

HAYNT



ASPJ

Australian Society of Polish Jews
and their Descendants

**PRESERVE
EDUCATE
PROMOTE**

SPRING 2020
ISSUE 10

VALE MARIAN PAWLIK OAM **8/12/1954–31/7/2020**

IN THIS ISSUE

From the President
From the Co- Vice President
Vale Marian Pawlik OAM
My venerable ancestry
City on the trail of borderland cultures
Warsaw Jewish theatre
Wroclaw Jewish community
Jewish born Polish artist

Page 3
Page 4
Page 5
Page 6-8
Page 10
Page 11
Page 12-14
Page 15

The war on reason
Wonderous adventure
ASPJ and FestivALT partnership
Hundred years of learning
Polish poet Irena Tuwim
Man of vision
New director of Polin Jewish Museum

Page 16
Page 17-19
Page 20
Page 21-23
Page 24
Page 25-28
Page 29

PRESERVE EDUCATE PROMOTE

“Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants
is dedicated to preserving and promoting the historical
and cultural heritage of Jewish life in Poland and to fostering
understanding between current and future generations
of the Polish and Jewish communities”

The ASPJ coordinates with the established Jewish and Polish communal bodies, religious leadership, governmental, parliamentary and diplomatic bodies, as well as historical, cultural and educational organisations in both Australia and Poland.

Polish–Jewish dialogue in Poland today is growing, particularly among the post-communist, educated young. There is a growing understanding and acceptance of the past, both the good and the bad. A new spirit of positive cooperation has emerged. Young Catholic Poles, more than ever before, are expressing an interest in the Jewish history of their country. This dialogue and interest needs to be nurtured and encouraged.

We organise educational and cultural events that cover the broad range of Polish–Jewish relations.

Our *Haynt* magazine is published three times a year, showcasing cultural, social and political articles of interest to Polish and Jewish communities.

ASPJ is a resource for educational material and offers a speaker service in a variety of topics relating to Polish–Jewish relations.

The Henryk Slawik Award is bestowed by the ASPJ to a person or institution that helps foster a deeper understanding of Polish–Jewish history and relations.

ASPJ Oration invites national or international speakers who can address complex and relevant issues regarding Polish–Jewish concerns.

Based in Melbourne, Australia, we invite all people, Jewish and non-Jewish, whose roots lie in Poland, to join our organisation.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors.
They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of ASPJ or its members.

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

President:	Secretaries:
Ezra May	Lena Fiszman
Co-Vice-Presidents:	Peter Schnall
Izydor Marmur	Board Members:
Estelle Rozinski	David Prince
Treasurer:	Eva Hussain
Andrew Rajcher	Karen Pakula

CONTACT US

Telephone: +61 (0)3 9523 9573
Email: lfiszman@bigpond.net.au
Website: www.polishjews.org.au

Mailing Address:
PO Box 56,
Elsternwick, Vic., 3185,
Australia

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Ezra May
President ASPJ

Although the global Covid-19 pandemic is severely impacting our way of life, thankfully, Australia

has been one of the most successful countries in the world in reducing the direct health impact of Covid-19. Notwithstanding that blessing, the sincere sympathy of the ASPJ is extended to all those families who have lost loved ones and we wish a speedy recovery to all those currently suffering and a strong protection for those vulnerable to it. Our thoughts are also extended to those suffering from the enforced lockdowns and social distancing, be it economically or emotionally.

The ASPJ is not immune and we too have been affected by Covid-19. Our 2020 schedule of events has necessarily been postponed, including our widely anticipated 2020 ASPJ Oration featuring the inspirational Dariusz Popelia – a current Polish Olympian and founder of *People, not Numbers* – a unique project which leads efforts to preserve the memory of otherwise forgotten Polish communities throughout his home region in Poland. ASPJ plans for other functions, events and exhibitions throughout this year on a wide variety of interesting topics have also been placed on hold.

An aspect the ASPJ was seeking to focus on and expand was its national footprint and it was with great disappointment that the launch of our NSW chapter was postponed in March earlier this year. The format of our 2020 Henryk Slawick Award scheduled for December remains in doubt, as it is still unknown what restrictions may apply.

The major indirect impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the ASPJ, is that in the lockdown period, our CEO & my Co-President, Bernard Korbman OAM, took time to reflect and

came to the determination that the time was right for him to retire effective immediately from all positions at the ASPJ. Now is not the time to laud Bernard's contribution in establishing, building & leading the ASPJ, and his impact on Polish-Jewish relations in Australia and internationally. A formal appreciation and recognition will be organised in the appropriate time. However it would be remiss of me and the ASPJ not to acknowledge Bernard's retirement in the moment.

Positively for the ASPJ, a strong, committed & talented Board remains with strong links and involvement in both the local Australian and international Jewish & Polish communities and with relevant parliamentarians, dignitaries, institutions & organisations.

Despite all the current uncertainty and the concern many people have regarding the future direction of world events, or perhaps it is precisely due to this increased uncertainty and concern, the APSJ remains committed to promoting its agenda and ideals of preserving and promoting the historical cultural heritage of Jewish life in Poland and continuing to foster understanding between current and future generations of Jewish & Polish communities, as well as in areas of interfaith and inter-cultural dialogue.

We see our mission of inspiring and enabling dialogue and the exchange of ideas as now more crucial than ever and it is in this vein that we continue to work to further these ideals. Please look out for our re-worked program for the remainder of 2020 and beyond. The ASPJ is actively exploring opportunities for a wider scope of events and international experts and guests as we pivot to online and technology-based formats.

Looking forward to you joining us on our continued ASPJ journey. Stay safe.

I wish everyone a Shana Tova - a sweet and happy New Year - for this upcoming Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year).

STAYING ACTIVE DURING THE PANDEMIC



Izydor Marmur
Co-Vice President

It will come as no surprise to you dear reader when I say that so far it has been a very challenging year for everyone, and no less for us at ASPJ. With the terrible bush fires, floods,

tough world financial situation, rise of extremism and antisemitism world-wide and now the pandemic, we could very easily start believing that it's all too hard and, as there are more pressing issues, our mission is less important.

We believe that in difficult times like the present, our work and that of other community organisations is even more necessary. When we see people and communities retreating into themselves and distrusting others, we see potential dangers. For us doing nothing is not an option. We are continuing our mission with more vigor than ever. And we ask others to join us.

Of course, the Covid-19 pandemic does limit us in implementing the usual plans developed before the pandemic. We have to work within the new reality and therefore find opportunities to continue keeping our members and friends in both Polish and Jewish communities well informed of developments as we go.

It isn't often that one can be fortunate enough to meet someone with whom one can form a strong, long-lasting friendship. Over the many years Bernard Korbman (Bear) has been my loyal friend and confidant. Our conversations over coffee are always pleasurable and valuable to me, often resulting in collaboration on many projects.

A highlight of our friendship was a journey to Poland. There we had many official meetings, visited many interesting places and established new friendships.

Bernard inspired me to join ASPJ and with our board we brought our organisation to the point where it is today. With Bernard's wisdom and passion we have been able to overcome many difficulties often placed in front of us. In spite of this, over time we have developed strong ties with like-minded people and made many lasting friendships.

Bernard's leadership and the hard work of our board is the reason ASPJ stands out as an important contributor to multiculturalism in Victoria and now in NSW.

It is my hope that Bernard can be available when advice is needed and that he and I will continue to work together on various other projects for a long time to come.

Thank you Bernard for your friendship.

I hope that the Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year) will bring peace and fresh new beginnings to all.

Shana Tova Um'tuka.

Vale Marian Pawlik OAM

8 July 1954 –31 July 2020

Albert Einstein said, "The value of a man should be seen in what he gives and not what he is able to receive."

Marian Pawlik gave much to many good causes. He believed in the value of cooperation and mutual respect between people, and supported the mission of the Australian Society of Polish Jews of bringing Polish and Jewish communities in Australia closer together.

