

Jewish genealogy: a summary of sources at London Metropolitan Archives

London Metropolitan Archives: Information Leaflet Number 24



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Introduction

This leaflet explains some of the major sources, both Jewish and non-Jewish which would be helpful in tracing a Jewish ancestor. It is intended to complement our Information Leaflet No. 20, "Records of the Anglo-Jewish Community at London Metropolitan Archives" which covers the records of the major Jewish organisations.

Arriving

The Records of the Jews' Temporary Shelter

The Jews' Temporary Shelter opened in 1885. It was a shelter for newly arrived immigrants who were permitted to stay for a maximum of 14 days. The only contribution to costs was based on what they could afford. Immigrants intending to continue their journeys from England were given aid in purchasing travel tickets and changing currency and those intending on remaining were given help in locating any family members or friends who had already settled in England.

The Shelter kept registers of inmates and the series is fairly complete. The most notable gaps are before May 1896 when there are no records and between June 1905 and November 1907, November 1911 and July 1913, September 1915 – November 1919, and March 1922 – October 1934. The registers include a wealth of details such as the name of the immigrant, age, birth place, marital status, number of children, condition of entry, whereabouts of any family, the last place the immigrant had been, number of days in the shelter, date leaving and destination. It is necessary to obtain the permission of the Shelter in order to view the original records but there is an online database at - <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue?sn=6012> of over 43,000 entries for the period 1895 – 1914 available.

World Jewish Relief

World Jewish Relief (formerly, amongst other names, known as the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief) has deposited its records here at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA). The organisation was founded in 1933 with the primary aim of aiding Jews who were fleeing from persecution in Germany. Within this collection are the records of the Kindertransport; these are records of children who were evacuated from Germany and Austria between 1938 and 1939. Access to these records is restricted and in the first place any interested enquirer should

contact World Jewish relief or search the online database at www.worldjewishrelief.org/about-us/your-family-history.

National Records

A number of records held by the National Archives may prove useful in tracing the arrival of an immigrant ancestor. These include certificates of arrival which survive for 1836 – 1852 and lists submitted to the Home Office by the Master of Ships listing all alien passengers which cover the period 1836 – 1969. There is also a series of inward passenger lists which survive for 1878 – 1960; these list all the passengers on vessels which originated from outside Europe and the Mediterranean which means they are usually of limited help to the Jewish genealogist, but occasionally if a vessel had begun its journey outside these areas the master would include names of passengers picked up later in the voyage.

Living and Working

Synagogue Records

There are some records from individual synagogues within the collections of Jewish Organisations held here at LMA, but most do not include records of births, marriages and deaths. These records can be difficult to obtain partly because many communities have retained their own records but also many synagogues have moved sites and records have either been lost or destroyed in the process. The majority of the synagogue records which we hold were deposited by the United Synagogue and access is strictly by the permission of the depositor only. Transcripts of some records have been published and these include the marriage records 1791 – 1850 for the oldest Ashkenazi synagogue in London - the Great Synagogue, originally situated in Duke's Place (LMA Library ref 60.58 GRE).

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, have been deposited in LMA. Service registers in the collection cover births 1767 – 1882 (indexed), circumcisions 1715 – 1785, 1803 – 1825 and 1855 – 1869, marriage contracts 1690 – 1795 and burials in the Velho and Novo cemeteries in Mile End Road 1657 – 1935 (indexed). Many of the records of births, marriages and burials have been transcribed and published as the *Bevis Marks Records* series (LMA Library ref 60.58 SPA). The collection

also holds records relating to almshouses, schools, burial and orphan societies and hospitals connected to the Synagogue. One point to note is that original synagogue records are usually always in the Hebrew language.

Civil Registration

Civil registration of births, marriages and deaths was introduced in England and Wales in 1837. The advantage of these records is that there is a series of searchable name indexes. It is advisable to obtain such certificates where possible.

Microfiche copies of the General Register Office indexes to births, marriages and deaths are available at the City of Westminster Archives Centre and the British Library as well as at five libraries in other parts of the country. It is also possible to access this information via websites such as Ancestry and FreeBMD which are available free of charge at both LMA and Guildhall Library. Once you have obtained a reference you would then need to contact either the General Register Office or alternatively the registry office where the event was registered.

Postal applications for copies of certificates should be sent to the Postal Application Section, Office of National Statistics, General Register Office, PO Box 2, Southport, Merseyside PR8 2JD. Certificates can be ordered online from the General Register Office at www.gro.gov.uk/gro at or by telephone on 0845 603 7788.

LMA cannot issue certificates or provide any further details than those included on the indexes.

Census

There are surviving national census returns for every ten years since 1841. These are held at The National Archives at Kew, although increasingly access is available online. The records of the 1881 census can be searched on the Family Search website at www.familysearch.org and those of the 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911 can be accessed for a small fee on the National Archives website: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Census records from 1841 to 1911 can be searched at LMA and Guildhall Library via Ancestry which is available free of charge.

