

## THE JEWS OF BATH

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Bath, as has long been known, attracted many Jewish visitors from early in the 18th century, but the disappearance of all save a handful of communal records puts an exact analysis of the later settlement there beyond the bounds of possibility. Apart from municipal archives and directories the major sources of information are two newspapers, the *Bath Journal* from 1744 onwards and the *Bath Chronicle* from 1755. Both from their earliest issues printed at the head of the local news, week by week, 'persons of distinction that arrived'.

Certain customs accompanied the arrival at Bath. 'If a broker or statesman, a gamester or peer, / A naturalized Jew, or a bishop comes here' wrote Christopher Anstey in his light-hearted verse *New Bath Guide* to the city, 'With horns and with trumpets, with fiddles and drums, / They'll strive to divert him as soon as he comes'. Half a guinea or crown would pay off the waits, and the Master of Ceremonies might then call to collect subscriptions for the varied diary of events. Most Jewish visitors would have followed a routine along the lines indicated by entries Jacob Franks made in a cash book in 1777, when he took a house in Milsom Street for his wife Priscilla, his sister Abigail and himself for eight weeks. Bathing, drinking, or taking the waters preceded a morning concert or a public breakfast, then came the shops and promenades, the Upper or Lower Rooms, dances and card parties, another concert or the theatre. A few weeks of this exhausting regimen sufficed for many, although the more socially ambitious would stay longer, and return more frequently.

Not everybody found a trip to Bath entirely pleasurable. The serious business of the city, often obscured by its role as a pleasure resort, was always health. Circumstantial evidence and obituary notices – those for instance of Isaac Franks, Hyman Hart,

David Michaels and several of the Adolphuses – suggest that at least some must have been chronic invalids in search of a cure. The first identifiable Jewish visitor, Catharine da Costa, was with her children at the Bath, recovering her strength, in 1731. Eight years earlier Mr. Dias, Marcus Moses and Joseph Musaphia appear in the first list of subscribers to the Bath General Hospital.<sup>1</sup> The second list, opened in 1737, includes Messrs. Salvador, Capadose, Moses Pereira and Mrs. Pereira, and Aaron Franks. Contributions to the hospital were usually collected in the churches after charity sermons, but Jewish contributors preferred to make their payments, as did Mr. Mendez and Mr. Lindo in 1748 and Mrs. Levy and Mr. Franco in 1759, via Mr. Nash. They would have been well advised to do so, in view of Philip Thicknesse's story of Ralph Schomberg helping himself out of the church plate.

The visitors' lists, compiled by lodging house keepers who usually omitted first names, offer much material for speculation. It is unprofitable, if tempting, to correlate the dates of arrivals with the incidence of festivals, to show that Bath may have played something of the same role in the 18th century as for instance Bournemouth does for some today. No doubt the motives for a visit were as varied as the visitors themselves. Mr. & Mrs. Lara, Mr. Lopez, Mrs. Barnet and Miss Capadose all arrived in the last week of December 1782, and in the first week of January 1792 came Mr. & Mrs. Bernal, Mr. & Mrs. Mendes, Mr. A. Mendes, Mr. Hart and Mr. Franco. A few of these could have travelled together, but there is no means of telling. Allowing for an imbalance due to uncertainty as to Ashkenazi surnames, it is possible to say only that Sephardim seem to preponderate until some point in the 1780's, and that the proportion of Jewish visitors to the overall estimates declines very gradually from about 1765. By then, Bath was beginning to lose its primacy as the novelty value of other resorts became more compelling. But this is to look too far ahead. While Bath maintained its appeal, everyone with aspirations to sociability, that quality so dearly prized in the 18th century, visited the city. Nash's achievement, for which so many of the well-to-do would have been thankful, was to impose a code of conduct that in effect tempered differences sufficiently to make introductions and conversation far less burdensome than in London.

The consequences of this were satirized by Smollet in *Humphrey Clinker* in one of the classic passages in the literature of Bath. Many features of Matthew Bramble's unflattering picture would have been recognisable to contemporaries, but the fashionable world had long since come to terms with reality. At the higher reaches of status, Sarah, Baroness d'Aguilar, twice, on successive Tuesdays in May 1760, opened the ball. In particularly select company Mr. Prado (Abraham or Samuel), arrayed in Spanish costume, attended the Millers' dance on Twelfth Night, 1779, at Batheaston. Joseph Salvador, whose family are numbered among the earliest and most regular names on the visitors' lists, was one of the original shareholders in the New Assembly Rooms, and despite reverses, continued to visit twice yearly. Nor did Bath alone claim Jewish visitors. Bristol Hot Wells and Cheltenham drew some; two Miss Harts spent a season at Scarborough in 1733, a Mrs. Isaac was at Weymouth in 1773, and when the Naphtali Franks spent four months on the Continent in 1754, many of their letters were addressed from Aix or Spa. The watering places provided unrivalled opportunities for improving the acquaintance of those who might have kept their distance elsewhere. Writing to his father-in-law Moses Hart in June 1754, Franks was able to tell him that 'Lord Chesterfield (whom I have the hon.<sup>r</sup> of conversing with dayly) kindly Enquir'd how his good old Friend Mr. Hart did, and is sorry to hear you have any Indisposition.'

Supporting the visitors and dependent on their favours were the trades and services, principally medical. Several of the Schombergs removed to Bath, as did Lacour and for a short time Luzzatto. Two corncutters, Mr. Joseph and Mr. Solomon, advertised their availability. Mr. Joseph 'from Holland' recalled his 'long and successful employment in the cities of York, Lincoln and Worcester' and furnished two testimonials, one from the steward of Lord Monson's household. Dentists practising in Bath included Benjamin and Abraham Levis and their wives, Mr. H. Hart and Joseph Sigmond, who settled in the West Country in 1783. The endpapers of Sigmond's *Short Essay on the Teeth*, published at Exeter in 1790, show that his Quintessence of Pearl, dentifrice and brushes were retailed through more than a dozen outlets in the market towns of the West, as well as at Bath, Bristol and London. In 1791 and 1792 he rented rooms in Bath for six

weeks, attracting sufficient patients to transfer his main surgery there in 1793. Mention should also be made in this context, as a medical adjunct, of Abraham Buzaglo's patent warming machines. These were advertised in the local press during the cold spring of 1773, when Buzaglo sent his nephew down to Bath to demonstrate them.

