

Bet Hayim 'House of Life': An Introduction to Jewish Funerary Art and Architecture in Britain

by

SHARMAN KADISH

In Hebrew, a Jewish burial ground is referred to by several names: Bet Kevarot 'house of graves', Bet Olam 'house of eternity' or Bet Hayim 'house of life'.

This essay for the first time presents the funerary art and architecture of a minority faith in this country to a wider readership. It outlines in very general terms beliefs and customs that may be unfamiliar but that determine the distinctive character of Jewish funerary art. Special attention is paid to the art and symbolism of the Jewish tombstone. The essay is illustrated by examples of extant sites and structures, either of architectural importance or simply typical of the building type, that have been researched and recorded for the Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage in the UK & Ireland. Data on the age, number and distribution of Jewish burial grounds in Britain gathered by the Survey are summarised and the problem of conservation of cemeteries as sacred places is addressed.

INTRODUCTION

According to *Halakhah* (Orthodox Jewish law) it is forbidden to disturb the physical remains of the dead. Burial grounds are regarded as sacred places in perpetuity.

Dr Sharman Kadish is Director of 'Jewish Heritage UK' and Project Director of the Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage in the UK and Ireland. She is an AHRB Research Fellow and Lecturer in Jewish Studies at the University of Manchester. Her many publications on Anglo-Jewish history and heritage include: (ed.) *Building Jerusalem: Jewish Architecture in Britain* (1996); *Synagogues* in the Heinemann Library *Places of Worship* series for children (1998) and *Bevis Marks Synagogue 1701-2001* (English Heritage 2001). *The Synagogues of Britain and Ireland: An Architectural History* is in preparation, to be published with the support of The Arts & Humanities Research Board (AHRB) and The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art with photography by English Heritage.

Although no great emphasis is made on the afterlife in Judaism, which is primarily concerned with conduct in 'the here and now', the concept of *Kri'at HaMetim* (the Resurrection of the Dead) is a basic doctrine. A Jewish burial ground is consecrated ground. In practice, therefore, Jewish burial grounds may not be disturbed through archaeological investigation or redevelopment.

Burial in the earth is the traditional Jewish way of disposing of the dead, the system of catacombs found in ancient Rome and Jerusalem, notwithstanding.¹ Cremation is not permitted by *Halakhah*, but began to be accepted within Reform communities from the beginning of the twentieth century.

Unlike Christian churchyards, Jewish burial grounds are rarely found next to the synagogue.² According to *Halakhah*, burial grounds must be situated outside the walls of the town. The cemetery of the Medieval London Jewry at Cripplegate was located outside the walls of the City. In many countries, this was normally the case when first opened, but the growth of towns has led to historic burial grounds now surrounded by urban development. Jewish cemeteries generally exist in isolation from the residential Jewish quarter, with its synagogues and other religious and social amenities. Even in Europe before 1870 the burial ground was often sited at the extremity of the ghetto or Jewish quarter. The famous Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague which dates from the fifteenth century is a good example.

Since the construction of a purpose-built synagogue is not an essential precondition for Jewish worship, the presence of Jewish burial grounds is often the most reliable material evidence for both dating and plotting the development of Jewish communities. The physical survival of a cemetery is generally longer than that of a standing building.

Jewish burial grounds are preferably owned freehold by the Jewish community, although historically freehold possession of land was forbidden to Jews in Christian Europe before the nineteenth century. In England, the freehold of early leasehold plots was in many cases subsequently purchased by the Jewish community. Responsibility for upkeep and maintenance of the burial ground may be in the hands of an individual synagogue, or vested in several congregations jointly or, and especially in traditional communities, the *Hevrah Kadishah* or burial society, a cross-communal organisation. The *Hevrah Kadishah* is responsible for ensuring the proper burial of the deceased according to Jewish rites. In London, umbrella synagogue organisations: the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation, the United Synagogue, the Federation of Synagogues, the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain and the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, each maintain their own burial grounds, sometimes sharing contiguous sites.

In Britain, quite a large number of Jewish burial plots, especially in provincial towns, are to be found within the boundaries of municipal cemeteries, a phenomenon which dates back to the beginnings of publicly-funded provision of city cemeteries in the 1850s. By contrast, a few instances of private Jewish burial plots have been documented, located in the back gardens of dwelling houses occupied by the founding families of several communities in the eighteenth century, for example

at Exeter and Liverpool. The Burials Act of 1853 put an end to such practices and no examples are today extant.³ However, one Jewish plot is to be found in a Victorian cemetery established and still run by a private cemetery company in Glasgow.

Jewish communities keep registers containing vital records often of genealogical and historical interest. These include death and burial registers and lists of *Yortseits* (anniversaries of the date of death) kept in the *Memorbuch* of the *Hevrah Kadishah*. Sometimes these records are combined with the *Pinkas*, the official history of the community, held at the synagogue. The *Mohel* (circumcisor) keeps a circumcision register, effectively a record of live male births in the community. Historically, in Eastern Europe in particular many of these hand-written registers were decorated with pen and painted drawings and sometimes with paper cuts in crude but attractive folk-art style. Nevertheless, even in Britain, the loss of vital records, including title deeds, burial registers and plot plans has, in some cases, made it impossible to establish precise dating, legal title and the exact boundaries of old Jewish burial grounds.

NUMBER, DATING AND DISTRIBUTION

Jews first came to Britain from Rouen in Normandy with William the Conqueror after 1066 but this medieval community ended in expulsion by Edward I in 1290. Whilst the location of a number of Jewish burial grounds from the medieval period is known from documentary sources, few physical remains have been identified. The site of the cemetery of the London Jewry was partially excavated in 1949 and 1961 yielding a row of seven truncated, empty graves, perhaps desecrated after the expulsion of 1290.⁴ Jewish tombstones in secondary use were documented in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Large-scale excavations have been carried out only at York and Winchester.⁵ However, in neither case has the Jewish identity of the site been established beyond dispute. Some excavation at Northampton in the 1990s remains to be published.⁶ No physical evidence from sites at Oxford, Bristol and Norwich has yet been found.

A total of 153 surviving Jewish burial grounds opened between 1656 and 1939 have been recorded by the Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage.⁷ There are nineteen extant Jewish burial grounds in England dating from the Cromwellian Resettlement (1656), when Jews were unofficially readmitted to England, through to 1800. There are a further fifteen dating from the Regency period (defined for the purposes of this study as 1800-36). The Jewish population grew from an estimated 6-8,000 in 1760 to 40-60,000 by 1880 on the eve of the big immigration from Eastern Europe that boosted the size of the community to c.300,000 by 1914, roughly its present size today.

Six pre-1830 Jewish burial grounds are extant in London, the earliest centre of Jewish settlement and consistently home to about two-thirds of Anglo-Jewry in the modern period. Five of the surviving burial grounds in London are in the East End. The oldest Sephardi and Ashkenazi grounds in the country, dating from 1657 and 1696/7⁸ respectively, are listed Grade II.

The oldest Jewish burial ground outside London is in Dublin and dates from

1718.⁹ The oldest fully-documented Jewish burial ground in the English provinces is in Portsmouth, a south coast town where naval and trading connections attracted Jewish merchants and Naval Agents from an early period. Located at the aptly-named Jews' Lane, Fawcett Road, Southsea (Fig. 1), the land for this cemetery was acquired in 1749.¹⁰ A Hebrew tablet inside the *Ohel* ['prayer hall' or 'chapel'] yields the civil date 1781, although the current *Ohel*, the third on site, dates from 1881.



Fig. 1

Jews' Lane Jewish Cemetery, Portsmouth (1749), the oldest documented extant Jewish burial ground in the English regions

© English Heritage

However, the Old Jews' Burying Ground on Plymouth Hoe is thought to be the earliest of its type in the English provinces, although this has not been proven beyond doubt by documentary evidence. It is thought to date from *c.*1744. Plymouth's synagogue of 1762 is the second oldest surviving synagogue in Britain. However, after London, it is the West Country that has the richest selection of

Georgian Jewish burial grounds in the country.¹¹ An original lease dates Exeter's Bull Meadow to 1757. In Cornwall, old grounds can be found at Falmouth (c. 1789-90) and Penzance¹² (1791), and elsewhere, at Bristol (before 1759), Bath (1812) and Cheltenham (1824). Two of these West Country Jewish sites are currently listed for their gates and boundary walls: Exeter, Bull Meadow and Bristol, St Philip's Cemetery, Barton Road (oldest stone 1762).¹³ Falmouth was the first Jewish burial ground in the country to be scheduled as an Ancient Monument in 2002, whilst the boundary wall and four tombstones at Penzance were listed in 2004.

A cluster of Georgian and Regency Jewish burial grounds is also to be found in East Anglia, at Ipswich (1796), Great Yarmouth (1801), Norwich (1813) and Kings Lynn (before 1811), although these are not generally in such well-preserved condition as the West Country examples. In Kent, Canterbury's Old Jewish Cemetery, recently restored (see below), dates from 1760, and Sheerness from 1804.

