

London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 20

Records of the Anglo- Jewish Community at London Metropolitan Archives



Introduction

Since the mid 17th century the majority of Jews in Britain have lived in London. Anglo-Jewish organisations of local, national and international importance are based in the capital and many of them have deposited their records at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA).

In this leaflet all collections are mentioned in bold type with the LMA reference. As many collections are available only with the permission of the depositor, this has also been stated in bold type where applicable and researchers should obtain the necessary permission(s) by contacting the relevant organisations before they hope to start their study. LMA staff will be pleased to advise on this, but cannot apply to depositors on behalf of researchers.

Anglo-Jewish Community before 1656

LMA does not have any records relating to the medieval Anglo-Jewish community which was expelled from the country in 1290. There are a small number of references to Jews who lived illegally in London before the re-admission in 1656. These references are in the archives of the **Middlesex Sessions** which are held by LMA.

Representative Organisations

The Board of Deputies of British Jews (ACC/3121. **Records are only available with the permission of the Board of Deputies.**), is the representative body of British Jewry. It was founded in 1760 as the London Committee of Deputies of British Jews. Representatives from the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities in London originally met to present a loyal address to George III on his accession to the throne, but soon decided to continue joint meetings.

The organisation blossomed in the nineteenth century and is now one of international standing. The records deposited cover the period 1806-2004 and cover practically every facet of Jewish life and activity - immigration, anti-Semitism, education, public relations, Israel, legal matters, Shechita, the Holocaust and Yad Vashem, and community research and trade. In particular the records contain extensive information on the Board's deep interest and concern for the well-being of co-religionists overseas. There are files on conditions for Jews in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Germany and Austria, South America, South Africa and the Commonwealth. Some documents are written in French, German, Hebrew and other languages as well as English reflecting the highly cosmopolitan nature of the collection and the organisation.

Religion

Archives across the religious spectrum have been deposited at LMA. The largest collections are from the **United Synagogue (ACC/2712)** and the **Office of the Chief Rabbi (ACC/2805)**. The papers of Joseph Hermann Hertz (1913-1946), Israel Brodie (1946-1965), Immanuel Jakobovits (1967-1991) and Jonathan Sacks (1991-2013) form the bulk of ACC/2805. A smaller amount of material survives for Nathan Marcus Adler (1845-1890) and his son Herman Adler (1891-1911). The files of all three twentieth century Chief Rabbis contain papers on communal affairs, education, immigration, relations with other Jewish religious organisations, religious practices and belief, and correspondence with communal organisations as well as on developments abroad. Lord Jakobovits had a very friendly relationship with Margaret Thatcher who was Prime Minister for much of his term of office. His own personal high profile extends beyond the Anglo-Jewish community. The same is true of Professor Jonathan Sacks, who is a prolific author and a gifted speaker and broadcaster. His many books, articles, and papers have attracted wide attention. **These records are only available with the permission of the Office of the Chief Rabbi.** Researchers who are interested in the archives of the Chief Rabbi need his personal permission as well.

The United Synagogue (ACC/2712, access by written permission only) is the largest Anglo-Jewish archive at LMA. The United Synagogue was formed by Act of Parliament in 1870 and today its activities lie at the heart of the community. Records from the oldest Ashkenazi synagogues in London - the Great, the Hambro, the New, the Bayswater and the Central Synagogues - form part of this collection, as well as records of most other member synagogues. The United Synagogue became involved in social, philanthropic and educational activities within the community and also created a Burial Board. Minutes, accounts, working papers, photographs, deeds and correspondence cover a vast range of religious and social activities. The United Synagogue works closely with other communal organisations and has some financial responsibilities for the Chief Rabbinate and the **London Beth Din (ACC/3400, access by written permission only)**. The London Beth Din is now generally recognised as one of the Diaspora's most important and distinguished Batei Din. It gives advice on halachic matters and is the ecclesiastical authority on Kashrut and Shechita for the majority of Anglo-Jewry; it supervises religious conversions, divorces, adoptions and deals with determination on Jewish status. The Dayanim also arbitrate in cases of civil disputes. The records cover most aspects of work, particularly during the second half of the twentieth century, but do not include personal papers. Researchers who are interested in the orthodox section of the community should also be aware of the archives of **the Federation of Synagogues (ACC/2893)**, also **available only with the written permission of the depositor** and the independent **Western Synagogue (ACC/2911, access by written permission only)**. The Federation of Synagogues was created in 1887 by Samuel Montagu to bring together synagogues and chevras established by the newly settled Jews in the

East End of London. These Jews, although Ashkenazim, found the practices of the newly formed United Synagogue incompatible with the customs and patterns of religious practice they brought with them from Eastern Europe and preferred to set up their own places of worship.