As with the professions, so with the performing arts. Charles Galindo took a part in Cumberland's play 'The Jew', soon after advertising as a fencing master. Thomas Pinto advertised Venetian eye-salve in the intervals of taking his violin onto the concert platform; another violinist, Nicolas Ximenes, appeared with the Linleys on several occasions. Emanuel Siprutini, the much-travelled cello virtuoso, embarked on a second career at Bath as a wine merchant. The fine arts proper were represented by Abraham and Joseph Daniel and by the previously little known engraver Benazech, who in 1789 advertised his return to Bath 'after an absence of eleven years' at 8 John Street, where he taught drawing and etching and sold proofs of his engravings after contemporary landscape painters. Several others also set up at Bath before venturing on, or returning to, the metropolis. Among these should be included Messrs. A. Polack and Polack junior, from The Hague. A. Polack sold stencils that could be used to mark linen with names, crests or cyphers, and more decorative plates for painting sprigs or borders on silk. Polack junior (not to be confused with another identically described member of the family) charged two guineas for miniature portraits which could be set in bracelets or rings.

Turning to other company, Bath had its own second-hand clothier in 1775, Alexander Solomon. For new clothes or materials, Figgins' and Moses' warehouse offered muslins, printed calicoes, dimity and Irish cloth. Ostrich feathers, the purveyance of which was for long a Jewish speciality, might be had of Mr. Morris, of 4 Lower Church Street. J. Isaacs, the furrier, of Lilliput Alley tempted those attracted by reasonable if not reduced prices. And Joseph Moses, who was to die in extreme old age at Bath in 1812, might have been found as a street trader there from 1762, selling his home-made and rather curiously named caravan boxes.

Occasionally a darker tone breaks through in the newspaper reports, as when in 1764 Hart Jacob, an itinerant jeweller, was

robbed of his stock while lodging at the White Hart in Avon Street. Jacob obviously knew the thief; 'Joseph Manuel, about 17 years of age, with black hair, had on a light-coloured coat, patched with many colours, a very old hat and speaks very bad English.' Manuel was never apprehended. In another case Benjamin Noah lost a quantity of diamonds: a suspect was brought to trial but was not convicted. More cheerful is the record of a Bath thief who melted down some stolen plate and tried to sell it to a Jewish dealer. The thief was asked to return in an hour, by which time the dealer, 'much to his credit' as it was reported, had summoned a constable.

The fullest documentation relating to any one Jewish resident in Georgian Bath concerns a teacher of languages, Paul Guedelle, whose lessons, whatever else they were, must have been far from tedious. Guedelle arrived at Bath in 1762 and first appeared before the public in 1766, when a few lines in the press informed readers that he was 'now established . . . in Orchard Street . . . where he continues to teach the French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Hebrew languages, in their greatest purity'. Two years later his lessons succeeded sufficiently for him to announce a sale of the 'perfume, soap, writing paper, prints, pictures, pencils, pens, quills . . . tea boards, china and coffee pots' which had hitherto been stocked in the shop on his premises in Borough Walls, although he continued 'to make and sell all sorts of Dutch and English sealing-wax, wholesale and retail'. By 1770 he had moved to Alfred's Buildings, where his terms were a guinea for twelve lessons per month and a guinea entrance, and 'at the schools, according to the terms of the school, except the Hebrew language, at twelve lessons per month, two guineas per month and a guinea entrance'. What competitiveness existed between the language teachers of Bath it is no longer possible to determine, but it seems plain that by 1775 Guedelle had a serious rival. In January that year he announced from Lilliput Alley a money-back guarantee: 'if any of his scholars do not make greater progress in a month than those taught by any other master in this city in one year, he expects no gratuity . . . the public are grossly imposed on at the expense of their credulity, nay by the meanest and most insignificant fellows . . . witness a letter Mr. Guedelle received from one De Fitzgerald . . . Mr. Guedelle will think himself very happy in convincing the public of his capacity before

he undertakes any pupil, notwithstanding his being well known in this city, where he has the honour of being constantly employed by . . . Dutchesses, Lords, Bishops, &c. (whom he can show by his register) . . . and is still mostly employed by like personages'. The challenge provoked an immediate reply in the next issue of the *Bath Journal*. 'The many illiberal attacks made by Guedelle on Mr. Fitzgerald . . . are convincing how much he has been reduced in the estimation of the public since Mr. Fitzgerald's arrival in this city. He says, that he has had the honour of being employed by Dutchesses, Lords and Bishops – I suppose he means, in making band-boxes at his shop; or he might have taught them his mother and natural languages, Hebrew and Savoyard . . . [Mr. Fitzgerald] would advise him to take up his old trade again, of crying boxes, sealing-wax, &c. to sell, and not persist in teaching his barbarous French, which nobody can understand but such as himself'. A truce was observed until 1779, when stung by 'some wicked wretches who have spread a false report that Mr. Guedelle had quitted Bath, he most respectfully informs the nobility and gentry that he has been at Bristol during the summer, teaching . . . languages with great success, and is now returned to his former establishment . . . where he continues teaching by his own new method, to be published in about a fortnight'. A *New Idiomatical Guide to the French and English Languages*, the fruit of eighteen years' experience, was indeed published, on 13 January 1780. The subscription list, a cross-section of Bath society headed by the Prime Minister's father, Lord Guilford, (then President of the Mineral Water Hospital) shows to what lengths Guedelle went to gather local support. Fitzgerald slated the book in the *Bath Chronicle*, emphasizing rather unfairly that the least qualification for such a work was a university education, and Guedelle returned to the columns of the press. Brushing criticism aside, he assured readers that the grammar was 'so far warmly and universally approved of that he is almost ready for a second edition'. Fitzgerald rejoined by inviting Guedelle to submit the dispute to arbitration by several of the leading teachers of French at Bath and Bristol. 'Mr. Fitzgerald', wrote Guedelle, 'has invited me . . . to settle a dispute I know nothing of. I am fully convinced he is an Irishman who ran away from being a common soldier in the French service and was last war at Exeter prison, from whence he made his

escape, passes now for a Frenchman, and brags of a liberal education under the instruction of Louis le Grand, Preceptor of the University of Paris . . .'. On this patriotic note, the correspondence ends. By way of a postscript it should be added that however justified were the comments made on the competence of Paul Guedelle as a linguist, the works of his presumably collateral descendant and one of our many distinguished Presidents, Philip Guedalla, still repay attention as examples of admirably grammatical prose.

