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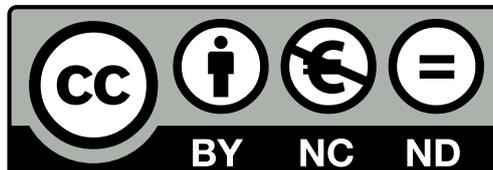
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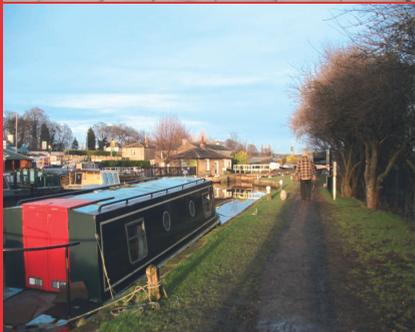
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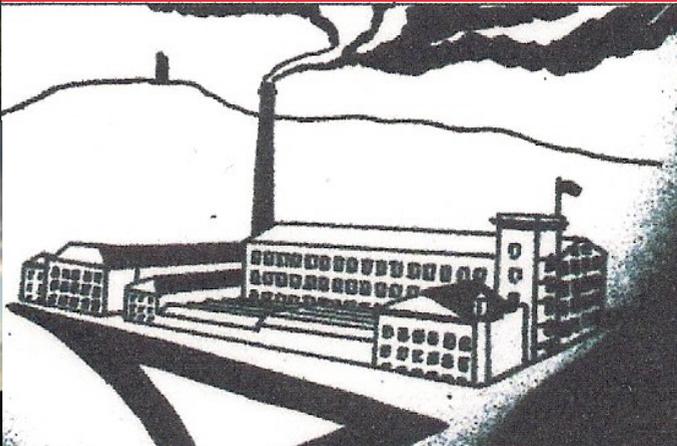


Journal

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THE COMMUNAL HISTORY OF JEWS IN HUDDERSFIELD

By Anne C Brook

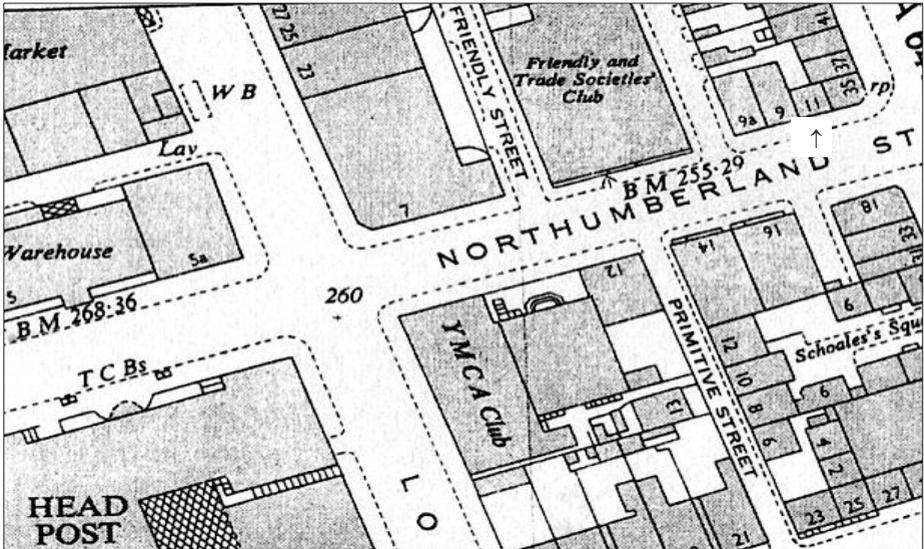
Although some individuals of Jewish ancestry are a familiar part of Huddersfield history - Lord Kagan, of Harold Wilson and Gannex raincoats fame, being one - it will almost certainly come as a surprise to most readers, as it did to me, that Huddersfield had a synagogue for substantial periods of the twentieth century. It was the Huddersfield Heritage Forum's resource sheet for the study of migration, researched by Bill Roberts and available on our Society's website, that first alerted me to this part of our history. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of Huddersfield's Jewish past, and to encourage those who may know more about the story to share that knowledge with a wider audience.