The archives of **the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation, Bevis Marks (LMA/4521, access by written permission only)**, which is the oldest Sephardi Synagogue in London, includes records relating to the Synagogue's governance and administration, as well as service registers, deeds, legal papers, and a small amount of material relating to branch synagogues at Lauderdale Road and Mildmay Park. There are also records relating to the Synagogue's social, philanthropic and educational activities, which included administering the Beth Holim Hospital, the Barrow and Cock Court almshouses, a Board of Guardians, various schools and orphan, dower and burial societies. The collection also includes personal papers and records of Sephardic congregations in Bordeaux, Barbados, Amsterdam, Venice and Germany. Many of the records of births, marriages and burials for the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Synagogue have been transcribed and published (LMA Library Ref 60.58 SPA).

No less interesting are collections from Reform and Liberal congregations. The archives of the **Liberal Jewish Synagogue (ACC/3529)** include correspondence, sermons and working papers of the three founders of the Liberal Jewish movement - Claude Montefiore, Lily Montagu and Israel Mattuck. Rabbi Mattuck was instrumental with the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in establishing one of the earliest inter-faith organisations in the country, the **London Society of Jews and Christians (ACC/3686)**. Reform congregations are represented by collections from the **West London Synagogue (ACC/2886, access by written permission from the Synagogue)**, which is the oldest Reform congregation in Britain, and the independent **Westminster Synagogue (LMA/4071)**. The Westminster Synagogue was founded in 1957 by Rabbi Harold Reinhart, formerly Senior Minister of the West London. Rabbi Albert Friedlander succeeded Rabbi Reinhart and combined his ministry for some years with his post as Director of Rabbinical Studies at the Leo Baeck College. The Westminster Synagogue provides a home now for the Czech Memorial Scrolls Centre. LMA also holds some of the records of the **Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues (LMA/4429)**.

Researchers who are interested in the architecture of synagogue buildings should consult the archives of the former **Greater London Council** held at LMA. Architectural plans and photographs exist here which are generally not present in the records of the organisations themselves. LMA's Print Collection includes prints of some of the older synagogues such as the Great Synagogue and the West London, and the Sephardi Bevis Marks.

Education

Education has always been a core activity of the Anglo-Jewish community. The **Jewish Memorial Council (ACC/2999, access by written permission only)** was established in 1919 as a permanent memorial to Jews who had died in the Great War. Records include volumes compiled in memory of dead Jewish servicemen. The Council inspects and organises Hebrew and religious classes, organises and endows scholarships, and is very active in supporting and encouraging those small Jewish communities (including universities) which are unable to fund their own ministers. The Reverend Malcolm Weisman was appointed as Visiting Minister to Small Communities in 1962 and also worked as the Senior Jewish Chaplain to the H.M. Forces. The records date mainly from the second half of the twentieth century and include much information on the survival of Judaism in small isolated communities.

Jews' Free School (LMA/4046 - now called J.F.S. Comprehensive) opened as a Talmud Torah at the Great Synagogue in 1732. Originally a charity school for 15 poor orphan boys it grew to become the largest Jewish school in Britain. At the end of the nineteenth century the school roll peaked at 4,250; between 1880 and 1890 one-third of all Anglo-Jewish children were educated there. Of particular interest are the school's admission and discharge registers (1869 - 1939) for pupils. LMA also holds archives of the former **Westminster Jews' Free School (LMA/4047 and LCC/EO)**. The records of the **School Board for London (SBL)** and the **London County Council (LCC/EO)** have material on the education and welfare of Jewish children. These include not only specific references to Jewish children alongside non-Jews in schools, but also reports, photographs and other school records for the Jews' Free and Westminster Jews' Schools. We also hold records of **Finnart House School (LMA/4242)** which was opened in 1901 as Hayes Certified School for Jewish Boys. The records comprise annual reports for the years 1902 to 1938 (with gaps) which are open to public consultation and minute books from 1939 to 1973 which are not available for consultation because they contain confidential personal information.

