

5618 and all that

The Jewish Cemetery Fairview Strand

The little village of Fairview which until the end of the 18th Century was known as Ballybough, has down the years seen the coming and going of many varied groups, sects, landowners, scholars, farmers, industrialists, law enforcers, wayfarers and colourful characters. Among one of the most intriguing groups, from a historical point of view to settle in the area were the Jews. Present day passers by, whether on a bus in a car or on foot, cannot but notice the sentinel inscription over the door of the small gate house proclaiming *Built in the year 5618*. This curious piece of information has over the years caused many a head to turn, and many a screech of brakes on this stretch of Fairview Strand situated between Meagher's pub and The Fairview Inn. The house immediately next door to this gate lodge of the Jewish cemetery, No. 89, was from 1830 an R.I. C. Barracks until 1910 when the force took up residence in Clontarf Barracks. The house immediately the other side of the cemetery, Erlington House, was in 1748 occupied by Joseph Dioderice, who was maternal grandfather of Thomas Erlington, Provost of Trinity College and Bishop of Ferns. Croydon Park House at the top of Fairview Avenue was once the home of Thomas Clarke, the 1916 treaty signatory and Cathal Brugha lived on Richmond Avenue. Indeed the Fairview area was a hot bed of activity during the 1916 Rising, and many locals gave the supreme sacrifice. The sombre connection with the Ballybough of the day was further emphasised by the presence of the Suicide's Plot situated on the

corner of Clonliffe Road and Ballybough Road. Here it was the practice in the 18th and 19th centuries, to bury suicides, highwaymen and robbers and drive a wooden stake through their hearts, lest their spirits were wont to rise and terrorise the locals. Is it any wonder then that another famous son of Fairview, Bram Stoker wrote such blood curdling stories as Dracula? Not that the area was particularly known for it's spirits and spectres, apart from the usual 'apparitions' around the many lively hostelries towards the Midnight hour, on the contrary, the name Fairview accurately reflected the splendid view that the area afforded out over the Bay. In fact 'The Strand' as it was popularly known up and 'till the building of Annesley Bridge in 1797, was a favourite haunt for the 'Gentry' and fashionable nobility of the day to parade their victories, valuables and vanities. Dean Swift and Mrs. Delaney of Delville in Glasnevin, were among the regulars who could be seen 'taking the airs' on horseback along what is to-day Fairview Strand. The view they would have enjoyed then, was one of an uninterrupted vista of Dublin Bay from Howth Head to the Dublin Mountains on the south, with the thriving Dublin Port thronged with hundreds of sailing vessels of every description and origin. Another long gone sight which was available to them was the 4 acre island nestling just off the northern shore, roughly where Goulding's Fertiliser factory was. Clontarf Island as it was called was part of the Vernon estate and was mentioned by historians during the Battle of Clontarf in 1014. Although this 'landmark' disappeared from view forever in the worst storm ever recorded by the Port of Dublin in 1844, drowning it's owner Christopher Cromwell and his ten year old son, another fixture replaced the Fair View, when the Dublin and Drogheda Railway embankment was built across the Bay from Amiens St. to Clontarf Road in 1843. Again in 1954 Fairview was once again overwhelmed by floods, when the Tolka burst it's banks and left the whole area resembling an eighteenth map of the place, when Mother sea owned most of what we know as Fairview to-day.

Local Industry

The Ballybough/Fairview area had just as any other it's fair share of tragedy and suffering. Apart from the confiscation of the great monastery of St. Mary's, and the granting of the lands of Ballybough to the Earl of

Desmond and another Geraldine supporter Walter Peppard, renting asunder the harmonious and fruitful relationship the local people enjoyed with the monks for centuries, the predominantly agricultural area felt the full ferocity of Cromwell. One peculiarity of Cromwell which later affected the locality, was his remarkable regard for the Jews. Perhaps he admired their business acumen. He attracted large numbers of them to England and some to Ireland, posing the suggestion among some London Jews the possibility of proclaiming him the Messiah, so apparent was his favour towards them. The arrival of Jews to the Ballybough area coincided with a marked upsurge in the industrialisation of the district. From the end of the 18th century, and right through the 19th century the area of Ballybough grew more and more as a manufacturing district. This was particularly so in the business of flint glass. There was at one time in the 18th century a glass factory near Ballybough Bridge whose products included "a set of fine lustres for Dublin Castle."

