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THE JHASW/CHIDC NEWSLETTER

Official Newsletter of the Jewish History Association of South Wales / Cymdeithas Hanes Iddewig De Cymru

A MESSAGE FROM JHASW/CHIDC:

Welcome from the chair

It all began in June 2017, when Klavdija Erzen, Laurence Kahn and I met to discuss how we could preserve the heritage of the Jewish communities in south Wales. We agreed to set up a charity and initiate a six-month pilot project starting on 1 January 2018 which enabled the fledgling Association to research how to best collect and preserve the heritage of the south Wales Jewish communities.

Our pilot was a resounding success and led to two successful funding applications; over the next five years success bred success. None of this could have been achieved without the efforts of JHASW/CHIDC Trustees (current and past), fantastic volunteers (current and past), financial contributions by members both within the Jewish community and outside of it, and, of course, Klavdija, Rob, Laura and Mike.

To use a well-known phrase, 'The rest is history'. The Association has grown into the well-respected professional organisation we know today with a website and Twitter account, educational material, Holocaust material and oral histories. We have been fortunate enough to forge partnerships with national and international organisations and academic institutions. But the work is not finished and, if we are to celebrate 10 years of JHASW/CHIDC in 2028, we continue to require your support.

Stanley Soffa BEM, JHASW/CHIDC Chair of Trustees.

IT'S OUR 5TH ANNIVERSARY!

This edition we celebrate the last five years. Through the newsletter are contributions from some of those who have volunteered and worked with JHASW/CHIDC, as well as highlights from our different projects. We want to say a massive 'Thank you!' to all those who have helped, supported and followed our work!



JHASW
CHIDC



THE VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE

I have been a volunteer with the Jewish History Association of South Wales since its inception. I coordinated the design of our Cardiff Jewish heritage trail and for the past year, I've been working on a similar trail for Swansea and District.

Before joining JHASW/CHIDC, I volunteered with Klavdija and Rob on the Chronicle project which looked at volunteering in Cardiff over the previous hundred years. As part of that project, I was introduced to the joys of cataloguing, recording oral histories, preparing an exhibition, scripting a radio programme and writing walking trails, including a trail telling the volunteering history of Charles Street. With JHASW I have catalogued and uploaded to People's Collection Wales many items including the Rabbi Asher Grunis collection, about which I wrote an article for Morgannwg. I have done around seventy oral history interviews. I also oversee copyright permissions and project evaluation.

Coordinating trails includes seeking out suitable sources, contacting people who might help, editing and writing stories, finding suitable images (and getting permission to use them), checking historical facts, managing software experts, and curating a collection of items. I recently gave a Zoom talk in Russian (through an interpreter) to people in Belarus and Israel. My experience with JHASW/CHIDC has not only enabled me to acquire a range of new skills, in the supportive environment provided by Klavdija, but more importantly has given me privileged access to a world which was completely new to me, and the chance to meet many fascinating people.



Some of the JHASW/CHIDC volunteers on a visit to Cardiff Reform Synagogue.
Image: JHASW/CHIDC.

Mike Hawkins

Volunteering with JHASW/CHIDC has been a really valuable experience. Klavdija was extremely supportive and created a role based on my needs, which enabled me to gain valuable cataloguing skills that I was missing on my CV. Through volunteering I've been able to gain a thorough understanding of cataloguing as well as gain new research skills into historic businesses and people. Being able to work from home meant I could volunteer in my free time, which fitted perfectly around my university course and job commitments. By volunteering I was able to build a more well-rounded skill set for my CV and was able to confidently talk about my cataloguing knowledge and experience in a recent museum interview, for which I was successful! I am very appreciative to Klavdija and JHASW/CHIDC for this opportunity and would highly recommend volunteering here for anyone interested in history, culture, museums and heritage.