Trade Directories

These are a vital source of information for anyone who may have an ancestor who ran a business. These directories can at the very least be helpful in establishing the trading period. These directories also often contain a residential section which can also be helpful. LMA has microfilms of London Post Office directories as well as directories for Middlesex and other home counties and some local directories for places in the vicinity of London.

Electoral Registers

Jewish people first received the franchise in England in 1834 so this is a source worth checking. The inclusion of an individual depends on whether they were entitled to vote, for example, children do not appear on electoral registers and nor would non British subjects. LMA holds registers of electors for London and Middlesex. The electoral registers are usually arranged by electoral division, ward and address and very few are name indexed so it is advisable to have a particular address in mind before tackling this source.

Business and Insurance Records

If an ancestor did own a business, as mentioned above, Trade Directories would yield some information. The records of businesses are generally very sparse and where they do survive the material is usually of an administrative nature. Records of employees are especially rare. There is a good online database which is useful when searching for business records by using the former National Register of Archives now available on The National Archives Discovery search website – <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> (select 'advanced search' and click on 'record creators' tab). There is also a comprehensive guide to LMA's [catalogued business holdings](#).

Records of insurance policies issued to individuals of Jewish origin are held at LMA which give details of properties and businesses they owned from 17th to 19th centuries. There is an important dataset by the late George Rigal published in 2013, ***Jewish Surnames in London-based Insurance Policies; an index to policyholders who were probably Jewish in the registers of London-based insurance companies from the early-18th to the mid-19th centuries***. The data covers over 26,000 Jewish policy holders and draws on the policy registers of the Sun Insurance Office, Hand in Hand, Law Life, Legal and

General, London Assurance, Metropolitan Life, and Royal Exchange. The data is available to search online on The Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain's website <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/uk/> and is also published in two volumes, arranged by surnames A-L and M-Z respectively, and held in LMA's Library.

Photographs and Prints

LMA holds prints and photographs of many areas of London. These images include houses, streets, schools, synagogues, churches, hospitals and they can be an excellent source for adding colour and interest to a family history. The images can be searched by subject or street name.

Registration and Naturalization

These records are held by the National Archives and are a useful source of information for immigrants who wished to become British Citizens. One method was denization which gave limited rights but was a cheaper option at a time when naturalization could only be obtained by an act of parliament. The Huguenot Society has published some indexes to denizations for 1509 – 1800 (Huguenot Society Vols XVIII & XXVII LMA Library ref. 60.9 HSL). Indexes to Naturalizations by act of parliament up to 1900 are available at the National Archives. In 1844 the procedure was simplified and the Home Office was allowed to grant certificates of naturalization, this also made the processes cheaper to undertake and there was a significant increase in people applying.

Health and Welfare

Jewish patients were admitted to all the medical institutions in London. They can often be found in the Infirmaries managed by the Board of Guardians in areas which sustained a high Jewish population. The Jewish community actively encouraged strong links with certain hospitals, for example, there was an agreement with the London Hospital to provide Jewish patients with Kosher food and the Evelina Hospital for children set aside one ward solely for Jewish children. Similar agreements were made with the Brompton Hospital for Consumption and Diseases of the Chest, the Charing Cross Hospital and the German Hospital. The first predominately Jewish Hospital to be established was opened near the London Hospital in 1919 – the few

surviving records of the London Jewish Hospital are held by the Royal London Hospital Archives which also holds the records of the London Hospital and the Poplar and Stepney Sick Asylum which became St Andrew's Hospital. LMA hold the records of many other London hospitals including Mile End Infirmary and the Evelina Hospital.

Jewish patients suffering from mental illness may be found amongst the records of Colney Hatch (later known as Friern Hospital). The United Synagogue was very involved with the hospital in ensuring that patients were able to practise their religion. LMA hold a substantial series of patients' records.

There was also a separate Jewish Board of Guardians, whose records are held by Southampton University but this was not able to assist all those who were in need and therefore it is also worth searching records of the Board of Guardians in the locality where an individual lived for records such as admissions to the workhouse, infirmary or school. LMA holds the records of the Boards of Guardians for London.

Crime

LMA holds the records of the City of London, County of London, and Middlesex Sessions and many of the London magistrates' courts. Some of the Middlesex Sessions papers have been listed in detail and can be searched by name on our computerised catalogues on the LMA website www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma There are no central indexes to the records of the magistrates' courts making searching these records very difficult and time consuming.

Children

General Schools

One of the largest collections of school records held here is from the Jews' Free School which was founded in 1732. It is estimated that over a third of all British Jewish children may have attended this school and by the end of the 19th century the school had taught over 4,000 pupils. LMA holds pupil registers for 1869 – 1939; the early registers in this period were included on a searchable database on a 'Moving Here' project website (see below).