In the 1960s, before Albion Street was redeveloped as part of the construction of the Civic Centre, No 11 was the home of the Jewish Synagogue and Community Centre. It closed its doors not so much because of the demolition of the area but because the community had shrunk to a size where it could no longer regularly raise the ten adult males necessary for public worship (known as a *minyan*). The final entry submitted to the *Jewish Year Book* (1964 edition) recorded that public worship had last been possible in 1961, that the total Jewish population was down to about 20, and that the congregation dated its origins to 1895.

The Albion Street Centre had been opened in 1941, following the re-formation of an active worshipping community in Huddersfield during the Second World War. In that year it was reported that there had been no Holy Day services in the town for 15 years¹ - referring to the extensive liturgical and social activities around the Jewish New Year, which falls in the autumn. However, there was clearly a minimum level of community continuity, if not regular public worship, as there were intermittent annual returns to the editors of the *Jewish Year Book* during the late 1920s and 1930s. By the 1949 edition of the *Jewish Year Book*, there was an estimated total population of 45, rising to a peak of 70, in 1951.

¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 31st October 1941.

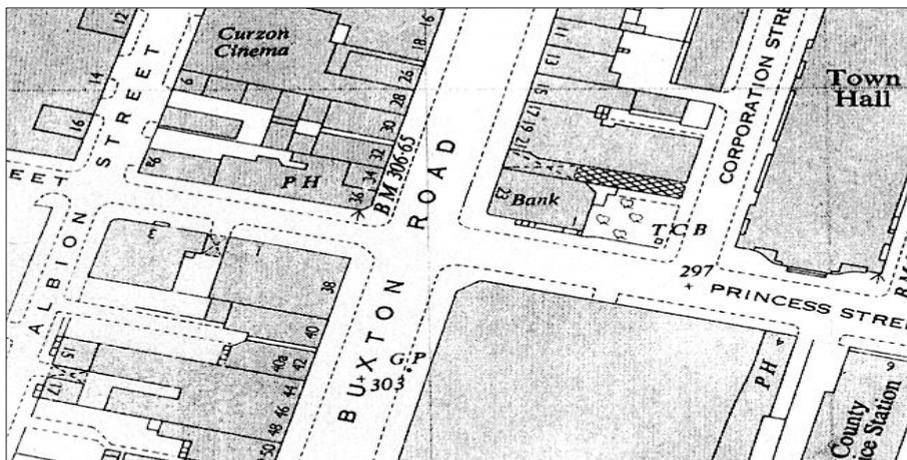
The Albion Street era may be regarded as Phase 2 of the story. Phase 1 began in 1895, when the first edition of the *Jewish Year Book* (1896-97) recorded that a *minyan* had been formed in that year in the town, there was a Jewish population of about 50, but as yet no synagogue. The next time Huddersfield appeared in the *Year Book* (1902-03), there was a very brief entry referring to a synagogue, and giving the name and address of its President. The following edition (1903-04) gave a location for the synagogue, Northumberland Street, a population estimate of 50, and the names of a President, Treasurer, and Secretary. Entries in the *Year Book* continued regularly thereafter, although there are no convincing signs of the entry being



Huddersfield town centre 1961 – from the OS map, sheet 1486. 11 Northumberland Street is clearly marked (top right hand). Earlier street directories indicate there were no previous re-numberings.

updated after c. 1927, when the community estimate was 45, a figure probably not revised since c. 1923. So why are we not aware of these synagogues? The most obvious explanation for the absence of synagogues from the general record of Huddersfield history is that, in both these phases of Jewish community life in the town, the buildings housing the synagogue were ordinary parts of the streetscape, not purpose built architecture. In Northumberland Street, no street number is given in the *Year Books* for the synagogue but the fact that two officers of the synagogue had businesses in the street, and one also lived there, strongly suggests that the room or rooms used as a synagogue were within the premises leased or rented by one or the other. (The most likely location is 11 Northumberland Street, now lost

below the dual carriageway which truncated the road at its eastern end.) From the outside, the place of worship would have been invisible. In the second phase, it appears that the whole of 11 Albion Street was leased by the community, but again the building was one which had already been used by other tenants (when it was known as the Albion Rooms) and, to passers-by, it may have appeared simply as a community centre, without explicit mention of its role as a place of worship. (Again,



11 Albion Street isn't marked on the map. [OS Sheet 1486 (1961)] The numbering jumps from 9/9A, north of John Street/Princess Street, to 15 south of it. However, there is a gap in the street frontage where 11 and 13 should be and a yard narrowing to a snicket/ginnel into Buxton Road (now New Street). Descendants of members of the Phase 2 synagogue remember the entrance being down an alley, which would fit.

the building no longer exists, being just south of the cut through from Albion Street to New Street.) The basic requirements for equipping a synagogue were not extensive: a Torah scroll (a ceremonial manuscript copy of the first five books of the Bible), a cupboard behind a curtain to house the scroll, and a reading desk. After the second synagogue closed, its Torah scroll was presented to a Manchester synagogue (Higher Crumpsall Hebrew Congregation) for safe keeping.