It seems not to have been until the later years of the century that a number of the more conscientious settled as a potential community in the city. Jewish visitors, certainly, continued to come: John Braham, the tenor, to sing in 1794 (he returned frequently later); Samuel Solomon of Liverpool, whose Balm of Gilead and other medicines were widely puffed in the local press and who had his portrait painted at Bath; and in 1799 (although by this date he had left the fold) David Ricardo. It was at one of the circulating libraries that Ricardo came across a copy of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, the book that inspired his study of political economy. But more generally, residents at Bath were becoming increasingly a company of the retired and elderly,<sup>2</sup> many of whom are usually unwilling to forego traditional comforts.

If occasional services were held privately, one venue might have been the Repository on the Walks, previously Mr. Wiltshire's Long Room, where from 1787 to 1794 J. Levin Newman, jeweller and silversmith, was reputed to be in a very extensive line of business. Also to be considered is the pull the city must have exerted as a distribution centre for neighbouring areas and towns, for instance Frome, where Isaac de Paiba circumcised Samuel Nathan in 1750. Abraham Moses, silversmith and pawnbroker of Frome, and reported bankrupt in 1790, recovered sufficiently to be recorded as a silversmith and watchmaker there in 1822. Another silversmith at Frome in the 1790's was Aaron Joseph of Cheap Street, one of whose family was probably the J. Joseph, watch and clockmaker, whose watchpaper gives his address as 'On the Bridge, Frome'. There are traces, too, of isolated settlement at Shepton Mallet and Wells during this period. But the majority of any congregation in Bath would have been Bathonians, and rather different from most of those so far encountered. Sir Archy MacSarcasm, the stage

Scotsman in Macklin's *Love a la Mode* (1759) apostrophized Beau Mordecai as a 'cursed impudent fellow', who 'because he is suffered to speak till a man of fashion at Bath and Tunbridge and other public places . . . always obtrudes himself upon ye.' Twelve years later, Moses Franks was writing from Bath to Edmund Burke, declining an invitation to Beaconsfield as he was 'travelling like the patriarchs of old, with all my family, and have a visit or two to make on the way.' The Jewish gentry could hold their own, then, and continue the process which in time would lead to fuller emancipation. Fostering a sense of community was a task left as so often to the stalwart, observant few.

The year 1800 marks the arrival of one of these, Jacob Abraham, optician and precision instrument maker, who came to 12 Kingsmead Street from Fore Street Hill, Exeter. A subscriber to the *Levi Machsor* (Prayer Book) of 1807, he later opened a branch surgery next to the Montpellier Rotunda at Cheltenham; the Duke of Wellington used to call in occasionally and tap a barometer. His Bath practice in 1808 was at Bartlett Street, where he claimed the Duke of Gloucester's patronage. By this date Joseph Sigmond had been established at Bath for fifteen years. His was the only Jewish name in a list of contributors in 1799 to the local patriotic fund. Samuel Pratt, a popular poetaster of the day, dedicated in 1803 six stanzas 'To Mr. Sigmond (a celebrated Dentist at Bath) on drawing one of the Author's Teeth.' In December 1808 Sigmond asked the Duke of Gloucester to supper. The sense of disbelief was general. In the event the Duke sent one of the gentlemen of his suite to take his place, but this brave effort to follow the Goldsmids' example in entertaining royalty may have been all of a piece with Sigmond's position as a Life Governor of the *Neveh Zedek*, the Jewish hospital in Mile End. Another dentist prominent in Bath was Solomon Abraham Durlacher. Born in Durlach near Karlsruhe in 1757, he came to England in the 1780's and married Betsy Harris of Birmingham, where their son, Lewis, was born in 1792. From 1808 Durlacher had a surgery at 2 Union Street, Bath, and a branch at Cheltenham, practicing also as a corncutter (his wife practiced the same skills 'for the ladies'). They moved to 3 York Street in 1813, staying until 1818. Successful practice and Lewis' career (he was to be chiropodist to George IV, William IV and Queen Victoria) took the Durlachers to London. Sigmond, on the other hand, stayed in Bath, where his *Domestic*

*Treatise on the Management of the Teeth* was published in 1825. His son, too, moved to London.

Three teachers of Hebrew advertised their presence in the early years of the century. The local press first printed Hebrew type in 1810, when Nahum Joseph offered lessons in *Dikduk Lashan Hakodesh* (the Grammar of the Holy Tongue) later adding that he was assisting with the revision of Robertson's *Compendious Hebrew Dictionary* (1814), evidently the only work of Hebrew scholarship ever published at Bath. Sigmond and his son George Gabriel were among the subscribers. Sigmond subscribed as well to a *Theological Grammar and Lexicon* published at Liverpool in 1815, whose author, Solomon Lyon, also advertised for a while in Bath as a teacher of Hebrew. Although Durlacher's name is absent from these subscription lists, when yet another Hebrew teacher, H. Bernstein, made himself known in Bath in 1814, he stated that he was to be found at Mr. Durlacher's house. Bernstein also described himself as minister to the Hebrew Congregation.

At least two Jewish greengrocers came to the city for a while in the 1810's: Emanuel and Levy of Oxford Street, London, who opened an orange and lemon warehouse at 6 Stall Street, and H. Israel, who kept a foreign and British fruit warehouse at 17 Union Street. Mr. Samuel, an umbrella maker, might have been located either at the bottom of Market Place or at his Umbrella and Fur Warehouse in 11 York Street. There was even a milkman, Mr. M. Moses, at 1 Juda Place, Snow Hill.

