

STAMFORD HILL AND THE JEWS BEFORE 1915

BY

M. BERNSTEIN, B.ED.

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M.B.

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

TODAY, Stamford Hill, a district within the Borough of Hackney, is very largely an urban working-class area in which a high percentage of its residents are Jewish. Although over the last twenty to thirty years Stamford Hill has witnessed a marked decline in the number of its Jewish residents, nevertheless, it can still claim to be catering, in general, for a very wide spectrum of Anglo-Jewry and, in particular, for orthodox Jewry. This being so, there has been a tendency among laymen to assume that the migration of Jews to Stamford Hill originated after the First World War, by which time the more religiously committed type of Jew, such as the immigrant from Russia or Poland of the 1880s, had established himself in England.

The purpose of this modest work is to dispel this misconception by showing how Anglo-Jewry established itself in the north-east of London. It will be shown that a small number of Jews were resident in Stamford Hill already in the 18th century; that what could be termed a Jewish settlement originated there long before the 1880s; and that, as a result of this early settlement, the way was paved for the tremendous number of Jews who settled further and further away from the City during the second half of the 19th century. Since, in looking at the early migration of Jews to the north-east of London and especially to Stamford Hill, emphasis will be placed upon the significance of social, economic and religious factors, a prior examination both of the early Jewish community in London and of the transformation of Stamford Hill and its surrounding areas, from a rural village to urban suburbia, will be necessary. Only then will it really be possible to appreciate fully who these early Jewish residents were and, more important, why they should have chosen Stamford Hill, of all places, as a district in which to live.

TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF ANGLO-JEWRY

17th Century Anglo-Jewry

IT is generally assumed that there had been Jews in England even after their expulsion in 1290. However, it was only after 1660, with the restoration of Charles II, that the Jews, although still not formally admitted, settled in England as a body, beginning their quest for equality of rights. Indeed, already in these early days, some headway was being made in this direction. In 1656, a Jew had already been admitted as a broker to the City and, in 1667, a Jew was allowed to take an oath in the Court of the King's Bench on the Old Testament. Ten years later, Jews were no longer compelled to give evidence (if called upon to do so) on the Sabbath.

In the 1660s, the Sephardim (Spanish-Portuguese Jews) occupied the prominent position within the Jewish community. There was only one place of worship. This had been established in 1657 in Creechurch Lane and followed the Sephardi ritual. Likewise, there was only one Jewish burial place — the one owned by the Sephardim in Mile End. This group, admittedly, did have among them a number of very poor Jews but, for the most part, they were extremely wealthy. Yet, contrary to common belief, the generation succeeding the Resettlement did not consist exclusively of Spanish and Portuguese Jews. At about the same time, many Jews had, in fact, fled westward as a result of the massacres in Poland during the 17th century and some had found their way to England. These Ashkenazim (as they were known) were, however, extremely poor and thus occupied no position of prominence. Indeed, their significance was totally minimized as a consequence of the economic vitality of the Sephardim.

By the end of the 17th century, however, a significant change had already taken place. Prominent, aristocratic Jewish gem mer-

chants from Hamburg had settled in England and, although they were accepted by the Sephardim (because of their respectable and affluent standing) they nevertheless desired to establish their own separate Ashkenazi community. With the relationship between Holland and Britain at this time becoming increasingly better, there was a general growing influx of immigrants into the country, among whom were a number of Ashkenazi Jews. It was not long, therefore, before they had equalled the Sephardim in number (although the total Jewish population was only 1,000!) and they felt strong enough to establish their own community. So, by the turn of the century, the Sephardim had built for themselves their synagogue (1699) known ever after as the Bevis Marks, and the Ashkenazim had erected for themselves the Great Synagogue in Broad Court, Duke's Place, on which site it stood until its destruction by bombs during the Second World War. By then, the Ashkenazim had also formed a separate Burial Society and had purchased their own cemetery in Alderney Road. This was not, however, as the result of communal endeavour. It was due to the generosity of Benjamin Levy and, henceforth, the community was to be under the thumb of Jewish aristocrats.

In the 17th century, whilst a number of poor Jewish peddlers sought their living in the Provinces, the wealthy Jews — many of whom were involved in banking — resided in London, close to the City. This remained the hub of the financial system even though, in the latter part of the 17th century, London was spreading her wings towards Mile End and Whitechapel. It was in these areas that the merchants and humbler classes resided and where the Jews had to establish themselves, since retail trade in the City was confined to freemen.

THE 18th century reveals a somewhat contradictory and ambivalent picture of the Jews in terms of their religious commitment. For example, in 1704, when Benjamin Levy died, he declared (among other things) in his will that he desired his children to be educated in the fear of G-d and that they always marry into the race of Dutch Jews. Unless the emphasis is on the word 'Dutch', which would seem unlikely, it can only be interpreted as meaning that he saw the need to warn his children of the danger of intermarriage. Today it would seem incongruous that a devout Jew, who is himself observant and whose children are apparently continuing the tradition of his fathers would have to warn his children of such a danger. No doubt such would be his plea only if he had some cause to fear that his children were straying from the path.

Perhaps, it would be true to say, therefore, that what forms a major part of religious affiliation during this period is not so much devoutness as loyalty; the concern being for unity rather than for commitment. Certainly, during this period the objective of conforming to a united body seemed to override any other consideration. Indeed, the penalty for those who disregarded this was severe; taking the form of excommunication. It is during this time that a certain Moses Hart, a relative of Benjamin Levy, had become the recognised lay leader of the Ashkenazi community (its religious leader being his brother Aaron Hart), and two instances of secessionist attempts are to be noted. The first was by Marcus Moses whose attempt to set up a Beth Hamedrash had to be abandoned because of Moses Hart's opposition to it. The second was as a result of Marcus Moses being excommunicated by the Ashkenazi community. Being thus barred from both the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities, he was forced into establishing the Hambro Synagogue, and even into purchasing his own cemetery in Hoxton. Its spiritual leader was Moses's own tutor, Rabbi Hol-

leschau.

It is this Rabbi Holleschau who writes in his book 'Maaseh Rab' (1707) of the general religious laxity of the Jews and of how they had already begun to live as much as a mile away from the synagogue. The wealthy Jews had furthermore adopted the practice of going into the country whenever the opportunity afforded itself. Yet, for all this (and in comparison with today when even many so-called orthodox Jews treat this matter lightly), respect for the ruling of drinking only supervised milk was shown by most Jews. It is also of interest to compare his remark about the Jews spreading themselves further afield with that made in 'A New Guide to London' (1726) in which Duke's Place is referred to as 'where most of the Jews dwell'. It would, therefore, seem that the drift had only affected a small minority, among whom could be mentioned Jospa ben Jacob Buchtel who tried to arrange services at his home in Bethnal Green in 1747. Cecil Roth¹ points out that the Jews conformed meticulously to the Shulchan Aruch. In illustrating this point he says how the Beadle of the synagogue was not allowed to announce any wedding celebrations which were to take place on the Sabbath. Yet, it could be argued that the very need for such a prohibition implies that many such violations were taking place. The inference can only be that the 'official line' was that of conformity with regard to the fundamental tenets of our religion.

During the first half of the 18th century, the Jewish community as such grows from strength to strength. The Great Synagogue is rebuilt in 1722; the Hambro Synagogue moves to Magpie Alley, Fenchurch Street in 1725; a Talmud Torah (the precursor of the Jewish Free School) comes into being; the Initiation Society is founded in 1745; many charitable organisations are formed (of which the Orphan Aid Society is but one) and, in

(1) Roth, C. (1950) *The Great Synagogue, London, 1690—1940.*

1749, a new cemetery is bought in Colt Yard (Alderney Road) Mile End — the previously used one having now become full. Throughout this period, the reputation of the Great Synagogue had grown so much that it had become known the world over. No doubt this was also as a result of it offering positive help to oppressed Jews abroad.

After Rabbi Aaron Hart died in 1756 (his brother Moses had also died in that year), the Rabbinate was taken over by Hart Lyon, a grandson of the renowned Jewish scholar, Haham Zvi. It is from Hart Lyon that a picture of the increasing laxity of religious standards among the Jews of this period emerges. His own attempt to establish a Beth Hamedrash, a House of Study, met with little response and even his venture to set one up in his own home failed. Once again, ambivalent religious codes were practised. On the one hand, the Jews would violate the Sabbath by collecting their mail yet, on the other hand, they would refrain from opening the letters themselves. Throughout Hart Lyon's term of office, he tried to counteract the low religious standards. He tried to establish a Yeshivah but, not surprisingly, this venture too failed. He bemoaned the fact that the Jews preferred to spend their time gambling instead of learning. He was far from happy with his task and eventually, in 1764, he resigned his post.

The latter half of the 18th century saw further development and growth within the Anglo-Jewish Community. In 1760, the Board of Deputies, an organisation with representatives from the Bevis Marks, the Great and Hambro synagogues, was formed with the purpose of representing the Jewish interest on national affairs. In 1761, the German Jews sought to establish another synagogue in Bricklayers' Hall, Leadenhall Street. It was not the intention to become a secessionist group but due to it not being well received by either the Great or Hambro synagogues, it was forced into becoming one. The New Synagogue, as it became known, consequently acquired its own cemetery in Duckling

Pond Lane (Brady Street). By this time, the number of Jews had increased sixfold to 6,000, with the majority being Ashkenazim.

The main features of this period seem to be the constant expansion of London Jewry both numerically and economically; a growing anglicisation of the dominant section, and the consolidation of the newly established congregations in the provinces. In London, the Great Synagogue had been enlarged in 1766. Expansion geographically was very much to the west and by the affluent members of the community. For them the Western Synagogue had come into being and catered for their needs. At the same time a distinct movement towards the east was discernable, with the main Jewish settlement establishing itself around Mile End and Whitechapel. As early as 1765 there was also a fair sized community in rural Bethnal Green and, by 1779, a street had been given the name of Jews' Walk. By this time Goodman's Fields was recognised as an area in which many prosperous Jews resided and, by the end of the 18th century, two out of three of the empty houses in Whitechapel were taken by Jews.

But if this was a period of growth, it was also a period in which religious laxity continued to grow. Children were allowed to go about bare-headed and many of the habits of the Jews were 'unacceptable' to the truly orthodox. Likewise, there were more and more instances of the desecration of the Sabbath. Yet, with all this, the bond of unity was still to be observed. In 1788, the Great Synagogue had once again been enlarged to cater for the increase in demand. As its number of members increased though, so did the grip of assimilation. Gradually, with the turn of the century, the Minutes of the Great Synagogue were no longer recorded in Yiddish alone and, by 1815, they were recorded only in English.

By the end of the 18th century, three other synagogues had established themselves, catering for the steady influx of poor from abroad. One of them was in Cutler Street,

Houndsditch (dependent on the Great for burial rights); another was in Gun Yard, Houndsditch (dependent on the New for burial rights), and the third was near the Tower of London, in Rosemary Lane — the heart of the old clothes industry. This augmented number of poor caused the Jewish aristocracy much concern, but there was an optimistic aspect as well. It was largely within such homes that the spirit of religion still flourished and where the effects of assimilation were little felt. Thus, Levi Nathan records about the poor immigrants:

“Their homes are pure and ennobling. Every week the Sabbath comes to convert their hovels into palaces illumined ... no sacrifice is too great for them as an alternative to the desecration or non-observance of Jewish laws and religious customs.”¹

Early 19th Century Anglo-Jewry

AS a result of the Napoleonic wars, Anglo-Jewry, free from the tribulations of immigration, was able to continue the process of anglicization and to consolidate itself “institutionally”. By this time, there were as many as thirty flourishing Jewish charitable organisations and the Board of Shechita, with the co-operation of the four main synagogues, had come into being. There also developed a greater concern for Jewish education, very much as a result of the pressure of the early 19th century Christian missionary schools and, in 1817, the Jewish Free School was opened.