The identities of the first officers are a good indication of the composition of the congregation in Phase 1. The first President, Henry Krüger, was a photographer, in business in Northumberland Street, next to the (old) Post Office, and later in Queen Street. He was Prussian born and had lived in Huddersfield since about 1880. He left Huddersfield for the United States in 1914. The Treasurer, Jacob Harris, differentiated from the others by being listed as "Esq." rather than "Mr" in the *Year*

Book entry, was born in the Russian part of Poland, and was a tailor. Other named officials included Marks Kahn, a Russian born draper. The community's roots were therefore in Ashkenazi rather than Sephardic Judaism (i.e. Northern European, rather than Southern and Mediterranean), from either the Germanic states or from further east. Jewish individuals and groups had moved to Britain from those areas throughout the nineteenth century, as voluntary migrants following business opportunities, as forced economic migrants, and as refugees from persecution. The latter two groups, often arriving with few if any resources, had created problems for the existing Anglo-Jewish community, and for the British government more generally. The *Jewish Chronicle* of 1 April 1910, recorded that Huddersfield was one of the places in which new migrants were being settled by the national Dispersion Committee and, indeed, the very first entry in the *Year Books* referred to there being a small fund in Huddersfield for the relief of tramps travelling to Leeds and Bradford, evidence that a degree of corporate Jewish life had existed in the town before 1895.



Reverse of a studio portrait of a woman held in the Kirklees Image Archive (KSA-1986-004-017). Henry Krüger was the first President of the congregation in Phase 1.

In the interwar years, the community numbers dwindled, falling as low as 10 by 1939, reflecting not only the usual movements of families for marriage, employment, etc. but also, no doubt, a desire for easier access to the religious and cultural infrastructure of the much larger Jewish

communities of Leeds and Bradford. By 1939, many of those that remained would have been British born. Events in Europe had already begun to bring in a fresh group of forced migrants to the country, and Huddersfield's Jewish population was being augmented by those refugees, as well as by evacuees from elsewhere in the England, and locally stationed troops, according to a Bradford Rabbi speaking in Huddersfield in July 1941². In contrast to many of the refugees of the 1890s and 1910s, those who reached Britain from Europe in the 1930s tended to be better educated and from wealthier backgrounds, whatever their immediate economic circumstances. The names of officials for Phase 2 of the congregation's existence include four doctors

² *Jewish Chronicle*, 18th July 1941.

(Ballon, Davis, Kahn, and Sapier) and three dentists (Friend, Horwich, and Samek). Very surprisingly, given the conventions of the period, the synagogue's Treasurer throughout Phase 2 was a woman, Miss Clara Schofield. Born Clara Schoolberg in Huddersfield in 1909, she was the daughter of a Hull born wallpaper merchant, and the granddaughter of a Russian born jeweller and silversmith. The community was represented on the Board of Jewish Deputies by Marcus Shloimovitz, a woollen merchant of Salford, who does not appear ever to have been resident in Huddersfield, although he was a regular visitor. He was briefly famous, in 1973, for taking the Oxford University Press and other dictionary publishers to court to try and force them to remove derogatory usages from their definitions of the word Jew³.

Continuity between these two phases of Jewish community life in the town was provided by the Kahn family. Marks Kahn, born in Russia, probably arrived in Huddersfield in the late 1890s, and became a British citizen in 1913. He initially undertook the roles of Teacher and *Shochet* (the individual in charge of the kosher slaughtering of animals) and, by 1926, was President of the synagogue, with his only son, Jack, as the Secretary. When Phase 2 began, Jack, now Dr Kahn, was the first President and remained in office until he moved to London in the mid-1950s. The obituary of the younger Kahn, in the *British Medical Journal*, referred to him carrying 'the Talmudic tradition of his early home environment into medicine, general practice, and subsequently child and family psychiatry' and noted that as well as his medical publications he had written a psychological re-interpretation of the book of Job⁴.