Where the Ballybough flats stand to-day once stood a glass factory that made plate glass for coaches, polished it and exported it to the Continent. Perhaps the most celebrated glass factory to exist in the area was Chebsey's glass house which produced the magnificent 1,233 piece glass chandelier for the Irish House of Parliament in College Green (Bank of Ireland). Mulvaney's Glass factory was another example of the extent of the industry in the district. To emphasise the industrial nature the locality attained in the mid 18th. And 19th. Centuries, the little lane now known as Esmonde Avenue, was then known as "Factory Lane," such was the abundance of manufacturing and obviously employment, in the area.

Just as Clontarf Island disappeared in a deluge and floods overwhelmed the Fairview area on the 8th of December 1954, some thirteen years previous to this watery wake, on a gloriously sunny Whit week end, four German bombs rained death and destruction down on the North Strand just a fin tail away. In that same year a former resident of Fairview who had an inordinate life long interest in the Jews, departed this life. Living as he had done in Stella Maris, 29 Windsor Avenue, (1896-1899), Convent Avenue, (1899), Richmond Avenue, (1899-1900), and Royal Terrace, (1900-1901), Fairview, James Joyce had ample Jewish culture and customs to exercise his interest in same. Besides the glass making factories, there were a

number of other industries extant from the 1830's in the Ballybough/Fairview area. These mostly were concerned with the making of agricultural instruments for the inhabitants of the area, which apart from the Mill at Ballybough, and the glass making industry, was still almost completely rural. There was also a small factory for printing linen which was much admired by the previously mentioned Mrs. Delaney of Delville.

Jews in Ireland.

The first Jews to come to Ireland in significant numbers were Morano Jews, that is to say Jews who readily converted to Christianity but practised their Jewish faith assiduously. These Jews came from Spain and Portugal and were believed to have fled the Inquisition. Within a few years there were enough Jews to found a Synagogue, which was situated in Crane Lane. The attitude of the Irish Parliament after the Williamite wars to both Catholics and Dissenters frightened the Jews and made them feel unsafe in the City. They moved north of the Tolka and settled in Annadale about 1718. This little village was connected to Fairview by Ellis's Lane (Phillipsburgh Avenue). To-day Annadale is a very nice housing estate on Phillipsburgh Avenue. At one time the Jews of Dublin exceeded a hundred, and their leader was a man named Phillips, who was well known to his compatriots in London. There were Jews in Ireland long before this but they made little or no impact either on the natives, or on their own lives.

The earliest record of Jews coming to Ireland is found in the Annals of Innisfallen, translated by Fr. Dineen. These state papers tell us that "in 1062 five Jews came to Ireland from over the sea, bringing with them gifts to Tordelbach, but were again expelled over the sea" It is believed that these Jews came from France as there are no records of Jews in England before 1066. There is mention of Jews in Ireland in 1232, when King Henry II put them under the care of his Viceroy here. In 1672, John Brennan, Archbishop of Cashel, stated in a report to Rome, that "among the Non-Catholics resident in Ireland, there are Protestants, Anabaptists,

