eight years and for running the Sabbath School. His successor, the Reverend Hyman Levin, came from West Hartlepool and was engaged at a salary of £104 per annum. In 1877 he was given a £5 rise on account of an addition to his family and in May of that year he was given a further 2 guineas increase in salary. He was obviously well respected by the congregation and in spite of one or two differences of opinion with Mr. Edward Lowe, at the time the President elect, Mr. Levin remained in Cheltenham for another seven years.

Edward Lowe first appeared in the subscription books in 1859. He practised as a Chiropodist and Dentist in the town and in the 1870s he held his surgery at 53, Regent Street. He resigned from 'all offices' in 1873 but not from the congregation. However, he allowed himself to be nominated as President in 1879, an office which he held on two separate occasions for more than two years each time. When he died in 1886, at 6, Ashling Villas, London Road, he left in his will £10 to the Cheltenham Boys' Orphan Asylum, £50 to Cheltenham Hospital, and £10 to the Synagogue so that his name might be remembered on festivals in the prayers for the dead.

Although there seemed to be a shortage of funds and even members, there does not appear to have been any general sense of despondency. Members locally were encouraged to plan for the future by the receipt of gifts such as that sent by Gabriel Lindo, their Board of Deputies' Representative. This took the form of a very handsome silk curtain for the Ark in memory of his wife who had recently died. Mrs. Nathan presented a silk scroll in memory of her late husband and Mrs. Moses donated a lovely sanctification cup in memory of her departed and lamented father who had died 1st October 1872. The cup bears the following inscription:

TO THE CHELTENHAM HEBREW CONGREGATION
FROM
A J M
IN MEMORY OF
ABRAHAM MYER OF
HEREFORD
HESHVAN 23, 5634 (1873)

In 1876 news arrived of the death of Montague Alex in Southampton. Even after leaving Cheltenham Montague had remained a Trustee of the Burial Ground in the town and it was therefore thought necessary to make a new appointment now that he had died. Mr. Woolfe Issachar, the Secretary, and Hertz Karo, the Treasurer, thought that this would also be an ideal opportunity to obtain all the 'Deeds from wherever they were held and to deposit them in a Bank'. As early as 1853 Montague Alex had made enquiries as to the whereabouts of the Deeds as 'at present they are with various members'. Obviously Samuel Sternberg held some as he was called to a meeting in January 1877 and told to produce the Deeds in his possession. By the following month all the Deeds had been deposited in the City of Gloucester Bank.

It seems strange that in spite of the obvious financial difficulties which were being experienced, discussions were under way as late as May 1878 as to the feasibility of having a Mikvaa — a ritual bath house — built near the Synagogue. Many years previously Montague Alex had written to the Chief Rabbi regarding the Montpellier Baths. In a letter dated 1846, he wrote, 'They were sanctioned by our late Rabbi, but owing to their having very lately undergone an alteration, Mr. Pulver has been instructed to attend to others that will be altered to suit our wants, and which will soon be ready for our use.' Where these future baths were, or if their use ever materialised is not evident, but in 1878 the attempt could have been accomplished through the purchase of the house next to the Infants' School opposite the Synagogue. Edward Lowe offered to advance the money at 5½% if the owner was willing to sell. No further mention of the matter is recorded.

Funds appear to have received a 'boost' in this same year by the notification that Mr. Coleman Levy of Ross had left £100 to the Synagogue. Under the terms of the will it was later discovered that the money was to be invested and the interest used to keep in good order, Mr. Levy's own grave and that of his relatives in Gloucester's Burial Ground. Thus the congregation received no financial benefit at all.

Under the Presidency of Edward Lowe and later Samuel Goldberg attempts were made during the 1880s to revive interest and increase membership. Samuel Goldberg was a pawnbroker of Westgate

Street, Gloucester, who had subscribed to the Cheltenham Synagogue since 1862. By 1886 he had opened a shop in Portland Street, Cheltenham and served as President of the Synagogue from the death of Edward Lowe in 1886 until 1894. Secretary during this period was Woolfe Issachar, a Watchmaker and Jeweller of the Colonnade, Cheltenham. He had been a member of the Synagogue since 1858 and spent over twenty years as Secretary as well as a short term as Treasurer. He died in Cheltenham in 1893 aged 70. He, therefore, was one of the senior members and was obviously looked to for guidance and support at a time when the future really did look bleak.

In 1881 there was a financial deficit of £40 per annum and it was resolved that before the Minister, Mr. Levin, be given notice to leave, the President should write to members living out of town, to ask for their help. It was also suggested that the local congregation should double its subscriptions. Two increased subscriptions each for 5 guineas, were promised from Mr. Grenville Myer of Hereford and Mr. Ephraim Joseph of Gloucester. Grenville Myer left Hereford in 1888 and no further payments were received from him. Ephraim Joseph had subscribed to the Cheltenham Synagogue since 1858. He was a pawnbroker of Westgate Street and later Northgate Street, Gloucester, until 1883 when he moved to Birmingham. His wife Sarah died in 1858 during the birth of a still-born male. The appeal to distant Jews paid dividends for a Mr. A. Levy of Stroud, applied to become a seatholder at £2.12.6 per annum, presumably to secure burial and kosher privileges, and a Mr. Samuel of Gloucester and a Mr. Jacob of Lydney were also accepted as members.

A religious census of 1882 showed that on 9th September there were only eight men and six women at the 8.0 a.m. service, yet a representative to the Board of Deputies was elected to replace Mr. Lindo that year and provision had to be made for the expenses which that office would incur. Between 1883 and 1884 there do not appear to have been any committee meetings until February of the following year. By June there was a financial deficit of £50 and it was agreed that when Mr. Levin's contract expired in September, he should be offered the reduced salary of £80. Of course he could not, and did not accept. He was replaced by the Reverend Samuel Joseph who was appointed with immediate effect at a weekly stipend of £1.10.0. With the arrival of the Reverend Joseph, Edward Lowe tried to encourage a further increase in funds by offering the following inducement; any member who paid five guineas could be called to meetings and all those who paid ten guineas could hold office if they resided in Cheltenham and had paid at this level for at least two years. This was not as popular an inducement as Lowe had hoped and no rush to raise subscriptions was witnessed. On Lowe's death, in 1886, Samuel