The growth of the Jewish community in the nineteenth century is reflected in the larger number of Jewish burial grounds (seventy-one) dating from the Victorian period (1837-1901). In the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of large sites were established in big cities, especially London, to serve newly-formed umbrella synagogue organizations, and these took on the character of municipal cemeteries. The Victorian burial grounds constitute by far the most numerous group of Jewish burial sites by chronological period. Immigration and industrialisation brought Jews not only to London but also to the Midlands and North, to Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds and to the port cities of Hull and Liverpool. Although Liverpool Jewry, like Liverpool itself, developed first, by the early nineteenth century Manchester had taken over and has retained its position as Britain's second Jewish city until today (estimated current Jewish population of 35,000). The population statistics are reflected in the number of Jewish cemeteries established on the outskirts of all of these cities before 1900: twelve survive in Manchester, six in Liverpool, four in Hull and three each in Birmingham and Leeds. Glasgow possesses eight.

Jewish burial grounds continued to be opened throughout the twentieth century, whilst older and full ones have been closed. The Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage found a total of forty Jewish burial grounds opened between 1902 and 1939. The newest Jewish burial grounds are usually to be found in municipal cemeteries or in the semi-rural hinterland of London and Manchester.¹⁴

JEWISH FUNERARY ARCHITECTURE

BOUNDARIES AND GATES

All Jewish burial grounds and Jewish plots inside municipal cemeteries are enclosed within their own boundaries, usually paid for by the Jewish community. Such boundaries may range from elaborate brick, stone and buttressed walls with ornamental metalwork railings and gates, to simple fences or hedging topped with

barbed wire. Occasionally, ornamental gateways and screen walls are found, most notably the Greek Revival screen at Deane Road, Fairfield, Liverpool (1836), Grade II listed. Security is a constant concern, given the recurrence of vandalism in recent years, sometimes motivated by anti-Semitism.

INTERNAL LAYOUT

Inside, Jewish burials are usually, but not always, laid out in rows, often in chronological order, interspersed with reserved plots for spouses. In some cases Jewish burial grounds are divided up into different sections for different categories of burials, for example, men and women are segregated. Often there is a separate plot for stillbirths and infants with many unmarked graves. *Cohanim*, by tradition the descendants of the priestly classes who in ancient times ministered in the Temple in Jerusalem and who still perform special functions within the synagogue service, are sometimes buried in a separate plot at the edge of the ground. Given that living *Cohanim* are subject to stricter regulation in Jewish law than the rest of the community when it comes to contact with the dead, often a separate enclosure or porch is provided for them close to the *Ohel*, or a pathway for use when they need to attend the funeral of a close relative.

In the Jewish tradition bodies are usually buried with the head facing Jerusalem, oriented to the east or south-east in Britain, with the headstone placed over it. In England, this alignment was found in excavated medieval cemeteries in London (east) and at York (south-east).¹⁵ The body should be buried intact without any interference, including by autopsy. Simple wooden coffins are used to conform to British burial practice, although the Jewish tradition, still practiced in Israel, is burial of men in a shroud and *Tallit* (prayer shawl) and women in a shroud. Burial is simple and the placing of grave goods in tombs is unknown in Judaism. The underlying principle is 'And the dust returneth to the earth as it was'.¹⁶

The practice of burial in layers is avoided except historically in ghetto situations where there was a problem of space, for example Prague. The only known British example is the central mound at Brady Street, London E1 (1761). Jewish law stipulates that in such cases an allowance of six-handbreadths must be made between graves, both vertically and horizontally. The burial of two bodies in a single grave is forbidden. The absence of grave disturbance through inter-cutting or overlaying of graves or by gravediggers at Jewbury, York, was a matter for comment by archaeologists, but is simply characteristic of Jewish burial practices where there is a strong taboo against disturbance of the dead. Mass graves are regarded with aversion especially in the modern period because of associations with the Holocaust.

Suicides are buried away from the rest of the community close to the boundary wall. Sometimes the headstone faces in the opposite direction (west). Gentile spouses of Jews cannot be buried in Orthodox Jewish cemeteries. Sometimes the grave of such an individual is to be found just beyond the boundary of the Jewish plot in a municipal cemetery.

Within Jewish burial grounds a number of standing architectural structures

may be found. The *Ohel* and *Bet Taharah* serve a distinctive Jewish function.

THE OHEL

The *Ohel* (Hebrew, plural *Ohelim* lit. 'tent') is a small chapel or prayer hall in which the funeral service is held. Funeral services are not generally held in the synagogue but immediately prior to interment. In Britain, no intact *Ohelim* survive from the Georgian period (that at Bath is derelict), so it is not possible to arrive at any conclusions as to the form or style of these buildings during that period.¹⁷

Research by the Survey has revealed the widespread use of simple Gothic Revival styles in Victorian and later *Ohelim* (Fig. 2). This stands out in contrast to the absence of pointed arches in synagogue architecture, because of the association made between the Gothic and Christianity by Pugin. A good example is H. H. Collins's hexagonal *Ohel* (1871) in the Witton Old Cemetery, Birmingham.¹⁸ It is



Fig. 2

Southern Cemetery, Manchester
Entrance gates and Gothic Revival *Ohel* in the Jewish section

© English Heritage

interesting to note that this prototype was copied in increasingly simplified form, in both of the subsequent burial grounds of Birmingham Jewry, at Witton New (1937) and Brandwood End (1918). The only other hexagonal *Ohelim* are at Brighton, Florence Place, Ditchling Road (1826) and at Newport, South Wales (ground opened 1859). The Brighton example, listed Grade II, is of red brick with a hexagonal turret to match. Late Victorian (Lainson & Son 1891),¹⁹ it is a replacement of an original structure commissioned from the 'first Jewish architect' David Mocatta in the 1830s.

Jewish tombstones (for more on tombstones see below) in the shape of a pointed arch and carved in Gothic lettering are also not uncommon in the Victorian period. The stonemasons who worked on these memorials were generally Gentiles. The fact remains, nonetheless, that their Jewish clients did not object to the style adopted. Jews found the association between the neo-Gothic and death quite acceptable. However, in life it was too closely associated with the established Church.

Large *Ohel* complexes, sometimes with one or more separate chapels, were built by metropolitan synagogue organisations only in London. These were inspired by contemporary fashions in public cemetery design and paralleled similar tastes amongst acculturated Jews on the Continent, particularly in Germany.²⁰ The earliest example is at Willesden cemetery,²¹ designed in 1873 by architect to the United Synagogue and brother-in-law of the Chief Rabbi, Nathan Solomon Joseph. Gothic was his preferred style, using slate for the roofs, Kentish ragstone with Bath and Mansfield stone dressings for the walls. The pointed windows were filled with tinted cathedral glass in leaded diamond quarries. By contrast, redbrick and terracotta Romanesque was the choice of Davis & Emanuel for the Golders Green Jewish Cemetery, Hoop Lane (1895-7),²² shared by the Spanish and Portuguese and Reform congregations. In the twentieth century, the more traditionalist Federation of Synagogues had its successor cemetery at Rainham (1938) designed in Italianate style on a semi-circular plan with monumental gateway by Federation architects Lewis Solomon & Son. The United Synagogue, the chief exponent of the monumental 'cathedral synagogue' in the late Victorian period,²³ also persisted in the building of large cemetery complexes well into the 1960s.

In addition to the *Ohelim*, such cemetery complexes typically included a mortuary (see below) and a completely separate area for the *Cohanim* as well as offices and conveniences. A caretaker's house was also built as part of the plan.

Far more typical around the country in the late nineteenth and twentieth century are small *Ohelim* of no architectural pretensions, often simple structures of red brick with a pitched roof. Usually, they are aligned east-west with entrance and exit doors in the short gable walls. Sometimes the *Ohel* abuts the front wall, making a logical procession of the funeral cortège from street to grave. An interesting twentieth century *Ohel* built in art deco style is at Sheffield's Ecclesfield Jewish Cemetery (New Section) (Wynyard Dixon 1931-2)²⁴ (Fig. 3). This building, of yellow brick, stands out on account of its size and quality workmanship.

Small *Ohelim* built over the graves of famous rabbis or other pious men can be found in England, notably at the Adath Yisrael Cemetery at Enfield which is used



Fig. 3

Ecclesfield Jewish Cemetery, Sheffield.

Ohel by Wynyard Dixon 1931-2

© English Heritage

by Hasidic communities. Here candles and lanterns are lit at the graveside, in addition to the widespread custom of placing a stone on the grave. Flowers are not laid in Jewish cemeteries, except in those of the Reform movement.