We have known and collaborated with Marian for over ten years. He was generous in sharing his knowledge, expertise and skills, and was committed to doing the work needed. His presence with us will be sorely missed, but we will continue to fulfill our joint vision into the future and will always remember his valuable contribution.

Rest in peace Marian. Shalom Haver.

MARIAN PAWLIK OAM

A BIG MAN WITH A BIG HEART.

REMINISCINGS



Bernard Korbman OAM and Marian Pawlik OAM

By Bernard Korbman OAM

When Marian entered the room, everyone automatically smiled. It was an automatic response; you just couldn't help it. Furthermore, when Marian entered the room, he had a beaming smile on his face. This was the nature of the man.

From the point of view of the Australian Association of Polish Jews, Marian was a committed champion

to uniting us all as Poles. For Marian, man-made classifications and barriers were to be obliterated, and we were to be accepted and connected by our humanity and commonality. After all, he pointed out, "we are all created in God's image."

It is not easy leading a community. After all, we Jews and Poles share so many characteristics, such as when you have two Jews or two Poles you have three opinions. Nevertheless, undaunted, Marian ventured on in his quest for honesty and truth between the two communities. He was open to learning more about Jewish history and culture, meeting with a number of Holocaust survivors and reading widely. He was not afraid to give us the Polish perspective on many issues, even when that perspective differed greatly from ours. However it was Marian's honesty and the trust that he instilled in others that made conflict resolution possible. One always left Marian's company feeling fresh and positive.

Even in hospital, when I visited, or speaking to him on the phone, he remained positive, asked about my family, called to wish me well on my new venture when I resigned my position at the ASPJ, and made plans for more joint cultural activities.

To many of us, Marian was much more than a colleague. He was a friend, one that we would cherish for the rest of our lives. My fondest and proudest memory of Marian was the day he presented me with my Widzew Łódź football club jumper.

As two Lodzers, we became bound forever.

Marian, I speak on all our behalf's when I say, may your dear soul rest in peace.

MY VENERABLE ANCESTRY – WHO KNEW?

by Andrew Rajcher

ASPJ Treasurer & Board Member

Over the course of my more than ten years working as a volunteer English-language translator for the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, I had developed a love of history. I had retired early, so I thought that maybe I would take on a Masters degree in that field.

My best friend in Poland is a history professor and, with his assistance, I was told that the university in my family's home city, Częstochowa, would accept me as a Masters student and that, if I went ahead with it, he would be my supervisor (of course, someone else would do the final assessment). I even had the topic of my thesis picked out and refined AND they would allow me to write it in English (as my formal Polish is not of a sufficiently high standard). So far, so good!

But then it was drawn to my attention that I had never before done any historical research and that commencing my thesis, without gaining SOME experience in this skill, could prove problematic. My professor friend suggested that, in order to gain a measure of said skill, I should research my family's genealogy and construct a family tree. Little did I know, at that time, the path along which this would lead me.

So, at the suggestion of a POLIN genealogist, I downloaded and set up a Polish genealogy program (*Geno-Tree*), which is designed specifically for Polish genealogical research.

I got to work, entering all the information I knew, all the knowledge which I recalled having been told to me by my late parents, going online to various genealogy search engines and, with almost one hundred entries, I pretty much hit a dead end.

I then turned for help to Michał Majewski, the POLIN and ŻIH genealogist and historian who had visited Melbourne in August 2019 for our ASPJ Genealogy Open Day. My first request to him related to my paternal grandmother, Chana Fajga Reicher, nee Gancwajch (my grandfather later *Polonised* our surname to "Rajcher"). From my late mother, I knew that she had died in 1938, just before World War II, but I had no photograph of her nor did I know where she had been buried.

Not long after, while I happened to be working at POLIN, Michał came back to me with an "I've got good news and bad news" response. The "bad news" was that he had been unable to locate any photograph of her (and I still have not found one to this day). However, the "good news" was that he had located her grave – in one of the two Jewish cemeteries in Otwock, about 40 kilometres from Warsaw! (This made perfect sense, as Otwock was, and still is, a sanatorium town and I recall my mother saying that my grandmother had long suffered from tuberculosis.)

At Michał's suggestion, we agreed that, on the following weekend we would drive there to see what was left of my paternal grandmother's grave. After searching around a little, we found it – it had been almost completely destroyed, but the *matzevah* (headstone) seemed to still be intact. By the time I returned to Australia, I had decided that I wanted to rebuild her grave and, if possible, to use the original *matzevah*.

A few months later, I returned to Poland and, with Michał, a representative of the Rabbinical Cemeteries Commission and Rabbi Yehoshua Ellis from Warsaw, we again drove to Otwock. This time, we wanted to determine the exact dimension of the grave itself and, with the help of Rabbi Ellis, to examine the *matzevah* more closely, including lifting it out of the dirt and seeing what was written on its other side. The *matzevah* was surprisingly thick and heavy – it took three of us to lift it!

Once it was upright, Rabbi Ellis looked at what was written in Hebrew on its reverse side and kept repeating, "Oh, my goodness! Oh, my goodness!", followed by "Your family has quite a history!" In

response to my "What?" query, he said, "Let me take a photo and I'll email you a translation this afternoon".

True to his word, Rabbi Ellis' email arrived that afternoon and I was shocked. The Hebrew text, written on the back of the *matzevah*, among other things, stated that my grandmother was the direct descendant of



Gate to the Kromolów Jewish Cemetery



My paternal grandmother's grave. L-r: before, after (rear view), after (front view)

not one, not two, but THREE *Tzaddikim* – the *Tzaddikim* of Kromolów, Zawiercie and Szydłowo! What shocked me even more was the fact that my late father – a former *cheder* and *yeshivah* student, coming from a fairly religious family – MUST have known of this. Even if it had not been told to him earlier, he would have attended her funeral and would certainly have been able to read what was written on the back of the *matzevah*. Yet he never said one word to me about this part of my ancestry!

Subsequently, I did manage to rebuild my grandmother's grave with the help of the Rabbinical Cemeteries Commission. Within two years of locating her grave, my paternal grandmother now lies in a newly-constructed grave, with the original *matzevah*, stripped and cleaned, standing atop of it.

But this was to be only the first part of my genealogical journey.

I wanted to know more about my illustrious ancestry – the *Tzaddikim*. Again, I turned to Michał Majewski who began to dig deeper. After some further research, he discovered that one of these *Tzaddikim* was **Rabbi Izrael Lejb Gancwajch – the *Tzaddik* of Kromolów**. He also discovered that he had been buried in an *ohel* (small room built around the grave – Hebrew meaning "tent") in the Kromolów Jewish Cemetery. Rabbi Gancwajch had served the Kromolów Jewish community from 1875 to 1892 and had also served as head of the local area rabbinical council (Beth Din).

The small Jewish cemetery in Kromolów, today, is looked

after by an amazing man – Marcin Bergier – a non-Jewish Pole, who is a local high school teacher and who, every year with his matriculation class, does a major clean-up of the grounds and tends to the graves. The cemetery is locked and visitors can call Marcin to meet them and unlock the gates.

A visit to Kromolów was now the next step. So, in November 2019, two representatives of the Rabbinical Cemeteries Commission, Michał

Majewski and I drove the three hours from Warsaw to Kromolów to meet Marcin Bergier at the Jewish Cemetery.

As expected the cemetery was in excellent condition. However, the *ohel*, sitting in the centre of the cemetery, was a sad sight. Only one and a half walls still remained standing and the roof had all but disappeared. I commented to Marcin that this destruction must have been the work of the Nazis during World War II. He said that it wasn't. I said, then, that it must have been antisemitic Poles who had destroyed my great-great-grandfather's *ohel*. Marcin confirmed that it was, indeed, Poles who had done this, but that it had nothing to do with antisemitism. He said that, in the 1950s and 1960s, building materials were in extremely short supply in Poland. During that time, it was a common practice, when building materials were required, for people to raid cemeteries for what they needed, irrespective of whether the cemeteries were Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant. It appears that these people were equal-opportunity raiders.