Caroline Parkin

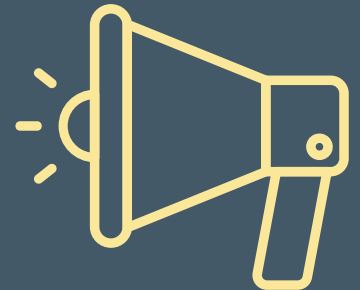
In 2019, I was volunteering at the Cynon Valley Museum when I responded to an advert from JHASW/CHIDC to be involved in a project identifying and researching Jewish heritage objects in Rhondda Cynon Taff museums.

Throughout the project, I developed important skills relating to object cataloguing, research, and interpretation. I learnt how to use and update collections management software, how to digitise and photograph objects and how to prepare interpretation and metadata for digital archives. Similarly, the community engagement aspect developed my public speaking and presentation skills. I also undertook a research internship focusing on the Jewish refugee businesses on the Treforest Industrial Estate during and after World War 2. This also involved thorough research and cataloguing objects of interest belonging to public and private collections.

Three years on and I continue to assist with research and interpretation, most recently working on the Swansea trail.

Volunteering with JHASW/CHIDC has helped my personal and professional development. I have developed my understanding of an area of Welsh history that I had not previously engaged with, covering topics such as religion, war, business, sport and society and culture. I have been privileged to share the stories of the communities and individuals I have learnt about not only with my family and friends but also with the wider public.

I have now been working in the heritage sector for two years. I use the skills I developed in my volunteering, such as research and interpretation, cataloguing and engaging with the public, on a daily basis. Similarly, as a museum collections manager, I can identify Jewish heritage objects of significance, and ensure that the material culture of Jewish history in south Wales is shared and preserved for future generations.



Rhian Hall



JHASW/CHIDC volunteers at Cynon Valley Museum Open Day, February 2020.
Image: JHASW/CHIDC.

PARTNERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

PEOPLE'S COLLECTION WALES

Since 2017, the People's Collection Wales (PCW) has been very fortunate to collaborate with and to support the JHASW/CHIDC, and to watch the project growing from strength to strength in the community. Due to the consistently high standard of the archival content produced, the JHASW/CHIDC very quickly became a prime example of community-generated content and was regularly used to demonstrate volunteer contributions to other, similar projects around Wales. Today, with the JHASW/CHIDC archive celebrating well over a thousand items on the PCW platform, this project continues to be a flagship exemplar in our ongoing community engagement work, with dozens of projects, community groups and heritage institutions drawing on the JHASW/CHIDC format of presenting content to publish their own material. The numerical impact of this collection speaks for itself – in 2022, JHASW/CHIDC items were viewed on 8,560 occasions by more than 1,600 unique visitors to the PCW site.

However, the true value of this material lies in the project's sensitive yet thorough celebration of normal peoples' lives, using oral histories, photographs, manuscripts and artworks to present engaging content which may otherwise remain undiscovered. More importantly, project presents a Welsh context to one of recent history's most harrowing periods, the Holocaust, and the educational resources produced by JHASW/CHIDC ensure that researchers of all ages understand its impact on their local community and the legacy it left in Wales today.

PCW looks forward to continuing its fruitful partnership with JHASW/CHIDC into the future, whether by facilitating the development of skills of their participants or by celebrating the project's outputs on the PCW platform.

Gruffydd Jones, Community Engagement Officer

GLAMORGAN ARCHIVES

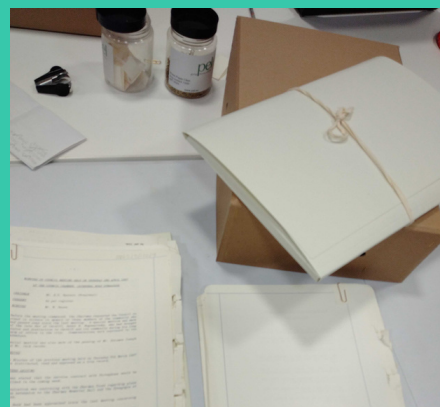
The Jewish History Association of South Wales/Cymdeithas Hanes Iddewig De Cymru celebrates its fifth birthday this year. An amazing milestone in itself, it also marks five years of productive partnership working between the Association and Glamorgan Archives.