London School of Jewish Studies (LMA/4180, formerly Jews' College) was established in 1855 to train rabbis and ministers for service in orthodox Jewish congregations in Britain and the Empire. By the early twentieth century this had largely succeeded. The School is now a recognised department of the University of London and welcomes female as well as male students. It has very close links with the Chief Rabbinate.

Welfare

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Anglo-Jewish community established a comprehensive array of communal organisations to assist poor and underprivileged Jews. **Soup Kitchen for the Jewish Poor (ACC/2942)** was founded in 1854 in Spitalfields to supply basic food twice weekly to poor Jews, especially immigrants,

and later on to those who were sick or elderly. **Jewish Bread Meat and Coal Society (ACC/2944, access by written permission of the Jewish Museum London)** distributed bread, meat and coal to the poor during the winter from 1779 onwards. The **Victoria Club (ACC/2996)** started life in 1901 as a youth club to help Jewish delinquents in Whitechapel. It later moved to Stamford Hill and then to Hackney. In 1976 it was renamed the Victoria Community Centre and closed in 1991. It incorporated the Victoria (Hackney) Kosher Meals on Wheels Service which was begun in 1956. We also hold the records of the **League of Jewish Women (LMA/4475, access by written permission)** which was founded in 1943 to provide help to both Jewish and wider communities and the records of the **Grand Order of Israel and The Shield Of David Friendly Society (LMA/4447)** both of which were founded in 1896 and merged in 1935.

The **Boards of Guardians** have records of the care of the Jewish destitute, particularly the **Whitechapel Board of Guardians (STBG/WH)**. The **London County Council's** and **Middlesex County Council's** Children's Departments also have files on the welfare and spiritual ministrations of Jewish children in residential homes and institutions. Some Jews received medical treatment in London County Council hospitals and in the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel. Jews suffering from mental illness were usually treated in **Friern Hospital (H12/CH)** whose archives are held by LMA. Patients' records are closed to public access until they are over 100 years old.

Nightingale, formerly known as Nightingale House and The Home for Aged Jews (LMA/4456) had its origins in three charities, the Hand in Hand Asylum for Decayed Tradesmen (founded 1840), the Widows' Home Asylum (founded 1843) and the Jewish Workhouse also known as the Jewish Home (founded 1871). They were established in the old Jewish quarter in London's East End to cater for the needs of the Jewish poor. In 1894, these charities amalgamated as The Home for Aged Jews 'to provide a Home for, maintain and clothe aged, respectable and indigent persons of the Jewish Religion, who shall have attained the age of 60 years, and shall have been resident in England for at least seven years.'. In 1896 the combined Homes were based at 23 and 25 Well Street, Hackney and 37 and 39 Stepney Green. Two Medical Officers, a Master and two Matrons cared for 105 residents. In 1907 The Home for Aged Jews moved to 'Ferndale', Nightingale Lane, Wandsworth Common. In the early 20th century, the work of the Home moved away from direct rescue work and the alleviation of poverty carried out by the former Charities, to a greater emphasis on care and the improvement of the quality of life for its residents. In 1960s The Home for Aged Jews became Nightingale House (The Home for Aged Jews). From 1997 the Home was renamed as Nightingale. A large proportion of the original archives of the Home were lost in 1970 due to flooding of a basement at Nightingale. The majority of the archive relates to the later half of the 20th century, although there is a small survival of records from the early period of the Home and its former Charities (from 1879) before its move to Wandsworth in 1907. These records are open to public

inspection, although records containing personal information may be subject to closure periods

The Jews' Temporary Shelter (LMA/4184, access by written permission only) was opened in 1885 to help migrants and transmigrants. At the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth many thousands of Jews, mainly from eastern Europe, emigrated to England as conditions at home made it difficult for them to practise their religion freely. Some immigrants became transmigrants and travelled on to the United States, South America and Africa. Many of the migrants were very poor and had little knowledge of English. The Shelter helped thousands of people every year: nearly 5,000 in 1903-1904 for example and over 8,000 in 1938-1939. Until 1939 the majority of residents at the Shelter generally came from eastern Europe. Refugees came from Belgium during the First World War. German and Austrian Jews came in the 1930s. Between 1940 and 1943 the Shelter provided temporary housing for people who had lost their homes in the bombing of the east end of London. The archives consist mainly of minutes, accounts, annual reports, correspondence and registers of inmates of the Shelter. There is also an (incomplete) series of Annual Reports which contains information about the annual activities of the Shelter. Those reports which pre-date the Second World War contain tables of statistics with details of the nationalities and countries of origin of inmates, their ages, status and lists of occupations. This is statistical information only and does not relate to named individuals. The archives of the Board of Deputies also have records on immigration and aliens.