THE *BET TAHARAH*

The *Bet Taharah* [lit. 'house of purification'] is the mortuary where the body of the deceased is laid out on a slab (traditionally of stone or marble although modern facilities are equipped with a stainless steel hoist) and washed prior to burial which takes place as soon as possible after death.²⁵ In traditional Jewish communities 'watchers' from the burial society stay with the body until burial and this may involve remaining over-night in the *Bet Taharah*. Often a small *Bet Taharah* is found adjoining the *Ohel*²⁶ and the big London Jewish cemeteries, as mentioned, have an *Ohel* complex containing ancillary rooms including *Bet*

Taharah, offices and conveniences. In old and smaller burial grounds the *Ohel* often itself doubles as the *Bet Taharah*. Both are likely to have fallen into disrepair or disuse, may have been demolished and rebuilt, or may never have been built at all owing to lack of funds.

Ideally, it is a *Halakhic* requirement that a supply of running water be available at a burial ground. Theoretically, Jewish cemeteries ought to be located close to a water source, especially a spring, for purposes of ritual purification, but few English examples can be found from either the medieval or modern periods, medieval Bristol's being a possible exception because of its proximity to the site of Jacob's Well.²⁷ Warm water is used by the *Hevrah Kadishah* for the ritual washing of the dead, hence the installation of a boiler and fireplace in some Victorian *Ohelim*. Visitors to the cemetery traditionally wash their hands upon leaving. Hence the provision of sinks and washstands near the exit of many burial grounds. Again, in old and smaller grounds such facilities have often gone out of use or never existed.

MATZEVOT TOMBSTONES

The tradition of placing a *Matzevah* or standing stone as a memorial over a grave dates back to *Genesis*²⁸ where Jacob erects a memorial to Rachel when she dies in childbirth en route to Bethlehem. However, in Jewish tradition, the grave itself is of far greater importance than the memorial placed over it.

Jewish tombstones come in two main forms: *Ashkenazi* tombstones, that is those of Jews originating from German- or Yiddish-speaking lands in the medieval period, are characteristically upright headstones; *Sephardi* tombstones, that is those of Jews originating from the Iberian Peninsular in the medieval period (especially Spain, Portugal and North Africa),²⁹ are characteristically flat slabs (Fig. 4). Tombstones of Oriental (Middle Eastern) Jewish communities follow the same pattern.

The majority of Jewish burial grounds in England contain upright memorials, usually in the form of simple headstones, in the dominant Ashkenazi tradition. Sephardi burial grounds, with flat stones, are very rare, the most notable example from the early period being the Sephardi Velho 'Old' ground at Mile End, East London (1657).³⁰ Recently, health and safety requirements have begun to encourage the erection of flat stones throughout all sections of the Jewish community and the laying flat of old tombstones deemed to be in danger of toppling.



Fig. 4

Urmston Jewish Cemetery, Manchester. Sephardi section

© English Heritage



Fig. 5

'Taj Mahal' memorial (1923) at Urmston Jewish Cemetery, Manchester

© *English Heritage*

Traditionally, the inscriptions on upright Jewish headstones face in the direction of Jerusalem, to the east or south-east in Britain. However, this rule is not always adhered to in practice. Inscriptions may be carved, leaded or sometimes in relief. In some cases, Jewish tombstones bear the name of the stonemason, in London commonly Harris or Elfes.

The shapes of Jewish tombstones follow standard English norms except, of course, for the absence of crosses. The profile of headstones may be flat, rounded, gabled or, as mentioned, pointed, and chest tombs and obelisks can also be found. A handful of Ashkenazi grounds from the Georgian period contain chest tombs, for example at the Great Synagogue cemetery, Alderney Road, East London, in Ireland at Dublin, Ballybough (1718) and at Bath (1812). Elaborate memorials are to be found mainly in Victorian grounds. The styles of memorials usually followed the fashions of the day, with the occasional notable exception (see Art and Symbolism below). The fashion for orientalism in late nineteenth century synagogue architecture had minimal effect on Jewish funerary art in Britain. A most unusual memorial best described as a miniature 'Taj Mahal' made of granite was found by SJBH in the Sephardi section of the Urmston Jewish Cemetery in Manchester.³¹ It dates from 1923 (Fig. 5).

War memorials have been erected in Jewish burial grounds since the First World War. Such memorials that are also found in many synagogues have sometimes been re-erected in the burial ground on the closure of the synagogue. Several Jewish cemeteries also contain Holocaust memorials.

SHEMOT MARKERS

Some Jewish burial grounds have a space set aside for the burial of *Shemot* [lit. 'Names']. These are religious texts that contain the Name of God. Such texts, in either manuscript or printed form, are considered to be sacred and cannot just be discarded. Traditionally, such texts were either stored in a *Genizah* or repository, usually in a synagogue, such as the famous medieval *Genizah* discovered in the attic of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo in the late nineteenth century, or were buried. The *Shemot* burial plot is marked by a special memorial, usually of stone.

EPIGRAPHY

Inscriptions traditionally are given entirely in Hebrew and take precedence over visuals. Decoration of tombstones is usually simple or concentrated on the lettering of the inscription which may be finely carved (Fig. 6). Content includes the name of the deceased, date of death and burial, sometimes accompanied by an apt quotation from a Biblical source.³²

Jewish tombstones contain a wealth of information about individuals and communities, of interest to genealogists, historians and sociologists. Inscriptions alone may be studied as source material in charting the acculturation of a Jewish community, especially where the vernacular creeps in as the nineteenth century progressed.³³ Even today, staunchly traditionalist communities prefer Hebrew only, whilst the Reform and Liberal wings have gone over almost entirely to English. Many inscriptions feature a mixture of



Fig. 6

Penzance Jewish Cemetery.

Detail of the Tombstone of Jacob James Hart, 'Late Her Britannic Majesty's Consul for the Kingdom of Saxony', dated 1846

© English Heritage

the two languages, sometimes even a curious mixing of the conventions for denoting the date of death according to the Hebrew religious and Christian civil calendars.

Other inscriptions may help the historian or archaeologist to date a site. Many *Ohelim* have foundation stones, lintel stones or consecration plaques that date the opening of the building. Often this is later than the date of the first burial. Dates can be in both systems, Jewish and civil, sometimes with an apt quotation from the Psalms. The use of chronograms, dates hidden in Biblical verses, a traditional device, is sometimes encountered on tombstones, but was more widely employed on the date stones of *Ohelim* and synagogue buildings. It is comparatively rare in England and is confined to the older sites (e.g. Portsmouth).

TOMBSTONE ART AND SYMBOLISM

Jewish burial grounds are distinguished by the use of Hebrew lettering and Jewish symbolism on tombstones. A memorial in the shape of a cross will never be found in a Jewish cemetery. In Britain, Jewish symbolism in burial grounds tends to be

conventional: the *Magen David* or six-pointed 'Shield of David', more commonly referred to as the 'Star of David', is frequently found on the gateposts or above the *Ohel*. As already observed, decoration of tombstones is usually simple or concentrated on the lettering of the inscription. Some finely carved Hebrew inscriptions are to be found especially in the Georgian burial grounds of the West Country and East Anglia.

England has nothing to compare with the lavish Renaissance and Baroque carved decoration on Jewish tombstones in Eastern Europe, most notably in Galicia, Bohemia and Moravia, as exemplified in the Old Jewish Cemetery of Prague.³⁴

Traditional decorative motifs found on Jewish tombstones include: Open hands (Figs 1 and 7), denoting the grave of a *Cohen* making the *Birkat Cohanim* or 'Priestly Blessing' over the congregation during some synagogue services. Open hands



Fig. 7

Tombstone of a *Cohen*: Isaac, son of Abraham Katz, dated 1893 at Witton Old Cemetery's Jewish section Birmingham

© English Heritage

and a pair of candlesticks denote the grave of a pious woman who lights her Sabbath candles. Hand and Ewer pouring water (Fig. 1) denote the grave of a *Levi* or descendent of the Levitical families who served the *Cohanim* in the Jerusalem Temple. Today the *Levi'im* ritually wash the hands of the *Cohanim* before the latter recite the 'Priestly Blessing' during some synagogue services.

Other relief decoration may allude to the name of the deceased, for example, representations of animals such as a lion for Leib (Yiddish), Yehudah or Aryeh (Hebrew); a deer for Hirsch (Yiddish), Tsvi or Naftali (Hebrew); a bear for Dov Ber (Yiddish) or Isaacher (Hebrew); a wolf for Volf (Yiddish), Ze'vev or Benjamin (Hebrew). Common women's names such as Feiga, 'Bird' (Yiddish) or Tsipora (Hebrew), or Reizel, 'Rose' or Bluma, 'Flower' (Yiddish) are illustrated by a dove or rose. However, such allusions, whilst frequently found in old Jewish burial grounds in Eastern Europe, are unusual in Britain.

Another traditional animal symbol encountered on the Continent, that recalls a key prayer in the High Holyday liturgy that likens the living to a flock of sheep awaiting judgment, occurs in London, Brady Street (1761), and at Manchester, Crumpsall (1884), but is also quite rare.