Since 2017 we have worked together to ensure the permanent preservation of the historic records of the Jewish community in South Wales. Together we have ensured that these collections are accessible to the general public in the Glamorgan Archives searchroom.

And by creating high-quality catalogue data describing these records, JHASW/CHIDC has helped us to enhance the discoverability of these valuable resources, now easy to find on our online catalogue.

We have been very pleased to be able to deliver training to JHASW/CHIDC volunteers and interns on archive research, listing records and document handling.

JHASW/CHIDC have contributed to our public events programme, holding in-person talks and exhibitions at the Archives. During the Covid19 pandemic, our events programme moved online, and JHASW/CHIDC were one of the first organisations to participate in our virtual events programme. Since then, we've worked in partnership to deliver training to teachers in South Wales on the innovative Wales-specific Holocaust Education Resources developed by JHASW/CHIDC. All this has been made possible through the hard work and dedication of the JHASW/CHIDC team. We're looking forward to working together for another five years - and beyond.



Material from Cardiff United Synagogue being processed before being deposited at Glamorgan Archives.
Image: JHASW/CHIDC.

Rhian Diggins, Senior Archivist

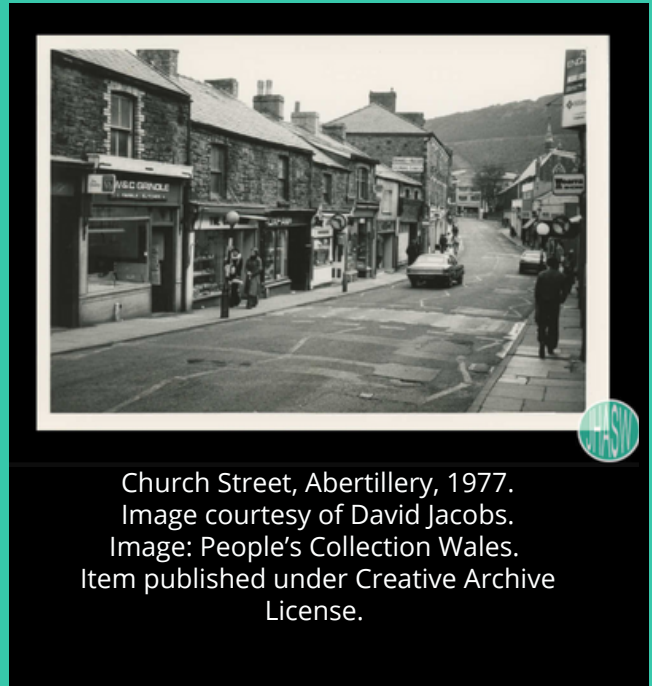
DAVID JACOBS

On beginning my family history research I visited Abertillery and explored my family and the town's history. In 1977, I visited Merthyr Tydfil and interviewed all the Jewish men and women who still lived in the town and took some photographs of the synagogue. Amongst the people I interviewed was Benjamin Hamilton, the President of the Synagogue, who was the local coroner who conducted the inquests into those who died in the Aberfan disaster. I also interviewed Morris Silverglit one of the few, the very few, Jewish men who had worked underground as a miner. He in fact was a prop man – someone who put up the wooden props in the mine shafts. In 1983, my wife and I spent our honeymoon in south Wales visiting the mining towns and learning something of their Jewish and non-Jewish histories.

So, it was not surprising that when I learnt of the establishment and subsequent work of the Jewish History Association of South Wales/Cymdeithas Hanes Iddewig De Cymru that I offered my knowledge and experience to them.

Early in 2018, I visited Cardiff and met Klavdija, the newly appointed Project Manager in the Glamorgan Archives, where I deposited the vast majority of my south Wales archive, which I had accumulated over 45 years.