Goldberg took on the reins of the Presidency but no official meetings were held until 1889 when mention is first made of Ezra Feldman. Between this time and 1892 five new members joined the congregation but several others died or left Cheltenham. After 1892 no new members joined and there were only three male members in all, each comparatively new to the congregation, of which Feldman was one. Ezra Feldman was a local Jeweller who lived first at Alpine Villas and later at Dunkeld Villa, Gloucester Road. 1892 also saw the arrival of Mr. I. Nestor Schnurmann who was immediately elected a member and was thus eligible to attend future meetings. This same year showed signs, albeit temporary, of an increase in the attendance at services. On September 5th there were 13 men and 4 women at morning service. Mr. M. Hart and Mr. S. Hart, father and son, were accepted as members in that same year and ritual and form of services were seriously considered and debated at length. A new ritual had been proposed by Dr. Adler and was adopted in Cheltenham with the exception of blowing the Shofar, which, it was decided locally, should continue to be blown at the conclusion of Nila, according to ancient usage. At the same meeting it was decided that ALL Sabbath services should be orthodox, that the Heptorah should be read in English and that Dr. Adler's prayer should be said immediately after Musoff. Mr. Nestor Schnurmann read the Heptorah and 'a great improvement all round was noted' — and minuted. Nestor Schnurmann was a Russian Jew, a reported nihilist, who had been in Siberia and was definitely in exile here. He had taught at St. Paul's Prep. School in London from 1884-1891 when he came to Cheltenham. From 1892 there was a special House at Cheltenham College for Jews. This was called Corinth House and was situated in the Bath Road, opposite the present Clock Tower entrance to College. Schnurmann attracted Jewish boys of intelligence and good family background to this house and the boys attended the Synagogue and kept the Sabbath. They made up on Sunday the work they had missed on the Saturday. Corinth was smaller than most of the other College Houses with less than forty boys.

In 1893 Schnurmann was elected Treasurer, Secretary and Registrar on the departure of the former Secretary/Registrar, Mr. H. Samuel, from the town. He took over at a most crucial period in the history of the Cheltenham Synagogue. Offerings were being received from only Samuel Goldberg, Ezra Feldman, Zalic Freedman, the Hart father and son and some six or so non resident subscribers from Stroud and elsewhere. Not a very encouraging prospect! The Pastoral Visit of the Chief Rabbi in 1894 absorbed most of the existing funds, although Schnurmann did play host during his stay.

'The Chief Rabbi arrived from Swansea and was met at the station by Mr. Schnurmann and the Rev. Joseph. In order to suit the

convenience of the boys of Jewish House, the Chief Rabbi went to the Synagogue at 6 p.m. and delivered a sermon exhorting the boys to be true in the faith and to bring honour to their Jewish name. The service was well attended and several masters were present. In the evening the Principal of Cheltenham College and some senior masters attended dinner at Schnurmann's house. The Chief Rabbi also visited the boys at prep and had breakfast and dinner with them. He also visited the Ladies' College before leaving for Stroud the next day.' (*Jewish Chronicle* 23.5.1894.)

This clearly shows how small the congregation must have been and how the Jewish presence in the town was made up almost entirely of students at Cheltenham College. No mention is made of any other officer or member of the congregation. Samuel Goldberg resigned as President after eight years in office, in 1894, as he was moving away from Cheltenham. Schnurmann was 'elected' to replace him but with funds at such a low ebb, the Reverend Joseph was offered a renewed contract at £1.0.0 weekly which of course he did not accept and resigned at the next meeting. It was as a result of this that Cheltenham approached the relatively young community at Stroud with a request for them to share their Shochet with Cheltenham.



CHAPTER 8

INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

During the 1890s a few new names appeared in the account books but they remained for a short time only. There were of course donations received from the College boys who attended during term time but to all intents and purposes the congregation consisted mainly of absentee members and the two or three resident members struggling to keep together the idea of a community and a synagogue. But there were no local families to give the active support that was needed. The Report of the Jewish Board of Deputies for 1893 revealed that 'Penzance, Bath and Cheltenham still have nominal congregations consisting of two or three families but it seems probable that such congregations will cease altogether in a few years.' With legacies and regular donations, however small, being received right up to the 1890s the financial position never appeared to be completely beyond redemption. It must be remembered that there were the cottages and the Synagogue itself to maintain and the remaining officers took this very seriously, although it did use up much of the available funds. In almost each year of the '90s repairs were necessary to the cottages or synagogue and extensive work had to be carried out at the Burial Ground in 1892/3. Yet in spite of these constant, necessary calls on resources, charitable works were still continued — the train fare of a poor man being provided; donations to a poor man to assist him to emigrate; and expenses of visits to prisoners by the Minister were paid on several occasions. It was thanks to the three surviving male members that the congregation and the Synagogue itself were not allowed to fade into non existence. Duties of President, Treasurer and Secretary were shared by these members although at one time, Mr. Ezra Feldman held all three offices. Mr. Nestor Schnurmann, who succeeded Samuel Goldberg as President in 1894, remained in office only a matter of months. Maurice Hart took his place, Feldman was elected Secretary and Treasurer and a Shochet and Reader was engaged for a trial period of six months. By the end of 1895 Mr. Hart had resigned and Ezra Feldman took on all three offices. With no congregation the duties were naturally few. Funds stood at £13.6.8d plus the interest on the Issachar Bequest.

In 1898 news was received of the death of Isaac Solomon of 3 Oriel Villas, Bath Road, Cheltenham. He left estate valued at nearly nineteen thousand pounds. Under the terms of the will the Cheltenham Hebrew Congregation was left one thousand pounds.

Other charities in the town were also to benefit. However, Isaac's brother and Sarah his sister, contested the will and proceedings were taken by the other executors to have the will proven in the courts. Two months later, April 1899, the deceased's relatives indicated that they would be prepared to accept a compromise agreement. It was not until 1901 that the will was finally released by the courts showing that as a result of the compromise the synagogue's benefit had been reduced to £322.12.11d. Other beneficiaries included Cheltenham General Hospital, the Salvation Army, Nazareth House, Cheltenham Corporation, Delancey Hospital and Victoria House Nursing Home.

At a meeting held at Feldman's home in March 1903 Schnurmann and Feldman were able to rejoice at a balance of £342.7.9d. The temporary closure of the synagogue was discussed and there being no congregation this was agreed with the proviso that it be opened on special occasions. Three years later Feldman announced his intention of retiring as he was leaving the town. Schnurmann accepted the responsibilities of President, Secretary and Treasurer. The Synagogue did not open again except for festivals when Jewish boys at College were relied upon to make up the required congregation.