The relative invisibility of the synagogues, and the migrant nature of its leaders, should not be taken to imply that the community shunned the non-Jewish life of the town. In 1895, the *Huddersfield Chronicle* (21 September) reported on the community's first New Year celebrations in the (Anglican) Parochial Halls, which had been hired for the occasion, and noted that non-Jewish guests had been invited to some of the events. During the First World War, Private Meyer Freedman, the son of Marks Freedman, manager of the Empire Picture House and later President of the Phase 1 synagogue, volunteered for service in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment and was killed in action a few days after being awarded the Military Medal, in September 1916 (*Jewish Chronicle*, 13 October). On a happier note, the first Jewish

³ Huddersfield Hebrew Congregation: correspondence & list of members (1952-61), Board of Deputies of British Jews records (ACC/3121/D/02/052) (London Metropolitan Archive); *The Times*, 6th July 1973. Mr Shloimovitz was reluctant to accept that the life of the Phase 2 synagogue had run its course by 1963 (*Jewish Chronicle*, 16th & 23rd August 1963).

⁴ *British Medical Journal*, 31st March 1990.

wedding known to have taken place in the town was that of Meyer's sister, Cordelia, in 1921. The wedding took place in the Albany Hall, the building which had been the former Collegiate School on Clare Hill, off St John's Road. Those non-Jewish guests privileged to be invited were clearly fascinated by the unfamiliar rituals! (*Examiner*, 26 February). When the community was re-founded, in 1941, there were a series of



Meyer Freedman's war grave in Gordon Dump Cemetery, Ovillers-La Boisselle. © War Graves Photographic Project.

public events reported in the press, including an address by the Mayor to the new congregation⁵. In addition to their prominent roles as medical professionals, two of the synagogue officers also served as town councillors (Davis and Kahn).

The absence of rabbis from this account so far requires some explanation. A rabbi's role bears more resemblance to that of a Nonconformist minister than an Anglican clergyman or Roman Catholic priest, as any adult male with appropriate knowledge and expertise may lead public worship. In Phase 1, the community recognised Mr Kahn as Teacher, a role which did not require rabbinical status. From occasional newspaper references, it is clear that the rabbis of both the Leeds and Bradford communities provided assistance to the Huddersfield congregation. Such arrangements, formal and informal, were common, as it required a substantial financial and

organisational commitment for a congregation to support a resident rabbi. In 1895, Rabbi Emmanuel Grossblatt of Leeds led the first New Year celebrations (*Huddersfield Chronicle*, 21 September), and ministers from the Belgrave Street synagogue, Leeds, conducted weddings in Huddersfield in 1926 and 1927⁶. However, Clara Freedman's wedding, in 1921, was conducted by a Bradford rabbi, Revd J Israelstam, who was described as Huddersfield's visiting rabbi, along with two other unnamed ministers. Rabbi Abrahams of Leeds was invited to inaugurate a Jewish Historical and Literary Society in the town, in 1915, with a launch in the Temperance Hall, with "many non-Jewish friends" present (*Jewish Chronicle*, 22 October 1915). When the congregation was re-formed, in 1941, the Presidents of the Bradford and West Hartlepool congregations were present to give support to the new venture (*Jewish Chronicle*, 18 July). There is also a tantalising reference, in the 1945-46 *Year*

⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 18th July, 31st October, 28th November 1941.

⁶ Sterne, Ernest C (1959) *Leeds Jewry 1919-1929*, Leeds, Leeds Branch of the Jewish Historical Society of Great Britain, Appendix (ii).

Book, to what appears to be a rabbi resident in Huddersfield, a Revd Srolowitz (almost certainly Lithuanian born Moses Srolowitz, who was described as an assistant teacher in Bradford at the time of his naturalisation, in 1947), but he does not appear again in the sources. Contacts with both Leeds and Bradford may also reflect the different characteristics of the Jewish communities in the two cities. Bradford Jewry had very strong German links, and Jews in prominent positions in society at an early stage, as well as strong textile manufacturing links with Huddersfield. The Leeds community was bigger and more socially and economically diverse, textile trade links with Huddersfield being more retail than manufacturing, with the tailoring trade having very strong Eastern European Jewish roots. Another form of support to the small Huddersfield community after the First World War was provided by the Jewish War Memorial, a national fund created to provide better educational and religious support to communities across the country. Passing references in a history of Leeds Jewry refer to Hebrew and religious classes being conducted in Huddersfield under the Memorial's auspices⁷. These initiatives may have helped extend the life of Phase 1 of this story by a few years.