It was a great pleasure to support the work that was subsequently undertaken, and I especially enjoyed listening to and reading the transcripts of the many oral histories as well as supporting the many grant applications that have been made over the years. The JHASW/CHIDC has been at the forefront of ensuring that the history of the Jews of south Wales is properly recorded for present and future historians and researchers.



Church Street, Abertillery, 1977.
Image courtesy of David Jacobs.
Image: People's Collection Wales.
Item published under Creative Archive License.

GEORGE SCHOENMANN

I would like to congratulate The Jewish History Association of South Wales/Cymdeithas Hanes Iddewig De Cymru on reaching its five-year milestone and am pleased to have been able to contribute to the work they have done. My focus has been the contribution that the Jewish refugees made to the economy of South Wales from 1938 onwards, and particularly the Treforest Trading Estate. I had a close involvement there; although I was only a child at the time, I was old enough to know what was going on and am fortunate in being able to remember it well.

Records show that there were 78 companies on the Treforest estate in 1939, and 49 of them were owned and run by refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe. They provided employment for 3881 people in the area and contributed greatly to the war effort. My father was the guiding light behind one of the leading companies, General Paper & Box Manufacturing Company Limited, which was taken over by Rizla when the war ended. As our family left Vienna in April 1939 with 10 Reichsmark (equivalent to £5.00 at the time), he only had a 10% shareholding in the company, and when the offer from Rizla came in 1948 the majority of the shareholders accepted it. He remained in the position of Managing Director, but after three years Rizla decided to dispense with his services. His health suffered, but despite this he started another company, this time making furniture. He never reached old age and died in 1967 at the age of 68.

My family are all very conscious of the efforts my father made to get his family out of Vienna and escape the Holocaust, which devoured so many who did not leave—including my Grandparents.

TOURING EXHIBITION

In the summer of 2019, we organised a touring exhibition, as part of the Records and Testimonies of the South Wales Jewish Community project, which was supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Jewish Historical Society of England, and private individuals.

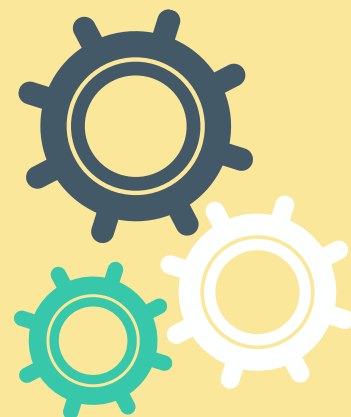
The exhibition was bilingual and staged in 14 locations across south Wales, including the Senedd, St Fagans National Museum of History, Neath Library, West Glamorgan Archives, Newport Museum and Art Gallery, Pontypridd Museum, Tredegar Library and Museum, Cynon Valley Museum, and Merthyr Tydfil Central Library.

It presented the Jewish heritage of south Wales as remembered and recounted by the members of the community. The banners displayed quotes from their oral histories and digitised images of records they contributed, which gave a kaleidoscopic impression of Jewish life. The 16 pop-up banners covered the following themes: Occupations, social life, kosher, celebrations, synagogues, death and cemeteries, sport, arts and culture, antisemitism, identity, youth, change and the future. The banners can be seen on our website <https://www.jhasw.com/online-exhibitions>.

Exhibition visitors included the First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford, and the then Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt.

"I am so thankful for this Exhibition presented by the Jewish History Association of South Wales. It is inspiring, educational and offers a deep insight into the life, contribution and history of our Jewish people in Wales." Jane Hutt, Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Welsh Government - Exhibition Visitors' Book.

"What a fantastic opportunity to see the long and influential history of Jewish people in South Wales. Enjoyable and informative." Mark Drakeford, First Minister of Wales - Exhibition Visitors' Book.



THE HERITAGE TRAIL

In 2021 we made a virtual heritage trail in both English and Welsh telling the fascinating story of Cardiff's Jewish communities. The trail is in three parts and covers not just synagogues, cemeteries, businesses and mikvahs, but also a school, care home, the social club and the last Jewish bakery and butcher shops. We reveal the tremendous Jewish contribution to the arts in Cardiff. Nelson Mandela, the Booker prize (twice) and the Cardiff Lord Mayor who admired Hitler are all mentioned.