Figurative art, in the form of reliefs, busts or even statuary is not unknown in Jewish funerary art, despite the taboo on figurative art in Judaism.³⁵ Sophisticated examples are found in seventeenth-century Sephardi cemeteries for instance at Ouderkerk, near Amsterdam, and, less recognized, in the Ashkenazi world, for instance in Prague.³⁶ The deployment of standard classical decorative motifs common in Christian cemeteries,³⁷ such as the tree stump or the broken column or urn-topped obelisk, are common in nineteenth-century English Jewish burial grounds. Memorials were often made and inscribed by non-Jewish masons who used standard patterns, and their Jewish clients did not object. This reflected their acculturation to dominant cultural norms. The use of the skull and crossbones at London, Alderney Road (1697)³⁸ (Fig. 8) is unique in Britain and reflects the assimilation of the elite of the eighteenth-century Ashkenazi Great Synagogue to the prevailing fashions of the day.

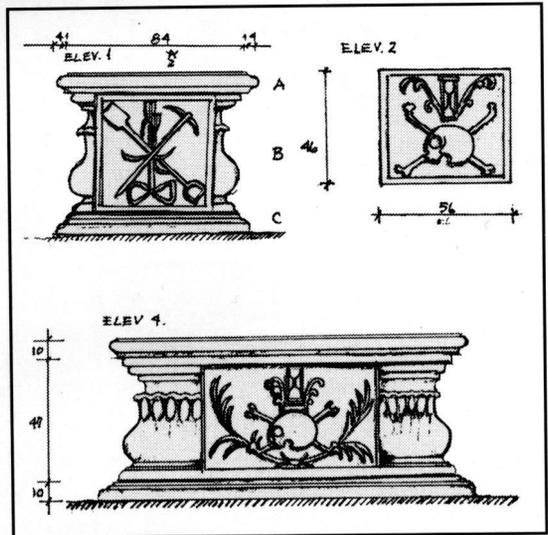


Fig. 8

Skull and crossbones relief decoration on an eighteenth-century chest tomb at Alderney Road in the East End of London, the oldest Ashkenazi Jewish burial ground in Britain

© Drawings by Yael Turner and Paula Palombo from B. Susser (ed.) Alderney Road Jewish Cemetery London E1 1697-1853 (London, 1997)

In the twentieth century, the Liberal Jewish Cemetery (1914), Willesden, London, features a figurative sculpture by Benno Elkan. This is most unusual. Resistance to the plastic arts, especially to sculpted likenesses of the deceased, endured in Britain's Jewish community, which remained overwhelmingly Orthodox throughout the nineteenth century, nominally at least. Britain has no real equivalent to the proliferation of sculpture to be found on the tombs of enlightened Jews of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example in Paris or at Prague's New Jewish Cemetery at Zizkov.³⁹

SARCOPHAGI AND MAUSOLEA

Historically, artistically important or architect-designed funerary monuments are few in Jewish cemeteries.⁴⁰ Private mausolea and Jewish family tombs exist, but are very rare. However, the tradition of Jewish family plots and mausolea goes back to Biblical times, beginning with the purchase of the Cave of Machpelah by Abraham in *Genesis*,⁴¹ down to the Hellenistic Valley of the Kings in the Kidron Valley (or Valley of Jehosophat) in Jerusalem: Jehosophat's Tomb and Absalom's Pillar (the latter with a distinctive conical top), the Tombs of the Sons of [Bnei] Hezir (known by Christians as the Tomb of St James, with Doric columns) and the Tomb of Zechariah (with a square pyramid).⁴² These tombs are reputed to date from the Hasmonaean period, but are stylistically first century Hellenistic.

In ancient Israel, in the Talmudic period (first century BCE to third century CE), the dead were placed in burial caves or catacombs. The bones of highborn people were sometimes re-interred in stone ossuaries, which were decorated in carved relief in geometric and abstract floral patterns. However, in the first-fourth century Jewish catacombs of Rome, some figurative relief work survives, along with traditional Jewish motifs such as *Menorot* [seven-branched candelabra] reflecting assimilation to local cultural norms.⁴³ About three-quarters of the inscriptions were in Greek.

In Diaspora conditions, especially in Christian Europe, there were few opportunities for Jews to build ostentatious mausolea. However, in Britain in the nineteenth century a few wealthy Jewish notables did adopt the idea, inspired by English aristocratic practices. The best-known example is the Montefiore Mausoleum in Ramsgate built next door to the Regency-style synagogue (David Mocatta 1831-3 Grade II*) on his estate by Sir Moses after the death of his wife Judith, Lady Montefiore in 1862 (Fig. 9). The Ramsgate Mausoleum is essentially a replica of Rachel's Tomb on the way to Bethlehem and was commissioned by Sir Moses as an appropriate memorial to his childless wife who predeceased him. Rachel's Tomb is reputed to have been the spot where the Matriarch Rachel was buried by her husband Jacob after dying in childbirth with her younger son Benjamin. It is one of the traditional places of Jewish pilgrimage in the Land of Israel. The tradition of visiting the graves of Biblical heroes and famous rabbis (*Tsadikim*) is very old in Judaism. Graves of famous rabbis in Eastern Europe are still visited by pious Jews today, especially Hasidim. The extant domed structure built over Rachel's Tomb is thought to date back to the Crusader period but was

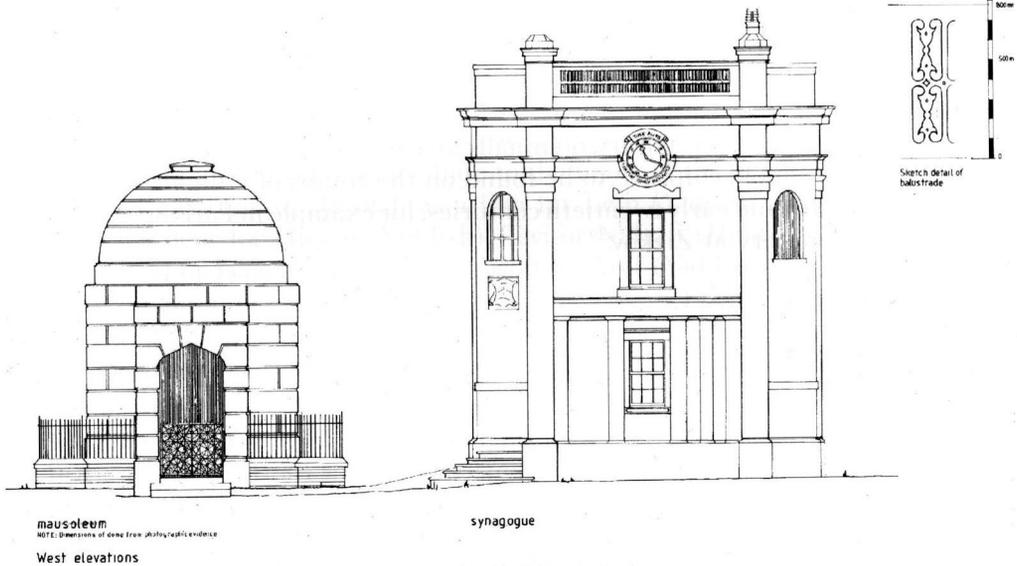


Fig. 9
Montefiore Synagogue and Mausoleum, Ramsgate
© Barbara Bowman for the Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage

rebuilt by the Muslims in the fifteenth century; the site itself is first recorded in the fourth century. At the copy in Ramsgate, built of brick, stuccoed and rusticated unlike the stone prototype, the Montefiores were laid to rest side-by-side in brick vaults covered by identical chest tombs of Aberdeen marble. Helen Rosenau praised the Ramsgate Mausoleum as ‘an outstanding example of applied oriental historicism to Victorian architecture’.⁴⁴ It has recently been upgraded to Grade II*.

There are other cases of wealthy Anglo-Jews having themselves buried on their country estates, for example the Faudel-Phillips and in Hertfordshire, the Goldsmids and Salomons families near Tunbridge Wells and the Bright Mausolea outside Sheffield.⁴⁵

North of the border, as far back as 1795, Herman Lyon (also known as Heyman Lion), purchased a private burial plot for himself and his wife on Calton Hill⁴⁶ overlooking Edinburgh. Lyon, who was a German-born Jew, had a successful Edinburgh practice as dentist and ‘corner operator’ (Chiropodist). He was author of a learned treatise on the corn published in 1802 and in all probability of doubtful scientific value. Lyon’s was a remarkable transaction, taking place between the City Council and a registered alien in the middle of the French Wars. Sadly, nothing today remains of his tomb except a bit of rubble and its appearance went unrecorded. It had been constructed in the period (sometime after 1795, it being unclear exactly when the interments actually took place) just before Calton Hill became the imposing landmark it is today, dotted with eccentric structures, ranging

from Gothick to Greek Revival. Most of the monuments on the hill were erected during the Napoleonic Wars down to 1830. The organised Jewish community in Edinburgh was not established until 1816 and its first burial ground – the oldest in Scotland – at Braid Place (Sciennes House Place) was not opened until 1820.