In February 1914 Schnurmann called a meeting to consider a request he had received from some Jewish families who had settled in the area and who desired to hold services. Present at this meeting was Mr. Dagutski, son of Rabbi Dagutski of Manchester. It was resolved to open for Friday and Saturday services with Mr. Dagutski officiating. Everyone else promised a weekly donation of 6d and the Synagogue reopened on 6th March. Less than a month later Mr. Dagutski took up an appointment away from Cheltenham, the promised subscriptions did not materialise and once more the synagogue was forced to close. Schnurmann wrote to a College colleague Mr. Daniel Leopold Lipson, who replied:

Dear Schnurmann,

In reply to yours, I should be pleased to act as President, Secretary, Treasurer of the Cheltenham Hebrew congregation, and will do all I can to ensure the preservation of the Synagogue in a satisfactory condition.

Yours very sincerely
(signed) D. Lipson

Schnurmann resigned as House Master of Corinth House in that same year and was succeeded by Lipson who served as House Master at College until 1923. Corinth House continued to attract boys whose Jewish parents wanted them to attend a good public school which also allowed them to practise their religion. In 1916 Lipson applied to the College Council to move to a house, 101 Bath Road, which he felt

was much larger and therefore able to take more boys. This house had previously been called Northwick House but when College approved the move Lipson re-named it Corinth House. The former Corinth House, which he was vacating, was bought by the Poor Sisters of Nazareth as an extension to their home for elderly poor and orphans. There gradually developed, however, a feeling among the Jewish parents, that their children were not treated as being of the same social standing as their predecessors. In view of the changing post-war attitudes, the College Council was against the idea of continuing with a Jews' house. Therefore in 1922 Lipson was told that Corinth House was to become an ordinary College boarding house and that he would be subject to the rules applying to all house masters and that he would have to retire in 1932. After much careful thought Lipson decided to set up Corinth House as a private boarding school and in the following year re-named it Corinth College. Half of the fifty boys left and joined College and Lipson found that he did not have the connections to maintain the numbers in his private school. In spite of dwindling numbers Corinth College survived until 1935 after which Lipson turned to politics. He was Mayor of Cheltenham from 1935-37 and from 1937-50 he was Independent Member of Parliament for the Borough. In 1953 he was made an Honorary Freeman of the town. He lived at 103, Bath Road, where he died on 14th April 1963.

During his period at College and up to the beginning of World War II Lipson held the three offices connected with the Synagogue, which he had assumed in 1914. To all intents and purposes, there was no longer a congregation and the Synagogue was closed. Between 1939 and 1945 life at the Synagogue was re-kindled by orthodox evacuees from London and after the war a constitution was devised which fostered the growth of the present congregation.

REVIVAL: A POSTSCRIPT

In the 1930s there were seven or eight Jewish families including Daniel Lipson, a Councillor, later Mayor and eventually Independent MP for the town.

At the outbreak of the war, a committee was formed and it was agreed that the Synagogue should be reopened. At this time there was an influx of newcomers to the town amongst whom was a number of Jews. A Minute of the meeting of November 1st 1941 says, "The question of an overflow service at Basinghall Hall was discussed." With the entry of America into the war, Cheltenham became one of the bases for the US Forces, some of whom professed allegiance to the Jewish faith. In the Synagogue today is a plaque presented by these servicemen in gratitude for the hospitality and welcome they received from the local congregation.

With the end of the war, many of these families returned to their native homes, but some remained because of their love for the town and its environs. The numbers which remained were not large, but certainly enough to maintain services even though they were somewhat infrequent. However from 1939, there certainly have been services at High Holydays and at frequent intervals during the year. In addition many children of the community have been Barmitzvah and married in the Synagogue.

In 1984 the fabric of the building, particularly the roof, gave cause for concern and with the help of a grant from the Local Council and the Government of nearly 50% of the total cost, the congregation of less than 100 members raised the balance of £11,000, by appealing not only to the local community, but also to people throughout the country who had connections with Cheltenham.

Today the congregation thrives with an influx of a few young executives and retired people contributing to its continuing existence.

“Long may it continue to be so.”

*Barry Green, Treasurer of the Cheltenham Hebrew Congregation
Cheltenham Congregation's Representative to the
Board of Deputies.*

May 1989.

CHAPTER 9

THE BURIAL GROUND

On 30th November 1824, shortly after the foundation of the congregation, the purchase of a site was agreed between the vendor, Mr. David Wheatley and others, and Mr. Lewis Isaacs, broker, purchaser: 'For the sale of a small piece of freehold land in Worcester Row or street, Cheltenham, to be used as a burial ground attached and assigned to the Jewish synagogue, situate in Cheltenham, of which we the undersigned are the congregation and joint owners, which the said Lewis Isaacs doth hereby admit and acknowledge . . . Unfortunately the 'undersigned' do not appear in the deed of transfer. The deed clearly states that the land was part of a much larger plot and that a right of way across the other land bordering on Worcester Street, giving access to the burial ground, must be established.

The earliest mention of this site in Synagogue records occurs in a receipt for November 1826 when Thomas Belcher 'received from Mr. Alex to build a Mount Wall at the burial ground, £10.9.0d'. In 1833 the account books show that twenty pounds were still owed for the purchase of the site. When the first burial took place is impossible to say but the earliest legible stone today is dedicated to Sarah Rees who died in 1834. The first burial for which costs are available is that of a child buried in October 1836:

Burial of Child	8/9d
Hearse	15/-
Driver	2/-
Watch for three nights and one day	£1.0.6d

and later in March 1837 we find another account for:

Coffin	14/6d
Candles for watch	4/6d
Burial shrouds	14/9d
Robe	3/3d
Digging grave	1/6d

In 1835 a Deed of Purchase of land adjoining the original Burial Ground between John Hill, vendor, and Messrs. Bowen and Winkle, purchaser, mentions 'cottages on the land in Elm Street, all in the occupation of . . . Cooke, bordered . . . on the south by a piece of land sold to Lewis Isaacs and others, forming the Jews' Burial Ground, subject nevertheless to a right of road of three feet six inches in width, granted on the said land from Elm Street to the said Burial Ground,

the right of way to the Burial Ground to be maintained.' Thus it would appear that the original piece of land was in the NW corner of the present site.