As the Jewish population increased during the first half of the 19th century, the relative influence of the Sephardim declined. By then, only a third of the Jews were Sephardim. Of the other two thirds, half showed allegiance to the Great and half to the New and

Hambro combined. The Great Synagogue stood out as being the Jewish institution par excellence and it numbered among its members persons such as the Rothschilds and the Goldsmids, who played a significant role in running and controlling the affairs of the Anglo-Jewish community. Generally, it could be said that whereas the Hambro catered for a small number of opulent Jews and, similarly, a small number of poor Jews, the Great catered for the largest number of wealthy Jews and also for the largest number of poor. The New Synagogue catered for those ‘in between’ — namely for the middle class. The Synagogue was thus very much the nucleus of the Jewish community, even though it was not frequented by all on a regular basis. The Great had, for example, long since held an over-flow service on the High Holydays, an unfortunate but significant indication that for many a visit to the synagogue was limited to but three days in the year. Even when Jews turned astray and created the Reform Movement in 1840, they could not sever the links with the Synagogue. Indeed, the very creation of the movement grew out of their establishing yet another, the West London Synagogue, off Euston Road.

By 1851, the Jewish population had increased to 35,000 with some 18,000 of them living in London. Of these, 12,000 lived in the City or adjacent to it on its eastern boundary. After two centuries, the Ashkenazim had asserted their supremacy over the Sephardim and the Jewish aristocrats had reinforced their hold over the Jewish community. But they were unrepresentative of the masses.

Before looking at the other side of the coin, so as to understand why some of these giants, such as the Rothschilds and the Goldsmids, should have been among the earliest Jewish residents of Stamford Hill, it is necessary to cast an eye back over this period and to look at the transformation of Stamford Hill and its environs.

(1) A short Account of the Life & Transactions of Levi Nathan (1776)

STAMFORD HILL AND ITS ENVIRONS

TO appreciate how Stamford Hill gradually transformed itself from a rural village into an urban suburb, and also why, in its early days, it should have attracted the elite of Anglo-Jewry among the first of its Jewish residents, it is necessary to acquire initially some knowledge of the area and of its environs. Otherwise, there is the danger, as a result of too narrow an understanding, of reaching false conclusions.

The Environs

HACKNEY, of which Stamford Hill is today but a part and of which Parish it was a part already some two hundred years ago, offers on the surface few clues to the person seeking out its bygone past. Admittedly times have changed, even though local residents may well recall the words of the old music-hall song:

"With a ladder and some glasses,
You could see the Hackney Marshes,
If it wasn't for the houses in between."

It was as early as 1015 that a Danish community had established itself on the River Lea at Hackney, known then as Hakon's Ea or Hakon's Island (perhaps an indication that their settlement was within the area encompassed by the Mill River). Later, in the 12th century, the area became known as Hackeneia, a name which probably meant 'the well-watered land or marsh that belonged to a certain Haca' (Haca being a personal name).¹

Basically, Hackney was and thus remained right up to the 18th century no more than just a village. However, it was of some significance in that, similar to Islington, it was an important dairying suburb where "stall-feeding of milch-cows was undertaken".² In fact, in the 17th century, Hackney was so well-known for its dairy produce that in the accounts of the Earl of Bedford in 1654 it is



FROM THE MAP OF THE PARISH OF HACKNEY,
surveyed by John Rocque, 1745.

stated that "the butter from Hackney was 10d. a pound, whereas ordinary butter cost 6d. or so."³ Hackney Wick too derived its name from this trade, the word 'wick' meaning 'dairy farm'.¹

Towards the end of the 17th century, Bethnal Green, to the south of Hackney, expanded fairly quickly, perhaps as a consequence of permission being granted to Lady Wentworth to build small houses for mariners and manufacturers. Subsequently, the latter, following the pattern of the

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- (1) Gower, J.E.B. (1942) *The Place-Names of Middlesex*.
 - (2) Clayton, R. (Ed.) (1964) *The Geography of Greater London*.
 - (3) Mitchell, R.J. & Leys, M.D.R. (1958) *A History of London Life*.

merchants who had built themselves houses in Hackney since the days of the Fire of London, turned countrymen. They settled down in what was a very pleasant village and made their way each day to and from their not too distant City premises.

To the west of Stamford Hill lay Stoke Newington, a name which means 'the new village built at the borders of a wood'¹ (the wood being part of what had once been the great Middlesex Forest). Robinson² remarks that two gentlemen he knew could recall seeing, in 1763, a brick tower in which Elizabeth I had been hidden as a protection from her sister. There is also supposed to have been a summer house at the end of Queen Elizabeth's Walk (so called because the two avenues of elms there became a favourite country walk of the Queen), where Mr. Dudley, a close relative of the Earl of Leicester, lived and to whom Elizabeth I often paid visits. When Mr. Dudley died, his widow married Thomas Sutton, the founder of the Charterhouse. He, in turn, moved away from this residence to Sutton House, Homerton, after Mrs. Dudley's death.

Among its other prominent residents was Charles Fleetwood (1618-92) who married Oliver Cromwell's second daughter (although it should be pointed out that not all historians accept that this was the same Fleetwood).

Perhaps, of all its residents, the most famous is Daniel Defoe (1661-1731) who lived at 95 Stoke Newington Church Street in a house which was built in 1681, a few hundred yards away from the house where later on Benjamin Disraeli lived. Unfortunately, Daniel Defoe's residence was demolished in 1865 and, today, the only indication of his having lived there is a plaque which is not even affixed to the correct spot! Defoe, in a description of the area, remarks that most people in Stoke Newington were poor dissenters of his own type, unlike the wealthier residents of Hackney who kept between them 'near a hundred coaches'.³

To the north of Stamford Hill is Tottenham. A glance at a map will show that it is, perhaps, not so surprising that as early as 1448 it could be thus recorded:

"There is in Middlesex a water called Le Ley running from Tottenham to the Thames by which ships and boats have been accustomed from time immemorial to go from the city of London to the said village of Tottenham and elsewhere with various goods".⁴

By the 17th century it had become a favourite summer resort and was even classified among the list of tea gardens which were common to such places as Hampstead and Isleworth. The grounds were spacious; the walks were well covered by trees; there was a canal and, in addition, a large banquetting/music hall.

Stamford Hill — its Early Days

STAMFORD HILL itself is an area, the name of which has long been the topic of controversial discussion. Quite ingeniously, it has been suggested that the name is derived from its position. Namely, that since it lies along the old Roman road between London and Lincoln, it has taken its name from Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire, the scene of King Harold's victory in 1066. It has also been suggested that its origin is derived from the fact that at the point marked Stamford Bridge there was a brook which those on foot could only cross by using the stepping stones. Thus, the area became known as Stone-ford (or possibly Stane-ford — 'stane' being the Saxon word for stone), and only

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- (1) Glunn, H.P. (1970) *The Face of London*.
 - (2) Robinson, W. (1820) *The History and Antiquities of Stoke Newington*.
 - (3) Mitchell, R.J. & Leys, M.D.R. (1958) *A History of London Life*.
 - (4) Barton, N.J. (1962) *The Lost Rivers of London*.

later changed its name, first of all, to Stamford and then finally to Stamford. It is of interest to note, in this connection, that on a map of 1800, the area is indeed marked as Stamford Hill. A further suggestion is that it was originally known as Sandford Hill, meaning a hill by a sandy ford. It should be noted that there are still some streets within the area bearing such names as Sanford Terrace and Sanford Lane.

From the map of 1745, it is clearly evident that the brook referred to above, and known as the Hackney Brook, formed the southern boundary of Stamford Hill. This brook, a stream of some considerable size, was a tributary of the River Lea. Its width 'at flood' was 10 feet at the Stamford, Hackney and Homerton bridges and as much as one hundred feet at the Hackney Wick bridge. Its whole course was, in fact, traced out in 1909 by a Mr. E. Bolus who presented his sketch map of the course to the North London Antiquarian Society. Towards the end of the 19th century, when excavations for the high level main sewer were under way, several warlike weapons, believed to have been the weapons of the supporters of the Earl of Warwick, who died whilst fighting in Barnet, in 1471, were found. Apparently, they had thrown their weapons away fearing that Edward IV would seek recrimination against them.

The actual hill itself lies further north, near what used to be a turnpike. It is alleged that it was at this spot that James I, having travelled from Scotland to take possession of the new crown, was met by the Lord Mayor of London in 1603 and that, on seeing London, he exclaimed,

"A splendid view indeed; at last, the richest jewel in a monarch's crown is mine."

A glance once more at John Rocque's map will show that right up into the 18th century, Stamford Hill consisted, for the most part, of open fields. On Batemen's map of 1765 the triangular area, today enclosed



MAP OF LONDON, 1800

on the west by Stamford Hill Road and on the east by Clapton Common, north of the Birdcage (the present day Birdcage Public House having been built where originally the horseshoe shaped pond was), is marked as Gibbet Field. It was in this field that gallows stood. A little further north (the area between today's Amhurst Park and St. Ann's Road), as is indicated on Thomas Clay's map of 1619, were two fields known respectively as the Great Gallows Field and the Little Gallows Field. Robinson² actually speaks of a hanging having taken place at Stamford Hill. Apparently, in 1717, a person by the name of Joseph Still came to London to seek his fortune, but without success. Consequently,

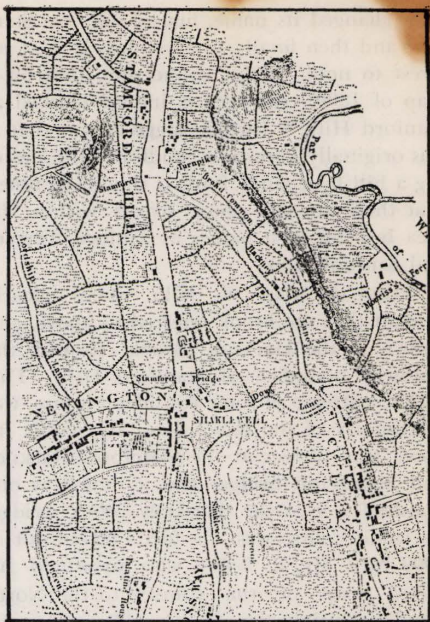
- (1) F.R.C.S. (1893) *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney*.
- (2) Robinson, W. (1842). *The History & Antiquities of Hackney, Vol. I*.

he turned to crime, but at this too he met with little fortune. Having held up a servant carrying a bag of money in Queen Elizabeth's Walk, in an endeavour to wrench the money bag away from him, he stabbed the servant to death. He was, however, caught almost immediately. He was taken to Newgate Prison, tried at the Old Bailey and was sentenced to be executed by hanging on Stamford Hill on March 22nd.

It may very well have been as a result of the frequency with which robberies occurred there that Stamford Hill should have been chosen as a spot on which to erect gallows. Even Dick Turpin (b. 1706), who lived near Hackney Marshes, found Stamford Hill an ideal location for committing highway robberies, a pastime at which he was most efficient. Once, at Stamford Hill, Turpin held up a well-dressed gentleman who was travelling by horse on his way back to London. The gentleman thereupon exclaimed,¹ "What, dog eat dog! Come, come, brother Turpin. If you don't know me, I know you and should be glad of your company." He had apparently held up Thomas King, an equally notorious highwayman. Subsequently, they committed together many robberies at Stamford Hill, until King's death.

Effects of City Migration

THE slow growth within Stamford Hill itself up to this time was not matched in its environs. Already, in the 17th century, there were signs of a fairly substantial migration out of the City and, in particular, there were signs of an early build-up in Islington. In 1757, a New Road linking Paddington and Islington was laid out across the fields and became London's first by-pass. This road marked at the time the northern limit of development. By 1800, however, although Islington still had many fields and open spaces, the influx there had become most significant



FROM THE MAP OF THE PARISH OF HACKNEY,
surveyed by John Rocque, 1745

and was even penetrating further, into High-bury. In the 18th century, with the tremendous advancement in trade, City accommodation was needed more and more as warehouses and offices and, consequently, migration out of the City increased.

By then, Stoke Newington too had felt the effects and although in 1774 the area is still referred to as 'a pleasant village near Islington'² (after all, it had less than 200 houses), concern was expressed about the fact that it was becoming a place 'where a great number of the citizens of London have built

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- (1) Robinson, W. (1842) *The History & Antiquities of Hackney, Vol. I.*
 - (2) Bolitho, H. & Peel, D. (1952) *Without the City Wall.*

houses and rendered it extremely populous, more like a large flourishing town'.¹

Hackney, especially, by this time had become one of the earliest suburban retreats from the City. It was, as Maitland points out in 1753, 'the nearest place in which a man could both live and work in London'.² It was an area within range of the City which offered both an efficient carriage transport and also open fields and villages. So, during the 18th century, many delightful houses came to be built there. But it would appear that Hackney had not become the resort of the aristocracy, who took to the west, but rather of those wealthy merchants and tradesmen, few of whom dared to tread upon the holy western soil of the aristocracy. By the end of the 18th century, a most interesting account of the area appears in the 'Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster' (1794):

"More fields and the neglected villas of Hackney which had once been inhabited by the rich merchants of the 17th Century, had now declined into tenements overrun by the poor."³

This account may well have been considered exaggerated at the time but, on looking back, it could only be criticized as being somewhat premature.