A Jewish presence in Huddersfield is not, of course, confined to the two periods during which there were synagogues. The 1841 census records a cap maker and a traveller who bear the unmistakably Jewish names of Moses Jacobs and Meyer Cohen, and similar names occur in every subsequent census, some obviously passing through, such as the eight Russian and Polish travelling jewellers in the 1851 census, but others certainly resident from at least mid-century. Examples of the latter range from Abraham Jacobowitch, a public singer from Poland, living in the town with his wife and son in 1861, to Maximilian Zossenheim, a German woollen manufacturer and merchant, living in Clyde House, Edgerton, in 1871, with his large family and three servants. Bradford established a synagogue in the Reform tradition in 1880, after discussions in which possible alternative homes included Huddersfield⁸, so there must have been Jewish residents in or around Huddersfield in the 1870s who inclined more to the Reform than the Orthodox tradition of Judaism, the former being particularly strong in Germany. D F E Sykes' second account of the history of Huddersfield refers to a number of members of the Unitarian congregation in Fitzwilliam Street as being of Jewish heritage, and regarding Unitarianism as fundamentally identical with a purified Judaism⁹. Of the five surnames he identifies

⁷ Sterne, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁸ <http://bradfordjewish.org.uk/a-history-of-jewish-bradford/> (accessed 24th February 2014).

⁹ Sykes, D F E (n.d. [1910]) *The History of Huddersfield and the Valleys of the Colne, the Holme and the Derne*, Huddersfield, The Worker Press, p. 245.

in that context (Huth, Kell, Liebeicht, Lowenthal, and Schwann) the most familiar is Schwann ó Frederic Schwann being one of the founding fathers of higher education in Huddersfield. A Unitarian strand to this story is also suggested by the presence of the



The tomb of Jacob Sussman, died 14th April 1852, in Lydgate Chapel graveyard.

tomb of a Jacob Sussman, who died in 1852, in the Lydgate Chapel graveyard. The grave bears no explicit marks of Jewish identity but still attracts the tribute of pebbles from visitors, a particular feature of Jewish funerary custom.

Sources and Further Research

This account could not have been written without the help of John Pearson, formerly of the University of Huddersfield, who has generously shared his extensive research on census records and other sources. Thanks are also due to Ann Lightman, who first introduced me to the local experts on Jewish history. For those coming new to this area of local history, there are excellent reading lists compiled by the Jewish Historical Society of England (www.jshe.org) and

by the contributors to JewishGen (www.jewishgen.org). The latter site has an increasing amount of information about the histories of individual Jewish communities across the United Kingdom, much of it drawn from the *Jewish Year Book* and the *Jewish Chronicle*. The Porton Room, in Leeds Central Reference Library, has an almost complete run of *Year Books* from 1896 to the present day, and bound copies of the *Chronicle*, as well as much other primary and secondary material relating to Jewish life and history. In addition to the familiar resources for local history of census returns and local directories, cross-referencing with the National Archives' Discovery Catalogue (discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk [sic]¹⁰) (using Huddersfield and/or a surname plus Naturalisation) and the archives of the *London*

¹⁰ Oddly this website has no www or other prefix – adding one when searching produces a nil return (*Editor*).

Gazette (www.london-gazette.co.uk)¹¹ (with similar search terms) helps to confirm birth places, name changes, and occupations for individuals.

Nigel Grizzard is energetically tapping community grapevines by contacting present and former Huddersfield residents who have personal or family memories of Phase 2 of the synagogue story, and much valuable material is emerging. He is planning an addition to the Huddersfield town trails. Preliminary discussions are also underway about other means of recording the town's Jewish heritage, perhaps including a plaque in either Northumberland Street or Albion Street.

Biography

Anne C Brook (a.c.brook01@members.leeds.ac.uk)

Anne Brook is Huddersfield born but resident in Bradford. She took early retirement to celebrate the millennium, following a career in various parts of higher education, and completed a PhD on Huddersfield's commemoration of the Great War in 2009, at the University of Leeds.

¹¹ At the end of March 2014 this website will be replaced by www.thegazette.co.uk.