Listening to Marcin Bergier speak about my great-great-grandfather, the *Tzaddik* of Kromolów, hearing about the history of the no-longer existent Kromolów Jewish



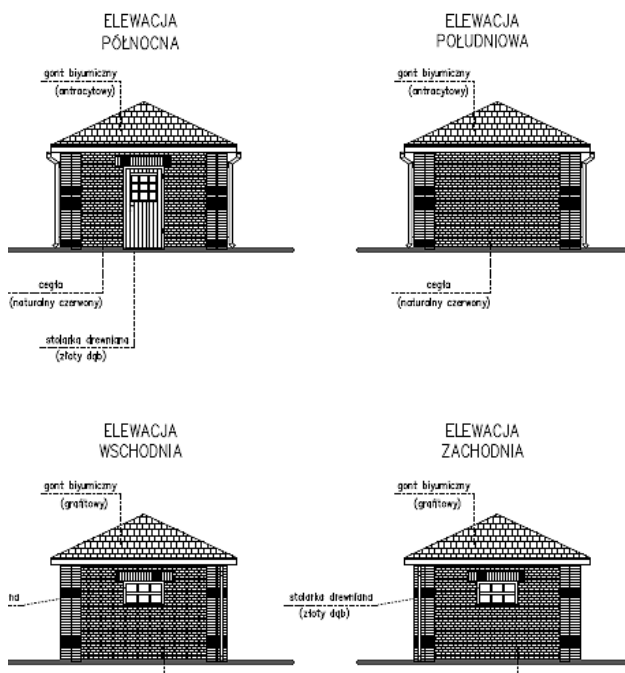
My great-great-grandfather's *Ohel*.

L-r: The *Ohel* remains before disassembly, the *Ohel* (front view), the *Ohel* (rear view)

community and looking at the state of my ancestor's final resting-place, I almost instantly decided that he deserved better and that I would rebuild his *ohel*.

As it turned out, this would prove not to be as straightforward as the rebuilding of my grandmother's grave. The Jewish cemetery, as a whole, and my great-great-grandfather's *ohel*, in particular, were classified as "Zabytki Narodowe" (National Heritage Objects). Kromolów lies in the Śląsk Province and, in order to do anything regarding the *ohel*, I would need the permission of both the Śląsk heritage conservation authorities and the Śląsk Jewish Community Council, both located in the province's capital, Katowice.

Here is where the Rabbinical Cemeteries Commission



The plan was required for the permission applications

in Warsaw came to my rescue once again. In February 2020, while again in Poland, I signed authorities for Commission representatives to apply, on my behalf, for the required permissions. We met with their recommended builder, who understood the requirements and prepared a detailed plan for the proposed rebuilding of the *ohel* (pic above). The plan was required for the permission applications.

The design required that, for the front wall, with the doorway and which faced the entrance gateway to the cemetery, as many of the *ohel*'s original bricks as possible would be used in its construction.



25th June 2020, and the careful disassembly of the *ohel* has begun!

With a little navigation through the bureaucracy, by 14 May 2020, we had received permission from both the Śląsk conservation authorities and the Śląsk Jewish Community Council, to go ahead with the rebuilding of the *ohel* of the *Tzaddik* of Kromolów, Rabbi Izrael Lejb Gancwajch – my great-great-grandfather.

Coronavirus notwithstanding, the hope still is that the



L-r: The *Ohel* site cleared, pieces of the broken matzevah found inside

rebuilding of the *ohel* will be completed this year and that sometime in early 2021 a ceremony will be held during which the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Rabbi Michael Schudrich, and Rabbi Yehoshua Ellis will re-consecrate the *ohel* and a commemorative plaque will be unveiled.

In the meantime, the rebuilding work continues!

P.S. Since beginning this quest into my own ancestry, thanks to Michał Majewski's brilliant assistance, my family tree has now grown from around 100 to almost 700 individuals – going back to five sets of my great-great-great-grandparents and with several branches of the tree bearing surnames I had never heard of before! The further digging into my ancestry also continues!



WOLF & DORA RAJCHER
MEMORIAL FUND

**proudly supporting
the work of the**



**Australian Society
of Polish Jews
and Their Descendants**

PROJECT "CITY ON THE TRAIL OF BORDERLAND CULTURES"



Tadeusz Kuźmiński outside the replica of Wolpa synagogue, in 2016

Article sourced from *Architecture, Ghettos /Shtetls / Jewish Quarters, Obituaries, People, Synagogues*.

Tadeusz Kuźmiński, an entrepreneur who rebuilt a wooden synagogue and created a "living shtetl skansen" without Jews in southeast Poland, has died after a long illness. He was 65.

Kuźmiński, was a businessman and local philanthropist in Biłgoraj, a town that was a thriving Jewish center before the Holocaust but a place where no Jews live today.

It was there that he built a full-scale replica of the destroyed wooden synagogue of Wolpa (now in Belarus) standing in a replica Jewish marketplace aimed at anchoring a cultural-commercial-residential

development designed to evoke a pre-WW2 village.

Kuźmiński called his project "City on the Trail of Borderland Cultures," and his dream was to create a complex that reflected the multicultural character of pre-WW2 Poland, but which would serve as a cultural and commercial venue, and also a tourist attraction.

"He was a wonderful and very special person, a creative dreamer," Emil Majuk, project manager of the Shtetl Routes initiative at the Grodzka Gate NN Theatre in Lublin, told JHE. "His passing away is a great loss for the Lublin region. I hope that there will be some people to continue the work he started in Biłgoraj."

The development of the "City on the Trail of Borderland Cultures" is overseen by the Biłgoraj XXI Foundation, which was established in 2005. The plan is for the complex to include museums as well as apartments, shops, restaurants, hotel accommodation, and sports facilities.

The replica Wolpa synagogue stands in the middle of a market-style square, lined by reconstructed buildings that evoke historic shtetl architecture, much the way buildings from various towns are arranged in skansens, or outdoor ethnographic or architectural museums.

During a visit to the complex in 2016, Kuźmiński told JHE director Ruth Ellen Gruber that each building was a replica, based on old photographs, of a house that was found in one of several pre-war shtetls. One building on the square houses a small museum/exhibition space dedicated to the Nobel Prize-winning Yiddish author Isaac Bashevis Singer, who spent his childhood in Biłgoraj

To date, only the main part of the Jewish marketplace section of the 40-hectare development has been built.

However, after being idled for awhile, construction began again this spring on a second market square, where there will be replicas of wooden churches and a wooden mosque (such as the one or two still in use by the descendants of Tatars in eastern Poland).

THE JEWISH THEATRE IN WARSAW

Article sourced from the Ester Rachel and Ida Kaminska Jewish Theatre.
www.teatr-zydowski.art.pl/en

The Ester Rachel and Ida Kaminska Jewish Theater was created in 1950 as a result of the merger of two theatrical groups: the Lower Silesia Jewish Theatre in Wrocław and the Jewish Theatre in Łódź.

In the following years the theatre operated in both cities and held guest performances around Poland. Upon Ida Kamińska's initiative the theatre moved to 13 Królewska Street in Warsaw and since 1970, it has been operating from Grzybowski Square building.

A large group of actors, including the director and the artistic head of the theatre Ida Kamińska, left Poland as the result of the March 1968 antisemitic campaigns. The theatre was then led by acting director Juliusz Berger for one year. From 1969 to 2014, the general and artistic director of the Jewish Theatre was Szymon Szurmiej. In 2015, the position of the theatre's director was filled by Gołda Tencer.