This nucleus from the professions and trades, together with a number of the retired, lacked only an obvious leader. Cecil Roth stated that a constant visitor during the Napoleonic Wars was Moses Samuel, warden of the Great Synagogue, who retired to Bath and for whom life without a synagogue was impossible. Rate books confirm that Moses Samuel was indeed at 42 St. James' Square from 1812, although his last years were spent in London. Born Moses ben Samuel Pulvermacher at Krotoschin, Poland in 1742 he came early to England, worked in Rag Fair (later known as Petticoat Lane) and prospered. Several of his children and grandchildren occupied important communal positions. At Bath in 1815, he subscribed to two copies of S.I. Cohen's *Elements of Faith for the use of Jewish Youth*.

1815 was also the year when the first mention occurs of the cemetery on Combe Down; the *Bath Chronicle* reported the theft of

furniture from its adjacent prayer room. The cemetery still exists hiding behind a high wall between 174 Bradford Road and separated from The Foresters' Arms by Greendown Place, opposite the Admiralty hutments. The earliest extant tombstone is that of Joseph Sigmond (1832) and the last burial (though no stone marks the spot) was that of Reuben Somers in 1942. Earlier burials would have been at Bristol, where a cemetery was in existence by 1759.

Plainly services were held somewhere in Bath and the house could have been that of Moses Samuel. Another address with long-term Jewish associations was 4 Lower Church Street, Abbey Green, where Lyon Joseph lived from 1815. Joseph started as one of Zender Falmouth's peddlars, later becoming a shipper in the Peninsular trade, but when he fell upon hard times retired to Bath as a pawnbroker. Later occupants of 4 Lower Church Street were S. Solomon, who lived in the East End of London but travelled to Bath, Clifton and Cheltenham as a circuit optician from 1829 to 1833; and the Rev. Solomon Wolfe.

Most references to Jews in the local press at this time concern the activities of the missionary societies. There were in fact few local conversions. One took place in 1816, the baptism of George Gerson, described as a respectable Jew of middle years. The Jewish community are said to have made strenuous efforts to prevent his conversion: within a month of the event he died. The same year, by way of contrast, Alexander Schomberg (a member of an otherwise assimilated family, two of whom had been Doctors at the Mineral Water Hospital) wrote to Solomon Herschell of the Great Synagogue on a similar topic. He explained that he had taken to his house a non-Jewess who was carrying his child. She had given birth to a daughter and Schomberg, naming referees, now asked for the mother to be converted in order that they might marry. Herschell's answer to this appeal has not survived, but a *ketuba* (marriage contract or certificate), never entered in the marriage register, shows that the lady in question was duly proselytized and married in the Western Synagogue. Since Alexander Schomberg does not appear in the Bath directories after 1816 it seems that the girl was no longer accepted by her family, and that they moved to London. Certainly Schomberg and his sons were buried in the Brompton cemetery of the Western Synagogue.

The names given to Herschell as referees offer almost our only leads to the identity of the early congregation. Abraham Rees, a tailor, long established in the Strand, retired to his brother Daniel's house at 20 Bathwick Street in 1830. Both brothers were later buried at Combe Down. Henry Moore, jeweller and warden of the Bath synagogue, remained there until 1826. Mr. Cohen was *Gabbai Tzedekah* (Appeals Treasurer) in Bath but is otherwise unknown. The last reference Schomberg named, the Rev. Solomon Wolfe, is the most significant. Wolfe, a native of Prussia, arrived in Bath about 1815. He was to serve as Reader, *Schochet*<sup>3</sup> and probably *Mohel*<sup>4</sup> to the congregation for many years. It is on previous record that in 1782 the *Chazzan* (Reader) came from Bristol for a *brit* (circumcision) and in 1783 his son-in-law, the *Mohel* of the Western Synagogue, came for a similar purpose. From 1842 Wolfe was also Secretary for Marriages, celebrating in all some nine. Both a man of the people and the cornerstone of the community, he eked out his salary by working part of the week at his general dealer's shop, helped by his wife Phoebe and their two daughters. This however is to anticipate.

The clue to the whereabouts of the first synagogue lies in the history of the Bath theatres.<sup>5</sup> The first was demolished to make way for the Mineral Water Hospital, which still stands. The second, erected in Kingsmead Street in 1723 and known as the New Theatre, measured 50 feet long and 25 feet wide, with a gallery at the end facing the stage. The New Theatre was superseded by one in Orchard Street (now the site of the Freemasons' Hall) and the present theatre in Beaufort Square opened in 1805. In that year the former New Theatre, at 19 Kingsmead Street, was occupied by a girls' school and Miss Sharland, a clearstarcher. In 1812 the school moved out and in 1821 Miss Sharland died. Shortly afterwards, the building reopened as the first synagogue known in Bath. Kingsmead Street has since disappeared beneath the DHSS Building in James Street West and the Telephone Exchange in Monmouth Street.

The Reader, as we have seen, was Solomon Wolfe, and the congregation (apart from those named in 1816) could have included those such as Samuel Lazarus, a pawnbroker, and the only Bath subscriber to the Phillips-Levi *Machsor* of 1824; E. Levey, a wholesale importer of foreign goods; Moses Abraham, in his own words 'importer and dealer in Italian and

Flemish pictures, drawings, antique china and shells', at the Repository of Fine Arts, 17 Milsom Street; and Harris Bamberger and Isaac Mainzer, partners in a small firm of jewellers. Despite the relatively humble status of a general dealer, Solomon Wolfe, the head of this small body, must have been a well-known figure in the world outside the synagogue. In 1821 he was made a mason in the Royal Sussex Lodge and in 1824 was installed as Worshipful Master, an office he occupied again in 1825 and 1828. As late as 1890 many brethren remembered him as a frequent attender at Lodge. Samuel (Mark) Lazarus was installed as Master of Royal Sussex in 1827. He too was a general dealer, with a large house at 6 Abbey Street from 1827 to 1839 and in 1836 his grand-daughter, Phoebe (who had recently moved with her mother, Mrs. Lyon, from Plymouth to Bath) married Solomon Wolfe.