The Sassoon Mausoleum, Paston Place, Brighton (1896) (Fig. 10), is the only monument of this type constructed in a populated area, contrary to both Jewish law and Home Office regulations. In this case, a precedent existed in India. The Sassoon family mausoleum in the courtyard of the Ohel David Synagogue (1863) at Poona⁴⁷ had been erected by David Sassoon, progenitor of the Bahgdadi-born dynasty of merchant princes of India. His son, Sir Albert Sassoon built the mausoleum in Brighton and was buried there with other members of his family. The remains were removed and the site deconsecrated in 1933.⁴⁸ The distinctive Grade II listed structure, with trumpet-shaped dome, that rivals in exoticism the Brighton Pavilion, is currently being restored as part of the Kemp Town Regeneration Scheme.

Plots reserved for individual monied families exist at Willesden Jewish cemetery (United Synagogue 1873), for example for the Rothschilds. A fine Italianate mausoleum commissioned in 1866 by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild of Waddesdon



Fig. 10

Sassoon Mausoleum, Brighton (1896), now part of a pub

© *Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage* Photo: *Sharman Kadish*

to memorialise his young wife Evelina is at West Ham Jewish cemetery.⁴⁹ It was designed by Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt, perhaps the most prestigious architect ever to have been commissioned to work for Anglo-Jewry.

CREMATION

Cremation, as stated above, is forbidden in Orthodox Jewish law. Today, this ban is reinforced for many Jews by associations with the Holocaust. The Liberal Jewish Cemetery that adjoins the United's cemetery at Willesden is unique in Britain in that it possesses an elaborate columbarium complete with urns stored in niches right inside the *Ohel*. A much simpler columbarium, with plaques, is also found in the historic Reform ground at Higher Lane, Manchester (1858) and similar groupings of plaques are found in the open air at many other Reform cemeteries in the twentieth century. There is even the odd case of ashes deposited in the burial grounds of smaller provincial communities, especially where these are located within municipal cemeteries, which are nominally under the jurisdiction of the [central Orthodox] Chief Rabbinate, for example at Norwich, Bowthorpe Road (1854).

LANDSCAPING

The concept of a Garden of Rest does not really exist amongst Jews. It is against Jewish law to allow animals to graze in burial grounds and the idea of treating a graveyard as a nature reserve is unknown. In fact, landscaping and flowerbeds are sadly rare in Jewish burial grounds, being most likely to be found in the municipal plots managed by local authorities.

The earliest example of a Jewish plot planned and landscaped as part of the overall design of a municipal cemetery is The Jews' Enclosure at the Glasgow Necropolis⁵⁰ (and afterwards at the Glasgow Eastern Necropolis, Janefield 1853-6). The Glasgow Necropolis was laid out in 1829-33 on the model of the prestigious Père la Chaise cemetery in Paris. In 1830 the Glasgow Jewish community paid one hundred guineas outright to secure provision in what was one of the first public cemeteries in Britain. In fact, the earliest burial in the entire cemetery was that of Joseph Levi, aged sixty-two, quill merchant, who was interred on 12 September 1832 in the Jewish plot. The rest of the cemetery did not become operational until May 1833. Levi had died of cholera, an epidemic raging in the city at the time. His coffin was filled with lime and water either to prevent the spread of infection or as protection against grave robbers.

The tiny 'Jews Enclosure' was provided with a stone boundary wall, monumental column and iron gateway⁵¹ erected c. 1835-6 at the expense of the city. The column and gateway were designed by John Bryce (1805-51) who was responsible for other contemporary monuments within the complex including the Catacombs and the Egyptian vaults.⁵² Bryce's obelisk was supposedly modelled on Absalom's Pillar in Jerusalem. However, as George Blair commented in 1857, the conical shaped dome over that rock-hewn tomb actually looks nothing like its 'counterpart' in Glasgow.⁵³ It may be relevant to note that the famous Scottish traveller-artist David Robert's *Holy Land*, which was published in 1842, included a view of Absalom's

Pillar. This may well be the origin of the connection made in Scotland between the two monuments. The obelisk in the Glasgow Jews' Enclosure is classical in form. Mounted on a high plinth, it tapers towards the top and has a carved decorative capital, somewhere between Corinthian and palmette. This supports two entablatures, the lower one is decorated with acroteria-like carvings and the upper one is topped by a rounded urn finial. The stone scrolls over the gateway also carried an urn finial, now gone. The column and gateposts were inscribed and a combination of Biblical quotations in Hebrew and English and a long quotation from Byron's *Hebrew Melodies* ending in the proto-Zionist stanza:

The wild dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,
Mankind their country – Israel but the grave.

The combination of Byronic and Biblical quotations, now gently crumbling away, must rate the Jews' Enclosure in the Glasgow Necropolis as one of the most romantic Jewish sites in Britain.

The earliest municipal cemetery in England was the Common Cemetery, Southampton. Here, the Jewish community was in negotiation with the corporation for a plot in 1845, a year before the opening of the cemetery and the first Jewish burial appears to have taken place in 1854.⁵⁴ This is one of nine Jewish plots inside Victorian municipal cemeteries currently known to be included on the 'Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England'. With the exception of Southampton and Coventry's London Road Cemetery (Grade II*) designed by Joseph Paxton in 1845 (the Jewish plot dates from 1864), all of the other cemeteries were registered after the year 2000 and are Grade II. A cluster of Jewish plots in municipal cemeteries dating from the 1850s are to be found in East Anglia: Ipswich Old Cemetery (1855 P&G), Norwich, Bowthorpe Road (1856 P&G) and Great Yarmouth, Kitchener Road (1858) and all date back to the opening of the respective cemeteries. Towns in the North East of England also began to provide facilities for burial for their Jewish communities from an early date, usually at the request of the latter: North Shields, Preston Road; Sunderland, Bishopswearmouth (both 1856), and Newcastle, St John's Cemetery, Elswick (1857).

In many cases, but not in all, the Jewish plots are to be found at the edge of the general cemetery, or contiguous with it. Usually, they are provided with a separate entrance in the external perimeter wall and internally are separated by some form of boundary, ranging from solid stone walls to privet hedges and paths. The earliest examples were integrated into the overall design of the cemetery. At Philips Park, the first municipal cemetery in Manchester (1867, Jewish plot 1874, P&G), there are clearly marked separate entrances for 'Catholics', 'Dissenters' and 'Jews' – although some councils resisted the concept of denominational plots in public cemeteries. Some plots were equipped with *Ohelim*, simple Gothic style being the usual choice of the municipal architects who often designed them in keeping with the chapels put up for Christian denominations. Although not all have survived, good examples are to be found at Norwich, Bowthorpe Road (by the City Surveyor, E. E. Benest 1856); Bradford, Scholemoor Cemetery (1860, Reform Jewish section

1877, P&G) and Manchester's Southern Cemetery (1879, Jewish plot 1892?, P&G) (Figs 2 and 11). Southampton's *Ohel* (F. J. Francis 1846), now sadly disused, is most unusual and is listed in its own right. It has a Tudor doorway and ogee window-heads on the long walls.

Many other Jewish cemeteries, particularly those owned by cross-communal synagogue organisations, have a rather desolate air, with hardly a blade of grass to relieve the serried ranks of gravestones. Overuse of chemical weed-killers rather than regular gardening has been the cause of this and it is a difficult job trying to change management policy on the point. Financial considerations as well as certain cultural attitudes are the problem. Letters frequently appear in the Jewish press complaining about the poor (i.e. overgrown) state of some cemeteries found on annual visits to the graves of close relatives.

Concrete paths and gravel are regarded as infinitely more acceptable than muddy feet on wet grass! Much work needs to be done on 'green education' within the Jewish community. Ironically, some of the most neglected Jewish burial grounds are also the most attractive.

JEWISH BURIAL GROUNDS AS SITES AT RISK

The steep demographic decline of Anglo-Jewry since the Second World War, from an estimated peak of 450,000 in the 1950s to 267,000 in 2001 (Census returns) has exacerbated the problem of 'orphaned' burial grounds, that is those abandoned because of the disappearance of the community that established them.⁵⁵ The Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage has designated a number of these as 'Sites at Risk'⁵⁶ from vandalism, development pressures, but mostly through sheer neglect. Memorials and structures are exposed to the same threats from the environment: climate, erosion, unchecked vegetation and poor drainage, as all other burial grounds.⁵⁷ Weathered and fallen tombstones, often made of inferior materials (such



Fig. 11

Southern Cemetery, Manchester. Elaborate memorial to Abdullah Ellias, died 1911, in the Jewish section

© *English Heritage Photo: Tony Perry*

as sandstone) are commonplace even in some grounds of fairly recent date. Mindless vandalism, particularly by juveniles, and deliberate desecration by anti-Semites, are on-going problems. The latter phenomenon has been on the rise again in recent years. Security issues around cemeteries are of concern to the Board of Deputies and other institutions of organised Anglo-Jewry. The sacred nature of Jewish burial grounds has not prevented their destruction in practice, even in Britain whose Jewish community escaped the fate suffered on Continental Europe during the Holocaust.

