

# The closed cemeteries of Manchester

by Lorna Kay

**I**N August 2004 the Manchester Branch of the JGSGB toured four closed Jewish cemeteries in and around Manchester with a knowledgeable and amiable guide, Yaakov Wise. We easily filled the 16-seater mini-bus which we had hired and regrettably had to disappoint the other eight people who wanted to join us.

Manchester's first Jewish cemetery was **Pendleton Cemetery**, in Brindle Heath Road, Salford, once part of Pendleton Village.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the purchase of this plot of land, Jews who died in Manchester before 1794 had to be interred in the burial grounds in Liverpool. The land on which the cemetery was established originally belonged to the church. It was purchased by the Jewish community, represented by Isaac Isaacs, Phillip Isaac Cohen and Jacob Sanks, for £43 8s 9d, (£43.43) with an annual rent of one peppercorn "if demanded", on 10 March 1794 from Samuel Brierley and Michael Hughes.

This cemetery was first used in 1794 under the auspices of the Manchester Old Hebrew Congregation (later the Great Synagogue), the last burial being in 1840 when it closed. It measures approximately 13 yards by 12 yards and contains 29 graves, most of which are overgrown. Although the grass is under control and the cemetery is clean and tidy, only about four or five flat gravestones are still visible. It is maintained by Salford City Council from time to time and there are protective railings all round it, with large gates for access.



Broken stone at Pendleton Cemetery

To one side, the area has been paved with a *Magen David* (Star of David) design picked out in small stones. An organisation called "Groundwork" is responsible for the site at the present time. A list of names of some of those buried in Pendleton Cemetery can be found in the burial registers of the Great Synagogue, at present held by the Manchester Central Library Archives.<sup>2</sup>

While we were visiting the site, a local lady, Mrs Dorothy Jones, brought across to us in a supermarket trolley a gravestone which she had found lying about.

During regeneration of the Brindle Heath area, which began in March 2004, a workman had unearthed the stone while clearing the ground before new railings were erected round the cemetery. A fallen tree had taken root in the ground and when it was lifted, the stone came up with it.

Although the workmen wanted to discard the stone, Mrs Jones realized its importance and took it home for safe-keeping.

Gratitude was expressed to Mrs Jones and the stone was put into the back of the minibus. A local *sofer* (scribe) later helped Mr Wise to decipher the wording on the stone which translates as follows: "Here lies the girl, Breinl, daughter of Mr Mordechai Yaffe (or Jaffe) who was freed from this world and buried on the Fourth day (Wednesday) 27 Tammuz 5558." Mr Wise calculated the Hebrew date to coincide with 11 July 1798.

Historians have no record of a Yaffe or Jaffe family living in Manchester at that time and it is possible that the deceased was the child of a travelling pedlar. Mr Wise said that as the stone is full size (36 inches by 16 inches) and is elaborately decorated, it indicates that the family must have been financially successful.

The stone of a child from a poor family would have been much smaller and plain. Conservation experts at English Heritage and the Manchester Museum are now being consulted in order to protect the stone before it goes on display.



Rescued from destruction: tombstone in a trolley



Pendleton Cemetery iron gates