Into this perhaps over-respectable atmosphere an account that appeared under the name of Juan de Vega in 1830 brings a welcome breath of relief. Charles Cochrane, a young man-about-town, eager for adventure, adopted the unusual disguise of a Spanish minstrel, purchasing a cloak for the purpose from one of the Levys of Monmouth Street before starting his journey around the country. Arriving at Bath one December evening in 1828, he came upon a foot-travellers' lodging house. 'The landlord spoke a little Portuguese and begged me to sit down for a while. Many of his lodgers were in the room; they were chiefly Jew pedlars occupied in relating the various successes of the day. Some of them were Poles . . .'. Returning the next afternoon, Cochrane struck up conversation with one of the pedlars. 'Mr. L-, for that was the Jew's name, was asked by the landlord what success he had. "Excellent", said he, "I have sold all my watches on the road", then recounted the various places where he had disposed of them. The landlord and his wife congratulated him on the occasion, with countenances brightening, as if they expected the sale of all their stock in consequence.' Cochrane returned again to the inn, fascinated by the picaresque qualities that matched his own, but declined a subsequent offer to join a troupe of travelling showmen.

There would have been a world of difference between this scene and that a year earlier in the Guildhall, when the first of many annual meetings of the Bath Auxiliary of the London Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge amongst the

Jews was held. In 1829 the London Society complained that its operations in Bath had failed completely, due to the great influence of the Rabbi, who would not suffer any tracts to be accepted by his people. The conversionists were not always so unsuccessful. Three children of Bernard Klamborowski, a recent immigrant from Poland who struggled for a short time as a green-grocer at 33 Morford Street, were baptized in 1842.

Equally prone to the pressures of assimilation, or at best a benevolent neutrality, were some of the wealthy Sephardim who chose a life of genteel retirement in Bath. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, recording the death of Francis Salvador's widow, Sarah, (whose last years were spent at 5 Belmont) spoke of the 'strict and uniform observance of all religious, moral and social duties [by which she] conciliated the regard of a numerous acquaintance.' The career of Simon Barrow is another case in point. Warden of the *Beth Holim* (a hospital for Spanish and Portugese Jews) in 1808 and Treasurer in 1827, he moved from London to a large mansion, Lansdown Grove, (now a hotel of that name) in 1817. Each of his five sons contributed to a *Mekhaseh Evyonim* (Society for Clothing the Indigent Poor) in 1822. Shortly after his wife's death in 1828 all of the family, himself excepted, were baptized at Walcot parish church. Some such drastic step must have been considered necessary for Barrow to gratify his civic ambitions. He was elected alderman of Bath in 1836 and mayor in 1837, during a period of much unrest in local politics. Long experience in Sephardi charities would have served him well when administering the new Poor Law; it was indeed for his liberality that he was chosen as guardian. The local congregation itself supported three paupers at this time, but no member ever put himself forward as a candidate for civic office.

Several newcomers of note arrived in the 1830's. Two probable seat-holders were Elijah Solomon, silversmith and subscriber to the Levi-Phillips Prayer Book of 1830, and Myer Fishel, a silversmith of 6 New Bond Street. George Braham moved from Bristol to Pulteney Street, first advertising in 1833 as an optician. In 1842 a paragraph recorded his marriage at his brother's house in Bristol to Amelia, eldest daughter of Mr. P. Bright of Doncaster. The alliance was an illustrious one, for Philip Bright was the younger brother of one of the earliest Jews to settle in

Sheffield and was himself the leading Doncaster watchmaker and jeweller. Braham was one of the mainstays of the Bath congregation, the only local subscriber to the volume of essays published by the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1852 and his early death in 1865 was a considerable loss. Another newcomer in the 1830's was a furrier, David Nyman of 10 Bath Street. After the forced sale of his stock in 1840 he moved to Bristol, where he prospered as a hat and cap manufacturer. He served also as president of the congregation from 1851 to 1859 according to the Jewish Year Book, but probably until his death in 1876. The two major losses of the decade were the deaths of Moses Samuel and his wife. In the year before his wife's death Moses Samuel made the first of several capital contributions towards the cost of a new synagogue. Bank of England records show that a sum was deposited in the name of Solomon Wolfe in July, 1832, and further deposits were made subsequently. On Samuel's death in 1839 a final deposit was paid into this account. His funding of the Bath Synagogue amounted in all to £300, the sum encashed a month after the consecration of the building he did not live to see completed.

'It was at first in contemplation, as there were many wealthy and influential families in the city', reported the *Jewish Chronicle* on 6 May 1842, 'to build an edifice on a larger and grander scale, but owing to some misunderstanding the design was frustrated.' The community had reached a turning point in its fortunes. For over a quarter of a century it had been able to look for support to one of the patriarchs of Anglo-Jewry, the bulk of whose charitable bequests however went to the Great Synagogue. On current and prospective membership, a large new building at Bath could hardly be justified. Improved road transport and the railway link with London (authorized in 1835 and opened in 1841) bound the energetic ever less firmly to a city increasingly isolated from either industrialization or the tide of fashion. These considerations, together with the size of Samuel's donation, may have deterred some who might otherwise have contributed more generously to a rebuilding programme. A tablet commemorating Moses Samuel's gift was to be placed in the new synagogue. Little more money was forthcoming and (of far greater consequence) little thought can have been given to the choice of site.