The partial excavation of possible medieval Jewish burial grounds at York and Winchester aroused opposition within the traditionalist Jewish community, despite the fact that the identity of these sites has not been properly authenticated.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, it is a fact that some cases in which old Jewish burial grounds have been cleared and remains re-interred elsewhere are known from the nineteenth century. Usually this was as a result of development pressure, especially from the railways, for example at Liverpool, Birmingham, Hull and Sheffield. The two predecessors of the Bath Row 'Betholom' ground (1823) in Birmingham both fell victim to railway development. Bath Row itself was saved from a similar fate in 1881 by virtue of a vigorous defence campaign organised locally and supported by the Chief Rabbi. The case against the Midland Railway Company was successfully fought right up to the House of Lords.⁵⁹ Today, the badly neglected site is once again in danger of extinction.

A comparable case is to be found in Manchester. The Collyhurst cemetery, also known as Miles Platting, is the third oldest Jewish burial ground in the city. Dating from 1844, this cemetery, which contains many pauper and unmarked infant burials, was relatively intact until the 1930s. In 1938 the *Jewish Chronicle* carried a report headed 'Jewish Cemetery desecrated: Fascist outrage in Manchester: Slogans painted on tombstones'.⁶⁰ The piece was accompanied by a photograph of a gravestone daubed with the words 'Dirty Jew' decorated with a swastika. Yet it was the Manchester Great Synagogue, the senior Ashkenazi congregation in the city, which was culpable for the eventual consignment of Collyhurst to virtual oblivion. In August 1937 an architect's estimate obtained by the Manchester City Surveyor for re-erection of the boundary wall 'was considered too high'. This unforgivable abdication of communal responsibility no doubt gave a free hand to 'Fascist activity' and led indirectly to the destruction of the site. According to a memorandum afterwards written for the Manchester *Beth Din* (Jewish ecclesiastical court): 'In the meantime the local hooligans razed the wall to the ground and almost levelled the ground'. A total of eleven tombstones were rescued and moved to Crumpsall Jewish cemetery. Between 1938 and 1955, the Great Synagogue made unedifying attempts to divest itself of financial responsibility for the ancestors of its congregation. This even extended to seeking the disinterment of the remains and handing over the land to the City Council or the Church authorities, efforts that were opposed by the *Beth Din*. Today the site, devoid of tombstones, but still containing burials, is roughly grassed over and railed off, under the supervision of Manchester City Council.⁶¹

In the twentieth century several Georgian Jewish burial grounds were exhumed, usually, but not always with the sanction of the Jewish religious authorities, for example at Gloucester in 1938, Hoxton, East London in 1960, and, most controversially, from the older part of the Sephardi Nuevo ground (1733) at Mile End in 1972.⁶² Attempts by the West London Synagogue (Reform) to treat similarly their historic ground at Kingsbury Road/Balls Pond Road, Dalston (1844), in 1996, were scotched by vigorous opposition from both inside and outside the Jewish community, spearheaded by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, with the support of English Heritage. Income for conservation has now been generated by the approved sale of empty land on site to The Peabody Housing Trust for building purposes.

The number of disused Jewish burial grounds is increasing. In London, perhaps half the total of eighteen dating from between 1656 and 1939 are completely closed to further burials, whilst several others have remaining reserved plots only. Of the total of 107 Jewish burial grounds throughout England, twenty-one dating from the Georgian and Regency periods are effectively closed, and eleven from the Victorian period and later. A number of Victorian Jewish burial grounds in urban areas currently have only reserved plots left and are likely to be closed completely within the next few years. Jewish plots in small provincial towns are ceasing to be used not through lack of space but because the communities that opened them are disappearing.

Several Georgian Jewish burial grounds in urban contexts are in danger of extinction. Only five tombstones survive, no longer *in situ* at the oldest cemetery of Manchester Jewry at Pendleton (also known as Brindle Heath) that was acquired in 1794.⁶³ Sunderland's aptly-named Ballast Hill cemetery at Ayres Quay (c. 1780)⁶⁴ – the oldest city cemetery outside London – is situated on a steep slope in industrial wasteland between a slag-heap and a factory. The boundary walls and most of the memorials are broken down, including the obelisk to David Jonassohn, Jewish mining entrepreneur and communal leader. This is a case, not unique, where research by SJBH has drawn attention to an abandoned old cemetery, long forgotten – or put out of the minds – of a local Jewish community which is, in any case, in sharp demographic decline.⁶⁵

A far greater number of Victorian Jewish burial grounds survive although a surprising number are in only fair to poor condition. At disused cemeteries, usually in inner city contexts, the *Ohel* (if there is one) is frequently in poor condition, on account of years of neglect and/or from vandalism. This building type might therefore be considered valuable, less on account of the architectural importance of individual *Ohelim*, which are usually very simple, but because of their social-historical significance.

THE CHALLENGES OF CONSERVATION (Fig. 12)

Burial grounds are not a profitable enterprise. Income generated by the sale of plots comes to a natural end, whilst the cost of maintenance increases. The shrinking size of Anglo-Jewry means that small and ageing congregations around the country



Fig. 12

Weathered tombstone at Braid Place (Sciennes House Place), Edinburgh, the oldest Jewish burial ground in Scotland, dating from 1820

© *Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage*

Photo: Andrew Petersen

are increasingly going to need outside assistance with the upkeep of historic synagogues and disused cemeteries. Whilst in theory Jewish communities have a religious obligation to maintain the last resting places of their ancestors, in practice some communities (including large ones) are unwilling to spend money on closed burial grounds that belonged to synagogues that have ceased to function. There are instances where money originally earmarked for cemetery maintenance has been subsumed into current synagogue accounts. A 'Code of Practice for Good Cemetery Management' is being drawn up⁶⁶ whilst the creation of a central Jewish community conservation trust fund is badly needed to tackle the issue on a national scale. The growing countrywide problem of redundant Victorian cemeteries does not leave Anglo-Jewry untouched.

In some cases, the local authority or even the probation service⁶⁷ has been successfully brought in to assist with tidying, day-to-day management and security. Jewish burial grounds stand to benefit from the review of heritage

protection legislation currently being considered (2004). Designation by Listing or Scheduling can help protect sites of most architectural or historical significance, whilst others, particularly Jewish plots located within municipal cemeteries, may fall within designated Parks and Gardens or Conservation Areas. However, many burial grounds possess unrecognised significance for the local community, because they provide a sense of place and of belonging and because they contribute to the character of a given neighbourhood. In smaller provincial towns, the survival of the 'Jews' Burying Ground' may be the only reminder of the former presence of a minority community, long since disappeared.

For the wider public, cemeteries are a valuable resource. School visits to Jewish cemeteries can be a way of educating young people about the cultural diversity of British society. Cemeteries are also of great interest for genealogical research, which is now very popular. The Jewish Genealogical Society has some members who, although not Jewish themselves, have discovered that they had Jewish ancestors.⁶⁸

In Canterbury, the historic importance of the Old Jewish Cemetery in Whitstable Road (1760) was recognized in 1997 through a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £42,000 to Canterbury City Council to undertake conservation, primarily through the clearing of excessive vegetation, repair of the eighteenth-century walls, the provision of signage and occasional opening to the public. At Great Yarmouth, the Regency ground at Alma Road (1801) is being incorporated into the Town Trail currently being developed. In London, tours of Willesden Jewish cemetery, instituted on the annual European Jewish Heritage Day (since 2000), have been overwhelmed with participants. This cemetery contains some outstanding memorials to the 'Great and the Good' of Victorian Anglo-Jewry.

However, simply opening Jewish burial grounds to the public is neither possible nor desirable. Access would need to be managed and security concerns remain serious. Sensitivity must be shown to the sacred nature of these sites and proper respect shown, by covering of heads, modest dress, no eating and drinking nor stepping on graves. Therefore it would not be appropriate to turn a Jewish burial ground into a park or play area. Such reservations aside, it nevertheless remains a truism that visiting a cemetery is the best way of demonstrating that you care.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage in the United Kingdom & Ireland is grateful for the generous support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, the Arts and Humanities Research Board, the former Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, the Royal Institute of British Architects, The Pilgrim Trust, The British Academy, The R. M. Burton Charitable Trust, The Aurelius Charitable Trust, the Trustees of the former Notting Hill Synagogue, The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and several individual and anonymous donors.

The author is indebted to the late Rabbi Dr Bernard Susser and to Charles Tucker, Archivist at the Chief Rabbi's Office, for sharing their appreciation of Jewish funerary art and architecture over many years. She would also like to thank fieldworkers Barbara Bowman RIBA and Andrew Petersen MIFA for their contribution to the Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage, and Rhona Beenstock for acting as volunteer research assistant.