So the exodus from the City continued into the 19th century, with families flocking in ever increasing numbers to the suburbs such as Islington, Barnsbury, Hackney and Stoke Newington. The population of London increased from 865,000 in 1800 to 2 millions in 1837, and, during the same period, the City population fell by 30% to 125,000. (By the end of the century it was to fall to a mere 30,000).

Gradually, by 1835, Stoke Newington saw its population increase almost three-fold from what it had been at the turn of the century. This period saw the development of local domestic trade, the building of schools and, generally, the transformation of the area into a much more lively place in which to live. It was about

this time that Crawshay's Farm, owned by Mr. Crawshay (one of whose daughters married the curate of the Parish, Rev. Augustus Clissold) became Clissold Park, with Clissold House being built in 1830. In 1845, Abney House, the manor on the grounds of Sir Thomas Abney (the Lord Mayor of London in 1700) was pulled down; the grounds having been opened in 1840 as the Abney Park Cemetery.

During the first half of the 19th century, the effects of the overspill from the City were likewise felt much more in Hackney. But, in much the same way as Defoe had pointed out in the 17th century and, in spite of the Ambulator's remarks above, Hackney stood apart, 'with its well-to-do suburban population'.⁴ In this pleasant suburb it was still the wealthier folk who had houses and who drove into town in their own carriages whilst their sons went on horseback. Certainly, at this time, Hackney was well-known both for its extensive market gardens and also for its healthy air and for having the lowest mortality rate (1.674 per 100, in 1839). Locally, the important figure during this period was W.G.T.D. Tyssen, the lord of the manor. He owned not only all the manors of Hackney but also a tremendous amount of demesne lands and estates. The Tyssens were of Dutch origin and had made their wealth during the 17th and 18th centuries. Indeed, already during the 17th century two of the three Holds within the Parish of Hackney had already been acquired by the Tyssens. In 1766, Mary Tyssen had married Captain John Amherst and the name of Tyssen became absorbed into the Amherst family. Still today many places in the locality bear the

(1) *The Ambulator* cf. Bolitho, H. & Peel D. (1952) *Without the City Wall*.

(2) Lipman, V.D. (1954) *Social History of the Jews in England, 1850—1950*.

(3) Margetson, S. (1969) *Regency London*,

(4) Booth, C. (1889) *Life and Labour of the People of London*.

name of either Amherst or Tyssen. But the prophesy of the Ambulator was fast becoming true. By 1821, the 1801 population had almost doubled and, by 1841, it had more than trebled, almost reaching 40,000. And this increase was only slight in comparison with the rate of increase that was to follow!

Ultimately, the areas further north such as Clapton, Tottenham and Stamford Hill too were affected. But during this first half of the 19th century, the influx into Stamford Hill was comparatively minor; somehow reserved for the upper classes only. In 1825, Tottenham extended "in a line for nearly two miles, interspersed with many beautiful gardens and homes, inhabited by numerous families of rank and opulence".¹ In 1831, a direct link from Regent's Park and the West End to Tottenham was made by the laying of the Seven Sisters' Road. Even so, it remained "a rural village whither the Londoners repaired on a summer's evening".²

Clapton at this time, with some of its older houses at the Common dating from about 1800, had "many elegant houses inhabited by wealthy and respectable persons" and was "a situation which was particularly pleasant".³ It was in this district that John Howard, the philanthropist, had been born in the country residence of his wealthy father, an upholsterer of the same name. This mansion, in what is now known as Laura Place, was sold in 1785 to T. Smith, Esq., the lord of the manor of Tottenham. Shortly afterwards it was pulled down. The other significant mansion in Clapton was Brook House. This house had passed through several different hands since the days of Henry VIII in 1538, getting its name from Lord Brooke, its owner in 1689. Pepys,⁴ in his diary, remarks about its wonderful gardens in which, among other things, oranges grew. In 1823 it is, however, listed in the Directory as being occupied by Dr. Munro, "a receiver of insane persons."⁵

19th Century Stamford Hill

BY the early 19th century, Stamford Hill alone stood out from its environs.

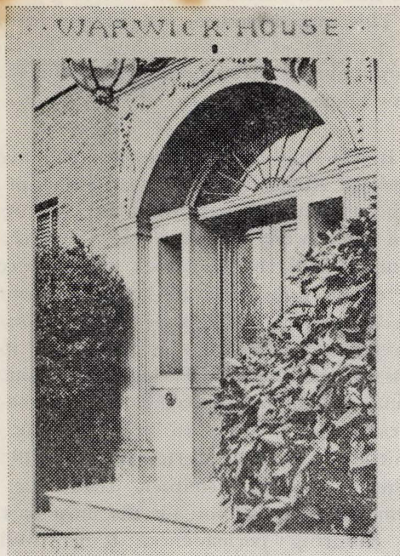
"This beautiful and highly respected village (possessing 'scarcely a shop' and with nearly all its houses having gardens before them) consists principally of genteel private houses, occupied by persons who have trade establishments elsewhere, or who have retired from business altogether. Besides these, there are many families of distinction who have tasteful villas and elegant seats in the immediate vicinity... Indeed, the general appearance of the place is very superior to the greater number of villages around the metropolis."

The above account goes on to describe that,

"the constant succession of carriages of every description (one passing through every ten minutes) not only adds to the convenience of the inhabitants but gives it an air of pleasing animation."⁵

Perhaps a subtle indication of Stamford Hill's 'superiority' is to be seen by the fact that it was then marked by name on a map of *England and Wales*.⁶

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- (1) Pigot, J. & Co. (1825) *London & Provincial New Commercial Directory*.
 - (2) Besant, W. (1909) *London in the Nineteenth Century*.
 - (3) Pigot, J. & Co. (1823—4) *London & Provincial New Commercial Directory*.
 - (4) Kent, W. (1947) *The Lost Treasures of London*.
 - (5) Pigot, J. & Co. (1825) *London & Provincial New Commercial Directory*.
 - (6) Pigot, J. & Co. (1823—4) *London & Provincial New Commercial Directory*, inside cover.



WARWICK HOUSE

It is always difficult to 'imagine exactly what such 'genteel private houses' must have been like. Fortunately, some knowledge of those in Stamford Hill can be furnished. On the map of 1765, four houses are marked as occupying the whole area from the Birdcage Tavern to the apex of that triangle, described earlier. The southernmost house, known as Warwick House, became an Orphan's Asylum in 1844, moving later (some time in the 1860s) to Reedham near Croydon. In the *Jewish Chronicle*¹ it is referred to as 'The Asylum for Fatherless Children' and was under the patronage of the Queen. The Treasurer was Baron Lionel de Rothschild, M.P. and among its main stewards was David Salomons, Esq. M.P., Alderman. The Secretary of this institution was the Rev. Thomas W. Aveling of the Kings and Congregational Church, who died in 1884 at the

age of 44. It had been established as an asylum for orphans irrespective of their race or creed, thus accounting for the unusual 'mixture' of persons on the committee. This house was demolished in 1912, when its place was taken by several smaller houses. Luckily, prior to its demolition, a local antiquarian, F. Bagust, had taken several photographs of the house. Because of the observatory in the garden there is a myth that Sir Isaac Newton once lived there.

Next door to Warwick House, at 132 Stamford Hill, stood a house known as Trenance. Although on one of its lead rain-water pipes the date 1772 appears, this house was built somewhat earlier, about the mid-18th century. The last owner was Mr. Thomas Garland, J.P. who died in 1912. A year later this house too was demolished.

The next house, equally large, was known as Holly Lodge. It was destroyed in 1908 without any photographs having been taken of it. The last of these four houses was named



CEDAR LODGE

(1) *Jewish Chronicle*, 1.1.1864.

Cedar Lodge, after a cedar tree that stood in the grounds and was over 200 years old.

Still on the east side of Stamford Hill, but somewhat further south of these four houses, was a house known as Gothic Hall. This was, until 1908, the residence of Mr. Thomas Windus, F.S.A. On these premises Mr. Windus kept his own museum. In 1908 a request was made to the Victoria & Albert Museum in London to save it from demolition, but without success.

The house par excellence was, no doubt, Craven Lodge. It was situated east of the Turnpike in its own extensive grounds with its 'Leg of Mutton' pond and with springs which discharged themselves into the lane called Spring Hill at Upper Clapton, and from where they ran into the River Lea. Originally the residence of a Mr. Craven, it became in 1854 (and remained for the next sixteen years) the home of that wealthy businessman and leading member of the Nonconformists

who had an obsession with building churches. This was, of course, Mr. Samuel Morley, the architect of the great hosiery business, whose name is still a household word in so many homes today.

It was thus to this 'beautiful and highly respected village' that in the early days of the 19th century a small number of upper class Jews were attracted. It was here, in Stamford Hill, that they took up residence in one of the 'genteel private houses'. No doubt, for the most part, they were simply following a trend already set by a number of upper class citizens generally. Perhaps the significant point is that *they* preferred not to cross the threshold on the west to reside among the Gentile aristocracy. Certainly, as will be shown in the next chapter, their stay in Stamford Hill was not, for the most part, of any enduring permanence. It may well be assumed, therefore, that Stamford Hill was for them but a stepping stone to greener pastures at a later date.

THE BIRTH OF STAMFORD HILL JEWRY

Suburban Jews

EIGHTEENTH Century suburban Jews, generally, were of the upper class, namely having at least three servants. Following the pattern of the wealthy English, their suburban residence would either be a country home, used at week-ends when they would get away from their town house in the City, or else a house in a residential village, bought or rented by them once they had retired.

At this period, some Jews had already alighted upon Hackney. The names of some well-known members of the Jewish community who had settled here, such as Jessurun Alvarez, Da Costa, Moses Alexander and Joseph Montefiore, are to be found mentioned in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.¹ Similarly, there were a number of Jews already resident in Islington. It is also known that Jacob Fernandez Junes was a resident in Stoke Newington in the 18th century, and Robinson² makes reference to a Mr. M. Solomons who lived at Clapton House, Clapton in 1788.

The earliest reference to a Jew in Stamford Hill seems to be in a newspaper dated 1748:

"Arthur Gray and William Roland, the two smugglers, were executed at Tyburn after which the body of Gray was hung in chains on Stamford Hill on the gibbet that the body of a Jew was lately stolen from".³

Since a criminal was left to hang either in the area in which he lived, or in which the alleged crime took place, there is a fair possibility that this Jew was the first to live (and not just to die!) in Stamford Hill. It is likely that his body was removed by other Jews out of respect for Jewish Law which demands that a body of a hanged man should not be

left hanging overnight. This being so, it would also bear evidence to the religious sensitivity at the time which can well be appreciated. Lipman⁴ too speaks of individual Jews being resident in Stamford Hill in the 18th century but does not give any further information.

The local Census Returns could, of course, help to indicate which Jews lived in Stamford Hill in the early 19th century. However, to do thorough research would require a good working knowledge of the etymology of Jewish names, especially since the names of so many Jews could have been of Spanish origin and have been anglicized with the passing of time. Even so, a glance through the Census of 1811 reveals two people possessing such an obviously Jewish name as Cohen and in the 1831 Census too, another person with that name appears. On the basis of the additional information given in these Returns, it would seem that they were all of the upper middle class.

During the 1830s and 1840s it appears, however, that the drift of Jews towards the north east was arrested. Certainly, the movement by the Jews into such areas as Hackney and Islington was small in comparison with the general drift. It would seem that in the 1840s most of the 6,000 Jews who lived away from the City had migrated westward rather than north-eastward.

- (1) Lipman, V.D. (1968) *The Rise of Jewish Suburbia*.
- (2) Robinson, W. (1842) *The History & Antiquities of Hackney, Vol. I*.
- (3) Bagust, F. (1938) *A History of Stamford Hill*.
- (4) Lipman, V.D. (1954) *A Social History of the Jews in England 1850—1950*.