There are records in the **MCC's Welfare Department** concerning the care of Jewish refugees in the 1930s and 1940s. **World Jewish Relief (ACC/2793 previously Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief)** was founded in 1933 to help the Jews who fled from Nazi persecution. LMA has case files of refugees and a series of administrative files (which are available on microfilm elsewhere). The administrative files are available to readers. All enquiries concerning **the case files should be made in the first instance to World Jewish Relief.**

British Jews have a long tradition of giving aid to co-religionists living abroad. The **National Council for Jews in the former Soviet Union (ACC/3087, previously National Council for Soviet Jewry. These records are only available with the permission of the Board of Deputies).** The Board of Deputies established the National Council for Soviet Jewry in 1976 to co-ordinate all campaigning in the United Kingdom for Soviet Jews to have freedom of worship and the right to emigrate to Israel. There is extensive material on very highly organised campaigns and demonstrations in Britain as well as information on Jewish life in the former Soviet Union. The lives of well known refuseniks such as Anatoly Scharansky (later Natan Sharansky), Ida Nudel and others are covered in detail. The records (1976-1993) consist of correspondence, reports, photographs, leaflets, publications, films and press cuttings. There is further (especially pre 1976) material on Soviet Jewry within the records of the Board of Deputies. The United Synagogue also had a Soviet Jewry

Office from the late 1980s onwards (LMA reference ACC/2712/16) which encouraged links between British and Soviet synagogues.

Zionism

British WIZO (LMA/4175), now WIZO UK, is the British Branch (British WIZO) of the World Women's International Zionist Organisation (World WIZO). The Federation was founded in 1918 by Rebecca Sieff who had spent her early life in Manchester and had been greatly influenced by Chaim Weizmann. British WIZO was founded as a non-party organisation which sought to attract members from all sections of the Jewish community. WIZO aimed to train Jewish women in Palestine and the Diaspora for work in a Jewish homeland and provide care for mothers and children in Palestine. During the 1920s British WIZO raised the funds to found an agricultural school, a domestic science training hostel, child welfare centres and other facilities in Palestine. Members were also encouraged to promote and publicise the Zionist cause. Following the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 British WIZO became involved in providing a wider variety of help. At the end of the twentieth century British WIZO had some 200 affiliated societies with around 14,000 members and continues to be one of the country's most significant Jewish (and Zionist) organisations. Historians have noted that WIZO's growth has encouraged Jewish women to participate in communal political life on a national and international stage. The archives consist mainly of minutes of the organisation with a few volumes of minutes from affiliated groups - notably the West London Women's Zionist Societies which was one of the first societies to be started after the First World War. Some miscellaneous papers are also in the collection. These contain material on Rebecca Sieff and the early history of the organisation.

LMA also holds the records of **The Maccabi Union of Great Britain (LMA/4286, access by written permission)**.

Zionism was not embraced by all British Jews in the decades before the Second World War, Claude Montefiore being one notable opponent. Researchers may be interested in the archives of the Board of Deputies if they wish to examine other material on the subject.

Family History

Jewish genealogists may find many classes of archives held at LMA useful for study - such as electoral registers, school records, and coroners' casepapers. Until 1858 all matters concerning probate and the dissolution of marriages for all Christian citizens of England and Wales were dealt with in the Church Courts of the established Church of England. The records of Church Courts, and in particular the **Consistory Court of the Bishop of London (DL/C)** do, however, contain material on some Jews both in

connection with probate and marital litigation (the religious *get* was a separate communal matter dealt with by the Batei Din).

There are limited sources for family history within the Anglo-Jewish archives themselves. The admission and discharge registers of the Jews' Free School and the Westminster Jews' Free School are one major source; the inmates registers of the Jews' Temporary Shelter are another. Enquirers should note that many of the Shelter's records are unavailable for general access to protect the privacy of named individuals. There are references to named individuals in other collections, but these are incidental to the main administrative purpose of the records.

For further information see our leaflet no.24 on Jewish Genealogy. Researchers who are interested in tracing Ashkenazi ancestors in this country, and who have obtained all the information they can from such sources as General Register Office records of births, marriages and deaths and census returns can apply for further advice at the Office of the Chief Rabbi.