It was resolved at a meeting in April 1839:

'... to purchase land adjoining the Burial ground in Elm's Street and that we should open a subscription towards defraying the cost and also that of building a room for Watching and all other necessary purposes and of erecting a wall around the ground'.

Five years later, in 1844, the above mentioned cottages, known as Worcester Cottages were purchased by the congregation at the same time as the land also mentioned above. These cottages existed until the 1950s on the Burial ground site of what is now Elm Street. Additional land at the South end of the site was purchased in 1860 thus nearly completing the acquisition of the present cemetery. The final piece of land was bought, it would seem, as late as 1892/3 according to a letter from Mrs. Hester Sternberg, written to the Jewish Chronicle in April 1893, in which she stated that the Cheltenham 'Ground has been enlarged in the last few months', although she may in fact have been referring to the major repairs which were undertaken to the actual Burial Ground and cottages in that year.

In 1853 the expenses for the burial of a Mr. Plaite are entered in the account books. Perhaps this was the same Mr. Plaite who carried the scrolls at the opening of the Synagogue in 1839. No other mention of him is made anywhere else in the records. A year later, in 1854, a Jew from near Bremen in Germany was buried at the expense of the congregation, having died here of cholera. Mr. Isaacs was instructed by the Chief Rabbi to make the matter known in all Jewish newspapers as the man may have had a wife or children, 'although nothing is known of him in the town.' Up to 1872 burials from Stroud, Ross, Hereford and Gloucester took place at Gloucester, but on July 3rd 1872 Coleman Levi, Trustee of the Gloucester Burial Ground, wrote to Mr. Emanuel Samuels, Warden of the Cheltenham Synagogue, expressing his approval to the annexing of the Gloucester Ground to the Cheltenham Congregation. This meant that Stroud would also have to apply to Cheltenham for permission for burials in Gloucester as well as Cheltenham. In 1878 a letter from Stroud requesting burial privileges solicited the reply that no more burials of non-members could be allowed due to shortage of space.

Regular inspections of the Burial Ground were made in Cheltenham and Gloucester by the minister, in accordance with Law 65, and expenses were paid for this duty. Repairs to the Ground were frequent but in 1861 major improvements took place. An estimate for

£75 was first quoted, but as this could not be afforded, it was agreed that £40 worth of work be completed. The contract implies that much of the Burial Ground was open to the Street and this is supported by an application made in 1872, by the committee, to wall in the Burial Ground and to enclose the piece of garden attached. This application was approved but in 1877 we read that the railings at the Burial Ground had been destroyed by wind. They were replaced in March of that year.

In 1892 a letter was sent to the Board of Deputies in reply to a survey which was being undertaken in respect of the Jewish Burial Grounds in the Provinces. Herman Samuel, Secretary, stressed that Cheltenham's cemetery was not disused . . . 'we are still burying and enlarging the Ground'. He added that Gloucester had a Mortuary and the Ground there was nearly full. The issue of provincial cemeteries received much publicity in the Jewish Press and the Chronicle of 1893 reported that the Cheltenham Burial Ground was 'neglected and disused'. At the monthly meeting of the Board of Deputies it was also stated that the Cheltenham Burial Ground was likely to become neglected and disused soon. This prompted Mrs. Hester Sternberg, widow of Samuel Sternberg, to write to the Jewish Chronicle complaining most bitterly at their criticism of the Cheltenham cemetery, which ' . . . is not poorly kept. My sister Helen Yoell is buried there and places are reserved for my sister Mrs. Lowe and myself by the sides of our dear husbands. The ground has been enlarged in the last few months and our congregation though small, is far from defunct'. She later wrote to the Board of Deputies itself, saying, 'Many persons in good positions have parents lying there. There are seven male seat renters here. My subscriptions are more than the majority of the male members.'

The cottages, known as the Jews' Cottages provided rent for the Synagogue but as early as 1845 shortly after acquiring them the congregation found itself faced with bills for repairs. Half yearly rent for one cottage in 1849 amounted to £1.16.0d but frequently repairs ate up more than the yearly rent. In 1893 the cottages were in a very poor condition and were included in the major repair and improvement plans. A collection was taken amongst the small congregation for the repairs to the Mortuary House and the new wall to the cemetery, and this amounted to £10.17.5d. A fund was also started to pay off the balance, to keep the ground in good order and to preserve the tombstones. At the meeting where this was all agreed it was also decided to keep in future a Register of Burials which had not been done previously.

Today the Burial Ground is well kept but filling up rapidly with little opportunity for expansion. On 28th February 1912, on the death of Herman Samuel, last surviving Trustee of the Burial Ground, the Deeds were passed into the keeping of the Board of Deputies by his solicitors.

CHAPTER 10

THE STROUD COMMUNITY

During the eighties and nineties there was a massive influx into England of Jews from Eastern Europe. These unhappy people were fleeing from the Pogroms, which happened with depressing frequency in the eighties and nineties as well as at the beginning of the twentieth century. They sought refuge in London and other cities of industrial importance. Although Cheltenham was not such a centre, immigrants were attracted to Stroud where in the late '70s and '80s they were able to find work in the tailoring and clothing trade associated with the large mills of Hill Paul and Holloway Bros. of Threadneedle Street. These immigrants seem to have settled in the newly developed Lansdown district and some took shop premises on the other side of the town in the Middle Street and Nelson Street areas. By 1890 the Jewish Community numbered about 100 persons and was an important and 'respectable body of citizens'.

In the early part of the 19th century there is little mention of Jews in Stroud. One Andrew Isaacs, was a signatory to the Deed of Purchase of the land on which the Cheltenham Synagogue was built and by 1845 he had moved to Cheltenham where he carried on his pawnbroker's business at 89, Winchcombe Street. In 1844 a Master Levy of Stroud was paying a stranger's fee to the Cheltenham congregation of 1/- weekly and in 1854 the Stroud Coroner Mr. Ball, notified Mr. Andrew Isaacs, who at this time was Treasurer of the Cheltenham Synagogue, that he had held an inquest on 26th June on a man who had been found dead in a pond near Dunkirk, Nailsworth. The papers on him suggested that he was Isaac Cohen. Mr. Ball also stated that Jewish persons in the neighbourhood had made enquiries on the spot, but no definite proof of identity had been made.