At the end of 2016 the theatre was forced to move to a temporary location at 35 Senatorska St. Ever since, the performances are mainly held at the Command of Warsaw Garrison Club in Niepodległości Street. Guest performances are held in other theatres, such as Nowy Teatr, Teatr Polski or ATM.

Since the very beginning, the Theatre contemplated and interlaced three repertoires. The first was classical literature and Yiddish theatre, the second includes plays from beyond Yiddish literature but engaged in Jewish-related subjects, and the third focuses on variety shows and cabaret.

The Ester Rachel and Ida Kaminska Jewish Theater in Warsaw is the only Jewish Theatre in Poland and one of the two permanent theatres in Europe staging shows in Yiddish. As of July 2012, in line with the Charter, the



Theatre is also responsible for the Yiddish Culture Center and its operations.

Ester Rachel Kamińska (1870–1925)

Ester Rachel has been known as the "mother of Yiddish theatre." As a young woman, Ester moved to Warsaw, where she made her theatre debut on stage

in 1888. Initially, her performances were limited to operettas and comedies. After several years, she became famous as the leading actress in the Jewish plays but also in the classical repertoire. During most of her career, Ester Rachel performed in theatres run by her husband, Abraham Isaak Kamiński. In 1913, she started her own theatre group, "Ester Rachel and Ida Kamiński." She performed in the USA, London, Paris, Moscow and acted in Yiddish films.

She was buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw, at Okopowa Street.

Ida Kamińska (1899–1980)

Ida debuted on stage when she was 6 years old. At first, she performed mostly in operettas. In the time between the WW1 and WW2, she headed Warsaw's Jewish Artistic Theatre and Drama Ensemble and went on several tours around Europe. Ida managed to survive the war because she fled to the Soviet Union. After coming back to Poland in 1946, she was engaged

in coordinating two Jewish theatres founded after the war in Wrocław and Łódź. After the merger of both groups, she moved to Warsaw and was appointed the director of the Jewish theatre.

In 1968, as a consequence of the antisemitic campaign, she left Poland for the United States where she attempted to open a Jewish theatre in New York, however, she was unsuccessful. It is estimated that Ida performed in 150 roles. She was not only an actress but also the head of theatre, translator of plays, director and teacher.

She died in New York.



Jewish theatre c.1920



Jewish theatre today

JEWISH COMMUNITY HISTORY–WROCŁAW



Wrocław city square (Rynek).

Sourced from *In Your Pocket Essential City Guides*
www.inyourpocket.com/wroclaw/history

The oldest Jewish tombstone found in Wrocław (Breslau) dates back to 1203, indicating that by then Wrocław was home to a permanent Jewish community. In 1290, Wrocław had the second largest Jewish community in East Central Europe, after Prague. The Jews of the city worked primarily as moneylenders and traders; a smaller minority worked as artisans.

During the 14th century, however, the Jews of Wrocław were the victims of a number of outbreaks of violence. After a pogrom in 1349, about 5 families remained of the original seventy. 41 Jews were put on trial and burned at the stake in 1453 after being accused of host desecration. That same year the Jewish community was expelled. Two years later the town was granted an official status of intolerance; Jews were forbidden to live in Wrocław until 1744 and could only visit during the annual fairs.

In 1741 the city was annexed by Prussia, and in 1744 Frederick II allowed Jews to form an official community there. The Jewish population grew rapidly. In 1747 there were 532 Jews living in Wrocław (1.1% of the total

population); by 1810 that number had jumped to 3,255 (5.2%).

Wrocław became an important centre for the Haskalah (the Jewish Enlightenment). Both communities – the orthodox and the liberal – were active in the religious and cultural lives of the Jews of the city, and were led by distinguished rabbis and scholars.

The number of Jewish residents in the city was 19,743 in 1900, and 10,300 in 1939.

In November 1938, Jewish cultural, social, and educational activities were halted and synagogues and Jewish schools were destroyed during the Kristallnacht pogroms.

Beginning in September 1941 Jews were driven from their homes and property and crowded into “Judenhaeuser” to be deported a few months later to transit camps on the way to Auschwitz. Between November 1941 and the summer of 1944 the Jews of Lower Silesia, including those from Wrocław, were deported in 11 transports. The first transport took the Jews to Kaunas, where everyone was shot. Subsequent transports sent the Jews to the death camps of Sobibor and Belzec, or the concentration camps Terezin and Auschwitz. Some Jews were sent

to temporary labour camps. By 1943 only partners of mixed marriages and some children remained in the city. The last 150 Jews of the city were deported to Gross-Rosen in January 1945 where they were killed. The old cemetery, which had been founded in 1761, was destroyed.

Beginning in May, 1945 Wrocław was a transit centre for Jewish survivors returning from concentration camps in Silesia and Poland. Jews from former Polish territories that had been annexed to the Soviet Union during the war began arriving in the city in waves beginning in 1946, making Wrocław the largest Jewish community in Poland. Though the number of Jews in Wrocław rose to 17,747 in 1946, after the pogrom in Kielce in July of that year the numbers dropped considerably; by the spring of 1947 there were about 15,000 Jews living in Wrocław.

The postwar Jewish community attempted to rebuild and established a religious community, schools, Jewish cooperatives, and a Jewish theatre, as well as other organizations and political parties. The population continued to drop, largely as the result of emigration, and by 1960 there were 3,800 Jews left in the city.

The Six Day War and anti-Semitism led to a marked increase in emigration after 1967. This led to the closing of the Jewish school and theatre.

In 1974 there were 3,000 Jews in Wrocław.

A Jewish revival began during the late 1980s. In the year 2000 the city reopened the Jewish Social-Cultural Society, and was home to a Jewish school. The White Stork Synagogue, which had been used by the Nazis as an auto repair shop and to store stolen Jewish property, was rededicated in 2010 after a full-scale restoration.

As of 2014 there were 350 registered members of the Jewish community in Wrocław, making it the second-largest organized Jewish community in Poland, after Warsaw.

When visiting Wrocław, you may pass by what was once the city's magnificent main synagogue – torched on Kristallnacht

(November 9, 1938). A small memorial remembering where it once stood is located at ul. Łąkowa 6.

The only synagogue in Wrocław to escape the torches of Kristallnacht, the White Stork was built in 1829, taking its name from the inn that once stood in its place. Following the design of prominent German architect Karl Ferdinand Langhans, it is ironically considered a sterling example of 18th century Protestant sacral art. Discreetly hidden from view in a courtyard, it was



The old Jewish cemetery. Founded in 1761, as it is today

here that members of the Jewish community were rounded up for deployment to the death camps during WWII. Badly damaged, but not set ablaze (thanks only to its proximity to residential buildings), the synagogue was literally left to rot after the war, before the Jewish community was finally able to recover it from the Polish



White Stork Synagogue



The Torah ark (or Aron Kodesh)
at White Stork Synagogue.

government in 1996 and initiate restoration. Re-opened in May 2010, the synagogue now serves as a worship space, cultural centre, and branch of the Jewish Information Centre, with a new multi-functional hall in the synagogue's basement, two exhibition spaces on the balconies (one houses a permanent exhibition about the History of Jews in Wrocław and Lower Silesia, while the second is for temporary exhibitions), and a ritual bath which opened in January 2019.

Right next to the synagogue, you will find the Bente Kahan Foundation, which organises monthly events, including exhibitions, film screenings, workshops, lectures, concerts, theatre performances, and more. There is another Jewish cultural centre in the same street: After renovations, the Jewish Information Centre has reopened as ClŻ Cafe – a kosher coffee house, bookshop, and tourist information centre. In addition to being a new venue for Jewish-related lectures, workshops, and other events, this outfit also arranges Jewish walking tours of Wrocław. While you're there enjoy Middle Eastern snacks and the all-day breakfast. Note that this Jewish centre also edits the Jewish-Polish magazine *Chidusz*.

