Around the Archives

The Scottish Jewish Archives Centre: 30 Years of Preserving the Records of an Immigrant Community

Harvey L. Kaplan

It is 200 years since the first Jewish community was established in Scotland and almost 30 years since the establishment of the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre (SJAC).1 An organisational member of the Scottish Council on Archives, SJAC has created a collection of national significance which aims to document and illustrate the Jewish experience in Scotland. It is involved in collecting and preserving related records, looking at religious, organisational, social, economic, political, cultural and family life, as well as placing the Jewish story against the background of Scottish history and society. The Centre provides a research facility and an educational resource for the Jewish and also the wider community, in order to heighten awareness of the Jewish heritage in Scotland and to stimulate study of the history of the Jews in this country.

SJAC’s collection continues to grow, week on week, and now constitutes an impressive record of an immigrant community, showing how Jewish people came here to make a new and better life, and how they made a contribution to Scottish society, economy and cultural life. The collection includes:

• Records of Jewish organisations in Scotland such as synagogue registers, minute books, correspondence, annual reports, membership lists, brochures, magazines and newsletters relating to congregations, charity organisations, friendly societies, cultural groups, youth groups, political groups and politicians, and educational institutions (see Plates 1 and 2). These include, for example, complete archives of Garnethill Hebrew Congregation, the Jewish Lads and Girls’ Brigade, Lodge Montefiore, Glasgow Hebrew Burial Society and Glasgow Jewish Representative Council.
• Business records, including documents and photographs relating to over 100 Jewish businesses across Scotland.

• A large collection of photographs, programmes and posters from the award-winning Glasgow Jewish Institute Players/Avrom Greenbaum Players.

• Back issues of newspapers, such as:
  - *Jewish Times* (Yiddish), 3, no. 17 (1903) (see Plate 3).
  - *Glasgow Jewish Evening Times*, nos 3–4 (1914).
  - *Glasgow Jewish Weekly Times*, no. 8 (1914).
  - *Jewish Leader*, from the 1930s.
• Burial records and lists, tombstone photographs and transcriptions from Scotland’s seventeen Jewish burial grounds (in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Greenock and Inverness).
• Personal papers, naturalisation documents, immigrant passports, family trees and family histories, press cuttings and obituaries relating to over 1,000 individuals and families.
• A large collection of personal papers relating to the artist and sculptor Hannah Frank and her husband schoolteacher Lionel Levy, including diaries, scrapbooks, photo albums, correspondence, certificates, degrees, awards and press cuttings, as well as immigration papers concerning her father, Charles Frank.
An oral history collection containing interviews with over 130 people who have played a leading role in communal life or had an interesting story to tell, around 30 personal testimonies and more than 30 autobiographies. For the last few years, SJAC has utilised a Work and Community Placement in Oral History from the Scottish Oral History Centre at the University of Strathclyde.

Over 6,000 photographs of immigrant families, synagogues, religious activity, Jewish shops and businesses, youth groups and refugees. This includes the David Lewis Collection of over 50 high-quality portrait photographs and the photo library of the former *Jewish Echo* newspaper.

Objects, such as ceremonial keys, silver trowels, memorial plaques from former synagogues, tennis trophies from the Glasgow Jewish Athletics Club Tennis Section from the 1920s and 1930s, old charity collection boxes and war medals.

Textiles, such as Torah mantles, sashes from Glasgow Jewish friendly societies, and flags and uniforms from Jewish Scouts and the Jewish Lads’ and Girls’ Brigade (JLGB).

Artworks, such as sculptures by Benno Schotz and Hannah Frank, paintings by Joseph Ancill and Hilda Goldwag, drawings by Bet Low and Josef Herman, and prints by Robin Spark.
• Collections relating to political activity, including community leaders Bailie Michael Simons and Sir Maurice Bloch (who stood twice – unsuccessfully – for election as an MP in the Gorbals, Glasgow), Myer Galpern (Glasgow’s only Jewish Lord Provost in 1958), Bailie Walter Wober, Rufus Ross (Councillor for Eastwood, East Renfrewshire) and Theodore Speaker (Bailie and Provost of Largs). These include campaign leaflets, correspondence, speeches, photographs, press cuttings and interviews.