NOTES

1. See *Encyclopedia Judaica* [EJ] for a general introduction. This paper is based in part on Kadish, S., *Single Monument Class Description: Jewish Burial Grounds and Funerary Architecture* prepared for English Heritage in 2003. See www.english-heritage.org.uk
2. A unique example in England of a Jewish burial ground situated next to the synagogue, in the manner of a churchyard, is found at Rochester, Kent. However, this ground, thought to date from the 1780s, predates the Victorian Chatham Memorial Synagogue (1865-70) and is physically separated from it by means of a steep bank.
3. Gilam, A., 'The Burial Grounds controversy between Anglo-Jewry and the Victorian Board of Health', *Jewish Social Studies*, 45:2 (1983), 147-56.

4. Grimes, W. F., *The Excavation of Roman and Mediaeval London* (London, 1968); Honeybourne, M. B., 'The Pre-Expulsion Cemetery of the Jews in London', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England [TJHSE]*, 20 (1959-61), 145-59; Shepherd, J., (ed.), *Post-War Archaeology in the City of London 1946-72: A Guide to the Records of Excavations by Professor W. F. Grimes held by the Museum of London* (London, 1998).
5. Collis, J., *Winchester Excavations Vol.2 1949-1960* (Winchester, 1968) [with summaries in *Medieval Archaeology*, 18 (1974), 200 and 41 (1997), 270]; Lilley, J. M. et al., *The Jewish Burial Ground at Jewbury* (York, 1994) - the only full excavation published to date of a 'Jewish' site, see review by Kadish, S., *European Judaism* (London), 29:1 (Spring 1996), 146-7.
6. Foard, G., 'The early topography of Northampton and its suburbs', *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, 26 (1995).
7. Breakdown: 107 plus 18 in London, Wales (6), Scotland (14), Ireland, North (2) and South (4) and the Channel Islands (2). SJBH is the first comprehensive survey of Jewish burial grounds nationwide, but took as its starting point earlier unpublished studies: Lange, N. de, 'A Guide to Earlier Jewish Cemeteries in the British Isles' (Typescript, Cambridge, Faculty of Divinity 1985); Tucker, C., Jacobs, D. & H., 'London's Jewish Cemeteries' (Typescripts July 1987 and Sept. 1991) and Tucker, C., 'Jewish Cemeteries' (Typescript n.d. [late 1990s]).
8. Susser, B., (ed.), *Alderney Road Jewish Cemetery, London E1, 1697-1853* (London, 1997), the published results of an in-depth field survey organised as a student exchange project through ICOMOS UK and ICOMOS Israel by the present author in 1993.
9. Shillman, B., 'The Jewish Cemetery at Ballybough in Dublin', *TJHSE*, 11 (1928), 143-67.
10. Deed dated 6 December 1749 at Southsea Synagogue.
11. The survival rate of Georgian Jewish burial grounds is far higher than that of Georgian synagogues thus making them a particularly valuable source for tracking older Jewish communities.
12. Documented in Pearce, K., and Fry, H., (eds.), *The Lost Jews of Cornwall* (Bristol, 2000).
13. Tobias, A., et al, *A Catalogue of the Burials in the Jewish Cemeteries of Bristol: December 1997 Revised 1999* (Bristol, privately printed 1999). Contains some dating errors.
14. Recently a new Reform Jewish community in Cornwall, styling itself 'Kehillat Kernow', has been seeking to open a section at a municipal cemetery in Truro.
15. At Winchester the heads were to the west, see *Medieval Archaeology*, 41 (1997), 270. The various theories put forward by archaeologists to explain this apparent discrepancy of alignment have no validity and are ill-informed, for example Addyman and Lilley in Lilley et al and see Hinton, D. A., 'Medieval Anglo-Jewry: the Archaeological Evidence', in Skinner, P., (ed.), *Jews in Medieval Britain* (Woodbridge, 2003), 97-111, esp. 102, who also refers to a review by Prof. Dobson in *TJHSE* (1994-6). The use of iron pins for coffins at Jewbury in York does not conform to current Jewish practice in which wooden pegs are used. This finding was one of those that cast doubts on the identification of this site as a Jewish burial ground.
16. Burial service based on *Genesis* 3:19.
17. This is one question that archaeology could address, should the opportunity arise, provided that it does not disturb the actual burials.
18. *Jewish Chronicle [JC]*, 24 February 1871. See Kadish, S., 'Constructing Identity: Anglo-Jewry and Synagogue Architecture', *Architectural History*, 45 (2002), 386-408, esp. 395-6, on the issue of style in funerary architecture.
19. East Sussex Record Office Ref: DB/D7/2763. Research for SJBH by Barbara Bowman RIBA.
20. Knufinke, U., 'Ritual Buildings of Jewish Cemeteries in Germany - A Sketch', Unpub. lecture, European Association of Jewish Studies Conference, Amsterdam 2002, kindly copied to author; Parik, *Prague Jewish Cemeteries*, Prague, 2003; Jarrassé, D., (ed), 'Le patrimoine juif français', *Monuments Historiques*, 191 (February 1994) includes material on acculturated French Jewish cemeteries, whilst Michael Brocke has published extensively on German Jewish cemeteries (in German).
21. *JC*, 25 April, 10 October 1873; Ornstien, P., *Laws and Bye-Laws of the Burial Society of the United Synagogue, adopted by the Council, March 24th, 5662-1902. With an Historical Preface of the Society and*

- the United Synagogue Cemeteries* (London, United Synagogue 1902); Several of the larger London Jewish cemeteries are included in Mellor, H., *London Cemeteries* (3rd ed. Stroud, 1999).
22. *JC*, 19 February 1897.
 23. See Kadish, S., 'The Cathedral Synagogues of England', *TJHSE*, 39 (2004), 45-77.
 24. *JC*, 11 September 1931, 9 September 1932.
 25. The rituals are illustrated in the famous cycle of paintings dated c. 1772 displayed in the 'Ceremonial Hall' of the Prague Jewish Burial Society, see colour photographs in Parik, A., *et al.*, *Prague Jewish Cemeteries*, *op. cit.*
 26. The only known example in Britain of a *Bet Taharah* built in a separate place away from a burial ground is the strictly Orthodox Adath Yisrael's facility in Burma Road, London, N16 (1911). It was originally part of a synagogue complex, based on Continental models, now demolished. Nowadays the ritual of *Taharah* is often carried out in hospital mortuaries.
 27. See Kadish, S., *Monuments Protection Programme: Single Monument Class Description: Mikvaot* (English Heritage 2003) at www.english-heritage.org.uk
 28. *Genesis* 35: 19-20.
 29. And Turkey see Rozen, M., *Hasloy Cemetery: Typology of Stones* (Tel Aviv, 1994).
 30. Lysons, D., *The Environs of London; Being an Historical Account of the Towns, Villages, and Hamlets, within Twelve Miles of that Capital Vol. II County of Middlesex*, *Ibid. Supplement to the First Edition of the Historical Account of the Environs of London* (London, 1811); Mesquita, D. B. de, 'The Historical Associations of the Ancient Burial-Ground of the Sephardi Jews', *TJHSE*, 10 (1921-3), 225-54; Diamond, A. S., 'The Cemetery of the Resettlement', *TJHSE*, 19 (1955-9), 163-90; Ben-Ami, I., 'Death, Burial and Mourning Customs among Sephardic Jews in London', in Ben-Ami, I., and Noy, D., (eds), *Studies in the Cultural Life of the Jews in England* (Jerusalem, 1975), 11-35 inc. plates.
 31. Pointed out by Paul Fernandez, stonemason and sexton at Urmston, who died suddenly in September 2004 at the early age of forty-one, whilst this paper was being prepared for press. He had acquired some knowledge of Hebrew, and was thought to have Spanish-Jewish ancestry.
 32. Yaniv, B., *et al.*, *Hebrew Inscriptions and their Translations*' (Jerusalem, 1988); Susser, B., *How to Read and Record a Jewish Tombstone* (London, privately printed 1995).
 33. Susser, B., *The Jews of South West England* (Exeter, 1993) and *Ibid.* 'Jewish cemeteries in the West of England', in Kadish, S., (ed.), *Building Jerusalem: Jewish Architecture in Britain* (London, 1996), 155-66.
 34. Parik, *Prague Jewish Cemeteries*, *op. cit.* Also, see for example (in English): Herman, J., *Jewish Cemeteries in Bohemia and Moravia* (Prague, 1983); Goberman, D., *Jewish Tombstones in Ukraine and Moldova* (Moscow, 1993 Masterpieces of Jewish Art Vol.4); *Ibid.* *Carved Memories: Heritage in Stone from the Russian Jewish Pale* (New York, 2000); Krajewska, M., *A Tribe of Stones* (Warsaw, 1993); Schwartzman, A., *Graven Images: Graphic Motifs of the Jewish Gravestone* (New York, 1993); Khaimovitch, B., 'In the Footsteps of An-sky, 1988-1993', in *Back to the Shtetl* (Jerusalem, 1994) [Israel Museum exhibition catalogue, Hebrew and English], 1-7, 121-33.
 35. The 'taboo' is not as clear-cut as is generally assumed. See Mann, V. B., (ed.), *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts* (Cambridge, 2000).
 36. See Parik *op.cit.* 44-5 and Mann *op. cit.* 31-4. She cites a responsum of Rabbi Moses Sofer (known by the title of his chief work, the *Hatam Sofer*), written in Pressburg [Bratislava] in 1832. He condemned the use of a human image in relief on a Jewish tombstone - as in fact can still be seen in the portrait on the *Ohel* of the Chief Rabbi of Prague, Rabbi Aaron Simeon Spira, who died in 1679 and is buried in the Old Jewish Cemetery. Mann ascribes the Hatam Sofer's stringency to 'various pressures on traditional Judaism during the nineteenth century, among them the growth of the Reform movement'.
 37. For comparison see Curl, J. S., *The [Victorian] Celebration of Death* (London 1980, 2nd ed. Stroud, 2000).
 38. See illustrations in Susser (ed.), *Alderney Road*, *op. cit.*
 39. See for example Parik, *Prague Jewish Cemeteries*, *op. cit.*; Jarrassé, *Monuments Historiques*, *op. cit.* At Brady Street cemetery, London E1, is to be found a bust of a woman: Miriam wife of Moses Levy.