Established in 1856, the old Jewish cemetery is perhaps the most well-preserved testament to the former strength of Wrocław's pre-war Jewish

community, with over 1200 gravestones. Closed in 1942, the cemetery quickly fell into deep neglect: in 1945 it was turned into a fortress by the Nazis and saw fierce fighting as evidenced by the eerie bullet holes in many of the gravestones. Preservation began in the 1970s, and in 1991 it was opened as the Museum of Jewish Cemetery Art in tribute to the craftsmanship of its sepulchral art. Indeed the beauty and diversity of styles and symbols on display is perhaps unmatched anywhere. Many noteworthy figures are buried here, including the historian Heinrich Graetz and Ferdinand Lassalle. Using old records, some of their tombstones are slowly being restored. However, despite these modest efforts, the Ślężna Street Cemetery remains a wild sanctuary.

Located northwest of the centre, the New Jewish Cemetery was founded in 1902 when the Ślężna Street cemetery became too small, and is still in use by Wrocław's Jewish community today. That hasn't saved it from the ravages of time, however, and like the cemetery it succeeded, it stands in sharp contrast to the well-kept Catholic cemeteries across Poland. Comprising 11 hectares and approximately 8,000 graves, this is the fifth largest Jewish cemetery in Poland. Likewise registered as an historical monument for its rich diversity of aesthetic and architectural styles,



Monument to the Jewish soldiers who fought and died
for Germany during WWI

the most noteworthy tomb here is dedicated to the Jewish soldiers of the German Army who fought and died in WWI; their 432 names are etched into the top of the monument. The cemetery is currently the subject of slow renovation work, with about 50% having already undergone restoration.

POLISH BORN JEWISH ARTIST 1895–1949



Jankiel Adler

Jankiel Adler, a Polish Jewish painter, graphic artist, stage designer and poet, was born in 1895 in Tuszyn (next to Łódź).

He lived and studied in Poland and later in Germany, and also travelled (i.e. with his exhibitions) around Europe. For example, in 1918–1920 he lived in Łódź and Warsaw. His works were presented at the "SPRING Exhibition" organized by the Association

of Artists and Supporters of Fine Arts. They gained great interest and praise. Soon he became a member of the group "Jung Jidysz".

As a modern painter, and especially a Jew, he faced persecution under Hitler's regime. Two of his pictures were presented by the Nazis at the Mannheimer Arts Center as examples of degenerate art.

Jankiel Adler left Germany and moved to Paris. He thought of his exile as of political resistance against the fascist regime. He did not stop travelling and cooperating with artists from various countries. For example, in 1936 he worked as the artistic director and set designer of the film "For Sins" ("At Chejt" – the movie was made in Yiddish), produced in Poland by Jewish artists who left Nazi Germany

due to persecution. The movie was directed by Aleksander Marten.

In 1940 he joined the Polish Army formed in France and was later transferred to Great Britain. In January 1941 he was demobilised due to health conditions. He stayed and settled down in Great Britain, where he died in 1949 due to a heart attack. He never returned to Poland.



The Venus of Kirkcudbright, 1943

DID YOUR FAMILY COME FROM POLAND?

Discover the power of
dual citizenship for you
and your family!

UNIA EUROPEJSKA
RZECZPOSPOLITA
POLSKA



Polaron
European Citizenship

TALK TO US TODAY!

1300 88 55 61

polaron.com.au

citizenship@polaron.com.au

THE WAR ON REASON



By Prof. Jan Pakulski

Professor Emeritus at the University of Tasmania.

Past president of Australian Institute of Polish Affairs

One of the most disturbing aspects of contemporary politics and popular (media) culture is its intense irrational bent supported by the armies of shock jocks and trolls inhabiting the “dark corners of the internet”. Their key themes are partly new, and partly taken from the anti-Semitic and racist arsenal of the far right. Most absurd conspiracy theories abound – “deep state”, Satanist groups, state-protected pedophile networks, Jewish “world-control” cabals, vaccinations plots, black anarchists, etc. – and are elevated to the mainstream politics by the political extreme right, including the American Republican Party and its president. As today’s NYT reports, the infamous QAnon peddlers are now fighting for places in the US Senate:

“Precisely how many candidates are running under the banner of QAnon is somewhat open to interpretation — estimates range to more than a dozen, with many more defeated in primaries — and nearly all are expected to lose in November. Some candidates have clear connections to the movement and use its language and hashtags on social media and in real-world appearances.

Scores more have cherry-picked themes, such as claims that Jews, and especially the financier George Soros, are controlling the political system and vaccines; assertions that the risk from the coronavirus is vastly overstated; or racist theories about former President Barack Obama. Many have appeared on QAnon-themed podcasts and in news outlets. On Monday Jeff Sessions, caught in a tight race to reclaim his former Senate seat in Alabama, recycled an old QAnon meme about himself in a Twitter post.”

And they find audiences – like their Nazi predecessors – even among the educated segments of “political classes” in America and Europe (less visible in Australia, as yet). The shocking results of public opinion research show that, among others, 44% of American Republicans believe that vaccination is used by “Gates conspirators” to inject citizens with “control microchips”. Do not laugh – this is no longer funny.

The same memes – with some national variations – poison politics in Europe. The anti-vaccers in Poland openly refer to them. And they are quietly endorsed by “anti-Satanist” priests, as well as Konfederacja and some PiS politicians. Remember the strange remarks made by Duda about vaccinations? Whom do you think they were addressed to?

Most of the conspiratorial themes are “home products”, but a growing number, according to *The Economist*, come from Russia and China. Recently, friends have sent me a disturbing propaganda film about vaccs conspiracy made in China. It is grotesque in content and has a soundtrack that reminds me of Radio Tirana, but I am sure that there are thousands of better products of this sort.

If you remain sceptical, think about the damage done to Polish (political) culture by the “Smolensk conspiracy” peddled by Kaczynski & Macierewicz.

It is a highly disturbing and dangerous trend – no less dangerous than Covid-19 pandemic – and highly infectious. Last time the Western culture experienced such anti-rational pandemic was in the late 1920s.

QAnon is a far-right conspiracy theory detailing a supposed secret plot by an alleged “deep state” against U.S. President Donald Trump and his supporters.

A WONDEROUS ADVENTURE

Bernard Marcel Brzegowski-Korbman OAM
Past president ASPJ

“Nothing so influences the faculties of one’s mind as communicating with friends who are striving towards the same goal. Our thinking is shaped and corrected only through the exchange of thoughts with others. An intellect which depends entirely upon itself is prone to stagnation, fantasies or erroneous ideas.”

From the Wisdom of Mishle

When approached by the World Federation of Polish Jews – Australian Chapter, to take over the organisation, I was flattered but mostly overwhelmed by the responsibility placed upon me. Although both my parents were from Lodz, and I understood Polish, I could not speak the language. Also the fact that both my parents were vehemently anti-Polish did not help to make this project endearing. However, with the encouragement of the organisation’s membership and other Holocaust survivors’ confidence in me, I accepted the presidency of the WFOPJ.

Gathering a group of likeminded people around me, we held public meetings, interviewed many individuals, listened and learned. I must admit, that many children of Holocaust survivors felt very strongly against any sort of rapprochement with the Polish community. However, many of us who had visited Poland in the early 2000s realised that much of the negativity towards Poles was based on pre-war Poland and of course on the experiences of our families during the Shoah. In Poland itself however, we found the younger generation of Poles to be most welcoming, and inquisitive about Jews and their culture. It was the young that captivated our hearts and minds, and so the seed to bring Jews and Poles closer together was planted and nourished.

We came to the conclusion that the descendants of Polish Jews in Australia should be more aware of their heritage, have greater knowledge of the history of Jewish-Polish relations and to try to understand the Polish perspective on Polish-Jewish history, as well as support the young vibrant burgeoning Jewish communities in

Poland. It was decided that the best way of achieving our goals, was through dialogue and fraternization. Thus the Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants was born.