In 2008, SJAC opened a professionally designed permanent exhibition, with museum-style displays, to serve as a shop window for the expanding work of the Centre. The Heritage Lottery Fund and East Renfrewshire Council, as well as trusts and individuals within the Jewish community funded the exhibition.

The key themes of our collections are immigration, integration and the contribution of Jews and Jewish communities to Scottish society. Our keynote permanent exhibition, opened in 2008, is called *A New Life in Scotland* (see Plate 4). It includes an historical timeline showing the highlights of 200 years of Scottish Jewish history, starting with the first immigrants in the late 1600s, moving through the establishment of ten Jewish communities, and bringing visitors up to the present day. There is a wall-sized map and graphic display showing 24 varied but typical immigrant stories, from the 1700s and the first Jewish immigrants, through the major period of East European Jewish immigration, the refugee and Holocaust period, and up to the 1990s. In addition, there are three themed display cases, with artefacts, photographs and text:

• Jewish communities around Scotland.
• The immigrant Gorbals area.
• Garnethill Hebrew Congregation.

Another wall display shows paintings, prints, photography and sculpture from Scottish Jewish artists such as Benno Schotz, Hannah Frank and Hilda Goldwag.

One of our main aims is to facilitate and encourage research into Scottish Jewish history. In 2004, in partnership with the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies at the University of Aberdeen, we organised the first ever symposium on Scottish Jewish history, ‘Jewish Settlement, Development and Identities in Scotland, 1879–2004’, with a wide range of speakers and 140 attendees from all over the UK.

In addition to publishing books we have assisted students, from school to PhD level, and from universities across the British Isles, who have used our collections to research their dissertations. Our library contains over 350 books

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and around 35 dissertations on Scottish Jewish themes. Currently, we receive an average of around twelve to fifteen research enquiries per month, many of them relating to family history, and enquiries have come from as far afield as the USA, Canada, Australia, South Africa and Israel.

Data and collections held at SJAC have also been utilised by a project run by the International Institute of Jewish Genealogy in Jerusalem and now nearing completion. ‘Two Hundred Years of Scottish Jewry – a Demographic and Genealogical Profile’ seeks to produce new conclusions about the geographic

origins of Scottish Jewry, its dispersal and settlement patterns throughout Scotland, and the changes in its demographic composition over almost two centuries.4

We are currently engaged in a joint research project led by academics from the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. ‘Jewish Lives, Scottish Spaces’ runs from 2015 to 2018 and looks at aspects of Jewish migration to Scotland, 1880–1950, utilising the collections of SJAC.5

In partnership with Garnethill Synagogue Preservation Trust and with a grant award from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Archives Centre has completed the development phase of a project to create a Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre incorporating a Scottish Holocaust-era Study Centre as an adjunct of the SJAC and a range of new public visitor services, all in Garnethill Synagogue. The project Working Group, with the assistance of commissioned consultants, specialist staff and volunteers, has developed the details required and made the stage 2 submission to the HLF.

The Archives Centre is based in Garnethill Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in Scotland which opened in 1879. A Grade A listed building, it was the first to be purpose-built in Scotland and is the only Scottish synagogue on a list of the top ten historic synagogues in the UK produced by Jewish Heritage UK. Our new project will market the building as a Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre and develop a public guiding service, events and exhibition programming and a schools visit service. We will also create new interpretive displays for the building, highlighting examples of prominent congregants, such as:

- Bailie Michael Simons of Glasgow Corporation, international fruit merchant, theatre owner and patron of the arts.
- Rachel Levine, pioneering teacher of the deaf.
- Professor Noah Morris, the first Scottish Jew to be appointed to a Regius Chair at a Scottish university, as Professor of Materia Medica at the University of Glasgow in 1937.

The creation of a Scottish Holocaust Era Study Centre as an adjunct to SJAC will provide greater access to our collection relating to refugees who fled Nazi Europe in the 1930s (for example on the Kindertransport) or came as survivors after the war, finding a safe haven in Scotland. We will examine how these refugees were looked after here by Jewish and non-Jewish families around the country, how hostels were set up, the assistance provided by the Quakers and other churches, how the refugees integrated and the contribution they made to Scotland. The Study Centre will be equipped with computers, digital catalogue and online and library reference materials, specially created hands-on learning kits and an interpretative display, designed to benefit all kinds of users from school pupils to academic researchers and general visitors.