From correspondence in the Jewish Chronicle throughout December 1849, a somewhat different picture seems to emerge. Speaking about the German Hospital at Dalston, it is remarked¹ that, since the opening of the hospital in 1845, thousands of Jews had already been treated there. But, in actual fact, from later accounts and discussions, it becomes clear that most of these patients utilized its services in preference to the London Hospital, where there existed a Jewish Ward, not because they resided near the hospital but because they were of German birth and thus found themselves much better understood there. By the 1840s so few opulent Jews were left in the area that Robinson remarks:

"The village of Hackney was a place selected for retirement by many of that respectable class of society, the Jews, who located here many years ago; but at this time there are very few of that persuasion resident in the Parish".²

One of the Jews who did live there was Mr. Moss Ansell, the Secretary of the Philanthropic Society for Relieving Distressed Widows and Families of the Jewish Persuasion (offices being at 71 Whitechapel Road). In 1851, having lived in Shrubland Road, Dalston, he decided to change his abode. His desire was not, however, to leave Dalston but simply to move to what must have been a more attractive residence at 2 Flora Cottages, Queen's Road, Dalston. In 1854, he is listed as the Hon. Secretary of the Soup Kitchen for the Jewish Poor, a very old established Jewish charitable organisation whose offices were at 31 Leman Street, Goodman's Fields. By 1858 his address (probably his new business address) is given as 5 Houndsditch, but no indication is given as to what his occupation is. Two years later, he was elevated to the post of Vice-President of the Soup Kitchen and by 1865 he had become its President. In 1870, he left the district, setting up home at 48 St.

Luke's Road, Westbourne Park, where two years later he died.

The above is perhaps significant in that it is a very good example of the drift during that period. The opulent relinquished the area by the 1840s and the middle class moved in until, in the 1870s (by which time a tremendous population explosion occurred within the area), they too were moving away.

It is in Robinson too that reference is made to the burial ground in Grove Street, Hackney which belonged to the Jews of the Hambro Synagogue and "which was purchased and appropriated for that purpose about the year 1788".³ A hundred years later, in spite of some concern expressed publicly, this cemetery with its entrance in Lawriston Road, revealed only its unweeded paths and "a certain air of desolation hanging over the thickly set upright stones with their Hebrew inscriptions".³

The Rothschilds and the Goldsmids

IT is in the year 1825 that the local directory⁴ includes, under the heading of 'Gentry and Clergy', two people of particular Jewish interest as residing in Stamford Hill: Mrs. Montefiore and J.N. Rothschild, Esq. The 1831 Hackney Census throws a little more light on the situation by recording as resident in Stamford Hill Road Westside a 'male' of independent means by the name of Rothschild. The house in which this Rothschild lived is referred to as "the first house

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- (1) J.L. *Jewish Chronicle*, 18.12.1849.
 - (2) Robinson, W. (1842) *The History & Antiquities of Hackney, Vol. I.*
 - (3) Besant, W. (1911) *London North of the Thames.*
 - (4) Pigot, J. & Co. (1825). *London & Provincial New Commercial Directory.*

in the Parish".¹ At this time there were no more than 237 inhabited houses in Stamford Hill.

From Mayhew's account of the Jews in 1851, it would seem that the Montefiores and certainly the Rothschilds were resident in Stamford Hill in the 1850s when it was still very much a high class area:

"Of course, a wealthy Jew millionaire-merchant, stock-jobber or stock-broker resides where he pleases, in a villa near the Marquess of Hertford's in the Regent's Park, a mansion near the Duke of Wellington's in Piccadilly, a house and grounds at Clapham or Stamford Hill, but there were exceptions".²

A similar impression is made by Bohn who says:

"The mansion(s) of the Rothschild family and of Sir Isaac Goldsmid are considered most noble and elegant".³

Bohn also refers to the Salomons (possibly Solomons?) as living in Stamford Hill.

Yet, in spite of these accounts, there is no reference in the directories of these mid-century years to the Rothschilds or Montefiores as living in Stamford Hill at this time. The Salomons, referred to by Bohn, may likewise belong only to an earlier period. Certainly, the 1831 Census records a Mr. Abraham Solomons with a total of 3 males, 6 females and 2 maids residing in Stamford Hill.

References of a later date only confirm the existence of wealthy Jews in the vicinity, but give no indication as to when exactly they lived there. F.R.C.S., for example, simply says,

"Among the larger houses standing in their own grounds in Stamford Hill... resided years ago, men who have made themselves famous in the mercantile and financial world... Some of our most opulent Jews, such as Rothschild and Goldsmid and others".⁴

The Dictionary of National Biography, whilst it too is unable to help clarify the time factor, does at least come up with another important point of information. It mentions that the Rothschild who lived in Stamford Hill was in fact Nathaniel Meyer (1777—1836), the very first Rothschild to come to England. The Dictionary remarks that he "removed in middle life from his business premises in New Court to Stamford Hill."⁵ It also indicates that his stay was not of long duration but that subsequently he moved to 107 Piccadilly. The exact location of the Rothschilds' mansion is marked on a map of 1835 but a clearer picture of it can be seen on the map of Tyssen's estate. This site is just north of the present day Dunsmure Road. Nathaniel Meyer Rothschild's name was found in an 1828 Directory by Bagust⁶ but she too has been unsuccessful in establishing the year either of his arrival or his departure from this area.

Nathaniel's sister, Henrietta, married Mr. Abraham Montefiore, the brother of Sir Moses Montefiore, thus complicating the family tree (both Sir Moses Montefiore and Nathaniel Meyer Rothschild had married daughters of the tremendously pious gentleman, Levi Cohen). They lived a few doors south at No. 69. Mrs. Henrietta Montefiore died in 1854 and eventually this house became the property of their grandson, Mr. Claude Montefiore. He turned these premises

(1) *Hackney Census* (1831).

(2) Mayhew, H. (1851) *London Labour and the London Poor*, Vol. 2.

(3) Bohn, (1850) *Pictorial Handbook of London*.

(4) F.R.C.S. (1893) *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney*.

(5) Lee, S. (ed.) (1897) *Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. XLIX.

(6) Bagust, F. (1938) *A History of Stamford Hill*.

into a girls' school, of which Board of Governors he was the Chairman. This was known as Montefiore House. It was only recently that this property was finally demolished and a block of flats, known as Montefiore Court, was erected on the site.

Another of the Montefiores at this time lived, at first, in Queen's Road but later moved to Highbury New Park. If the various donation lists that appeared regularly in issues of the *Jewish Chronicle* are anything to go by, it would seem that Alexander was one of the less affluent members of the family.

Bohn refers to Sir Isaac as the member of the famous Jewish Goldsmid family who resided in Stamford Hill. It was though, Benjamin, his uncle, who was there first and who actually lived in the mansion which only subsequently became the residence of Nathaniel Meyer Rothschild.

Benjamin and his brother Abraham were the leading Jewish bankers at the beginning of the 19th century. Abraham, a very close friend of royalty, was referred to by George III as "My friend Abraham".¹ Of Abraham it was remarked that he had the command of 5 millions, the property of rich Jews and others".²

Benjamin, "a very civil man and not having the least appearance of being a Jew",² had two country homes. Apart from his mansion in Stamford Hill, he also owned a whole estate at Roehampton where one room had been converted for use as a synagogue.

It was at Roehampton that he also allowed wheat to be grown for the Chief Rabbi's unleavened bread for Passover. He was a personal friend of Pitt. He married a Miss Solomons of Clapton, possibly the daughter of Mr. Solomons, the 'overseer of the Hambro cemetery', already referred to. Unfortunately, his was an unhappy marriage in spite of his six children. Ultimately, in 1808, he took his life.

So, gradually, Hackney, Clapton and Stamford Hill, favourite suburban localities of the Jews of the early 19th century, lost their opulent upper class members of the Jewish community, all of whom could be said to have belonged to the Anglo-Jewish aristocracy. Whether in fact Mayhew was still justified in speaking in 1851 of Stamford Hill as the home of millionaire Jews is a little dubious. Certainly, its heyday, its attraction for the upper classes was declining. In their place were to come, in ever increasing numbers and well before the mass migration of the Russian and Polish Jews of the 1880s/1890s, an influx of middle-class Jews. To see why this was so, it is necessary to continue by looking at the development of London Jewry from the middle of the 19th century.

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- (1) 'The Goldsmids and the Rothschilds', *Jewish Chronicle* 18.1.1901.
 - (2) Greig, J. (Ed.) (1928) *The Diary of Joseph Farington (1793-1821) Vol. VI.*
 - (3) Greig, J. (Ed.) (1928). *Ibid.*

THE END OF ONE ERA — THE BEGINNING OF ANOTHER

The United Synagogue

BY the middle of the 19th century, there were approximately 5,000 Upper Class, 8,000 Middle Class, and the enormous number of some 12,000 Lower Class Jews, many of whom suffered bitterly from the straits of poverty. However, the middle classes were emerging as the largest section of the Jews and, consequently, they were to play a much more significant part within the recognised structure of the Jewish community.

The second half of the 19th century saw a further consolidation of the various Anglo-Jewish institutions but it also saw the gradual weakening of the hold that the aristocratic Jews had over them — a hold that had existed for almost two hundred years. With the decline of the City as a residential area, the support received by the three great city synagogues waned. Already, by 1860, there had been an attempt (although unsuccessful) by the Hambro to amalgamate with the Great since it was no longer a viable financial concern. Those at the helm had the foresight to appreciate that the prestige of the Anglo-Jewish leaders was in a critical position. It was inevitable, if the drift from the City continued (and there were no signs to the contrary), that attempts would be made to set up secessionist synagogues in other areas. Such attempts, especially if successful, could only further weaken the control of the City synagogues and of their lay leaders over the community at large.

So on the 14th July 1870 what might well seem to have been a compromise step was taken. By an Act of Parliament, 'confirming a scheme of the Charity Commissioners for the Jewish United Synagogues', the City synagogues would in the future not only allow but, in many instances positively assist

in the building of new synagogues. In return for this financial aid and for other benefits to be gained by admittance to the United Synagogue, a new synagogue would, however, have to give up much of its own authority. It would have to acknowledge the overall jurisdiction of the United Synagogue. The prudence of such a move proved itself as time went on. Not only did it mean that with each new synagogue the United Synagogue became stronger instead of weaker, but also, when the Hambro Synagogue closed in 1893 and the New synagogue in 1906, and the Great Synagogue stood alone, the establishment was able to continue without suffering any ill-effects.

Immigration

FROM 1850 the tide of Jewish immigrants from Central and Western Europe began to flow steadily. Those from Central Europe were, for the most part, of the middle classes but the Russian and Polish Jews were of very meagre means indeed. More Jews had by now settled in such areas as Holborn, Finsbury and Bishopsgate, but generally speaking the trend had been that of the rich going to the West End and the poor to the East End. It was to this latter area that the concentration of immigrants came, finding there many of their country-folk who had come over some years before. It was there that numerous Jews were able to continue the occupations which they had known on the Continent. In the 1860s and 1870s, as this steady influx grew, the immigrants opened their own small synagogues. These Jews were, for the most part, more religiously inclined than those anglicized Jews whose roots were already deeply embedded in this country. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, complaints were made about

the 'state of irreligiousness prevailing among thousands of our co-religionists at the east side of Aldgate'.¹ For this state of affairs, blame was apportioned to the Jewish Ministers, who were appointed on the basis of their singing capacity only and to the absence of educational facilities and/or sufficient synagogues. Such criticisms were, however, being voiced more against the well-established Jews than against the immigrants; against those who belonged to the 'intelligent orthodoxy'; against those who made a 'mad rush out of the synagogue immediately after Yom Kippur — profaning the Ma'ariv'.²

Jewish Life in the East End

IT should be realized, though, that for many of these Jews life was 'difficult'. Already in the 18th century not only had their living conditions been extremely poor but the physical abuse meted out to them was also terrible. "It was common practice for the boys to get together and pelt a Jew".³

A Gentile resident in the East End at the time had this to say:

"I have seen many Jews hooted, hunted, kicked, cuffed, pulled by the beard, spat upon or so barbarously assaulted in the streets, without any protection from the passers-by or the police. Dogs could not now be used in the streets in the manner many Jews are treated".³

Mayhew too speaks about the anti-semitism prevalent in the 18th century:

"... popular feeling ran very high against the Jews, although to the masses they were almost strangers".⁴

They were accused of being engaged in almost every 'disreputable trade' and whilst Mayhew does not absolve the Jews entirely from blame, he does admit, "the wholesale prejudice against them was absurd"⁴ Under such conditions, the less affluent Jews of the East End had engaged themselves

in wholesale and retail trades. About the mid-19th century, however, many were forced out of business by the Irish and emigrated to (what they hoped would be) the greener fields of California.