Corn Street, a depressed neighbourhood of low ground rents,

had been badly flooded twenty years earlier. The architect, however, H.E. Goodridge, had Cleveland Place and Bridge in his favour. Jacob Abrahams and Benjamin Samuel, the two wardens, laid the foundation stone in 1841 and the *Voice of Jacob*, quoting the local press, commented on the loyal fervour with which Solomon Wolfe read the additional prayers, it being the birthday of Prince Albert. At the opening ceremony in 1842 Benjamin Samuel was given most credit for fundraising and the list of donations included further large sums from Moses Samuel's family, £20 from the Bristol congregation and £5 from their President. So began the history of a building which was to be the centre of the community for the next sixty years. It was smaller in size than Kingsmead Street, having a frontage of 32 feet and a depth of 30 feet. It is described in the consecration report as being 'on a very limited scale' but the interior was 'very tastefully fitted up and embellished'. It had a large window at the front and a pointed roof. The entrance from Corn Street was through a door at one side into a hall with stairs up to the Ladies' Gallery. The men sat downstairs on seats ranged around the walls in rows with a reading desk in the centre and the Ark at the furthest end containing the *Sefer Torah* (Scrolls of the Law). The Ark would have had a secure door probably of metalwork with an embroidered, velvet curtain inside. The Scrolls would have been similarly covered in velvet, with silver ornaments. There was 'as yet' no charitable institution. The congregation never had sufficient funds to buy the site outright.

An answer to the Chief Rabbi's questionnaire of 1845 shows that Bath had four householders, five paying seat-holders, a Reader and Kosher butcher. Individual members numbered 15 male, 12 female and 23 children. Mention was made of an advantage apparently not shared by any other Anglo-Jewish community – a natural *Mikveh* (ritual bath with running water for purification before sabbath and festivals and for women after menstruation). Clearly this was an unusual use for the Roman baths; unfortunately there is no record of it in the local archives. There was still no philanthropic society. Shortage of funds was indeed to be a constant concern. Scarcely less so must have been the problem of security; in 1846 the Synagogue was broken into, with the loss of most of its brasswork and the contents of its two poor boxes. No doubt at least part of the damage was made good

before the visit in January 1848 of Sir Moses Montefiore, who characteristically gave generously both to the synagogue and the Reader.

Solomon Wolfe was by now fast ageing. In April 1855 the *Bath Journal* reported that the confused state of affairs of the congregation was to be looked into and a new *Kosher* butcher found. In May nine men, seven with London addresses and one each in Birmingham and Plymouth, appealed in the *Jewish Chronicle* for subscriptions on Wolfe's behalf. Wolfe himself wrote to explain why such steps had been taken. The Chief Rabbi had summoned him, in view of his age, for re-examination of his expertise as a *kosher* butcher. Before attending on Adler he had been refused further maintenance by the Bath congregation. When Adler withdrew his authorization he was left with no means apart from a weekly salary of 12/6 (62.5p) as *Chazzan Sheni* (second reader). As a comparison, the rabbi at Bristol in 1844 was living rent free at a weekly salary of 27/6 (137.5p), but the newly elected wardens at Bath had a Reader and a *kosher* butcher to support and numbers being very limited could allow Wolfe no higher salary. This unhappy episode ended, it was reported, in an amicable settlement made by the Chief Rabbi when visiting Bath three months later.

Solomon Wolfe died aged 81 in 1866. His headstone states that he was Reader to the congregation for fifty years. After his retirement as Reader and *Kosher* butcher the first rabbi had been appointed. Soon after Wolfe's death services were no longer regularly held. Twelve men served as minister at Bath up to 1900, none remaining for more than five years. In a valiant effort to make its voice heard, the community sent a Deputy to the Board from 1853 to 1859, when the secretary of the synagogue stated their inability to pay off arrears amounting to less than £13. The overall prospect of survival must have seemed sombre. In 1870 the Bath Auxilliary of the London Society met as usual and again the local papers gave extensive coverage to the speeches. Michael J. Goldsmid of Birmingham wrote to the *Bath Herald*, asking whether it was just to call a body 'fallen and degraded, some of whose members sat in 'the most important deliberative assembly in the world,' but significantly no such question came from Bath itself. Decay was briefly halted in 1872 when Nathan Jacobs, formerly rabbi of East Terrace, Cardiff, retired to Bath with

his wife and those of his eight children not yet married. He did all that he could to help re-organize the community and in 1876 the synagogue, closed for several years, re-opened under the presidency of Alfred J. Goldsmid (probably brother of Michael) who bought out Abraham Abraham's boot and shoe business in Union Street. David Nyman and Abrahams (who left Bath in 1872) signed a new lease for the Synagogue in 1869 which would last until 1890. David Nyman died in 1876 and left £10 a year to cover the Synagogue's rent until 1890 in his Will.

More particulars of the period between 1879 and 1901 are given in a minute book in the archives of the Board of Deputies. In 1880 the congregation agreed to grant 5/- (25p) a month for *minyán* men on Sabbaths and holidays.<sup>6</sup> Only a year later a letter appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle* under the name of 'An Occasional Visitor to Bath'. He had found the synagogue closed on Friday night and returned twice on Saturday morning, the second time to find a child playing with a rope for a swing in the doorway. Nathan Jacobs, acting president, replied that had the 'Occasional Visitor' contacted a member of the congregation he would have learned that they numbered only five, of whom two were always absent and one was blind. They did however send to Bristol and paid men to make the quorum. 'An Occasional Visitor' pointed out that in Penzance, with only three members, the synagogue was open every *Shabbat* and frequently made the quorum from visitors like himself. So demoralized was the handful in Bath that when the synagogue was flooded in 1882 no entry appeared in the minutes. Twelve years later floods caused even more severe damage. Water rose some four feet within the building, submerging the reading desk and forcing the seats from their fixtures. Fortunately a dozen prominent Londoners defrayed most of the cost of repair. The Board of Deputies was well aware of the local situation. Their report for 1893 noted that the Bath cemetery would soon need help from outside. The Chief Rabbi came down in 1894 and was shocked at the want of religious education of the children. Nathan Jacobs had died; his daughter Rosa later kept a Boarding house and Kosher restaurant with her husband, Michael Franks, the second Secretary for Marriages. The last Jewish marriage to be celebrated in Bath took place in the Assembly Rooms in 1901.