4 http://iijg.org/research/scottish-jewry/.
5 http://jewishmigrationtoscotland.is.ed.ac.uk/index.php/about/.
The Study Centre will play its part in enhancing understanding of the importance of tolerance, inclusion and mutual respect in a multicultural Scotland. It will be used by school teachers and pupils for lessons in history, religious studies and citizenship, as well as university undergraduates, postgraduates and academics for research projects. It will also be of interest to genealogists around the world with refugee family links.

There are no definitive figures for how many Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe came to Scotland. Frances Williams estimates 800 children came on the Kindertransport, while Kenneth Collins writes of around 350 doctors who retrained in Scotland at this time. There may have been another thousand or more refugees who passed through. Some refugees remained in Scotland, others moved on to England, Israel, the USA or elsewhere. In some cases, Kinder were adopted by non-Jewish families and were ‘lost’ to the Jewish community. In recent years, more and more of the surviving former refugees are coming forward with their stories and material. New information is coming to light on a regular basis.

SJAC has a growing collection of around 100 Holocaust-era interviews, autobiographies and testimonies, including the transcripts published online by the ‘Gathering the Voices’ project. This project was established to preserve the memories of Holocaust survivors and refugees in Scotland, and to document their contribution to Scottish society.

We also have copies of Pages of Testimony and notes on around twenty Scottish-born Jews who died in the Holocaust. These include Bessie Beugelmans (née Davis), born in Edinburgh in 1896, who was living in Paris in 1942 and was deported to Auschwitz.

Our papers relating to children who came to Scotland on the Kindertransport include passports, landing cards, correspondence, Home Office and Red Cross papers, photographs and memorabilia.

Our largest collection of refugee papers relates to Dorrith Marianne Oppenheim, who was born in 1931 in Kassel in Germany and came to Scotland on the Kindertransport in 1939, on the eve of the Second World War, aged seven (see Plate 5). She married Andrew Sim in 1952.

Dorrith’s grandparents, aunt and uncle all emigrated to Canada or the USA earlier in 1938–39. Her grandfather had received an Iron Cross for his services in the Red Cross in the First World War, as did Dorrith’s father, Hans Oppenheim, a cavalry officer. This service to the Fatherland did not save the family, however. Dorrith’s parents were unable to follow their daughter to Scotland; they ended up in Theresienstadt and later perished in Auschwitz.

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8 Page of Testimony, Yad Vashem, 1991.
When Dorrith passed away in 2012, her family gifted over 2,000 documents, letters, photographs, papers, books and artefacts to SJAC. Included in the collection are many photographs and documents relating to the history of Dorrith’s ancestors – the Oppenheims, Wertheims, Pappenheims, Meyers and Lindenfelds – some dating back to the eighteenth century in Germany. The Dorrith M. Sim Collection is a significant family archive which constitutes a

The earliest document dates from 1789, when the Duke of Hesse granted to Dorrith’s ancestor, Mendel Meyer of Cassel, the right to reside and trade in the principality.
treasure-trove for researchers interested in the history of these Jewish families in the Kassel area of Germany and elsewhere.

In 1990, a reunion was held for former Kinder in Scotland and the SAROK group was formed.\textsuperscript{10} The group, which functioned until 2007, produced newsletters and held regular meetings. We have copies of these newsletters, as well as photographs and press cuttings relating to the group. An anthology of 30 Scottish Kinder stories was compiled and later, a history of SAROK was written.\textsuperscript{11}

A number of refugee hostels were opened in Scotland to care for the refugees, enabling their rehabilitation and integration. SJAC has a copy of the register of the Boys’ Hostel opened by Garnethill Hebrew Congregation in its grounds (see Plate 6). This lists over 175 individuals who were admitted between 1939 and 1948, providing surnames, ‘Christian names’, country of origin, date of birth, occupation, date of admission, date left and destination. The majority, 42 per cent, were from Germany, with 14 per cent from Austria, and the rest from Poland, Russia, Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. SJAC also has a list of 32 refugee boys attending nearby Garnetbank Primary School in 1939 and contemporary extracts from the school log book, showing the impact on the school of the arrival of the refugee boys.