It is from Mayhew's conversations with various Jews during this period that it is possible to form a more detailed impression of their religious affiliation. For example, of the Dietary Laws (regarded undisputedly as of fundamental importance by most Jews) a Jew at that time said:

"I am no bigot; indeed, I do not care where I buy my meat, so long as I can get it... without looking to see how it was killed or whether it has a seal on it or not."⁴

Mayhew also points out that many of the Jews did not eat anything on their rounds during the day; not because of their concern to observe the Dietary Laws but because 'they are afraid of losing a deal'.⁴ Perhaps the truth is that there were varying shades of observance. Certainly a number, whilst willing to eat non-Kosher food, did not seek to do this blatantly: Thus, many single men, after a day's work, would go to an 'eating house' which was Jewish but,

"If no one is looking, they creep into a Christian cook-shop, not being particular about eating 'tryfer'.⁴

This Jewish 'conscience' (some might say hypocrisy) affected their attitude to Sabbath observance too. Hence, those who did not keep the Sabbath would "meet in some secret back place and... gamble away the morning and the greater part of the afternoon."⁴

(1) Louis Davidson, *Jewish Chronicle*, 17.5.1861.

(2) *Jewish Chronicle*, 30.9.1881.

(3) Besant, W. (1902) *London in the Eighteenth Century*.

(4) Mayhew, H. (1851) *London Labour and the London Poor*, Vol. II.

This play would go on until the conclusion of the Sabbath, after which they would either go to business or to the theatre. It would thus certainly seem that there was a great reluctance — even by the non-committed — to profane the Sabbath openly.

Traditional sentiment had its place too. Thus, Mayhew noted:

"On a Saturday, there's cold fish for breakfast and supper; indeed, a Jew would pawn the shirt off his back sooner than go without his fish."¹

Of those who did attend the synagogue on the Sabbath, whilst some were quite devout, most paid little attention during the service. The main complaint was that "there is a buzzing talk among the attendants during the ceremony"¹; a malaise which is still manifest in many synagogues.

Regard for religion and conformity to its requirements was really then more a result of a blind observance, void of any fundamental understanding. "Can I speak Hebrew?"¹ a boy repeated rhetorically when asked about his religion. "Well, I know what you mean. Oh, no I can't. I don't go to the synagogue; I haven't time. My father goes, but only sometimes... Pork! Ah. No. I never touched it; I'd as soon eat a cat, so would my father. No Sir. I don't think pork smells nice in a cook-shop; but some Jew boys, as I know, think it does! I don't know why it shouldn't be eaten, only that it's wrong to eat it." Another young Jewish girl neither knew who the Chief Rabbi was nor what the difference was between the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim. "They are Jews by the accident of their birth, as others in the same way with equal ignorance, are Christians."¹

Yet, for all this, some observances were kept then by the irreligious which today, even very few of the moderately religious

keep. Thus, not only did they all observe Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, but also Tisho B'ov the fast in commemoration of the destruction of the Temple.

Of the Jews at this time, a somewhat remarkable observation made was that they were not interested in politics.

"Perhaps there is no people in the world, possessing the average amount of intelligence in busy communities, who care so little for politics as the general body of the Jews. When such is the feeling of the comparatively wealthier Jews, no one can wonder that I found among the Jewish street sellers... a perfect indifference to politics."¹

It would seem, however, from the columns of the Jewish Chronicle of that period, that this was not the general trend. On the contrary, there were even many Jews who were very much 'politically minded' when it came to dealing with their own communal affairs.

As to the relationship between the rich and the poor Jews, this was somewhat of an ambivalent nature. Certainly, there were many charitable organisations, sponsored by the rich, which sought to help the poor to stand on their own feet. Indeed, it was a recognised fact that:

"The Jewish charities are highly honourable to the body, for they allow none of their people to live or die in a parish workhouse."¹

But, at the same time, the wealthier classes were also deeply concerned about the undesirable repercussions the ever increasing flow of immigration might have. Thus, they tended to seek ways to discourage Jews from settling in England. They tried to influence them to make good either in their own countries or to use England only as a 'half-way house' and to settle finally in America. The overcrowding of the East End, an issue of major concern, was but one of the problems caused by immigration.

(1) Mayhew, H. (1851) *London Labour and the London Poor*, Vol. II.

The massive tide of immigration took place in the 1880s and 1890s as a result of the Russian pogroms and continued until 1905 when the Immigration Act was passed. By then, some 100,000 Jews had settled in England, the vast majority finding a home in the East End. These 'foreign' Jews caused much embarrassment to the anglicised elite who sought their assimilation into the English way of life as quickly as possible. Whereas in 1837 there were some 20,000 Jews in London, in 1882 the number had reached 46,000. Of these, some 42 per cent were middle class and 19 per cent lower class. Of the remainder 14.6 per cent were the elite but the very poor account for almost 25 per cent. There were now descendants of the original Sephardi Jewish settlers and descendants of the other 'original' Jews in London but there were also large numbers of Russian, Polish and German Jews. By 1888 the population of London Jewry had reached 70,000 and, by 1914, this number had more than doubled.

Yet it was even before there were any signs of this steep increase that a pronounced concern was shown for the overcrowding of the East End. "E.H.", in commending the wealthy Jews for their generosity, says that they are, however, overlooking the housing problems. He suggests that they should undertake to provide dwellings in much the same way as the Peabody Trust was doing.

"What of those... who cannot manage to pay the rent of a healthy dwelling and consequently are obliged to live in the over-crowded East End?"¹

he asks. A year later the matter was again brought to the attention of the public.

"Were it not for the once a week Sabbath cleaning and once a year Passover cleaning... their homes would be hotbeds of disease. There are no longer to be found many decent private residences in and around the City. It is no wonder that they turn to gambling to vent their animal spirits."²

And so the discussion continued, culminating in the *Jewish Chronicle* itself demanding that this matter be dealt with.

It is interesting to note that such a remark as that above gives an indication of the more positive religious attitude of the East End residents. Indeed, so it was with these immigrants. Unfortunately though, in time, many of these too would be caught in the net of assimilation. These Jews, law-abiding, industrious and orderly, possessed the pressing desire to become established — to release themselves from the ghetto and from all that it stood for. To achieve these goals, they were willing to compromise with their religion and thus many showed few qualms about moving further afield. Many, however, did not follow any such drift. Either because of their economic plight or because of their strong religious affiliation, they were destined to remain behind in the East End.

So the problem of overcrowding in the East End got worse. The Jewish problem was that there were, by 1901, 150,000 Jews in the United Kingdom of whom 120,000 were in London and of whom 100,000 of these were in Whitechapel and the neighbourhood.

"In the interests of Anglo-Jewry as a whole... the decentralisation of East End Jewry is most urgently demanded ... The Jewish problem is the East End problem."

Before looking at how the Jews helped themselves to 'drift' towards the north-east and to Stamford Hill, it is necessary to see how changes within the environment itself were assisting this process.

(1) E.H. *Jewish Chronicle*, 7.4.1871.

(2) *Dwellings of the Poor*, *ibid*, 19.1.1872.

NORTH-EAST LONDON IN TRANSITION

THE gradual drift away from the City regions before the 1850s took a much more rapid turn in the second half of the 19th century. Islington, so close to the City, saw its population jump from 95,000 in 1851 to 216,000 in 1871. Twenty years later it stood at 320,000. Hackney too saw a rapid development. Its population rose from 38,000 in 1861 to 125,000 ten years later, and to 199,000 by 1891. This increase was also in spite of its concern, subsequent to the Sanitary Act, to limit its number of occupants. It is, perhaps, not surprising therefore that when two new boroughs were created by the Act of 1867, that Hackney should have been one of them. The transformation of the area was such that "where once great houses stood, the squalor and congestion were appalling."¹ As a consolation, Hackney had, at least, clung on to its low death rate; 20 per 1,000 in the 1860s.

With the building of the railways, new and vast opportunities for migration had presented themselves to the less wealthy classes. One of the earliest areas to develop rapidly as a result of this lay north of Stamford Hill. In 1852, the only railway north of the city was that which linked it with Edmonton. By 1872, the railway had been completed at Tottenham, slightly south of Edmonton, and the population there increased in the space of the next twenty years from 89,000 to 192,000. Gradually this easier access turned Tottenham into a fast developing working-class suburb which, like other areas such as Dalston and Walthamstow, had come to contain "many miles of small houses to accommodate an immense number of clerks."²

By 1869, the railway had come to Finsbury Park on the west of Stamford Hill and to

Dalston, south of it. As the population figures show, the increase in the 1870s and 1880s was most pronounced and this tendency of the working-classes to migrate there was accelerated by the provision of a cheap workman's fare of 1d. on the Dalston Junction to Broad Street line. By 1886, Hackney had the second largest co-operative society in the country.

Stoke Newington too was rapidly changing its image, becoming by the 1880s/1890s a new predominantly working-class suburb. By 1891, its population had more than doubled from 17,000 (1881) to 37,500. Ten years later Stoke Newington was providing purpose-built tenement flats.

The North London Railway, completed in 1865, saw the creation of a station at Highbury, as well as at Dalston Junction, Canonbury and Barnsbury. Highbury, however, secured for itself a slightly longer lease of life by having fortified its middle-class image through the building of a number of villas during the 1850s and 1860s. The spacious Highbury New Park too was laid out in 1859. In allocating stars to various areas, Zangwill³ accredits South Hackney with 2, Hackney with 3, Dalston with 4, and Highbury with 5. In fact,

"the Northern part of the district from Islington to Stamford Hill and from Holloway to Balls Pond and Canonbury provided the best example

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- (1) Hibbert, C. (1964) *The Biography of a City*.
 - (2) Besant, W. (1909) *London in the Nineteenth Century*.
 - (3) Booth, C. (1902) *London Life and Labour, Series III, Vol. I*.

of London middle-class life and of the religious and social influences to which it was subject”¹

during the latter part of the 19th century. No doubt, according to Zangwill’s classification, Clapton would have merited 4, and Stamford Hill 5 stars.

However, even Stamford Hill was not totally immune from the effect of the vast migration out of the City and its surrounding areas. By the 1880s, “the solid blocks of buildings had reached Hampstead, Highgate ...and Stamford Hill, strongholds of the middle-class.”²

Of Stamford Hill it was said that,

“If the traveller looks well about him, he may discern a few old oak and elm trees yet, who with their companions, long since cut down to clear the ground for building, and other purposes, made this a beautiful hanging wood; and from this summit (no doubt a few feet higher than it is now) a splendid view of London as it was then could be obtained.”³

Times had changed. Nostalgically, F.R.C.S. continued:

“This much I confess with regret, that Stamford Hill is not as it once was; other spots not nearly so healthy and often not nearly so picturesque are now the homesteads of the children of those who thought our parish good enough.”

But, if times had changed, they had certainly not changed to the extent that Stamford Hill had lost all its attractions. It was still lined by good middle-class shops and the general appearance was still picturesque.