One of our first undertakings was the creation of the Henrik Slawik Award. The Slawik Award, (SA), is bestowed upon an individual, a group of people, or an organisation that has enhanced the co-operation, trust and friendship between the two communities.

It is always dangerous to name individuals when thanking people who have helped in an enterprise, as someone is bound to be left out. So let me apologise sincerely beforehand for any omission on my part.



From the Jewish community, I would like to acknowledge and commend the following people for their initial and continued support over the years.

The late Shmuel Rosenkrantz, past President of the WFOPJ

The late Michael Nadworny, past Secretary of the WFOPJ

The late Masha Wiener, past Executive Member of the WFOPJ

Pauline Rockman OAM, and Slawik Award recipient

Suzanne Hampel OAM, and Slawik Award recipient

Frances Prince, Slawik Award recipient

Arnold Zable, 2019 Slawik Award recipient

Yuval Rotem, previous Israeli Ambassador to Australia

David Southwick MP

Phillip Maisel OAM

Professor Mark Baker

Peter Kohn, Australian Jewish News, and

Rabbi Philip Heilbrunn

From the Polish community, the following people and organisations not only embraced our mission and values, but added to our understanding of Polish culture, history and worldview. Through their hard work and goodwill, they opened the door to the Polish community and its organisations.

George Luk-Kozika OAM, Honourary Consul General of the Republic of Poland and Slawik Award recipient

Christopher Lancucki AM, Past President of the Polish Community Council of Victoria and Slawik Award recipient

Krystyna Duszniak, Member of the Institute of Polish Affairs, Member of the "Dialog" group, director/owner of Lost Histories and Slawik Award recipient

Lucyna Artymiuk, Member of the "Dialog" group, Polish Museum and Archives in Australia and Slawik Award recipient

The late Marian Pawlik OAM, President of the Polish Community Council of Victoria and Slawik Award recipient

Sylwia Greda-Bogusz OAM, Secretary of Polish Community Council of Victoria

The late Andrew Korab, President of the Albion Polish Club

Adam Warzel, Executive Member of the Australian

Institute of Polish Affairs

Zygmunt Bielinski OAM, Past President Dom Polski Syrena, and

Father Wieslaw Antoni Slowik SJ OAM, for forging strong bonds with the Polish Roman Catholic Church and the Jewish Community

The Polish Diplomatic Corps in Australia:

Past Ambassador Andrej Jaroszynsky

Past Ambassador Pawel Milewski

Current Ambassador Michal Kolodziejski

Two dear friends not "native" to either community

Natalie Suleyman MP and Slawik Award recipient

Nick Wakeling MP

I tried to keep the list of the leading activists as short as possible, but it must be remembered that behind each individual and organisation, there are many kindred spirits, without whose support no progress could be achieved and maintained.

It is impossible for a person to function fully without a close friend with whom he can discuss all that happens to him, and who will offer constructive advice. These words are dedicated to the most loyal and steadfast group of volunteers I have ever worked with: **The ASPJ Board of Directors.**

The wholehearted and devoted commitment of the Board to our principles and objectives, is confirmed by the fact that six of the Board's founding members remain on the Executive. The late Moshe Fiszman, who passed away last year, was still active until the very last moment.

Ideas people need to be surrounded by experts in many different fields. When Andrew Rajcher and I first spoke and settled on the idea of forming the ASPJ, it was Andrew who accompanied me to all public and private meetings to spruik the idea. Andrew, who had worked and spent a great deal of time in Poland, was well connected with the leadership of the POLIN museum, academics, journalists and members of the Polish Rabbinate. He added credibility to our mission and was able to present "modern" Poland to our audiences.

As well as the above, Andrew was experienced in the administrative and legal requirements necessary to set up a not-for-profit organisation and was largely responsible for the structure of our constitution and our audit system. Andrew's continuous generosity

is further demonstrated by the fact that he has been personally responsible for every single overseas speaker to come to Australia.

Lena Fiszman was the glue which held our fledgling organisation together. She went through all the WFOPJ records, making lists of members, extended our database by collecting information from other organisations and wrote hundreds of invitations to prospective members. Then came the physical hard work. Lena was responsible for setting up the venues, organising the seating arrangements, organising the catering and the clean-up of the venues. Just writing this paragraph has made me realise how much blood, sweat and tears Lena has put into this organisation.

Izydor Marmur, graphic designer par excellence, my travelling companion to Poland, the most loyal and supportive Vice-President anyone could ask for, and the man who took on the portfolio of liaising with the Polish community with such success, that the ASPJ is now accepted as part of the wider Polish Community, both in Australia and by the Polish Diplomatic Corps and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Izi has been responsible for all our advertising and publicity and the production and publication of *Haynt*. He is closely connected to the Polish Embassy and the Consulate in Sydney. When Polish Parliamentarians visit Melbourne, Izi is usually their first contact in Victoria. Apart from the important issue of Polish–Jewish dialogue, Izi makes sure that they “go bush” and see penguins and pat koalas, kangaroos, wombats and any other creature he can find. Izi’s personality and his hospitality is always appreciated and well-remembered by all Polish visitors.

From day one, Peter Schnall has been our main technology expert, making sure that all of our functions are well “hooked up”, and ensuring that our PA system is available to serve the needs of presenters. As the person in charge of new memberships, he created a new members introductory package. Peter is also the President of the Krakow Landsmanshaft. With his smiling personality, he will often be the first point of contact at a public meeting, as he is our usher extraordinaire.

David Prince, Holocaust survivor and Jewish Holocaust Centre guide is the suave and articulate member of the Board. His presence at our functions was paramount in establishing our organisation beyond the Polish–Jewish confine. As a member of a number of professional organisations such as Rotary, which

bring together business and professional leaders to provide humanitarian services for those in need, he informed the wider community of our aspirations and demonstrated to one and all, the Jewish people’s resilience in the face of adversity.

The late Moshe Fiszman, also a Holocaust survivor, was an amazing human being. He thrilled both members of the Polish and Jewish community with his perfect use of Yiddish and Polish, reciting poetry in both languages and astounded people with his impeccable knowledge of Polish–Jewish history and culture. He endeared himself to many in the Polish community who, if I attended a function would often ask after his well-being and pass on their best wishes.

The more recent members of the ASPJ Board have embarked on our mission full of enthusiasm and professionalism. The injection of “new blood”, new skills and new networks will ensure the vibrancy and continued success of the ASPJ.

Ezra May, a professional mediator and well known personality in the Jewish community is now the President of the association.

Eva Hussain, through her company Polaron, has brought with her an entirely new international network into our sphere.

Estelle Rosinski, co Vice-President, artist, educator and Sydney resident, has established strong ties with the Polish and Jewish communities in Sydney, as well as with the Polish Consul General. An official launch of our association in Sydney was postponed due to the pandemic.

Karen Pakula, journalist and also a resident of Sydney, has worked in partnership with Estelle to develop the NSW base. With her extensive knowledge and experience in the industry, Karen has also taken on the portfolio of Media Liaison Coordinator. The ASPJ is in great hands.

What have I learned on this wonderful adventure?

That friendship evolves through an exchange of give and take, a giving of oneself and a receiving from the other person. That respect and a lack of hubris allows for honesty in dialogue and action and that sharing with others brings fulfilment and peace of mind.

ANNOUNCING THE ASPJ & FESTIVALT PARTNERSHIP

It is with great excitement and anticipation that the ASPJ enters into a partnership with FestivALT www.festivalt.com.

FestivALT is an independent arts collective that produces a program of critically acclaimed Jewish art and activism in Kraków, Poland. Blending visual art, theatre, site-specific performance, activist intervention, and community conversation, FestivALT engages with the most vital issues in contemporary Jewish Poland.