Unfortunately many of the sites are no longer in Jewish use or, due to redevelopment, have been demolished. We hope that our images and your imagination can recreate that history. The trails include links to collections and audio excerpts from oral histories on People's Collection Wales. We included five of our popular before and after videos. Sources are given for those who want to explore this history more.

The trail was well received. Comments included :



Cardiff 1851 map, originally drawn up by the Ordnance Survey in accordance with the Public Health Act.
Image: Glamorgan Archives.

- *'I've already tried your trails and they are brilliant. For me it was a combination of revelation and nostalgia - who knew that the Empire Pool where I went every week had a mikvah! But lots of familiar names and details there too.'*
- *'What a fabulous site. Brings back a lot of memories. Some happy, some sad.'*
- *'Found the maps and the links useful, and was amused by the oral account of the marauding Stamford Hill Jews at the Penylan Mikvah.'*
- *'Fascinating and wonderfully well researched. A tour de force - well done!'*
- *'What a fantastic few hours for me to look through this jewel of history.'*

You can view the English version at <https://www.jhasw.com/heritage-trails>.
The Welsh version is at <https://cymru.jhasw-heritage.com/>.

Our Swansea & District trail will be released in the Spring.



ORAL HISTORY

Since the charity began, we have recorded 124 oral history interviews. All of our interviewees have one thing in common – their connection to Wales. Whether they only lived here for a short time, or their family history reaches back to the late 1800s. Each story contributes to the overall tapestry of Welsh-Jewish life.

We have spoken with Rabbis and Professors, Orthodox, Reform, Masorti, converts to Judaism, and atheists; we have interviewed descendants of families who fled Russian Pogroms and recorded first-hand testimonies of those who survived the Holocaust. We explore the idea of Jewishness and Welshness, and what this identity means. One of our interviewees commented:

"Hopefully someone will find something of this, I mean I'm hoping that someone will come along and listen to them and then write a study because I am really intrigued by this question of, well what is a Welsh Jewish identity and we're just not Jewish people who live in Wales..."

Our archive has also built a picture of the integration of the Jewish community into the wider Welsh Christian community, and this story is more often than not told with fondness and humour:

"When she was at School... and they were doing the Nativity play. And when I went to pick her up, her teacher came running out and went "I think I've made a terrible mistake. We've made A. the Virgin Mary in the Nativity play. Have I done wrong?" And I went "No. I think you'll find that Mary was Jewish. I think you picked the right one." And she went "Phew, that's right, Jewish" and ran back inside [laughs.]"

Our archive preserves the stories of people who bore witness to many historically important events, such as World War 2, the Aberfan disaster, the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War, Adolf Eichmann's trial, Bletchley Park, internment camps on the Isle of Man, and the fascist marches of Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts in London, to name a few. To date, we have interviewed people across the UK, and as far away as Australia, North America, Canada, and of course, Israel.

Sadly, some who shared their stories with us have since passed away, but their voices are forever captured and will continue to keep the story of the Welsh Jewish community alive.

We leave you with the words of Henry Foner, who came to Swansea as a young boy, fleeing Nazi persecution on the Kindertransport. He then emigrated to Israel and shared a sentiment that many of us can identify with:

"That's what links me I think to Wales still and the fact that I grew up in the nature...except for the rain. You can keep the rain."



OUR PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

EDUCATION

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks was one of the greatest Jewish thinkers of our generation - a teacher of Torah and a moral voice, who left behind words and teachings that will be an everlasting legacy.

His writings often focus on the power of education and the need to teach young people the principles of freedom, responsibility and respect for difference. He wrote: *"What makes a difference is what we teach our children. Civilisations survive less by the strength of their weapons than by the force of their ideals and their ability to hand them on to future generations."*

We are acutely aware of this responsibility and are committed to providing educational resources and programmes as part of our work to preserve and share the cultural heritage of the Jewish communities in Wales.

