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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

As I write this (mid-March) the Russian war against Ukraine continues. For me, it is problematic in the sense that my maternal grandfather, Barnett Roden, was born in Chernigov in the Russian Pale of Settlement in 1872. The Pale of Settlement was the area in Tsarist Russia where Jews were permitted to live and so he was a Russian citizen. If you look at a map, you will find Chernigov is in Ukraine.

He came to London in 1891 and then to Cardiff in 1896. He married my grandmother in 1911 who, although born in London, lost her British Nationality and became a Russian citizen. So, both my grandparents were Russian. Barnett's parents, brother and sister subsequently joined him. They left Russia because of the continual antisemitism faced by Jews in the Pale.

Knowing, recording, preserving, and sharing our family histories can provide countless benefits. Our memory is long and deep, as is our desire to help those who are in need, whether running from hate or war.

The Association plays an important part in reminding us of where we came from.

Stanley Soffa BEM, JHASW Chair of Trustees.

## 'PUNCH AND DIE' - AN APPEAL!

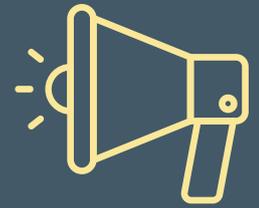
'Punch and Die' was the in-house magazine produced by Aero Zipp Fasteners, who were based on the Treforest Industrial Estate.

We know that there were at least 16 issues of the magazine, probably beginning in 1945. Not only does it detail the work of the firm, but it also gives a fascinating insight into how beneficial the company was to the artistic, sporting, and social life of the area.

We have only been able to locate one issue (in Glamorgan Archives). If anyone has copies or knows where we may be able to find copies, please get in touch.



## IN THE NEWS:



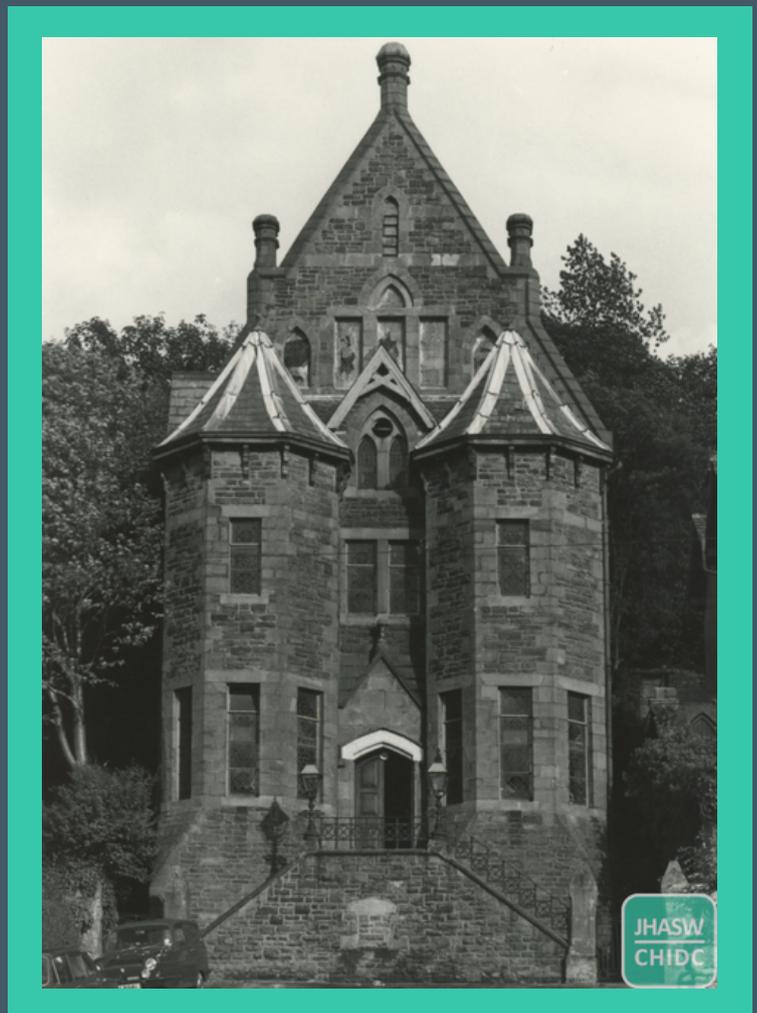
### "MERTHYR JEWISH HERITAGE CENTRE PLANS A STEP CLOSER"\*

Around Wales, there are amazing buildings which remind us of its rich Jewish history and heritage. One such building was brought to light in a recent BBC news article giving the incredible news that plans for a Jewish heritage centre in Merthyr are getting closer. The plan is to convert the former synagogue on Bryntiron Road in Merthyr Tydfil. The building was bought by the Foundation for Jewish Heritage in 2019 and is currently undergoing repair work, partly funded by Cadw.

The building has a rich past being the oldest surviving Jewish building in Wales. The article notes the unusual architecture influenced by other buildings in the area such as Castell Coch.

After its closure as a synagogue in 1983, the building was repurposed as a Christian centre and a gym before closing fully in 2004. This marked the beginning of its slow, sad decline into neglect and disrepair.

It is fascinating to find out about the next stage of its development and the work being undertaken to preserve the rich past and heritage of the Jewish community in Merthyr.