With the Covid-19 pandemic changing the way organisations interact with their members, supporters and the public, the ASPJ views this partnership with FestivALT as a natural fit and complementary to our online offerings.

The ASPJ & FestivALT partnership aims to create another platform for conversation, debate, education and reflection around issues of contemporary Jewish culture in Poland.

The ASPJ looks forward to collaborating with FestivALT in curating live cutting-edge online events, performances & tours with a uniquely Australian flavour as well as being presented in an Australian-friendly time.

We encourage you to look out for our promotion of these upcoming events primarily through our Facebook page and website.

100 YEARS OF LEARNING



100-year- old Holocaust survivor Max Hennar

by Samuel Radford
on behalf of the Sydney Jewish Museum

It was spring, the scent of flowering linden trees wafted in the air, the bank of a river, my nanny and my stroller. These were my first memories.

Maximillian “Max” Hennar embodies the ideal that we are students for life. An engineer, a musician, and now an aspiring physicist and philosopher, Max has continued his studies and passions as he eclipses his 100th birthday this year.

To hear him speak with vigour on topics of Einstein and general relativity, to his philosophical musings on the origins of music from an evolutionary standpoint is not just a testament to a man of 100, but an achievement at any age.

Due to a pandemic, we are encouraged to learn an

instrument, learn a language, study a new field, but Max proves differently. Opportunities to better yourself don’t arrive at specific moments, but rather they are constantly there, waiting for us to grasp them.

The impressive life of Max Hennar did not begin at 100, but rather began in the town of Przemsyl in Poland. Born in a Jewish family as the youngest of five brothers, Max began his learning at the dinner table, hearing stories and interests from his much older brothers. He developed a love of technical interests from Janek, and Oles (Alexander) leaving him with an interest in nature and the animal world.

Unlike his brothers, Max was never afforded the opportunity for university education, as his parents understood the then current economic status in Poland, and felt it better Max learn a technical skill or trade. The rising antisemitism at the time as well did not fill Max’s parents with confidence either. At 14 Max was enrolled at the National School of Construction, 30km

away from Przemsyl in Jaroslaw, wherein he would stay for the duration of the 4-year diploma. The inability to go to university, combined with the sale of the family piano was an emotional blow, but Max made the best of his situation. The final project for his diploma was the construction of a town hall for a town of 20,000 people.

Following the 1939 invasion of Poland by Germany, Max moved to the town of Lvov (now Lviv), where he would work as a technical officer with a Soviet building company. Despite his brother Janek also working in Lvov, there was much work to be done and therefore little time to see one another. Max used this time constructively, enrolling in the Polytechnic University and learning in the Civil Engineering faculty. The stay in Lvov was brief, as in 1941 along with the outbreak of the Soviet-German war, Max was evacuated to Kiev and the USSR, where his Civil Engineering and construction background proved an asset. The departure to the USSR was a blessing for Max, as he escaped many of the tragedies that befell his family and the potential for being caught up in the decimation of the Jews of Poland.

At 22 years old, Max was asked to lead the construction of a bridge across the river Tyereshka,



Max's family before WWII

in which his mastery of the Russian language aided him greatly. The bridge was to be built outside of Czerkasskoye, in which Max was made the manager of the roads depot, and responsible for the roads themselves. Max would volunteer to join a newly constructed Polish Army under Soviet control on condition that the bridge was completed. This provided

an opportunity for Max not just to return to Poland, but to be reunited with his brother Janek.

During their time with the Polish Army, Max and Janek were stationed in the liberated concentration camp of Majdanek, near Lublin in the South East of Poland. Seeing what had become of his people took a toll on Max, and it took years for his anger at the Germans to subside. Although whilst the anger may have dissipated, the memories and the dreams of what he had witnessed were not as quick to leave.

Following the end of the war, Max returned to Warsaw with his brother Janek. The two were afforded the opportunity to seek out what had become of their parents and older brother Edward who remained in the Lvov Ghetto. Here the two brothers learned that their family who remained in Poland were murdered as they attempted an escape to the nearby woods. Of the 5 brothers only 2 survived after the Holocaust. One joined the International Brigade in Spain and perished fighting the German-Italian fascist intervention.

Upon his return to Warsaw, Max found his greatest asset wasn't his technical skills which afforded him a position in the Polish Railway authority, but

rather his musical prowess. Jadzia was the darling of her workplace in the Ministry of Industry and had a beautiful singing voice which required accompaniment. Max would play piano during the rehearsals and then share his bike for the ride home as the two lived quite comfortably. In Max's own words, "the handlebars must have been very uncomfortable but she was smiling the whole time."

The time spent in Warsaw was not just work, but also further education for Max at the Electrical Faculty of the Warsaw Polytechnic as he looked to improve his skills.

The thirst for learning did not stop there, as in 1946, Max simultaneously enrolled in the Academy of Mining in Krakow, majoring in the Railway Division. For his masters degree and diploma project, Max worked on the electrification of the railway between Gdansk and Gdynia. This was followed by a PhD at the Polish Academy of Science. Although with the expansion

of the USSR's influence during the 1950's, Max and Jadzia decided it was best to immigrate to Australia, as growing concerns for the economic wellbeing under the Communist regime were well founded. The two looked to avoid the embers of anti-Semitism still remaining after the war.

One of Max's first jobs was preventing corrosion caused by electrolysis in electric and telephone cables with the Railway Department in Sydney. Although the science of electrolysis is lost on us, Max to this day can provide a better explanation of these terms than most science teachers we know! Although this is not to say the job search was easy, as Max spent most nights upon arrival learning English to help him not just in the employment sector, but socially day to day as well. Max and Jadzia helped expose many traditional Polish and Jewish dishes to their neighbours, living all over Sydney. In 1981, the couple bought their dream property in Balmoral, getting to live out the Australian dream of living by the ocean.

Max's love of music and the piano inspired him to help create the Chopin Society of NSW, a group which now boasts over 200 members. Max would help in setting up private showcases of internationally eminent pianists in creating a cultural exchange between the Australian, Polish and International communities. This

revolved around a shared love for music, and the joy that it has brought Max and his family over the years.

Currently, Max continues his learning online, where he has access to vast libraries of encyclopaedias covering all topics and satiating the desire to learn more. Hearing him speak now is an opportunity to learn from a mind that has only improved with age. We certainly all hope to be as well read as Max when we reach 100.



Author **Samuel Radford** is a recent graduate of a dual bachelor degree at the University of New South Wales in International Studies and Media. He has been assisting writing and editing on a freelance basis at the Sydney Jewish Museum for the past 4 years. He has also written articles appearing in numerous media sources, from University magazines to the *Guardian*

Australia. Next year, Samuel will continue his studies, entering a Post Graduate Master's degree in Australian Public Policy.

THE END AND THE BEGINNING.



On the occasion of the 77th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Zduńska Wola Museum are sharing on line a memory of Zduńska Wola's Jewish inhabitants, who were forced into the ghetto in our city during WW2.

Pre the Holocaust, the Jewish community led normal lives which are documented and well displayed at the permanent exhibition.

The permanent exhibition "The Missing Mezzuzot of Zduńska Wola" presents the fate of 100 families, which is why so many mezzuzot decorate the wall of the Jewish Hall of the museum. Using headphones and tablets, memories of surviving family members can be seen and heard.

The author of this extraordinary multimedia exhibition is Estelle Rozinski.

You can view the excerpt from the exhibition on:
<https://youtu.be/P5rhIFLoAXQ>

IRENA TUWIM – ONE OF THE FIRST FEMALE POETS PUBLISHED IN POLAND

Irena Tuwim, born in 1898, was the daughter of assimilated Jews Adela, née Krukowska and Izidor Tuwim, and younger sister of Julian Tuwim.