By way of example, we have recently developed online lesson plans relating to the Holocaust, for primary and secondary school aged children in Wales and we are now delivering a teacher training programme on how to effectively use these new educational materials in the classroom.

Critically, the resources are based around video testimony and primary photographic evidence of Kindertransport refugees who lived in Wales during and after the war. These testimonies serve as a central axis in passing on the history and the memory of the Holocaust to future generations and in emphasising that these stories are part of a collective, shared Welsh history.

However, our education materials are not simply focused on the past. They also aim to illuminate our present and future, to inculcate universal values of preservation of human rights, and to challenge students to think about their own responsibility in fighting racism and xenophobia today - so that "Never Again" can have the chance of meaning and hope in our society.

The screenshot shows a lesson plan document with the following content:

- Teachers' Notes**
- Activity 4: Jewish Life in Pre-War Europe: Identity, Diversity & Commonality**
- USC Shoah Foundation | IWITNESS**
- JHASW/CHIDC**
- TOPIC**: Jewish Life Pre-War
- AGE GROUP**: Years 4-6 (ages 9-11), Progression Step 3
- LENGTH**: 1 hour
- AREAS OF LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE**: Health and Well-being, Humanities, Languages, Literacy and Communication
- DESCRIPTION**: In this activity, students will reflect on the concept of 'identity' and how they view their own personal identity. Students will listen to the video testimony of Inge Hack, a Kindertransport refugee, and collect primary photographic evidence relating to her life in Germany, allowing them to understand the individuality of the Jewish lives affected by the Holocaust. The students will also have an introduction to what Jewish identity, culture and communal life was like in Europe before World War 2 and consider how Jewish pre-war experiences differed or were similar. The activity will allow students an opportunity to reflect on the points of commonality between their lives and those of Jews living in Europe before the war. It will also enable students to begin to appreciate the immense diversity of pre-war European Jewish culture. The activity can be easily split into two shorter sessions where necessary - Tasks 1 and 2 can be covered in the first session and Tasks 3 and 4 can be completed in a second session.*
- LEARNING AIMS**: As a result of completing this activity, students will:
 - Reflect on the concept of 'identity'.
 - Have an introduction to the richness and diversity of Jewish life and identity in Europe before World War 2.
 - Learn that 'Jewishness' was just one element of a Jewish person's identity, alongside a variety of other factors such as family, school, hobbies, etc.
 - Reflect on the individuality and common humanity of Jewish lives affected by or lost in the Holocaust.
 - Learn about the connection to Wales through the video testimony and primary photographic evidence of a Kindertransport refugee.
- Logos**: European Commission, Jewish History Association of South Wales / Cymdeithas Hanes Iddawg De Cymru
- Page-Footer**: © 2022 USC Shoah Foundation, 1, Activity created by Eimeir Clifton, JHASW/CHIDC Volunteer, jhasw.com, iwitness.usc.edu

HAPPY PASSOVER!

This year Passover falls from the 5th April to the 13th of April. All of us at JHASW/CHIDC would like to wish all of our subscribers and supporters a very happy Passover and holiday season!



REMEMBER US!

When people first hear about JHASW/CHIDC's work, we often get told stories about how they, or someone they know, recently had a clear-out and threw out piles of papers/photographs which documented the lives of the Jewish community of south Wales in some way.

If you or someone you know may have such a collection please don't hesitate to reach out to us; we are committed to collecting all south Wales Jewish heritage and we need your help to do it!

SUPPORT US!

Most of the work that we have accomplished so far has been dependent on grants and support from the community. However, we are acutely aware that there is so much to do that does not fall within the remit of these specific projects and without long-term financial support we will not be able to continue our work preserving and sharing the local Jewish heritage in the way it deserves.

If you would like to help us with our work by making an online donation please click on the link below!

[DONATE!](#)