Decline was now irreversible. The final entry in the Minute

Book, dated January, 1901, appoints new Trustees to look after the Cemetery. One of them, Reuben Somers, a master tailor who had come to England from Lodz, Poland, to escape conscription in 1873, had settled in Bath in the 1880's. With Abraham Leon he signed a new lease in 1890 for an annual rent of £15. Unfortunately Abraham Leon died in 1897 and when, in 1903, St. John's Hospital produced a long list of dilapidations Reuben Somers had moved to London and was unable to foot the bill. So it was that the Hospital made a new lease with Thomas Cooper, marine store dealer, later the same year. In 1909 St. Paul's Church took over the lease and altered the building to serve as a reading room for its parishioners. In 1938 the City Council requisitioned most of the property in Corn Street and Avon Street for rebuilding the Mineral Water Hospital. In the event this did not take place and the site is now occupied by the Technical College.

To date the only revival of communal life in the city this century is itself historical. From 1927 to 1946 Nathan Kerstein kept a Kosher Hotel at 10 Duke Street and again services were held regularly. In 1941 Miss Barbara G. Stone (in *Millenium*) records the Barmitzvah (coming-of-age ceremony) of a young German refugee schoolboy. He was prepared for the ceremony by some R.A.F. men at Colerne. Then on a Saturday morning a group of his friends assembled in the front room of the house in Duke Street. Ten men had to be present (a *minyán*) but women who were not of the Jewish faith were invited to attend. The Sacred Scrolls were taken from behind a curtain in a cupboard recess beside the fireplace and read by the men, draped with prayer shawls. The service, which lasted some hours, was conducted in Hebrew. Today the nearest Synagogue is in Bristol; nevertheless there are still a few Jews who enjoy living in Bath and travel to Bristol for services.

Addressing the Bath Institution 'On English Topography' in February, 1831, Joseph Hunter spoke of the subject as 'multifarious and abundant . . . If it is asked what good purpose is served by these minute enquiries? I answer that . . . that there may not be an immediate result in anything which touches the gross interests of the present age but there is that which fills and satisfies and delights the mind'. A century and a half later, local historians are rarely satisfied. Too little is known about general

economic patterns in Victorian Bath to draw any clear deductions, but it seems likely that conditions were seldom such as to hold the more ambitious and industrious for long. Even in the earlier period those who prospered often left, usually for London, or to take a previously unmentioned example, Jacob Abraham's son, Liverpool and Manchester. An ageing population of the well-to-do in a place where businesses and practices were already long established limited the range of opportunities too narrowly. In communal terms, an excess of female over male children of marriageable age, and occasional attrition through inter-marriage, continuously worsened the situation. Bristol, secure in its greater numbers, was only twelve miles distant. In the days of Moses Samuel and Solomon Wolfe there may have been little doubt in the survival of communal independence in Bath. Afterwards, in the face of recurrent threats of floodwater and ever-decreasing membership, decline, however long drawn out, was certain.

## Notes

- 1 Quoted in John Wood *An Essay towards a Description of Bath*, 1765.
- 2 Such as Abraham Mendez da Costa and his family at Kingsmead Street (1775–82), Raphael Franco's widow Leah at 17 Belmont (1797–1808) and Dr. and Mrs. Levy at Camden Place (1799–1801).
- 3 *Schochet*: the man authorised to kill meat for the Jewish community. Also known as a *Kosher* Butcher.
- 4 *Mohel*: the man authorised to perform circumcision.
- 5 B.S. Penley, *The Bath Stage*, 1892.
- 6 *Minyan*: a quorum – ten men to read the Scroll on Sabbaths.

An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Jewish Historical Society of England on 14 February, 1985, in London and an illustrated version is to be published in the Society's Transactions XXIX later this year.

## APPENDIX I

## Headstones at the Jewish Cemetery, Combe Down, Bath

*There are 50 gravestones of which only these are now legible.)*

Name	Age	Date	English or Jewish	
D. [Daniel] Rees	} (both of 20 Bathwick Street)	84	21 1 1842	5602
Abraham Rees		85	17 1 1845	5605
Myer Fishel		83	5 10 1861	
George Braham		55	21 12 1865	5626
Samuel Jacobes ( <i>of 12 Bladud Buildings</i> )		64	2 2 1866	5626
Rev. Solomon Wolfe (Reader to the Congregation for fifty years)		87	17 1 1866	5626
Matilda Samuel		65	8 1 1867	
Phoebe Jacobs (widow of Samuel Jacobs)		69	19 2 1867	
Jesse Fishel		74	13 1 1870	
Morris Abrahams		77	27 7 1877	5638
Maria Michaels		78	5 10 1878	5639
Lh Brooks (wife of Alfred Brooks)		31	30 8 1883	5643
Herentz Leon ( <i>of 1 Claverton Buildings</i> )		78	10 12 1884	5645
Harriet Jacobs (daughter of Samuel and Phoebe)		63	22 12 1885	5646
Rachel Jacobs (daughter of Samuel and Phoebe)		62	15 1 1888	5648
Harry Cohen		14	5 3 1889	
Aaron Morris		48	18 12 1889	
Rev. Nathan Jacobs		64	12 5 1890	
Hyman Somers (son of Reuben Somers – born 25 12 1877)		15	9 – 1893	
Henriette Leon ( <i>of Lime Lodge, Oldfield Park – born Hildesheim on 26 7 1823 (5583)</i> )		71	22 9 1894	5654
Eveline Sloman (daughter of Leman and Elizabeth Levi of London)		47	1 4 1896	5656
Julia Jacobs (daughter of Samuel and Phoebe)		71	13 1 1897	5657
Abraham Leon ( <i>of Lime Lodge, Oldfield Park – born Hagenow on 28 8 1818</i> )			23 8 1897	
Minnie Tyler (daughter of Simon and Freda Tyler)	2	28	3 1898	
Hannah Jacobs (widow of Nathan Jacobs)		75	10 3 1899	
B. Barnett		68	14 4 1901	
Kate Aaron (wife of Samuel Aaron)		75	9 10 1901	
Joseph Jacobson (husband of Antonia)		73	11 2 1920	
Solomon Kesseff			6 12 1921	

*Undated*

Joseph Sigo (nd)

Frances Ulman (Pious Priestess)

Lewis Cohn Silverstone (born December 1851, died 23 January ?)

Elizabeth Simmons (22 November ?)