The Stroud Jewish Congregation was formed about 1878 and for a while they worshipped in a small building in the Slad Road. At first they made use of Cheltenham's kosher butcher apparently without paying for the privilege, for in April of that year the Cheltenham Secretary wrote to the Stroud Secretary saying in all fairness they ought to pay for such services. 1878 is the first time that a Stroud *family* is mentioned in the Cheltenham records, as being a fee payer. This family, the Greensweigs continued paying until 1894, although there is no record of any of the family having been buried in either Cheltenham or Gloucester. There were, however, two Stroud marriages performed at the Cheltenham Synagogue in the 1870s,

between Adolph Cohen, son of Marcus of 2, Badbrook, Stroud, (both father and son were tailors) and Rebecca Rabiero, daughter of Joseph. This marriage took place in March 1878. In the following year, Abraham Isaac Carlish, son of Moses, a tailor of Uplands, Stroud, married Dora Metski, daughter of Jacob. At both the above events, the Rev. Hyman Levin of Cheltenham acted as officiant. The first recorded marriage *in* Stroud was at the Slad Road Synagogue on 1st June 1882.

In the mid 1880s the Stroud congregation directed their efforts towards providing a purpose built synagogue on land which they had acquired in Lansdown Road. The plans were prepared by Mr. J. P. Lofthouse who based them on photographs of, and maybe visits to, the Cheltenham Synagogue. The building work was carried out by W. H. Harper of Harper Bros, who had been responsible for the erection of the Unitarian Chapel in 1875/6 on land almost opposite the site of the new synagogue. This chapel, in 1989, is a Dance School.

The cost of the synagogue was £630 which was very cheap compared with the cost of Cheltenham's building which in 1839 cost £1500. On January 28th 1889, invitations were sent out to local Jews and civic dignitaries in the town:

Sir,

The new Synagogue which has been erected in Lansdown Road for the use of the Hebrew community in the neighbourhood, will be opened by Charles Samuel, Esq., and consecrated by Dr. Hermann Adler, Delegate Chief Rabbi, both from London, on Tuesday February 26th at 4.30 p.m.

An efficient choir from one of the Bristol Synagogues will perform the musical part of the ceremony.

As the available space for visitors is but small, the committee has decided to admit by ticket only, those to whom special invitations are sent.

I am directed to send you an invitation, and to ask if you will kindly send word to me on or before Friday next, February 1st, whether I shall send tickets for the use of . . . and yourself.

Samuel Hyman, President.

The Stroud congregation was not of the same social background as the one in Cheltenham — artisans rather than business men — but nevertheless determination and fervour were there and the Stroud Synagogue was consecrated on Tuesday 26th February. The Stroud News of 1st March reported the proceedings as follows:

A Hebrew Synagogue was consecrated at Stroud on Tuesday afternoon last by the Rev. Dr. Hermann Adler of London, Delegate Chief Rabbi, in the presence of the Jewish community and a considerable number of Christian visitors . . . The dimensions of the interior are about thirty feet by twenty eight with a dome in the centre. At one end is a gallery for female worshippers and at the other the curtained Ark where scrolls of the Law are deposited. This is approached by railed steps and above are the words in Hebrew characters, 'I will set the Lord before me continually,' and an abbreviation of the Ten Commandments. Suspended here is a lamp always kept burning in remembrance of the perpetual lamp in the Temple. In the centre of the building is a raised enclosure for the Minister and round the sides are light stained seats. Suspended from the ceiling are three handsome candelabra, and gas brackets are fixed to the walls which are coloured blue. On one side is hung a large board containing a prayer in English for the Queen and the Royal Family. The interior of the synagogue is reached by a passage from the principal entrance . . . About three o'clock, the building was formally opened by Mr. C. Samuel a well known wholesale clothier of London, who for this purpose was presented with a silver key . . . The doors having been opened the Delegate Chief Rabbi and others entered in procession with the scrolls in their arms, and the Reader Rev. Mr. Levi chanted all in Hebrew . . . The procession then moved up the Synagogue until it arrived at the Ark . . . The procession then passed round the synagogue seven times; during each circuit a psalm was chanted by the Reader and a choir (from Bristol) . . . The scrolls of the Law were then placed in the Ark, and the afternoon service was then proceeded with, after which the Delegate Chief Rabbi read an eloquent and powerful sermon. He then offered up the Prayer for Consecration and a prayer for the Queen and Royal Family.'

In 1889 the services were Friday evening and Saturday 9-11 a.m. and 3-4 p.m. Sunday School and adult classes were held on Sunday in a spacious room underneath the place of worship, so as not to publicly desecrate the Christian Sabbath. The Rabbi was the Rev. Samuel Orler.

Members of the Stroud Jewish Community in 1889 as listed in the local directories were:

Elias Greensweig

Tailor, Farr's Lane

Isador Greensweig	Tailor, Cemetery Road
Isaac Levi	Tailor, Middle Street
Lewis Levi	Shopkeeper, Middle Street
Isaac Shane	Tailor, Uplands
Emanuel M. Shane	Tailor, Pagan Hill

In 1894, only five years after the opening of the Synagogue, it would appear that many more Jews had settled in the town, and set themselves up in business. Harfield's Directory of Jews in Great Britain for 1894 lists the following traders:

Isaac Levy	Master Tailor
Marcus Whitehead	Master Tailor, Horn's Road
S. Sperber	House Furnisher, Upholsterer, John Street
I. Shane	Master Tailor, King Street
E. Greensweig	Master Tailor, Lansdown Hill
Mark Levy	Master Tailor, Lansdown Hill
Morris Malinsky	Master Tailor, Lansdown Hill
Lewis Levy	Master Tailor, Farr's Lane
Charles Berman	Master Tailor, Provision Dealer, Slad Road
Isaac Englishman	Licensed Victualler and Master Tailor, Slad Road
Joseph Goldstein	Master Tailor, 105, Slad Road
Hyman Levy	Master Tailor, 106, Slad Road
I. Greensweig	Master Tailor, Whitehall
Rev. A. Rosenberg	Minister to the Hebrew Congregation, 23, Springfield Terrace, Slad Road.

Printed sources disagree as to the names of the Stroud ministers, but local records and correspondence clearly show that from 1882 until 1892 the Reverend Samuel Orlor was Shochet and Minister. For the year 1892-1893 the Reverend A. Rosenberg held these offices, and in 1894 the Reverend A. Levinson was undoubtedly Minister as he is mentioned in newspaper reports of the chief Rabbi's visit to Stroud. The Stroud Shochet in 1895 was Mr. D. Jacobs to whom the Cheltenham congregation paid £5.6.0 in that year. The Reverend Levinson had moved to Brighton by 1897 and the Minister of the Stroud Synagogue is then advertised as being 'vacant'. Mr. Levinson did however pay a short return visit to Stroud in 1899 to conduct a marriage service there.