Large houses were still to be found on either side of Stamford Hill and also mansions in their own extensive grounds. Stand-

ing near what is today Ravensdale Road, Besant had this to say of the area:

“We feel we have got to the end of the world or at any rate to the extreme edges of London — as we stand on the broken heights of green grass and see the sudden drop in the ground which runs away to the stealthily flowing river (the River Lea) and beyond it again the shimmering sheets of water belonging to one of the great water companies, edged with stiff Lombardy poplars.”⁴

The Echo too recorded:

“The bathing place on the backwater of the Lea beneath the slopes of Upper Clapton, is still frequented although it does not present so animated a scene as it did in the bygone days... the view over the Lea Valley from the heights of the mellow old-fashioned suburb of Clapton is not inferior in its way to that of classic Richmond Hill itself.”³

Thus, although only a stone’s throw away from Tottenham, where the population had jumped in two decades from 89,000 to 192,000 Stamford Hill was still sufficiently isolated to be thought of as “the edge of the world”; as one of the best examples of London middle-class life; as a wonderful place in which to live. In spite of the rapid development of its environs, it had managed to hold its own. Eventually it would, however, have to yield and, already towards the end of the 19th century, signs of such a decline were notice-

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- (1) Booth, C. (1902) *London Life and Labour*, Series III, Vol. 1.
 - (2) Hibbert, C. (1964) *The Biography of a City*.
 - (3) F.R.C.S. (1893) *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney*.
 - (4) Besant, W. (1911) *London North of the Thames*.

able. At Portland Avenue, large houses gave way to smaller ones and the grounds and estate, once belonging to Mr. Arthur Craven, were unruly, unkempt and little more than a wilderness.

Even before the ultimate change occurred, a significant change had resulted with the influx of the middle classes. Whereas, in by-gone days, these residences were country homes — visited either at week-ends or lived in after retirement by the upper classes — they now became the sole residences of their owners, since (apart from other factors) it was

possible for them to live away from their business premises. In time, this was to result in the arrival of working-class residents too. As for the Jews, precipitating social and economic factors alone would not, in all cases, act as sufficient motivation to induce them to move. Religious motives had to be taken into consideration. Thus, only after considering all these factors — the social, economic and religious ones — would it be correct to suggest an explanation as to why the exodus of East End Jews resulted in many of them settling in Stamford Hill.

AND SO TO STAMFORD HILL

Economic Factors

FROM the middle of the 19th century, the migration of the Jews north east of London and to Stamford Hill could really best be described in the manner that the Rev. D. Wasserzug spoke of Highbury:

"Its suburban charm began to attract a constant drip-drip of Jewish Immigrants, which soon grew into a steady stream and ultimately into a copious flood."¹

Dalston and Canonbury were, in fact, regarded as the first step upwards for the Whitechapel Jews. After the 1870s, horse tramways offered the cheapest fares and with a general rise in incomes during the 80s and 90s, the 'clothing Jews' headed for the north east. As more and more immigrants invaded the East End, so more and more of the older established Jews moved out.

There was, however, the problem of where they should live. It was with this in mind that, at a later date, the Four Per Cent Industrial Dwellings Company (both Lord Rothschild and Mr. Charles Samuel were on the Board) began building tenement flats in parts of north east London. In Dalston, the Navarino Mansions were erected in 1903, in what was termed "a highly respectable neighbourhood with wide roads and open spaces",² and in Stoke Newington too, tenement flats and shops had been erected. In a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*³ Louis Conrad of Tottenham expressed his opinion that if it were to be possible to influence the movement of Jews from their insanitary quarters, then it had to be shown to them that living accommodation elsewhere would be no more expensive. Subsequently, he outlined his scheme to build 300 cottages, each to be rented at 8/6d. a week. Sir Samuel Montagu

too appreciated the housing problem and had offered land of his own, in Edmonton, to the London County Council, provided that dwellings would be built upon it for the working-class Jew and Gentile alike of Whitechapel.

But for many of the residents in the East End, economic factors were not always a major consideration. As explained by 'Sapphire' in 1871:

The rent they pay for what I call dens, would be almost sufficient to rent a whole house in the suburbs of London. There are numerous small houses in Old Ford, Hackney, etc. in excellent condition. But I am acquainted with many poor Jewish persons who would rather live and die in the dirty and unhealthy dwellings they now inhabit, than in a Belgravian mansion, on the grounds that their homes are associated with pleasant memories."⁴

Others expressed feelings of apprehension about the migration to the north east.

"Already there are ripenings in Edmonton, Tottenham and Walthamstow, as vile a set of slums as are to be found anywhere."⁵

It was argued that Jews should be encouraged not to overcrowd the suburbs but rather to spread further afield into the country. But, generally, the north east of London was the area to which migration was encouraged. In

(1) Wasserzug, D. *The Dalston Synagogue*, *Jewish Chronicle*, 31.8.1906.

(2) *Ibid*, 6.2.1903.

(3) *Ibid*, 22.3.1901.

(4) *Jewish Dwellings*, *Jewish Chronicle*, 28.4.1871.

(5) Prag, J. *Housing Problem*, *Ibid*, 22.3.1901

1904, at the 19th ordinary meeting of the Four Per Cent Industrial Dwellings Co. Ltd., Lord Rothschild explained their purpose in building more and more flats in north east London as a positive attempt to improve the dwelling conditions of the Jews in the East End.

The Synagogue

ALTHOUGH it was said that "business and professional considerations, even the vulgar considerations of *house rent* (absurd as that trifling consideration may seem to rich men) may oblige or induce a man to reside in a neighbourhood where there is no synagogue",¹ nevertheless it was also recognised that many Jews would only select their residences in vicinities where there were synagogues. Consequently, it was propagated that synagogues be established in all areas in which Jews lived and that their erection should not come only after large numbers of the residents there had decided to clamour for one themselves. Summing up the importance of the Synagogue a hundred years ago, the Jewish Chronicle wrote:

"The Synagogue is the *heart* of Judaism. Thither flow the streams of its life blood to impart to it its genial animating heat, and its active motion; thence flow the streams of life blood that shall percolate and circulate through the whole system in every great artery and minor vein, in every part to keep alive and at work the whole organization, and make the Jewish Community what Judaism is itself — a living fact."²

In 1886, when Samuel Montagu laid the foundation stone at the consecration of the New German Synagogue, Spital Square, he said:

"I consider it my duty to promote the erection of synagogues, not only because it is a way by which to correct the falling number of Sabbath attend-

ances but more so because it was the destiny of the Jews to be scattered all over the world and all over the cities ... and one mode for dispersing them would be found in the establishment of synagogues in every locality."³

He criticized Lord Rothschild, who maintained that there was a superabundance of synagogues, for refusing to be present at the opening.

Over the years, the importance attached to the Synagogue developed, as can be seen from correspondence almost 30 years later. In a letter by Nathaniel Louis Cohen, the opinion is voiced that,

"the two influences which are most helpful in stimulating the immigration of Jews from the congested districts in London are facilities for *religious worship* and facilities for *religious teaching*."⁴

In reply to this letter, Leonard B. Franklin explained that the United Synagogue seemed to be coming round to the opinion that,

"synagogue and religion classes established in the suburbs form the nucleus of the Jewish settlement to which more and more families migrate."⁵

By the turn of the century, the Dispersion Committee too was stressing that the acceleration of the process of decentralisation of the Jews "will largely be effected by the provision of sufficient religious facilities."⁶ That the Synagogue should indeed have been considered of significance was no doubt also due to the fact that the latter half of the 19th

(1) *The Synagogue Question, Part I.* Jewish Chronicle, 23.2.1872

(2) Jewish Chronicle, 26.4.1872.

(3) *German Synagogue*, Ibid, 22.1.1886.

(4) *U.S. Expansion*, Jewish Chronicle, 17.2.1899.

(5) Ibid, 24.2.1899.

(6) *Dispersion*, Ibid, 21.10.1904.

century saw the dispersal of many Jews who were not of the original 'English' stock. These were later arrivals from Central and Eastern Europe and were more religiously inclined.

It should be possible to get some impression of the religious standards of the Jews at this time by looking, for example, at the goings-on in the German Hospital. In the 1880s, about 10 per cent of the patients there were Jewish. When it was discovered that attempts were being made by the Conversionist Society to "entrap the Jewish sick",¹ so strong was the outcry that a few weeks later it had to be announced that "strict orders have been given not to admit this person (the missionary involved) any more and to guard against similar intrusion."² In 1894, the German Hospital was in the news again when, contrary to the understanding that it was to be a non-sectarian hospital, it seemed to be propagating "Protestant Christianity". It was alleged that,

"In the case of Mr. Freudenberger, a very pious old Jew, they went to the extreme course of depriving him of his Arbang Kanfaus and of his prayer book, substituting for those a Protestant Bible."³

Furthermore, a Mr. Philip Greenspan had visited this man when he was dying and had been begged by the patient to intercede with the authorities to take away the cross that hung over his bedside. This intercession was of no avail. However, this incident sparked off other complaints. It was reported that a servant girl, who had said her master was Jewish, had been turned away and also that only the German Hospital had not replied satisfactorily to a letter of enquiry sent to all the 'foreign' hospitals in London. The religious sensitivity of the Jews did not allow matters to rest. A massive public meeting with the hospital authorities was held and it was decided that Jewish support should be transferred to the Metropolitan Hospital. To-

wards the end of that year, however, the matter was put right and, by the 1900s, the percentage of Jewish patients had grown from 10 to 25. Unlike the indifference of earlier Jews, these 'foreign' Jews showed sufficient concern to ensure that provision for Kosher food was made and on December 11th 1900 a kosher kitchen was opened in the German Hospital.

Migration to North London

BY 1872, the first flight of our Jewish citizen fathers from their old homes around the Synagogues to the thickly populated suburbs of the north of London' is recorded. This 'flight' went eastwards, through Balls Pond Road, Hoxton and Dalston towards sober Kingsland and solemn Hackney... to the Green Lanes of Stoke Newington. From the issues of the Jewish Chronicle during the latter half of the nineteenth century, a picture of some of those early immigrants and where they lived in north east London during this period can be built up. Many of those who had moved (as is evident from reports in the Jewish Press), were well-known Jewish personalities and it is significant that, in spite of the positions they may have held in the Jewish community, they should have moved to areas where there were no synagogues.

The first synagogue to be established in Islington grew out of a minyan (a private place of worship with at least ten gentlemen) held initially in Upper Street in 1861. Two years later, a room was taken at Barnsbury Hall and in 1865 its promoters announced:

"Preliminary arrangements have been made to ensure sufficient maintenance

(1) *German Hospital*, Jewish Chronicle, 29.10.1880.

(2) *German Hospital*, *Ibid*, 12.11.1880.

(3) *German Hospital*, *Ibid*, 23.2.1894.

of a synagogue in the locality with an increasing number of Jewish residents.”¹

The above synagogue followed the Minhag of the Ashkenazim. Five months later it was announced:

“There is already a synagogue in North London, a fact the majority of the North London Jews are probably not aware of, erected by S.N. Andrade on his own grounds at Spencer House, Essex Road.”²

This synagogue followed the Sephardi ritual. As is evident from a letter written by Mr. Andrade himself,³ the number attending could only have been small, since he appeals to *all* Jews to come and pray there. By the end of 1866, a request was made for a synagogue to be built in Thornhill Road, Islington and just seven months later it was announced that a synagogue to cater for 700 persons would be completed by 1st March 1868.

The intention at the time was that the synagogue should be built to supply the numerous (although not wealthy) Jewish residents with the long-needed accommodation on Sabbaths and Festivals. For the most part, these Jews were not religiously committed. They arrived late at the synagogue:

“We cannot approve of a practice pursued in the synagogue — the late arrival of the congregation... (who) disturb the devotion of the older worshippers by marching into the synagogue after the Scrolls of the Law have been carried out to be read.”⁴

In 1880, they decided to modify the ritual — the Maaravos would no longer be recited on the holidays, with some of the congregants complaining that the service was too long. This point met with little sympathy from others, who retorted:

“The complaint is that all the day is gone before the worshippers leave synagogue, and this complaint is made

regardless of another fact, that all the day is gone before the worshippers enter the synagogue!”⁵

The Jewish Chronicle had this to say of the situation:

“In this neighbourhood — a tendency of the Jews—is really Nothingarianism or Indifferentism and if it were not for the existence of a synagogue matters would have been even worse.”⁶

Unfortunately, the intention to open a Jewish school in the area was scotched. In spite of some concern for such a school, by 1876, the committee had decided that there was no necessity for one. Perhaps the prevailing attitude is well summed up by “A Jewish Resident in the North of London”, when he says,

“I think it is time to put a stop to such movements for establishing schools which are exclusively Jewish...”⁷

The attempt met further opposition in June 1880 when a bitter attack was launched by a person calling himself ‘educationalist’. But such negativism was not shared by all. The Hon. Secretary, Herbert Bentwich, stated that over 100 applications had been received for such a school in one week.