Presbyterians, Quakers, Seekers, (those in search of religion), and a few Jews. It is believed by some historians that the Jews were encouraged to come to Ireland by Oliver Cromwell, who considered their supposed wealth, and reputation for industry, likely to advance the commercial interests of the country, and that with other Non-Catholics, they would form a barrier against the Catholic population. In an extract from the Register of Depositions at Canary dated 18th January 1664, one Gasper Pereria states that on the 8th of March 1662 that "his brother, Manual residing in Dublin is also a Judaiser." Manual Pereira was one of the first Jews in Dublin who founded the Synagogue in Crane Lane. When he and his brother arrived in this country in 1662, and reported to the authorities, they declared themselves to be "foreign Protestants" which indicates the insecurity of the fledgling Jewish congregation in Dublin. About the year 1718 the Jewish community of Dublin moved north of the Tolka and settled in Annadale, which at that time was outside the municipal boundary of the City. Other sects that settled in the area around the same time were the Huguenots, who had many fine houses on the Richmond Road, and the Baptists who at one time worshipped in a small chapel at the top of Phillipsburgh Avenue. Of the "Big Houses in the district from the beginning of the 18th century onwards, the most notable were, Cutaldo (Bushfield), Pennyville (Croydon Park), Ruthville, Annadale House, Rosemount, Woodlands, Woodbine Lodge, Marino House and Tokay Lodge.

Ballybough Burial Ground.

On the 28th of October 1718 Alexander Felix (David Penso), Jacob Do Porto, and David Machado Do Sequeira, on behalf of the Ashkennazim leased a plot of land in Ballybough from Chichester Phillips of Drumcondra Castle. Situated on present day Fairview Strand, this plot of land measuring "half a rood and five perches" or roughly 2,500 square metres was the burial place for the Jews of Dublin up to 1900 when the present cemetery in Dolphin's Barn was opened. The only burials to take place in the Fairview Strand cemetery after the opening of Dolphin's Barn took place in 1901, 1908, 1946, and 1958, the last and perhaps

most interesting. This burial was unusual in that Maud Jeanette Harris sought and was granted permission to be buried beside her father, Herman Boas in the same grave. In 1908 Lewis Harris was elected an Alderman of the City of Dublin. Unfortunately the day before he was to be made Lord Mayor he died and was buried in Fairview Strand, beside his wife Juliette. Along the East Wall of the cemetery there is a small plaque which simply states: "To our beloved sister Dinah Minnie" set up by an American solicitor about 1932. Initially the burial ground in Fairview was rented to representatives of the Jews of Dublin for a period of 40 years. In 1746 it's officials were threatened with prosecution for the recovery of £7-10-0 rent arrears due on plot. They sought assistance from the Spanish/Portuguese Synagogue in London. They suggested that they should buy the plot. Consequently the plot was bought on the 17th of September 1748 by the London congregation acting through, and in the name of Michael Phillips, Crane Lane, Dublin as a leasehold for 1,000 years at the annual rent of one peppercorn. This entailed payment of £34-10 shillings and the surrender of the 1718 lease. Michael Phillips reported that part of the wall of the cemetery had collapsed and was in need of urgent repair. This wall had been erected to block out the view from the street and to keep intruders out of the cemetery. Another important consideration was the prevalence of grave robbers and vandals. A sum of £10 to £15 was needed for repairs to the breeze wall. In 1857 a stone wall was built around the cemetery. Also in the same year, 1857 the gate lodge was built and the logo 5618 carved on it. A caretaker has been resident in the gate lodge ever since. Presently the incumbents are a Mr. and Mrs O'Neill. 5618 is the Jewish calendar of 1857. This gate lodge has been designated a listed building by Dublin Corporation since 1991. The house was erected as a permanent replacement for a temporary hut built by the Cohen family in 1798. The Jewish calendar is based on the Lunar month, with names for each month which date back to the Babylonian captivity of the Jews in 5751 (3760 B.C.). Regarding the wall around the cemetery, the taking of headstones and some of the bodies in fact, was quite an ordinary occurrence, hence the need for security. A quaint anecdote is told about the headstone of Solomon Cohen which disappeared, and one of his sons on visiting a Christian friend in the area noted that his father was buried in the chimney