## APPENDIX II

## Officers of Bath Synagogue – from the local Bath Directories

## At Kingsmead Street

1826: Solomon Wolfe <i>Reader</i>	J. Abraham <i>Warden</i>
1833: Solomon Wolfe <i>Reader</i>	Lewis Lazarus <i>Warden</i>
	Benjamin Samuel <i>Warden</i>
1841: Solomon Wolfe <i>Reader</i>	Benjamin Samuel <i>Warden</i>
1846: Solomon Wolfe <i>Reader</i>	Benjamin Samuel <i>Warden</i>

## At Corn Street

(*Wardens no longer figure in the lists*)

1856: Samuel Hermon <i>Minister</i>	Solomon Wolfe <i>Reader</i>
1862: Lewis Harfield <i>Minister</i>	Solomon Wolfe <i>Second Reader</i>
1864: Simon Greenbaum <i>Minister</i>	Solomon Wolfe <i>Second Reader*</i>
1868: Barnett Lichtenstein <i>Minister</i>	
1872: Rev. Israel Greenberg <i>Minister</i>	
( <i>Services no longer regularly held</i> )	
1878: Rev. Jacob Wittenberg <i>Minister</i>	
1882: Rev. Simon (J.) Fine <i>Minister</i>	J.W. Jacobs <i>Clerk</i>
1886: Rev. H. Dainmow <i>Minister</i>	J.W. Jacobs <i>Clerk</i>
1890: Rev. J. Rensohn <i>Minister</i>	Mr. A. Leon <i>Clerk</i>
1894: Rev. J. Burman <i>Minister</i>	Arthur J. Goldsmid <i>President</i>
1895: Rev. J. Burman <i>Minister</i>	Mr. Bertish (from Swindon) <i>President</i>
1898: Lewis Horfield <i>Minister</i>	Simon Sperber <i>President</i>
	Reuben Somers <i>Treasurer</i>
1901: <i>No Minister</i>	Reuben Somers <i>President and Treasurer</i>
1911: Lease not renewed. The cemetery remained as a reminder of the Jews who had lived in Bath since 1800.	

\*Solomon Wolfe died in 1866

## APPENDIX III

### Marriages

#### *Secretary for Marriages – Solomon Wolfe*

DATE	NAME	STATUS	AGE	PROFESSION	ADDRESS	FATHER	PROFESSION	WITNESSES
20. 5.1838	BENJAMIN LAZARUS MARIA ISAACS	Bachelor Spinster	32 full age	General Dealer	*6 Abbey Street No. 2 The Walks	Mark Lazarus Phineas Isaacs	Broker Furner	Lyon Davis Myer Fishel
27. 3.1839	ISAAC DAVIDSON SARAH PHILLIPS	Widower Spinster	32	Jeweller	Market Place, Falmouth 19 Daniel Street	Moses Davidson Moses Phillips	Merchant Slop seller	Mark Lazarus Lyon Davis
31. 4.1843	JOSEPH COULMAN HANNAH BRICK SAMUEL	Bachelor Spinster	47 36	Merchant Cap Maker	Church St. Abbey Green 7 York Street	— —	— —	Verity Sacks Joseph Simmons
12.10.1844	JACOB LION HARRIS SARAH SOLOMON	Bachelor Spinster	28 19	Draper —	3 Stall Street *20 Stall Street	— Alexander Solomon	— Broker	Elijah Solomon Benjamin Samuel
26. 2.1848	CHARLES DAVIS ROSETTA SOLOMON	Bachelor Spinster	25 25	Upholsterer —	10 James Street *20 Spall Street	Saul Davis Alexander Solomon	Merchant Broker	Lain Jude Jacob Louis Bleissner
28. 2.1849	NANOMAN SHARER SOPHIA ABRAHAM	Bachelor Spinster	20	Jeweller Sempstress	New Bond St. Place New Bond St. Place	David Sharer, decd. Samuel Abraham	— Jeweller	George Braham Benjamin Samuel
27.12.1849	JACOB MATTHIAS PERL HANNAH HARDING	Bachelor Spinster	26 26	Jeweller —	*9 Kingsmead Terrace 6 Princes Street	Matthias Perl David Harding	Merchant Factor	George Braham Joseph Levy
16. 2.1853	SANDY ALEXANDER FREDERICA DAVIS	Bachelor Spinster	23 23	Upholsterer Upholsterer	5 Wood Street 5 Wood Street	Sandy Alexander Saul Davis	Merchant Merchant	George Braham Samuel Solomon
13. 3.1861	HARRIS FREEDMAN HANNAH WOLFE	Bachelor Spinster	21 19	Pawnbroker Dressmaker	Dowlais, Glamorgan 43 Walcot Street	Samuel Freedman Solomon Wolfe	Pawnbroker Reader to Syn.	Lewis Simmons David Nyman

## *Secretary for Marriages — Michael Franks*

18. 7.1861	HYMAN ELEAZER GOODMAN BEATRICE MIRIAM GOLDSMID	Bachelor Spinster 27 25	Jeweller —	7 College St. Swansea *Effingham House	Joseph Goodman Lewis Alfred Goldsmid	Clothier Dealer	M Mindelsohn Henry A Edgar
29. 8.1894	JOSEPH MYERS FANNY FRANKS	Bachelor Spinster 27 age	Pawnbroker —	126 Dock St. Newport 14 Manvers Street	Nathan Myers Michael Franks	Pawnbroker Watchmaker	W Berlin Isidore Berman
27. 3.1900	SIMON SPERBER KATIE FRANKS	Bachelor Spinster 29 age	Pawnbroker —	Belle Vue, Cinderford 9 Prior Pk. Buildings	Moses Sperber Michael Franks	Dealer Watchmaker	Isaac M Jacobs Carl Sperber
21. 8.1901	MARCUS BARNETT FLORENCE GINSBURG	Bachelor Spinster 28 21	Draper —	Crumilin, Abercain 1 Pulteney Avenue	Samuel Barnett Bernard Ginzburg	Merchant Minister	H Ziman Hy Ginzberg

NOTE: All marriages were either celebrated at the Synagogue in Corn Street, or at the home marked \* except for the last one between Barnett and Ginsburg which took place at the Assembly Rooms.