“I will not do your readers such injustice to suppose that because this gentleman signs himself ‘Educationalist’, they will assume any more importance to his denunciations than if he had adopted the pseudonym of say ‘ignoramus’, for that he surely is,”⁸ he declared.

It is from correspondence that it becomes apparent that religious education was

(1) Jewish Chronicle, 10.3.1865.

(2) Hurwitz, Z. Ibid, 11.8.1865.

(3) Andrade, S. Ibid, 18.8.1865.

(4) Ibid, 4.8.1871.

(5) Ibid, 1.3.1872.

(6) Ibid, 12.4.1872.

(7) Ibid, 9.1.1880.

(8) Ibid, 11.6.1880.

thought of as belonging to the poor only and that the middle classes had some sort of licence to ignore their religious duties. This unsatisfactory situation is commented upon by another 'Educationalist' who wrote:

"If daily and graduated instruction in Hebrew and religious subjects is indispensable for the children of the poorer classes who attend our communal institutions, what alternative method exists ready to our hands for the religious education of those belonging to a higher social grade? Till this is done, the religious training and education of the very bone and sinew of the community must remain as at present, lamentably deficient."¹

In 1884, the argument was being put forward that even if parents could not see the need for Jewish schools, the community had to do its duty and provide them, "to avert the irreligion and want of faith into which the next generation are surely drifting".² The counter argument to this had been that it was wrong to force the minority opinion upon the majority, a wonderful analogy being made with the juryman who was asked if the jury had reached a decision. He replied, "No, my lord, those other eleven man are all so obstinate."³ The question of education and social class was again brought before the public eye when the Jewish Chronicle forcefully argued that Public Jewish Schools were needed only in neighbourhoods where there was a large population of poor Jews.

In 1886, Religion Classes were established and it is this year which is spoken of as seeing 'the new birth', the year from which the synagogue was no longer just a place of worship but also a place where religious and Hebrew instruction was to be given.

The desire of a synagogue to come within the fold of the United Synagogue usually indicated that it sought some financial benefit.

It was in January 1877 that the North London Synagogue discussed this matter — but expressed disapproval with the two-tier system of privileged and non-privileged members. "There should not be any distinction in a place of worship",⁴ declared Mr. Hart. Later, when it was decided to join, there was a further complication. The treasurer and a trustee of the synagogue, Mr. Lee, refused to sign the transfer of the property to the United Synagogue. It was only in the following year that the matter was finally resolved and a Mr. W. Flatau became one of the synagogue's four delegates to the United Synagogue.

The community's decline seems to set in about the last decade or so of the 19th century. In 1887, the United Synagogue cut down its payment for the weekday Minyan Men (the existence of which in itself is a poor reflection) and, in 1889, it was finally decided that since there was no desire to have a school in the area, the trustees should give the money collected for that purpose to some other cause.

As to the Sephardi Synagogue in Essex Road, this became known in 1866 as the Mildmay Park Synagogue and, in 1883, it moved to Canonbury. A year later Andrade's Minyan closed and the 200 Sephardim in North London had to move into a temporary synagogue at 39 Mildmay Park, using classrooms at the North London Collegiate School. This same temporary site was still in use 21 years later.

(1) Jewish Chronicle, 11.6.1880.

(2) Ibid, 25.11.1884.

(3) Ibid, 2.12.1881.

(4) Ibid, 26.1.1877.

Dalston

IN 1874, there were 200 Jewish families living near Dalston Junction. Services had been held at Colveston House, Ridley Road, until a synagogue was opened in Birkbeck Road in that year. This came about as a result of a meeting held at Mr. Jacob Van Den Bergh's house, 112 Graham Road, at which it was decided that,

"Without a doubt a synagogue of some sort is required in this thickly populated district of well-to-do Jews having a long walk to a synagogue and thus resulting in many not going at all."¹

Two years later, it moved to Mildmay Road, in spite of opposition. A letter written by H. Joseph sums up well the feeling prevalent then among many.

"All who have Jewish interests at heart must have learnt with regret that under the name of the Dalston Synagogue a new place of worship is intended to be erected in the neighbourhood to compete with that of North London."

The letter goes on to complain that the district is neither wealthy nor populated enough to support two synagogues and that, consequently, it must be evident that,

"the rearing of that structure will be inevitably followed by the disintegration and decay of the two places of worship."²

In that year (1876), it had applied to be admitted to the United Synagogue but was advised that such an application was premature; in 1881, it tried again. This time the United Synagogue told the Dalston Synagogue that it would be welcomed but only as soon as adequate support from the public locally had been promised. In 1884, it was thought that perhaps the New Synagogue would transfer itself to Dalston, but this was strongly opposed. Eventually, in May 1884,

it was decided that the temporary synagogue at 120 Mildmay Road, Mildmay Park, was no longer suitable. If necessary, they would go it alone. Consequently, in 1885, the Dalston Synagogue purchased a site in Poets Road to where it moved in the same year. The rest of its history followed very much the same pattern as the North London. Hebrew Classes were established in 1886 and, by 1890, it was remarked that a number of congregants arrived terribly late because, "those holding religious views of an easy accommodating nature viewed the morning service with little accord."³ It is important to note, though, that another element is said to have arrived late because, being "strictly orthodox", they davened shachris at home (said the early prayers at home). The year 1895 saw complaints about lack of decorum and by 1900 an indication that many did not attend on Shabbos was obvious because there was a need for overflow services to be held on High Holidays. Even the physical amenities seemed to be deficient, the complaint being that there was very poor ventilation and that since 1885 three deaths had occurred during Divine Service!

Hackney

HACKNEY was the next area in which a Jewish community established itself. There had actually been a Minyan in Hackney Road since 1862, but it was almost twenty years later (1881) that an announcement appeared saying that Friday night services were to be held at 43 Darnley Road, Mare Street. This was very much as a consequence of many of the Jewish residents in the neighbourhood of South Hackney and Victoria Park, all without proper synagogue accommodation, being unable to get a seat at

(1) Jewish Chronicle, 15.5.1874.

(2) Ibid, 18.6.1875.

(3) Ibid, 28.2.1890.

the Hand in Hand Asylum on the New Year. Once again this need for an 'overflow service' was indicative of the very low religious commitment of these Jews. Perhaps this accounts for the slow progress made in establishing a permanent synagogue in that area. In 1885, the South Hackney Synagogue moved to Mildmay Road, where it took over the premises previously used by the Dalston Synagogue. It was not, however, until 1889 that any thought of permanency was discussed. Then possibilities of association with the Federation (and later, in 1894, with the United Synagogue) were explored. Only in 1895, was it proposed to build a synagogue in Devonshire Road, Mare Street, "in a district thickly populated by the better class of Jewish working man."¹ This was finally opened in 1897. No doubt the fact that this population consisted mainly of working-class Jews was also a reason why it took so long to establish a permanent synagogue there.

Certainly, the community was short of funds and, by 1899, was already requesting financial concessions from the United Synagogue. In 1904, what was termed an 'innovation' took place, namely the holding of a dinner to raise funds.

Stoke Newington

IN 1883, the need for a synagogue in what is today the heart of Dalston was seen and it was thought that the wisest step would be to move the Hambro Synagogue to Mildmay Park. The leader in the Jewish Chronicle suggested that the New Synagogue should be removed to Dalston. It argued that the only possible reason for objection was one of sentimentality, that "it has a past and, for the sake of the memories of the past, it should be allowed to live on."² But was this logical, the leader continued,

"It is an offence to the Almighty that a synagogue should be badly attended ... Would it not be better therefore to

transplant the synagogue so that it may strike vigorous roots in favourable soil?"

This suggestion was not, however, taken up.

In 1887, it was stated locally that a new synagogue was to be established in Birkbeck Road, Sandringham Road, and known as the New Dalston. Once again an argument was triggered off. In much the same way as the North London Synagogue had objected to the erection of the Dalston Synagogue, now the latter objected to the New Dalston Synagogue. It was argued that it was only ten minutes walk away. One person actually wrote, "I have this day measured the distance... and find it 1,980 yards".³ Even so, a meeting was held at which it was pointed out that the subscription fees to the Dalston Synagogue were too expensive; that *their* local residents were also concerned about establishing a Jewish school, and that the Dalston Synagogue had been wrongly sited.

A year later it moved from its temporary place at 43 Alvington Crescent to Birkbeck Road, where the consecration ceremony was conducted by the Rev. Dr. H. Adler, Delegate Chief Rabbi. That year the synagogue was packed to capacity on the High Holidays. Because of their concern for a Jewish Day School, a Committee was immediately set up to deal with this task. By the turn of the century, not only was the synagogue filled to capacity on the High Holidays, but a number of residents had also to be refused admission.

In 1901, it was decided that the time had come for building a larger synagogue — to be known as the Stoke Newington Synagogue.

(1) Jewish Chronicle, 12.4.1895.

(2) Ibid, 7.12.1883.

(3) Ibid, 30.12.1887.

It was at about this time that the Four Per Cent Industrial Dwellings too were planning the erection of dwellings in Stoke Newington. It was pointed out that by building a synagogue "where the parents of hundreds of children are already and where a great many of our poorer brethren of the East End are continually migrating",¹ the local residents would be doing a great service to "the poor Jew of the East End". The latter would now be willing to migrate "knowing of the existence of such a place of worship where they can send their children to receive a religious education."¹ Eventually, in 1903, the synagogue opened. At the consecration it was again mentioned that the synagogue was a symbol of the migration from the ghetto. What was not pointed out was that so many had already moved to the area earlier in spite of the absence of any synagogue or religious facilities.

Finsbury Park.

CLIMBING still further north and getting closer to Stamford Hill, Finsbury Park next showed the desire to establish a community. In 1884, Mr. James H. Loewe (cf. Appendix) wrote that the need for yet another synagogue was mainly for the sake of the womenfolk, who would find it difficult to walk to any other existing synagogue. He suggested that more synagogues were needed, "to awaken sympathy in the hearts of about 150 newly 'discovered' Jewish families in the extreme north and north east of Finsbury Park",² (another indication that many had moved in spite of the total absence of any religious facilities). This synagogue was then temporarily situated in Lordship Park and it was there too that Hebrew classes were held. Two years later, in seeking to establish an orthodox synagogue (this word appears regularly in connection with the Finsbury Park community) the desire was to do so "at the least possible cost to the members."³ By

1895, the orthodox character of Finsbury Park was commented upon:

"The services of the Finsbury Park Synagogue are strictly orthodox. There is no choir and they have no sermons. They worship in the simple old-fashioned Jewish way and the whole congregation unite their voices in the time-honoured Jewish melodies with possibly not always the greatest harmony but certainly with undoubted fervour."⁴

Four years later it sought to establish a larger synagogue. For this the help of the United Synagogue was required. This help was not forthcoming. It therefore affiliated itself to the Federation of Synagogues and built a new synagogue in Princess Road, Queens Road which accommodated some 335 people. In contrast to the earlier synagogues this was certainly small.

It was some years earlier that its president, Mr. J. Loewe, had transferred his active support to what was a most exceptional type of institution — a Beth Hamedrash. Years earlier, Hart Lyon had tried unsuccessfully to establish one. In 1889, as a result of a growing number of committed Jews, a Beth Hamedrash was set up in Canonbury. No member was to be eligible for election to the governing body if he openly infringed the Sabbath, partook of non-kosher food or was not strictly orthodox. It was not long before this Beth Hamedrash sought to have a Mikveh (a ritual bath) built. By 1893, it had moved to new premises at 1A Ferntower

(1) *Overcrowding in the East End*, Jewish Chronicle, 15.3.1901.

(2) *Ibid*, 19.9.1884.

(3) *Finsbury Park Synagogue*, *Ibid*, 5.11.1886.

(4) *Ibid*, 18.1.1895.

Road and, by 1990, when its membership numbered just over 100, its President, Mr. L. Felsenstein, had to announce that the premises of the Beth Hamedrash — whose “principal object was to encourage the study of the Torah and to provide the opportunity for those wishing to study”¹ — were too small. So, in 1905, it moved once more, this time to 125 Green Lanes, where, four years later, it became the “Adath Yisroel” incorporating the North London Beth Hamedrash. It was in that year (1909) that the call was extended to Rabbi Dr. Victor Schonfeld to become its Rav and according to the Jewish Press, “large congregations are attracted (to that synagogue) by Rabbi Schonfeld.”² Slowly this congregation was to become a significant orthodox force, opposed in many ways to the Establishment. But before the First World War it was in its infancy.