All enquiries should be made in writing.

Records of the Anglo-Jewish Community: access by written permission only

Written permission of the depositor is required before the archives from many of the Anglo-Jewish organisations held by LMA can be consulted. Contact details for most of these collections are given below:

- **ACC/2712 - United Synagogue and Predecessors**

Chief Executive,
United Synagogue,
305 Ballards Lane,
North Finchley,
London N12 8GB

- **ACC/2793 – Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief**

Executive Director, World Jewish Relief,
54 Crewys Road,
London NW2 2AD

- **ACC/2805 - Office of the Chief Rabbi**

Chief Executive, Office of the Chief Rabbi,
305 Ballards Lane
North Finchley,
London N12 8GB

- **ACC/2886 - West London Synagogue**

Executive Director, West London Synagogue, 35 Seymour Place, London W1H 6AT

- **ACC/2893 - The Federation of Synagogues**

Mr G Coleman, Head of Administration, Federation of Synagogues, 65 Watford Way, Hendon, London NW4

Tel: 020 8202 2263

- **ACC/2911 - Western Synagogue**

President Western Synagogue,
Western Marble Arch Synagogue,
32 Cumberland Place,
London W1H 7DJ

- **ACC/2942 - Soup Kitchen for the Jewish Poor**

The Curator,
Jewish Museum London,
Raymond Burton House,
129-131 Albert Street,
London NW1 1NB

curator@jewishmuseum.org.uk

- **ACC/2943 - New Road Synagogue**

The Curator,
Jewish Museum London,
Raymond Burton House,
129-131 Albert Street,
London NW1 1NB

curator@jewishmuseum.org.uk

- **ACC/2944 - The Jewish Bread Meat and Coal Society**

The Curator,
Jewish Museum London,
Raymond Burton House,
129-131 Albert Street,
London NW1 1NB

curator@jewishmuseum.org.uk

- **ACC/2980 - The Kashrus Commission**

Chief Executive,
United Synagogue,
305 Ballards Lane,
North Finchley,
London N12 8GB

- **ACC/2999 - Jewish Memorial Council (except the personal archive of Malcolm Weisman)**

Trustees,
Jewish Memorial Council,
32 Moreland Court, Finchley Road
London NW2 2PL

- **ACC/2999/F – Reverend Malcolm Weisman**

101 Brondesbury Park, London, NW2 5JL

- **ACC/3087 - National Council for Jews in the Former Soviet Union**

Executive Director,
Board of Deputies of British Jews,
1 Torriano Mews,
London NW5 2RZ

(Tel: 020 7543 5400)

- **ACC/3121 - Board of Deputies of British Jews**

Executive Director,
Board of Deputies of British Jews,
1 Torriano Mews,
London NW5 2RZ

(Tel: 020 7543 5400)

- **ACC/3400 - The London Beth Din**

Chief Executive,
United Synagogue,
305 Ballards Lane,
North Finchley,
London N12 8GB

Tel 020 8343 8989

- **LMA/4184 - Jews' Temporary Shelter**

Mr B. Koschland,
23 Vincent Court,
Bell Lane,
London NW4 2AN

Further information is available on [their website](#).

- **LMA/4521 - Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Synagogue, Bevis Marks**

The Honorary Archivist and Chief Executive of Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation
2 Ashworth Road,
London W9 1JY

The following do not require permission

However there are restrictions on access to records which contain confidential personal information:

- **ACC/2996 – Victoria Club**
- **ACC/3090 – Jewish Health Organisation of Great Britain**
- **ACC/3529 - Liberal Jewish Synagogue**

Papers of Claude Montefiore, Israel Mattuck, Lily Montagu and Leslie Edgar

- **ACC/3686 - London Society of Jews and Christians**
- **LMA/4046 - Jews' Free School**
- **LMA/4047 - Westminster Jews' Free School**
- **LMA/4180 - London School of Jewish Studies**
- **LMA/4071 - Westminster Synagogue**
- **LMA/4175 - Women's International Zionist Organisation**
- **LMA/4242 - Finnart House School**
- **LMA/4429 - Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues**
- **LMA/4447 - Grand Order of Israel and the Shield of David Friendly Society**
- **LMA/4456 – Nightingale, formerly known as Nightingale House and The Home for Aged Jews**
- **ACC/3090 – Jewish Health Organisation of Great Britain**

About this leaflet

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