Other hostels are mentioned in oral histories and testimonies, but no formal records have yet been discovered. These include the Quaker-run hostel for women and girls in Renfrew Street, round the corner from Garnethill Synagogue, in use from 1940 to 1942; the Gertrude Jacobson Orphanage in Glasgow; Birkenward Hostel in Skelmorlie, Ayrshire; Polton House, near Dalkeith in Midlothian; Darleith House, Cardross; and The Priory in Selkirk. Some refugee children lived in Ernespie House, the Jewish evacuee hostel in Castle Douglas.

Whittingehame House, the former home of Arthur J. Balfour in East Lothian, served as a farm training school for refugee teenagers between 1939 and 1942. We have a set of over 400 photos of the training school taken by English teacher William Farinton Drew, as well as some reminiscences.

Various committees were formed in the Jewish community to assist the refugees and run or help run the hostels. SJAC has papers relating to:

- German Jewish Aid Committee.
- Glasgow Jewish Council for German Refugees.
- Glasgow Women’s Appeal Committee, 1939–40.
- Central British Fund for German Jewry, Glasgow Branch.
- German refugee appeal, Giffnock and Newlands Hebrew Congregation, March 1940.

\textsuperscript{10} Scottish Annual Reunion of Kinder.
\textsuperscript{11} R. Sacharin (ed.), \textit{Recollections of Child Refugees from 1938 to the Present} (Glasgow, 1999) and \textit{SAROK: A History of the Kindertransport–Scotland} (Glasgow, 2008). See also Williams, \textit{The Forgotten Kindertransportees}. 

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Plate 6  Refugee boys outside the Boys’ Hostel, Garnethill, 1939. © Scottish Jewish Archives Centre.
We also collect information and personal testimony about the efforts of the Quakers, Church of Scotland and other religious groups, as well as individual Jewish and non-Jewish families who sponsored and adopted refugees. SJAC has minutes, correspondence and papers of the Mutual Refugee Aid Society, 1950–59, which includes a list of around 180 refugees. This group existed:

for the purpose of helping all those of our friends who find themselves in needy or difficult circumstances …

Who gives the money? – Any of us refugees who earns a single penny more than he needs.

Who gets the money? – Any of us refugees who earns a single penny less than he needs.12

Refugees such as artist Josef Herman, sculptor Paul Zunterstein (who taught at Glasgow School of Art) and architect Isi Metzstein, all made an impact on Scotland’s cultural life at this time. Marianne Grant was forced to do drawings for Dr Mengele in Auschwitz and some of her artworks are included in the Kelvingrove Museum exhibition, Remembering for the Future (curated by my colleague Deborah Haase).13

SJAC also has an important collection of papers and memorabilia relating to Hilda Goldwag (1912–2008), a refugee artist from Vienna. She graduated from art school in 1938 and the following year escaped to Scotland, thanks to the assistance of Professor Max Born’s wife in Edinburgh and their daughter who was studying in Vienna. Hilda went into domestic service in Scotland, then in 1940, she began war work as a turner in McGlashans engineering works, Rottenrow, Glasgow. She moved to a flat in Hill Street with fellow refugee Cecile Schwartzschild and began to paint again. She attended evening classes in life drawing at the Glasgow School of Art and between 1945 and 1955, was Head of Design at Friedlanders, Hillington, Glasgow – a commercial printworks for scarves. She was a member of the Refugee Club in Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow and designed leaflets and programmes for refugee events. Between 1955 and 1962, Hilda undertook freelance illustration work for various publishers, then became an occupational therapist at Foresthall Hospital in Glasgow. She was a prolific painter, exhibited throughout Scotland and was a member of the Glasgow Society of Women Artists.14 We now have a large collection of over 600 items relating to Hilda and also her companion Cecile Schwartzschild – including passports, naturalisation and employment papers, papers from the Scottish Refugee Centre, correspondence via the Red Cross, education and

12 SJAC MRAS appeal, December 1955.
13 D. Haase and E. McAdam (eds), I Knew I was Painting for My Life: The Holocaust Artworks of Marianne Grant (Glasgow 2002).
art school documents, photographs, scarves designed by Hilda, photographs, textiles, graphic designs and paintings.

In addition to the extensive Dorrith M. Sim and Hilda Goldwag collections, SJAC has other sizeable collections of refugee papers. These include material from:

- Irene Marchand, who came to Glasgow in 1939 from Gelsenkirchen in Germany with her young son Ernst and became matron in the Garnethill Boys’ Hostel up to 1948; Ernst later graduated as an electrical engineer from the University of Glasgow. The papers include school reports and exercise books, family memorabilia, correspondence about Irene’s domestic service visa, employment references and the restitution process. Also included are nineteenth-century documents and photographs from Irene’s Lewin family from Falkenberg in Pomerania and the Marchand family in Gelsenkirchen.