Whereas the Stroud congregation had its own synagogue, Shochet and Minister by the 1890s, and the community was thriving, the Cheltenham congregation at this time was experiencing a period of

instability. The one advantage which Cheltenham had over Stroud was the Burial Ground. At least until 1887, Stroud burials took place at Gloucester. As late as 1886, Michael Shane of Stroud was buried at Gloucester, aged 13 days, and his sister Rebecca was buried there aged 21 months in 1887, the last burial to be recorded at Gloucester. Many Stroud families did of course contribute to the Cheltenham Synagogue in order to avail themselves of the opportunity to be buried in Jewish soil or to receive the services of a Shochet. However, the Cheltenham Burial Ground certainly was the cause of some friction in the mid 1890s.

As the Cheltenham congregation had virtually ceased to function by 1896, Stroud was naturally keen to be able to continue to have the right to use the Cheltenham Burial Ground, but as a result of such a request to the Cheltenham acting President/Secretary/Treasurer, Ezra Feldman, it is obvious that relationships soured somewhat. To be fair to Feldman he was acting out of loyalty to past members of the Cheltenham congregation and on behalf of the absentee Trustees. Feldman wished to establish and retain rules regarding costs and eligibility for burial rights in Cheltenham. Cheltenham was experiencing a period of severe depression at the time and as their Shochet and Reader had resigned in 1895, a request was made to Stroud for them to allow their Shochet to come twice a week to Cheltenham to kill for the Cheltenham members. Stroud offered Cheltenham the free use of their Shochet in return for free use of the Burial Ground. Feldman insisted that burial fees must remain as they had always been — £2.10.0 for an adult, 21/- for a child — exclusive of Sexton's fees. Consequently in that year Cheltenham had to pay Stroud £5.6.0 for the use of their Shochet! But the matter did not rest there. In December 1897, Feldman received a letter from the Stroud Secretary:

We are a community of 130 souls and it seems reasonable for us to have access, the only congregation in the neighbourhood, rather than one or two remaining members of a congregation now defunct, there being only you and Mr. Schnurmann left of your Congregation.

Minden Shane, Hon Sec.

Five years later — perhaps after more pleas, we do not know — the request was granted on condition that it was not binding on the Cheltenham Synagogue, in the event of the reforming of the congregation at a later date. Whether throughout the dispute Stroud's request really had meant unpaid use or whether it meant unrestricted use, it is not clear.

By 1908 the Stroud Synagogue had ceased to function. With the decline in the textile industry, the younger elements of the

community no doubt moved away from the area. This very fast decline in a period of just over ten years presents a marked contrast to the situation which existed at the time of the Pastoral Visit of the Chief Rabbi in 1894. On his arrival in Stroud from Cheltenham, Dr. Adler stayed at the Imperial Hotel. He visited first the school where the children were examined in their classes. Dr. Adler showed appreciation of Rev. Levinson's work as tutor and as Minister. Prizes were distributed as follows:

Kate Malinski, Abraham Malinski, Philip Greensweig,
Leah Minden Shane, Rosa Minden Shane, Henry Weinberg,
Rachel Levy, Rosa Greensweig, Solomon Levy, Henry
Levy, Solomon Weinberg.

In the evening the Chief Rabbi preached to a large congregation and a reception was held afterwards at the President's home, Mr. Isaac Levy. Here Dr. Adler expressed his pleasure at the progress made since his last visit in 1889.

It is sad that so much effort and promise should come to nought in so short a time. Today the synagogue building still exists, but hardly recognisable as a former place of worship. It has been converted into two dwellings and the roof dome has disappeared. Only a few panes of coloured glass in a window suggest that at one time this building was the home of a religious congregation.

The Marriage Registers were closed by order of the Registrar General on 6.4.1908 'In consequence of the Stroud Synagogue having been disused,' but descendants of the congregation at the turn of the century have contributed information for which the author is grateful.

Dr. D. Dimson is the son of the late Zechariah Dimovitch who was appointed Minister of the Stroud Synagogue in August 1904 and served there until April 1905. The congregation was obviously undergoing a period of financial difficulty at the time for the Secretary, writing to the Rev. Dimovitch, states that he does not wish to make promises which he cannot keep, but is prepared to pay 16/- weekly 'to give assistance with food and to make all clothes free of charge. I have done this in the past and I make no exception in your case'. He also enclosed 8/9 this being the train fare from London to Stroud. While in Stroud the Rev. Dimovitch perfected his English and gave his sermons in English on Festivals and Holy Days. He was appointed as Shochet but performed the duties of Minister and Teacher also. His ministry seemed to have encompassed Gloucester and Cheltenham as well as Stroud, for in his notebook he always linked the three together. He made many non-Jewish friends in the area and there is amongst his papers a letter to a local Vicar by the name of Hinchcliffe thanking him for the gift of the silver biscuit

barrel which he had given to the minister and his wife on the occasion of their marriage. He also mentions with affection the Rev. D. Ebenham who was Curate of All Saints Church in Gloucester. The Rev. Zechariah Dimovitch in his capacity as Shochet prepared for sale the kosher meat which was sold from a separate table in a non-Jewish butcher's shop under strict supervision. Times were hard and hospitality not always forthcoming. The minister records that on some occasions he was reduced to bread and bloater paste as a kosher standby.

His records give some idea of the state of the congregation in 1904 to 1905. Names on the register of the Sabbath school are:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>		
Ester Englishman	12	Lionel Weinberg	7
Rachel Levy	13	Dolly Englishman	11
Rebecca Gladfart	8	Joey Levy	7
Leon Gladfart	11	Mike Gladfart	9
Kelly Weinberg	8	Jack Englishman	7
Deborah Shane	9	Mike Englishman	9
Katye Shane	8	Frank Englishman	10
Rebecca Shane	6	Morris Levy	11
Alice Malinsky	10		

An inventory of the Stroud Synagogue at this period includes:

- 12 Sefut Amet (Siddurim)
- 5 Yisodei Hamitra (on scripture)
- 6 Pentateuchs
- 6 standard Siddurim
- 5 Bibles in English

Many of the family names in the children's register are those listed in the directories for 1889 and in the report of the Chief Rabbi in 1894, but obviously by 1905 families were moving away and the financial state of the congregation could not support a Minister. In 1905 the Reverend Mr. Dimovitch left and was not replaced.