Stamford Hill

MEANWHILE, the ‘anglicized’ community was spreading. In areas north east and north of Stamford Hill, Jews were establishing themselves. Talk was heard about Tottenham,

“where there is already a goodly number of Jews... who not very long ago, seriously considered the practicability of supporting a synagogue... but owing to want of sufficient support, the suggestion came to nothing.”³

The Jews of Harringay, Tollington Park, Wood Green, being without a synagogue, thronged the parks and open spaces on the High Holidays. Of Stamford Hill itself little mention is made until the question of the fate of the New Synagogue became a major issue.

Already, in 1892, it was hinted that the New Synagogue had served its purpose. One

letter to the Jewish Press bore the title, ‘New Synagogue — Doomed’;⁴ and two years later Lloyd’s remarked that they had heard it was to be ‘removed’. Further discussion, as a result of the move west by its ‘wealthier and influential members’, took place in 1902. It was as late as 1909 that the suggestion was put forward of either closing the North London Synagogue, the Finsbury Park Synagogue and the New Synagogue and of building another one somewhere in that vicinity or of building a new synagogue in the East End. A year later the opinion of the Press was that,

“the New Synagogue had been left high and dry on the banks of a chronic deficit; none would mourn its unfortunate but necessary fate.”⁵

By 1911, local residents in Stamford Hill were looking in Rookwood Road for a site upon which to build a new synagogue. It was in January 1912 that a most consequential meeting of the United Synagogue took place. The choice was put to the Council of either building a synagogue in or around Commercial Road/New Road in the East End or else in the Finsbury Park/Stamford Hill area. It was pointed out that the largest number of New Synagogue members now resided in the East End but that, on the other hand, some 600—800 children in the Stamford Hill, Tottenham, Clapton areas were not receiving any Hebrew or Religious education whatsoever.

(1) Jewish Chronicle, 17.4.1903.

(2) Ibid, 10.12.1909.

(3) Ibid, 25.6.1909.

(4) Wartski, A.M. Ibid., 2.12.1892.

(5) New Synagogue, Ibid, 28.1.1910.

This was particularly true of the Tottenham area where

“the number of Jewish families were mostly of the working classes and mainly foreign born; ...increasing year by year consequent upon the erection of factories in that district in which Jews are largely employed.”¹

But in favouring the erection of a new synagogue in the north east and not in the East End, it was pointed out that

“in addition, there is a numerous well-to-do class of Jews in the residential districts of Stamford Hill and Clapton.”²

The meeting ended with a resolution being proposed that,

“it is desirable to erect and found a synagogue to be known as the New Synagogue in the district of Stamford Hill...”¹

This was not the final say in the matter. There was an immediate protest that the East End's need was greater. Stamford Hill Jews accounted for only one per cent of the Jewish population, it was argued, and furthermore,

“with land and houses being cheap there, the district cannot be a prosperous one.”²

There could be only one reason why the United Synagogue did not wish to build a synagogue in the East End, and that was based on politics.

But whilst it was true that the area was declining, it still housed many well-to-do Jews, and the United Synagogue Council used this fact in their counter argument.

“There is the Anglicized type of resident of North London, those who were more blessed with worldly goods, more experienced in the management

of synagogues and communal affairs, and there was the type of working people in Tottenham.”³

It was alleged that two hundred of these ‘superior’ Jews had approached the United Synagogue about building a synagogue and it was argued that here was a wonderful example of how the rich could help their poor brethren. A compromise suggestion was then made. The site for such a new synagogue should be nearer South Tottenham. Such a suggestion found immediate displeasure among some of the more affluent Jews. “We cannot and will not have the New Synagogue placed in Tottenham,”⁴ wrote Mr. A.M. Wartski, a representative of the New Synagogue.

Eventually, agreement was reached. The Rookwood Road/Egerton Road site was to be used. The New Synagogue was planned and the cost set at more than £20,000. Before it was finally opened, peace was to be shattered once more. This time the controversy was whether the Rev. S. Levy, M.A. should continue as the Minister or whether the local community be allowed to make their own choice, a controversy which continued right until the New Synagogue was opened in 1915.

Understandably, a gathering of distinguished gentlemen was present at the opening. Among these were the Very Rev. the Chief Rabbi Dr. J.H. Hertz, Mr. Albert H. Jessel, K.C., the prospective Unionist candidate for Central Hackney (a vice-president of the United Synagogue) and the Mayor of Stoke Newington, the Alderman W.J. Ormond,

(1) *New Synagogue*, Jewish Chronicle, 5.1.1912.

(2) *Protest Against the Stamford Hill Scheme*, Jewish Chronicle, 5.1.1912.

(3) *The New ‘New’ Synagogue*, Jewish Chronicle 12.1.1912.

(4) *Ibid*, 9.2.1912.

Esq. Sir Marcus Samuel unveiled a tablet named after his father, the first Jewish Lord Mayor of London. The mayor remarked

"how glad he was that the Jewish Community had followed the example of the Gentile migration to that area."¹

What is remarkable is that by the United Synagogue showing a bias in favour of a small but economically significant group of Jews; by the United Synagogue finding reasons to avoid erecting the New Synagogue in areas which perhaps had a greater claim for it, they had ensured its future. Thus, in time, the East End revealed that it had no future; Dalston showed that it had only a limited future and districts such as Tottenham, Finsbury Park or Wood Green proved they held no great attraction to the Jews. Some-

how, the New Synagogue had managed to site itself exactly in the heart of an area which was to see Jewry, and specially orthodox Jewry, flourish when, as a result of both World Wars, many more religious Jews were to arrive in this country and make straight for Stamford Hill.

Anglo-Jewry has changed and Stamford Hill too. But (miraculously?) the New Synagogue, with a membership of over one thousand, remains still today to remind people that it has its own noble past, that Stamford Hill has a noble past and that by looking back at the histories of both, much can be learnt about the transformation of the Anglo-Jewish community.

(1) Hackney & Stoke Newington Recorder, 26.3.1915.

APPENDIX

SELECTED EXAMPLES OF WHERE JEWS RESIDED IN AND AROUND STAMFORD HILL, BETWEEN 1852—1889

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Date Mentioned in J.C.</i>
Hyam Cohen	4 Norfolk Terrace, Shacklewell Green	5.8.53
K.G.B. (<i>seeking job as governess</i>)	28 Hertford Road	12.1.55
Maurice Lipman (<i>visiting tutor</i>)	16 Cambridge Terrace	23.5.55
Lewis Woolf	Thornbury Park Stoke Newington Common	12.12.56
Rachel Angel	Burial Hall, Balls Pond	9.1.57
Joseph Rodriques Reynado	2 Landsdown Place	8.5.57
Sarah Gastello	22 Enfield Road	5.6.57
J. Platnauer	9 Shrubland Grove Queens Road	8.10.58
Solomon Nathan	26 Church Road De Beauvoir Square	4.11.59
W. Flatau	4 Clarendon Villas	2.12.59
Josephine Angel	Kings Road	30.12.59
Henry Cantor	74 Havelock Terrace, Downham Road	9.3.60
Jesse Allard (<i>46 years employee of N.M. Rothschild</i>)	Brunswick Place	20.4.60
B. Morris	8 Downs Park Road, Lower Clapton	31.7.63
Isaac Mocatta	35 Mildmay Park	5.8.64
M. Solomon	2 Clifton Grove, Graham Road	26.8.64
S. Ullman	6 Ash Grove	14.4.65
I. Ahrenfeld (67)	40 Queen Margaret's Grove	21.4.65

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Date mentioned in J.C.</i>
Misses Bensusan	London Fields	21.7.65
M. Spiegel	Albion Grove	8.9.65
M. Solomons	8 Navarino Road	11.5.66
N. Solomon	Grove Street	10.8.66
Y. Lenzberg	Nelson Terrace	28.9.66
A.L. Levi	Rose Villa	
	98 Greenwood Road	7.12.66
L. Yuly	1 Combermere Terrace	
	Victoria Park Road	7.12.66
Roseta Leo (<i>Wife of late</i> <i>Reader of Western Synagogue</i>)	Wellington House,	
	Wellington Road	11.1.67
Ab Solomon (<i>see census 1831</i>)	Stamford Hill	1.2.67
E. Mosely	42 Graham Road	14.6.67
A. Hart	Clarendon Villas	23.8.67
A.L. Sonn	9 Fassett Square	29.11.67
M.L. Isaacs	16 Darnley Crescent	6.12.67
A.A. Solomon	103 Graham Road	20.12.67
J. Frankenstein	66 Mildmay Park	23.3.68
J. Levi	Stanley Road	27.3.68
H. Tueski	Forest Road	8.5.68
S. Soloman	6 King Edward Villa	24.7.68
M. Myers	Shore Road	17.6.70
Mrs. K. Alexander	8 Albion Road,	
	Paragon Road	25.11.70
J. Cohen	81 Richmond Road	9.12.70
Rosetta Lazarus	190 Kingsland Road	30.12.70
M. Mayers	12 Mare Street	13.1.71
Frederick Jacobs	2 Grange Road Terr.	15.6.77
Esther Cohen	Green Lanes, Sussex Lodge,	
	Albion Road	10.8.77
M. Coopman	5 Blurton Road, Clapton	26.10.77
F. & E. Phillips	Hope Cottage, Hill Street,	
	Upper Clapton	2.11.77
L. Barnett	111 Seven Sisters Rd.	16.11.77
Moses Cohen	Newington Hall Villas	6.6.79
Phillip Phillips	12 Hill Street,	
	Upper Clapton	22.8.79
Ab. Abraham	Moat Farm, Enfield	5.9.79
	Pratts Road,	
	corner of Elderfield Rd.	5.9.79
Mitchell Myer	21 Brooke Road,	
	Upper Clapton	8.10.80
N. Solomon Guttman	16 Brownswood Park N.	26.11.80
D. Lang	14 Bethune Road	11.3.80
B. Asher	6 Newington Hall Villas	
	Green Lanes	23.7.80

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Date mentioned in J.C.</i>
Lazarus Cohen	7 Newington Green Villas	11.8.81
Samuel Gerson	6 Church Street,	
	Stamford Hill	24.11.82
G. Goldschmidt	Stamford House,	
	Lordship Park (No. 2)	1.6.83
L. Wolf	3 Somerfield Road	17.8.83
W. Behrens	4/6 Lorne Terrace,	
	Green Lanes	24.8.83
Rebecca Levi	28 Dynevor Road,	
	2 Lower Clapton Place	7.9.84
Samuel Tournoff	116 Rectory Road	14.11.84
Phillip C. Jacobs	11 Queens Road,	
	Brownswood Park	8.5.85
James H. Loewe	1 The Terrace,	
	32 Queen Elizabeth Walk	17.6.85
Joseph Hobinstock	54 Clissold Road	27.11.85
Berthold Pinner	91 Kyverdale Road	4.12.85
Lawrence Cohen	14a Woodley Road	22.1.86
Jacob Rosenthal	31 Queens Road	19.2.86
Henry Levy	4 Statham Grove Villas,	
	Green Lanes	2.4.86
Elias Ellis	92 Evering Road	10.12.86
A. Nathan	66 Clissold Road	17.12.86
Joseph Birn	71 Queens Road	21.1.87
S. Suskind	151 Wilberforce Road	27.5.87
J. Rosenberg	8 Ickburgh Road	17.6.87
Joseph Prag	47 Digby Road	17.6.87
Charles Solomon	204 Brooke Road	27.1.88
Waldemar Beshner	2 Princess Road	3.2.88
Lawrence Barnett	76 Brooke Road	18.5.88
Abraham Samuel	10 Statham Grove	15.6.88
I.I. Parker	Jesmond, Lordship Park	4.1.89
H. Kaufman	131 Listria Park	22.2.89
Sidney Selinger	108 Wilberforce Road	17.5.89
Louis Joseph	117 Evering Road	24.5.89
Solomon Lazarus	12 Filey Road	24.5.89
I.I. Wolley	Acacia House	
	Cazenove Road	21.6.89
Jacob Lyon	2 Brownswood Park	5.7.89

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