There were also other schools in London which had a majority of Jewish pupils such as the Spanish and Portuguese Infants School in Spitalfields,

the Westminster Jews' Free School, Bayswater Jewish School and the Stepney Jewish School. However, it is important to remember that many Jewish pupils would have attended the local elementary schools and we often have records of these. We also have a series of School Board for London and London County Council maps which can be helpful in identifying particular schools in an area. Copies of these are kept in the plan chests in the Information Area at LMA.

School records are subject to a period of restricted access to protect the confidentiality of living individuals.

Industrial or Reformatory Schools

Children who fell foul of the law or were generally too wayward to remain within the family unit may have been sent to a training school. There was a specific Industrial School for Jewish Children known as the Hayes Certified School for Jewish Boys and later Finnart House; sadly LMA does not hold any pupil records although there is a series of general registers of children sent to Industrial Schools and Reformatories for the period 1874 – 1965 amongst the records of the London County Council which can be a useful substitute and you will find children of the Jewish faith in the many other industrial and reformatory schools which served the Metropolitan area.

The Orphaned and Deserted

Orphaned and deserted children may have been cared for within the larger family unit or may have been assisted by either the local authority or a charitable body. The Jewish Orphanage at Norwood in South London was the largest such institution for Jewish children. The orphanage was closed in the 1960s and the funds became a charitable trust which still operates under the name of Norwood. Any enquiries concerning records of individual children should be made to the organisation's archivist. Of course not all Jewish children in need would have been sent to the Jewish Orphanage. A great number would have been taken into the care of the local Board of Guardians and local authorities such as the London County Council and again LMA holds an extensive collection of records from these organisations.

The Deceased

Coroners' records

Some coroners' records are held by LMA. The survival varies from district to district and in some cases is as low as only 10% of the number of files originally generated. A search can be made if the place and approximate date of death are known. A death certificate states whether there was an inquest. For more details about these records see our Information Leaflet No.41. An alternative source of information may be local newspapers or a notice of death in a publication such as the Jewish Chronicle.

Wills

Wills are also an excellent resource for the genealogist. Prior to 1858 the proving of wills was a matter for the church court; and you will find many wills of Jewish persons in these records. Our Information Leaflet No.6, "Wills for London, Middlesex and Surrey before 1858" explains these records in more detail. Some wills from this period are now available online such as those for the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on the National Archives website

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/wills.htm> Most of the original wills held by LMA (though not the wills which survive only as copies entered in the will registers) have been digitised by Ancestry.co.uk. Free access to Ancestry is available at LMA and Guildhall Library.

Alphabetical lists of wills proved in the Consistory Court of London and letters of administration 1514-1858 can be viewed on the LMA website www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma at (click on 'About', 'Volunteers').

After 1858 the proving of wills became a civil matter and was centralised at the principal probate registry. Indexes to these wills for 1858 – 1943 are held at the National Archives. Copies of wills proved in England and Wales from 1858 onwards can be obtained from the Principal Registry Family Division, First Avenue House, 42-49 High Holborn, London WC1V 6NP. Copies can be ordered by post from the Postal Searches and Copies Department, Leeds District Probate Registry, York House, York Place, Leeds LS1 2BA.

Burial records

Burial records can be difficult to find as the location of the cemetery in which interment occurred was not necessarily always in the locality where an individual lived. The United Synagogue Burial Society holds burial authorisations from 1872 and general burial registers from 1872 – 1912. They also hold pre 1872 burial registers from the Great Synagogue, Hambro Synagogue and New Synagogue. The Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation Burial Society hold general registers from 1897 as well as registers from 1657 for the Velho Cemetery – the oldest Jewish Burial Ground in England. In the case of other synagogues it may be necessary in the first instance to contact the synagogue or its umbrella organisation for advice. An excellent resource for locating cemetery records is **Greater London Cemeteries and Crematoria** by Cliff Webb published by the Society of Genealogists. A reference copy is available at LMA.

'Moving Here'

Online source 'Moving Here' project created a website which provided details and digital images of archival sources concerning 200 years of Migration of members of the Caribbean, South Asian, Irish and Jewish communities to the United Kingdom. The project was led by The National Archives and contributions were made by a consortium of 30 archives, libraries and museums who contributed material to the catalogue of 200,000 items. The original website content is no longer live and was acquired for preservation by The National Archives in 2013 and is available on their web archive (<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.movinghere.org.uk/>).

To search and view images of records contributed by LMA, please search the web archive advanced search http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/adv_search/. Limit your research to the website 'movinghere.org.uk'. Note the phrase 'London Metropolitan Archives' will bring all relevant items submitted by LMA. Include the search term 'Jews Free School' to obtain search hits including those for images of the School's pupil registers.

About this leaflet

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