Mr. Sidney Leaver, formerly Levy, who was born about 1900 lived with his family in Stroud in the years 1908-1910. His great uncle, and subsequently his father-in-law, was Mark Levi whose only surviving son helped Mr. Leaver to compile the following information.

Mark Levi with his wife, Dora, and two or three of their children settled in Stroud in the mid 1890's. Mark was a tailor by trade and went to Stroud to gain employment with Holloway Bros, who as well as being weavers of wool and worsted cloths, also expanded into the manufacture of men's clothing for which they required qualified and skilled tailors. Mark Levi soon appears to have enlisted the assistance of his brother Isaac and other members of his family as

well as that of friends and acquaintances who were skilled in the tailoring trade. Holloway also owned a retail shop which sold the garments made by Mark Levi and his colleagues — the Malinskys, Shanes, Englishmans and Weinbergs and he was soon promoted to what in those days was called a 'Chamber Master'.

Mark and Dora had three sons and five daughters, the eldest son Harry, also working for Holloway Bros. Another son, Abraham, perished as a result of playing with matches as a child. While in Stroud, Mark Levi played an important part in enlisting the services of a student minister, Isaac Ostroff, who also acted as Shochet and Mohel. He married one of Mark's daughters and after leaving Stroud in 1908/9 he was minister at Aberdare, Aberdeen, Kilburn, and finally the South West London United Synagogue in Wandsworth. He died in his fifties in 1933. Mark and Dora's last home in Stroud was in Melbourne House in Lower Street and some of the children attended the Black Boy School, Lower Street and also Uplands School. In about 1912 the family returned to London where Mr. Leaver subsequently married the youngest daughter of Mark and Dora Levi.

APPENDICES

MINISTERS APPOINTED TO THE CHELTENHAM HEBREW CONGREGATION, 1825-1897

Many of these Ministers acted as Reader, Cantor, Shochet and Shofar.

- 1825 JACOB KOPPEL HYMAN, Shochet.
1833 Mr. ROSE, Shochet, Mohel, Reader, Shofar.
1834 Mr. E. MOSELEY, Shochet and Mohel.
1835 Mr. WOLFE, Shochet.
1837 HYAM LEVI, Reader, Shofar. MICHAEL ROSE, Mohel.
1839 Rev. ISAAC PULVER, Reader.
to
1849 Rev. RAPHAEL JACOBSON, Reader and Shochet.
to
1854 Rev. KIRCHBAUM.
to
1855 Rev. SAMUEL HOFFNUNG.
to
1857 Rev. ABRAHAM GOLDSMIDT, Reader.
to
1859 Rev. JOSHUA LEVY.
to
1863 Rev. ABRAHAM GOLDSMIDT, Reader.
to
1864 Rev. BERTHOLD ALBU, Reader and Registrar.
to
1866 NATHAN AARON, of Oxford, temporary.
to
1866 Rev. PHILIP PHILLIPS.
to
1874 Rev. HYMAN LEVIN.
to
1885 Rev. SAMUEL JOSEPH.
to
1895 Mr. STOLLOFF, Shochet.
to
1897 From this date, Ministers from Birmingham and other towns came to officiate on High Festivals.
1899 and Rev. S. J. HEILBRON from London acted as Reader on
1902 the Days of Atonement.

SERVICE TIMES AT THE CHELTENHAM SYNAGOGUE

- 1840c Every Friday evening at sunset
 Saturday at 8.0 a.m.
- 1847 Every Friday evening and,
 Saturday 8.0 a.m. from March-September
 8.30 a.m. from September-March
- 1873 Friday, 4.30 p.m. and 7.0 p.m.
 Saturday, 9.0 a.m. and on all Feasts and festivals,
 according to Mosaic Ritual
- 1889 Friday at 7.30 p.m.
 Saturday at 9.0 a.m.
- 1892 Friday one hour before sunset
 Saturday at 9.0 a.m. and on all Feasts and Festivals
 according to Mosaic Ritual

CHELTENHAM'S REPRESENTATIVES AT THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS

- 1850 Unable to appoint due to small congregation and
 shortage of funds.
- 1853-1856 Ephraim Alex, 31, Bridge Street, Blackfriars, London.
- 1858 Unable to appoint as 'the numbers do not constitute
 the return of a Deputy.'
- 1871-1881 Gabriel Lindo, 12, Kings Arms Yard, Moorgate
 Street, London.
- 1883-1885 Hermann H. Myer, 30, New Bridge Street, London.
- 1890-1891 A. A. Jones, 19, Broadhurst Gardens, London NW.

THE OFFICERS OF THE CHELTENHAM SYNAGOGUE

The following lists have been compiled from the published Reports of the Board of Deputies and from the Archives of the Cheltenham Congregation. Appointments of President, Secretary, Treasurer usually took place at the October meeting. The President and Secretary were usually the Wardens.

Where no name is supplied in the lists below, this is because there is no definite referral to a particular person in office for that specific date in any available sources.