breast. To-day there are 148 tombstones still standing in the little cemetery (see list attached); which are inscribed in Hebrew, and English, with Jewish calendar month of death, plus the birth, age, place of origin of the person. In 1839 the laws of the Dublin Jewish Congregation included one which stated that after every burial, the body should be watched over for a week. More than one person was allowed to watch at a time, but one must be a Jew. The oldest standing tombstone in the graveyard is that of Joseph Wills. Dated 1777, he was known as "Jacob Frenchman" to his friends. The Cohen tombstones all have a depiction of hands over their remains. The reason for this is to show that they were descendants of the Cohens who were the Priests of Israel, and the hands are shown as blessing the people. This custom has still survived. If you go to a Synagogue on Yom Kippur, (the day of atonement) you will see the Cohens, who are the Priests of Israel blessing the community, standing in front of the Ark. There is a headstone in the cemetery to one of the Cohens, who although a very wealthy man spent most of his life in abject poverty. Known as the "Miser Cohen," in order to confuse his neighbours would fry onions, then open the window and let the smell waft into neighbours houses giving the impression that he was frying steak. When he died he left £45,000, which in mid Victorian times was quite a sizeable fortune. A Cohen does not attend a funeral. Obviously they had to be buried somewhere, so consequently one part of the graveyard is usually devoted to the Cohens. So whenever you go into an orthodox Jewish graveyard, you will always see one section devoted to the Cohens, and you will always know they are Cohens by the two joined hands depicted on the tombstones.

Burial Rites

There is a Holy Burial Society to which all adult Jews subscribe during their Synagogue membership, and they do this throughout the whole of their adult life. When they die, the Holy Burial Society which in Dublin's case consists purely and simply of volunteers, perform the last rites and prepare the body for burial. The organised communal society that does this task is called The Sacred Society (Hevra Kadisha). The congregation in Dublin has a burial society called in Hebrew (Kabronim Chegra). Shrouds were made by a

group of Jewish women, and earth from Israel was placed in the grave. The head of the body in the grave was turned slightly to face east. Usually this takes place on the same day as the person dies, provided he has died before dusk, and unless it is a Holy Day or the Sabbath or they are waiting for a close relative from abroad. The rule is one person to a grave. The dead must be clothed in white. Embalming is forbidden as is cremation and burial must take place in the earth. Another unusual request was agreed to when the Spanish Consul in Hollyhead, who was a Christian, expressed the wish to be buried in the Jewish graveyard on Fairview Strand. It is accepted that this person was able to produce documentary proof of his Jewish ancestry. The grave of Solomon Levenston is interesting because of the fact that it has a double headstone. The left side of the headstone is blank, and the reason for this is that this was intended for his wife when she died. A letter discovered in government files, written by a woman by the name of Mrs. Annie Fitzsimons, who obviously married outside the Jewish faith, but is May Levenston then living in 1926 at 17 Crampton Court., Dublin; writing to the Home Secretary in London writes: "I am taking this liberty in laying before you a matter very dear to me. I am the oldest daughter living of Solomon A. Levenston who died on the 3rd of October 1887 and is buried in Ballybough Jewish burial ground. We bought our double grave to have my dear mother buried beside him, but unfortunately my poor mother died the first week of the Rebellion, April 1916 and could not be brought across the City. We had to bury her in the new cemetery Bluebell, at Dolphin's Barn. Owing to the coffin being only a shell we could not remove same, so we had to abandon the idea. Now as I am the oldest daughter alive, I would feel really grateful if you would grant this little wish to apply to the Jewish community to be buried beside my dear father in my mother's place. Though the burial place is closed up they keep a caretaker there guarding the place. I will feel very much obliged and grateful if you would look into this matter and give it your kind consideration, and let me have a reply to same." Unfortunately, she was not buried in Ballybough, and was most likely buried in Dolphin's Barn.