The inscription is obscured but the style is mid Victorian. She is identified as Miriam Levy (1801-56), a welfare worker who opened the first soup kitchens in the East End. The tomb is in the form of a square obelisk with four faces.

40. Willesden Jewish cemetery (United Synagogue 1873) has a number of imposing memorials, as well as more modest tombstones featuring inscriptions by Eric Gill and Mary Seton Watts, the latter executed in terracotta. A detailed guide is in preparation by Charles Tucker.
41. *Genesis* 23: 4-20.
42. Illustrated in Avigad, N., 'The Architecture of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period', in Yadin, Y., (ed.), *Jerusalem Revealed* (Jerusalem, 1976), 14-20.
43. See *EJ*. Ancient ossuaries and tombs are amply illustrated in Sed-Rajna, G., (ed.), *Jewish Art* (New York, 1997).
44. Rosenau, H., 'Reflections on Moses Montefiore and Social Function in the Arts', *Journal of Jewish Art*, 8 (1981), 60-7, quote 63; 'Rachel's Tomb' in Pringle, R. D., *The Crusader Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 2 (L-Z) (Cambridge, 1998), 176-8.
45. Apparently several of the Bright mausolea (earliest 1831) were constructed in an unusual 'beehive' shape. Unfortunately, SJBH has not been able to gain access to the main site to determine whether or not the tombs are still extant.
46. Phillips, A., *Origins of the First Jewish Community in Scotland – Edinburgh 1816* (Edinburgh, 1979). The 'Burying place of the Jews' is clearly marked on *Kirkwood's Plans and Illustrations of the City of Edinburgh* Section 5 (1817) in the National Monuments Record of Scotland, Edinburgh. The 1851 OS map of Edinburgh, published 1853, also clearly shows the location of the tomb here labelled 'Jews' Burial Vault (Lyon's Family)', courtesy RCAHMS, Edinburgh; *Buildings of Scotland: Edinburgh* (London, 1984), 434-9.
47. *EJ* and see Weil, S., (ed.), *India's Jewish Heritage* (Mumbai, 2002).
48. *The Times*, 26, 28 October 1896 [Obituary], *JC*, 2 September 1949, *Brighton Herald*, 29 August 1949; Pevsner, N., *Buildings of England: Sussex* (1965), 448-9. Traced by Barbara Bowman as registered with the Borough Council Bye Laws on 5 February 1891 as a 'Smoking lounge', East Sussex Record Office, Ref: DB/D7/2707.
49. Hall, M., *Waddesdon Manor: The Heritage of a Rothschild House* (New York, 2002); Mellor *London Cemeteries*, *op. cit.* 176-8.
50. Blair, G., *Biographic and Descriptive Sketches of Glasgow Necropolis* (Glasgow, 1857), which quotes from an earlier work entitled *A Companion to the Necropolis, or Notices of the History Buildings, Inscriptions, Plants, &c., of the Fir Park Cemetery of the Merchant's House of Glasgow, illustrated with Landscape and Architectural Drawings* (Glasgow, 1836), not seen. These earlier sources were drawn upon by Levy, A., *The Origins of Glasgow Jewry 1812-1895* (Glasgow, 1949), *Ibid* 'The Origins of Scottish Jewry', *TJHSE*, 19 (1960), 129-162; *Buildings of Scotland: Glasgow* (1990), 139.
51. Shown intact on the frontispiece of Levy, A., *Origins of Glasgow Jewry*, *op. cit.* The source of this illustration has not been traced. The enclosure was in use 1832-51.
52. 'Glasgow Necropolis', Statutory List Description, Historic Scotland 15 December 1970. Courtesy RCAHMS Edinburgh.
53. See above. Blair, *Sketches of Glasgow Necropolis*, *op.cit.* 342, 345. Acknowledgements to Ronnie Scott of Glasgow, who is writing his Ph.D. thesis on the Glasgow Necropolis, for drawing attention to Blair's comments.
54. From a search of the burials registers for the entire cemetery (from 1846) kept by Bereavement Services, Southampton City Council. Jewish entries were not logged separately.
55. The Board of Deputies of British Jews, the main representative body of Anglo-Jewry founded in 1760, today acts as trustee for ten such grounds, mainly located in the West Country, East Anglia and Kent, plus one in South Wales (Swansea 1768) and one in the East End of London.
56. See www.jewish-heritage-uk.org
57. The wider issues are currently being explored by government: '*Cemeteries' Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, eighth report*, 2 vols. (London, House of Commons 2001); *Paradise Preserved* (English Heritage and English Nature 2002); *Burial Law and Policy in the 21st Century* (London, Home Office, January 2004).

58. Especially by the small but vocal strictly-Orthodox pressure group, the Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe.
59. Levy, R. E., 'The History of the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation (1829-1914)', in Josephs, Z., (ed), *Birmingham Jewry*, (Birmingham, 1984) 2, 11-23.
60. *JC*, 22 July 1938.
61. 'Manchester Great Synagogue: History - Miles Platting Cemetery', typescript memorandum dated 18 October 1955, 'Cemeteries' file, Manchester Beth Din, courtesy of Rabbi Yehuda Brodie. Eventually, in 1956, Collyhurst was laid out as a 'Garden of Rest' by Manchester City Council. It was again landscaped with input from the *Beth Din* in 1988. The successor 'Great & New Synagogue' at Stenecourt, Salford 7, which received proceeds from the sale of the old synagogues in Cheetham, has consistently shown reluctance to take responsibility not only Collyhurst, but also for Prestwich Village cemetery (1841) which, at time of writing, (2004), was completely overgrown.
62. In 1972 the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation, with the sanction of its *Haham* [Sephardi Chief Rabbi] exhumed the older section (1733-1874) of the historic Nuevo cemetery in Mile End and sold the land to Queen Mary College, on whose campus it is now situated. The remains were reburied in a fairly inaccessible site in Brentwood, Essex, in a manner reminiscent of a wartime mass grave. No tombstones were preserved or even adequately recorded. Rumours resurfaced in 1999 that the remains of Sir Moses and Lady Judith Montefiore were to be removed to Israel from the Ramsgate Mausoleum, another site for which the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation is responsible. See Horowitz, E., 'Leave the Montefiores in Ramsgate!', *Jewish Tribune*, 28 July 1978, reprinted 29 July 1999.
63. At least, this site has recently been railed off and landscaped by 'Groundwork'.
64. Illustrated at www.jewish-heritage-uk.org on 'Sites at Risk' page; Levy, A., *History of the Sunderland Jewish Community* (London, 1956).
65. Not an uncommon scenario today in Continental Europe where outside researchers are discovering long-forgotten burial grounds of destroyed Jewish communities. See Gruber, R. E., *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (California, 2002), esp. Part Two 'Jewish Archaeology'.
66. By Jewish Heritage UK. See www.jewish-heritage-uk.org. In 2004 a Charitable Trust was set up by Friends of Rainsough Cemetery in Manchester, a precedent which could be followed by other local communities.
67. An idea pioneered by Alfred Dunitz JP at the Jewish Memorial Council.
68. Much secondary documentation on Jewish cemeteries remains unpublished or has been privately printed and distributed by local historians and genealogists. Such material is now becoming increasingly available on the Internet especially via the website of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain (www.jewishgen.org). However, the accuracy of transcriptions, particularly in databases, should always be checked and such material should be used with appropriate caution.