<i>Year</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>Members</i>
1833			Isaiah Alex	
1834			Isaiah Alex	
1835	Isaiah Alex		Isaiah Alex	
1836	Isaiah Alex		Elias Myers	
1837	Elias Myers			
1838	Jacob Davis		Jacob Davis	
1839	Jacob Davis		David Sternberg	
1840	Lewis Levason			
1841	Lewis Levason	Montague Alex		
1842	Lewis Levason	Montague Alex	Israel Moses	
1843	Montague Alex		Israel Moses	
1844	Israel Moses	Ephraim Moseley		
1845	Montague Alex			
1846	Montague Alex		Jacob Davis	
1847			Jacob Davis	
1848		Montague Alex	Andrew Isaacs	
1849	Jacob Davis	Samuel Sternberg		
1850	Hertz Karo	Samuel Sternberg		
1851	Hertz Karo	Montague Alex		
1852		Montague Alex		
1853	Jacob Davis	Montague Alex	Andrew Isaacs	15
1854	Hertz Karo	Montague Alex	Phineas Solomon	
1855	Andrew Isaac	Montague Alex	Phineas Solomon	
1856	Andrew Isaac	Montague Alex	Phineas Solomon	11
1857	Andrew Isaac	Montague Alex	Phineas Solomon	10
1858	Hertz Karo	Montague Alex	Phineas Solomon	19
1859	Hertz Karo	David Sternberg	David Sternberg	16
1860	Samuel Sternberg	Montague Alex	Woolfe Issachar	
1861	Samuel Sternberg	Montague Alex	Richard Moses	19
1862	Montague Alex	Hertz Karo	Richard Moses	24
1863	Montague Alex	David Sternberg	Richard Moses	17
1864	Montague Alex	Rev. B. Albu		
1865	David Sternberg	Rev. B. Albu		
1866	David Sternberg	Emanuel Samuels		
1867		Woolfe Issachar		
1868	Samuel Sternberg	Woolfe Issachar	David Sternberg	
1869	Samuel Sternberg	Woolfe Issachar	David Sternberg	21
1870	Samuel Sternberg	Woolfe Issachar	David Sternberg	18
1871	Samuel Sternberg	Woolfe Issachar	Israel Moses	19
1872	Emanuel Samuels	Woolfe Issachar	Israel Moses	18
1873		Woolfe Issachar	Israel Moses	18
1874	David Sternberg	Hertz Karo	Israel Moses	19
1875	David Sternberg	Woolfe Issachar	Hertz Karo	15
1876	David Sternberg	Woolfe Issachar	Hertz Karo	15
1877	Woolfe Issachar	Edward Lowe	Hertz Karo	18
1878	Woolfe Issachar	Woolfe Issachar	Edward Lowe	17

1879	Edward Lowe	Woolfe Issachar		16
1880	Edward Lowe	Woolfe Issachar		13
1881	Edward Lowe	Woolfe Issachar		11
1882	Edward Lowe	Woolfe Issachar		14
1883	David Sternberg	Woolfe Issachar	Edward Lowe	14
1884	Samuel Sternberg	Woolfe Issachar	Edward Lowe	12
1885	Edward Lowe	Woolfe Issachar		9
1886	Edward Lowe	Woolfe Issachar		8
1887	Samuel Goldberg	Woolfe Issachar		11
1888	Samuel Goldberg	Woolfe Issachar		8
1889	Samuel Goldberg	Woolfe Issachar		7
1890	Samuel Goldberg	Woolfe Issachar		7
1891	Samuel Goldberg	Woolfe Issachar		8
1892	Samuel Goldberg	Herman Samuel		10
1893	Samuel Goldberg	I. Nestor Schnurmann	I. Nestor Schnurmann	7
1894	I. Nestor Schnurmann	I. Nestor Schnurmann		
1895	Maurice Hart	E. Feldman	E. Feldman	
1896	Ezra Feldman	I. Nestor Schnurmann	E. Feldman	3
1897	Ezra Feldman	I. Nestor Schnurmann	E. Feldman	3
1898-1906	Ezra Feldman	I. Nestor Schnurmann	E. Feldman	2
1906-14	I. Nestor Schnurmann	assumed all offices.		
1914-39	D. Lipson	assumed all offices.		

Secretaries had to be licensed with the Registrar General for Marriage purposes.

M. Alex — Licensed 10 January 1850

W. Issachar — Licensed 11 June 1866

D. Sternberg — Licensed 1863

I. Nestor Schnurmann — Licensed 23 June 1893

OFFICIALS OF THE STROUD SYNAGOGUE
Taken from Annual Reports of the Board of Deputies
of British Jews 1882-1899

<i>Year</i>	<i>Seat-holders</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>Minister</i>	<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Licensed</i>
1882	48	Gabriel Ruben	Rev. S. Orlor	Rev. S. Orlor	1882
1883	14	Samuel Hyman	Rev. S. Orlor	Rev. S. Orlor	
1884	15	Samuel Hyman	Rev. S. Orlor	Rev. S. Orlor	
1885	16	Samuel Hyman	Rev. S. Orlor	Rev. S. Orlor	
1886	16	Samuel Hyman	Rev. S. Orlor	Rev. S. Orlor	
1887	17	Samuel Hyman	Rev. S. Orlor	Rev. S. Orlor	
1888	18	Samuel Hyman	Rev. S. Orlor	Rev. S. Orlor	

All the above are listed under the **Slad Road Synagogue**. The following appear under the lists for the **Lansdown Road Synagogue**.

1889	17	S. Hyman/I. Levy	Rev. S. Orlor	Rev. S. Orlor	
1890	16	I. Greensweig	Rev. S. Orlor	I. Minden Shane	1890
1891	14	I. Greensweig	Rev. S. Orlor	I. M. Shane	
1892	20	E. Greensweig	Rev. A. Rosenberg	I. M. Shane	
1893	16	Isaac Levy	Rev. A. Rosenberg	I. M. Shane	
1894	14	Isaac Levy	Rev. A. Levinson	I. M. Shane	
1895	11	E. Greensweig		I. Minden Shane	
1896	15	E. Greensweig		I. Minden Shane	
1897	9	Isaac Levy		I. Minden Shane	
1898	12	J. Goldstein		I. Minden Shane	
1899	7	M. Malinsky		I. Minden Shane	
1904-05			Rev. Z. Dimovitch	I. Minden Shane	
1908			Mr. I. Ostroff		

Stroud Hebrew Congregation was represented at the **Board of Deputies of British Jews** as follows:

1892-1894 inclusive by E. P. Valentine, 39, St. Augustine's Road, Camden Square.

GLOSSARY

- Barmitzvah** the 'coming of age' of a Jewish boy at thirteen years when he assumes full religious responsibility.
- Kosher** fit to eat according to Jewish dietary Laws.
- Matzo** unleavened bread eaten during Passover.
- Mohel** a person who is licensed to perform circumcision.
- Shochet** an authorised slaughterer of animals according to Jewish Law.
- Heptorah** a selection of readings from the Books of the Prophets, read at the conclusion of the service on the Sabbath and Holy Days. Read after the reading of the Law.
- Mussof** additional prayers on Sabbaths and Holy days.
- Nila** Part of the afternoon service on the Day of Atonement, when the Ark is closed at the end of the service.
- Shofer** A most important symbol — the horn sounded on festivals but not on the Sabbath. Always blown at the end of the Day of Atonement service.

Members of the Synagogue were those who paid for the privilege of having special places in the synagogue near to the Ark. They also were eligible to vote and to hold office and had certain other rights.

Seatholders paid a fee for the right to a seat in the synagogue, but these were usually at the back. Seatholders did not have voting rights, nor could they stand for election to office.

SOURCES

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