Fluctuating Fortunes

The number of practising Jews in Dublin ebbed and flowed in a somewhat dramatic fashion over the years. In 1746 we read that 40 families numbering some 200 souls were living in Dublin. Such was the strength of their numbers in 1760 that a Synagogue was opened in Marlboro Green which adjoined Northumberland Square, off Lr. Abbey St. where Brooks Thomas had their premises. Then in 1818 the congregation had fallen to an all time low. In that year only two families were recorded, 9 souls in all, practising in Dublin. In fact from 1790 to 1821, they were lacking the Minyan, (the Minyan is a group of 10 males aged 13 or over necessary before public prayer can be said). The Jews recorded in Dublin between 1790 and 1812 consisted of just two families, the Cohens and the Phillips. The Cohens were the Pencil Cohens, and the Phillips were Chocolate makers. Then during the mid 19th century European Jews began to settle in Dublin. This fact is borne out by the names and places of origin of these immigrants carved on the headstones in the burial ground on Fairview Strand. Most of the Jews buried there were Jewellers by profession. Others were Merchants, General Dealers, Bill Brokers, Painters of miniatures, Engravers, Musicians, Druggists, Teachers of languages and Chocolate makers. The Cohen family who are buried in the cemetery are reputed to have introduced the graphite pencil to Ireland and consequently were known as the "Pencil Cohens." Some of the poorer Jews of Dublin were Itinerant Peddlars. The main places of origin were Russia, Latvia, Estonia, Germany, England, Poland, Ireland, and of course Spain and Portugal. To-day there are over , 1,500 Jews living and working in Dublin. Of course what the ordinary Dublin person associates with the Jews is the Pawn Shop, or the Molly Bawn as it is known colloquely. This in fact is a commonly held misconception, as no Jew ever operated a Pawn Shop or indeed a Public House either. Because of some obscure legislation in Irish law, Jews never in fact partook in the operation or ownership of these professions. In fact it is a

vastly different and sophisticated type of Jew that resides in our Capitol City of the 90s. Situated mostly on the Southside, mainly Rathgar and Terenure, a glance in the phone book alone will show Jewish names involved in almost every business, trade, and profession. Undoubtedly names like Ben Briscoe, Mervyn Taylor, and Alan Shatter are well known. The Goode's, and of course Chaim Hertzog are representative of Irish Jewry globally, the latter being president of Israel. Apart from a few well known traders, there are almost no Jews left on the Northside of Dublin.

Exodus.

As prejudices slowly disappeared, the exodus to the Southside gathered momentum. New Synagogues were opened at Lombard St; Heytsbury St. 1881; St. Kevin's Parade, 1883; Lennox St, 1887; Adelaide Rd, 1892; and Oakfield Place 1895, Leicester Avenue, Rathgar, and Greenville Hall (1916–1985). The first Jewish National School was opened at Bloomfield Avenue, Rathgar. Before that the Jewish children attended various private establishments. To-day there is the Stratford School Complex in Rathgar which includes Kindergarten, National, and Secondary Schools. The Jewish Museum in Walworth Road, Rathgar, which was opened in 1985 by Chaim Hertzog, had from the 1940s served as a Synagogue is a mine of information and interest to all creeds. The personable Curators Stanley and Raphael Siev could not be more courteous and helpful in greeting visitors to the Museum. Situated at 3/4 Walworth Road (off Victoria St.), South Circular Road. Dublin 8., (4531797) the Museum, a worthy and important link with the preservation of our colourful and many sided history, is open May–Sept. Sun. Tues. Thursday., 11.00 a.m.–3.30p.m. Oct–April. Sunday only, 10.30 a.m.–2.30 p.m. Admission Free.

It is rather sobering and at the same time slightly romantic, in a nostalgic kind of way, to stand in the exquisitely kept green burial plot on Fairview Strand. There is a timelessness and quiet defiance about the place. As the rumble of busy traffic on the thoroughfare outside is muffled into retreat by the Cawing of Jackdaws mocking sound in the huge Sycamore trees. The military motion of two Magpies marching

between the sentinel headstones, oblivious to distant barking dogs, is accentuated by the floating Butterfly counting Bluebells over by the wall. The Angelus bell rings out from nearby Fairview Church, and Yes! "These places are part of us all, whether we kneel or stand to pray! They call "