*Merthyr Synagogue, 1978, shortly before it closed.  
Image courtesy of David Jacobs.*

\*Source: BBC News, *Merthyr: Jewish Heritage Centre plans a step closer* (2022) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-60175337>> [accessed 22 March 2022]



## OUR PROJECT UPDATES:

### Swansea Heritage Trail

JHASW/CHIDC are creating a Swansea and District Jewish Heritage Trail. We would love to hear from anyone who has images or stories of Jewish life in Swansea, Port Talbot, Neath or Llanelli. We are particularly interested in Jewish shops, businesses, personalities or social activities. If you think you can help, please e-mail us at [heritage.trails@jhasw.org.uk](mailto:heritage.trails@jhasw.org.uk).

### Social Enterprise

Set up in 2021, the aim of this project is to become less dependent on grants by generating income to invest in preserving Welsh Jewish heritage, e.g., recording oral histories.

Social Enterprise will enable us to become more sustainable and put in place a five-year strategic and business plan. In February we were invited by Small Jewish Communities Network to present our work and plans to Jewish community leaders across the UK.

### Pears Action Learning Fund:

Running since September 2021, this project, set up by Community Foundation Wales and supported by Pears Foundation, aims to improve our grant-writing skills and how we communicate with funders; how we share our vision, mission, aims, and the work we do with them clearly and convincingly. We were asked to identify five Trusts and Foundations and contact them to discuss how suitable their grants are for our funding needs. Unfortunately, many Trusts and Foundations do not provide any advice at all to prospective applicants and some do not even provide any contact details. However, we are always seeking opportunities to discuss with potential funders how our work matches their funding criteria.

### Côf a lithr, llythyrau a geidw: Creating Holocaust resources for Welsh schools

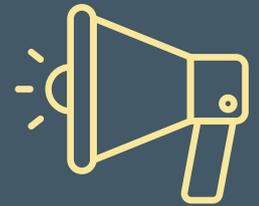
This project is being delivered in partnership with The Centre for the Movement of People (CMOP) at Aberystwyth University and is supported by the Association of Jewish Refugees, Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust, Jewish Historical Society of England, and Garfield Weston Foundation. We have created eight teaching resources and published them on People's Collection Wales Learn section and Hwb, Welsh Government's educational platform. These lessons explore [Kindertransport in Wales](#), [Kristallnacht](#), [Josef Herman and art](#), and [the Treforest Industrial Estate](#). The resources are bilingual and locally relevant to teachers and students in Wales.

### The European Network of Testimony-based Digital Education:

In January we met, via Zoom, with partners from Hungary, the Czech Republic, and the Netherlands to discuss the development of the project. We have created five activities on the topics of: Kindertransport; Jewish identity, culture, and communal life in Europe before World War 2; the Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany before World War 2 and the concept of universal human rights. All activities are bilingual and locally relevant to students and teachers in Wales. When the material is edited, we plan to publish the resources on the IWitness platform and our website. The project is funded by Erasmus+.

## SPOTLIGHT ON:

# Voices Through Time Oral History Project



Since we began in October 2021, we have recorded 30 interviews with four more on our schedule. I had the pleasure of interviewing Irene Silver, who is 98 years old and Thelma Gaba who will be 100 years old in a couple of months. These ladies kindly gave their time to speak to me about their childhood memories of Cardiff. I would like to thank their daughters, who provided the support required so we could record these important and rare memories.

I have just carried out my first interview with a gentleman from north Wales. We felt that it was important to document as many Welsh-Jewish voices as possible. Michael Manson shared his family history, which began with the arrival of his great grandfather, Morris Wartski, who was born in Poland in 1855. Morris Wartski's story is inspiring. He arrived in Bangor with a limited knowledge of English and some experience of the watchmaking trade. His great grandson told us how Wartski established his own jewellers in Llandudno. He was extremely involved with the local community and had a close friendship with Lloyd George for many years. Morris is credited as the founder of the Bangor Hebrew Community, and also the Synagogue in Llandudno, which he established in the Masonic Hall. Morris Wartski learned to speak Welsh fluently and he expressed a great love of his new home. It appears that the feeling was mutual because Morris received 300 telegrams of congratulations on his 80th birthday.



*Image of Wartski's Jewellers in Llandudno.  
Image courtesy of Michael Manson.*

As I write this, the world is in turmoil with hundreds of thousands of people fleeing their homes in the Ukraine and having to start their lives over with very little. We often hear people expressing fear regarding an influx of immigrants or refugees – fear that they are coming to take from their new home. But stories like this show us that this is not the case. Morris Wartski brought ambition, skill and a strong sense of community spirit. He went from a young Polish immigrant to a jewellery maker commissioned by the British Royal Family. Although the Wartski family jewellers had to close in north Wales, the family still run a very successful branch of the business in London, and outside this shop is proudly displayed a sign which reads 'Wartski's of Llandudno' because the family never forgot the beautiful north Wales town where their dreams were realised.

*Laura Henley Harrison, JHASW/CHIDC Oral History Officer & Events Coordinator.*

# READING RECOMMENDATIONS:

'A Kramsky Scrap Book' is a family biography, collated by Robert Barth, who died of Covid last year. Around 1905, his great grandfather Jack Kramsky came to south Wales from Odessa as a stowaway.

The book is full of anecdotes, often recorded by the author, and is illustrated with family photographs, newspaper articles and a variety of documents. The family had a scrapyard in Prince of Wales Road, Swansea. They were blamed for the collapse of houses there, which killed seven people. Although exonerated for that, this book candidly reveals many other run-ins with the law.



# HAPPY PASSOVER!

This year Passover falls from the 15th April to the 23rd 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!](#)



Created by Krista Benedikz and Mike Hawkins, JHASW/CHIDC volunteers.