- Kalman Frischer, born in Krakow but moved to Leipzig, where he married Helene Altwein in 1932. Before his marriage, Kalman was an amateur boxer with the Jewish sports club, Bar Kochba. In 1938, the Frischers and their children were deported to Poland. They managed to emigrate to London, then Glasgow, where Kalman re-established his fur business. SJAC has around 180 items, including family birth, marriage and death certificates, press cuttings, contracts, photographs about Kalman’s boxing career (1924–29), UK naturalisation papers and correspondence, and papers about German reparations.

- Isaak Millner and family from Vilna (Vilnius), Lithuania. They survived the Kovno Ghetto, Stutthof and Dachau concentration camps and emigrated to Glasgow, where Isaak set up a knitwear factory. Material includes family history, Dachau affidavit, naturalisation papers.

- Dr Charles Blum, an eminent consultant radiologist from Brunn/Brno in the Czech Republic. His wife, Luise Friedlander was from Vienna. This collection includes family photos, correspondence, medical papers, restitution claims, business papers.

- Henry Wuga from Nuremberg and his wife, Ingrid (née Wolff) from Dortmund. The collection includes scanned passports, landing cards, Red Cross papers and photographs. These reflect their immigrant and refugee experiences, and their subsequent career in kosher catering.

Brigitte Langer, the daughter of a Jewish mother who had converted to Catholicism, lived in the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. In 1938, when the Nazis annexed the Sudetenland, Brigitte was labelled a ‘Mischling’ (of ‘mixed race’). She survived the war and was living in a Displaced Persons camp in Nuremberg when her daughter Saskia was born in 1954. They emigrated to the UK in 1961. Saskia and her partner moved to Scotland in 1974, where she worked as a teacher. Brigitte worked in Worthing and elsewhere, but through ill health moved in 1991 to live with her daughter and family in West Kilbride, where she died in 1992. Saskia has deposited a collection of around 250 documents and 70 photographs with the Archives Centre. This includes
passports, identity documents, birth/marriage/death/baptismal/divorce records, legal, medical, employment, housing and naturalisation documents and correspondence.\(^5\)

SJAC has a large collection of papers, correspondence (in Polish, Yiddish and English), and photographs (1943–47), relating to activities by Rabbi Major Heszel Klepfisz and Rabbi H. Melcer, chaplains to Polish Jewish servicemen in Scotland and elsewhere. The Polish servicemen were based around Britain, and Rabbi Klepfisz seems to have worked mainly in South Bantaskine House, Falkirk, Kinnaird House, near Falkirk, and Polkemmet Camp, Whitburn, West Lothian. In addition, SJAC has passports and other papers relating to Szyja Trinczer from Stanisławów, Poland, who came to Scotland after the Second World War with the Polish Resettlement Corps.

So the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre goes boldly forward into its fourth decade, with the creation of a dedicated Scottish Holocaust Era Study Centre, the marketing of the nineteenth-century synagogue as a Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre and with expanding outreach and educational activities and visitor facilities. In this way, we will continue to serve our purpose of documenting the Jewish experience in Scotland, including the successive waves of Jewish immigration, which have enriched Scottish society.

We will also continue with our aim of setting an example of how religious and ethnic minority archives can be preserved and used to illustrate the contribution made to the wider Scottish society. We have worked on projects with the Scottish Refugee Council, engaged with Interfaith Scotland, the Scottish Catholic Archives and others.

In 2016, we had visitors from the Scottish Muslim Heritage Trust who have begun the process of setting up a project to chart the growth of Muslim communities in Scotland. In the same year, we hosted members of Madrasa Taleem Ul Islam, a mosque in the nineteenth-century villa in Nithsdale Road, previously occupied by Pollokshields Hebrew Congregation from 1929 to 1984. They were interested to learn about the history of the building and the congregation and viewed our records, including minute books, the marriage register, press cuttings and the order of the consecration service.

Our experience, built up over three decades, can hopefully assist and inspire other communities to begin similar archive projects and enrich the archival holdings of Scotland.