She was a student of the Gymnasium Eliza Orzeszkowa in Łódź. She made her debut as a poet in the daily *Godzina Polski* Polish Hour with the poem *Panienka* – Young Lady.

Her first volume of 24 poems was published in 1921.

Following her conversion to Catholicism, she married Stefan Napierski. The couple moved to Warsaw, where she joined the Skamander group. Her brother Julian Tuwim was one of the key members of the group.

She published a volume of poems, *Listy* – Letters. The poems received varying reviews and drew a lot of attention to her talent.

After leaving her husband for Julian Stawiński, she published another volume of poems, *Szczęśliwa Miłość* – Happy Love, which her critics compared to the achievements of Anna Achmatowa, Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska and Kazimiera Iłakowiczówna. At the same time she was also working on the translation of *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy.

Following their move to Ostrów Mazowiecka, Irena Tuwim and Julian Stawiński were formally married.

The couple then moved to Warsaw, where her husband worked as a lawyer. During this time she began translating children's literature, including Grimm's fairytales, books about Disney's Mickey Mouse and Snow White, Fernando Munro Leaf, *Mary Poppins* by Pamela Travers, *Winnie the Pooh* and *Hut of the Pooh* by A. A. Milne.

After the outbreak of World War II, she and her husband left Poland and travelled to Paris. In the first issue of the Parisian Polish Political and Literary News, her poem *Do*



Irena Tuwim

Wiosny Paryskiej – To Paris Spring was published.

Following the German Invasion of France Irena Twim and her husband evacuated to Great Britain. There she worked for the publishing house M.I. Kolin, where she prepared works by Adam Mickiewicz and Stefan Żeromski for reprint. In the anthology *Kraj Lat Dziecinnych* – Country Of My Childhood, she published a short story about her time in Łódź *Strachy Dzieciństwa* – Childhood Fear.

In 1945 she and her husband left for Canada and a year later moved to the USA. While there, she published a brochure on Great

Britain and the British Empire intended for the Polish readers.

Following their return to Poland in 1947, she devoted herself to translation work, tried to improve on her pre-war translations and translated children's poems from Russian.

She published a volume of short stories, *Łódzkie Pory Roku* – Lodz Seasons, which had favourable response from the critics. Two years later her volume of selected poems was published. In the following years, she devoted herself to writing for children and translation, mainly from English. She translated, among others, Oscar Wilde, Katherine Mansfield, Mary Norton and Edith Nesbit.

She also published her own works for children: *Marek Wagare, Co Okręt Wiedzie* – What the Ship Knows, *O Pingwinie Kleofasku* – About The Penguin Cleofascus and *Pampilio*. All the books were published in several editions.

Irena Tuwim was a recipient of the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta and Polish PEN Club Prize for translation from foreign literature into Polish (1981)

Irena Tuwim died in 1987 and is buried in Warsaw Powązki Cemetery.

A MAN OF VISION

by Karen Pakula
Board Member

Bernard Korbman's early diplomatic missions took the form of Sunday lunches, when he would infiltrate Melbourne's Polish clubs Syrena and Albion and dine with ASPJ colleagues. "We were looked at as being exotic," he says. "The three of us would walk in and there would be a hushed silence. But after a while, people got used to us, and what was nice was people came up and said, 'Shalom'."

Bernard's commitment to breaking down barriers defined his decade as the inaugural president of ASPJ. As he steps down from the role to pursue his love of literature, he reflects on the organisation's driving ethos: "When we started, it was really like a blank canvas," he says. "There was almost no dialogue between the Jewish and the Polish communities, even though the vast majority of survivors were from Poland. It was up to us to decide how to best go about a rapprochement and the way we thought we'd go forward would be the traditional European way of breaking bread."

As president, Bernard prized robust discourse between the two tribes, even if that meant addressing the "elephants in the room". A central aim of ASPJ, he says, "is to have honest dialogue with the Australian Polish community over sensitive issues – such as the Holocaust, the religion itself, antisemitism – so that when a strong bond does develop, it's on an honest basis."

In 2006, when Bernard – the Paris-born son of two Lodzians – arrived at the organisation, it was still the Australian offshoot of the World Federation of Polish Jews. Yiddish was still the official language of board meetings and minutes. Membership was down and the organisation was in need of modernisation. Bernard had been the executive director of the Jewish Holocaust Centre for eight years and was elected ASPJ's foundation president in 2009. With Bernard as president, chair and co-president, the

board has retained original members including Izydor Marmur, Andrew Rajcher, Lena Fiszman, David Prince and Peter Schnall.

Bernard is adamant about ASPJ's duty to connect descendants of Polish Jews to their heritage. "Not to just think, 'OK, I'm Australian' and to know nothing about where they came from except for the negative aspects of the Poles during the Shoah. It's really to give a sense of roots, if you like, for the younger generation. Whether they like it or not, Poland is part of their history and who they are."

He is equally committed to the Jewish community in Poland and last year wrote to the Vatican to protest antisemitic rhetoric in an Easter sermon in Tarnow. At the same time, Bernard walks the walk with the Australian Polish community, attending events during times of celebration and sorrow: after the Smolensk plane tragedy in 2010, Bernard and Andrew put on their kippahs and went to Midnight Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral.

Always with an eye on events in Poland, Bernard is circumspect about today's political landscape. "I must say, the current government in Poland doesn't make me feel confident. With all the breakdowns of rights and the rise of the Right – and antisemitism is growing, as it is everywhere – I do feel very conflicted about the dual nationality thing; of being Polish and being Jewish. I can't hide away from that."

A highlight of his tenure was the 2015 exhibition "They Risked Their Lives – Poles Who Saved Jews During the Holocaust", which travelled to Melbourne from the POLIN Museum in Warsaw. "The attendance was magnificent, both from Jews and from non-Jewish Poles," he says. "And what was absolutely wonderful was both Rabbi Heilbrunn and Father Słowik – the rabbi and the priest – having them both on stage, saying a prayer for the dead, for both sides. Everybody was in tears and felt as one. And I think that's one of the achievements, that we can share our joys, our *simchas*, as well as our grief together. This is what I *kvell* over."

Mr Michał Kołodziejewski

Ambassador of Poland

Bernard Korbman is a special person for me – not only because he was one of the first people I met when I first visited Melbourne, soon after I started my tenure in Australia. Sharp-minded, not hesitating to express his strong views, but also prepared to listen, learn and explore – Bernard inspired me every time we had a chance to speak, which we did quite frequently.

For me personally, Bernard Korbman is, first and foremost, – and will hopefully remain – an invaluable ally in advocating a closer cooperation and building trust between Polish and Jewish diasporas in Australia. Whatever the obstacles, Bernard has been working relentlessly towards this goal here in Australia for years, to keep pace with a similar process in Poland.

The achievements of Bernard Korbman in this regard would not be possible without his outstanding personality. It is due to his deep respect towards anyone struggling for the truth that people from all walks of lives, of any age or provenience enjoy sharing their ideas with him and participating in his wisdom. Sometimes Bernard and I may have had different opinions, but talking, or even arguing with him was never futile, it always led to a better understanding and concrete conclusions.

As a relentless advocate of bringing Polish and Jewish communities in Australia closer together, Bernard has always wanted to be a part of the solution, not part of the problem. So it goes without saying I would have been delighted if he had chosen to continue working in the capacity of co-president of ASPJ many more years. At the same time I can understand and I fully respect his intention to pass the baton to younger generations of leaders.

On behalf of all of us in the Embassy of Poland in Canberra, I wish Bernard good luck and success in all of his future endeavors!

Natalie Suleyman MP

State Member for St Albans

As a friend of the Australian Society of Polish Jews and their Descendants I've had the privilege of seeing firsthand Bernard's valuable work in bringing together communities and building valuable relationships in our society.

As the Founding President of ASPJ and a loyal member over the years, the impact of Bernard's work has been widespread and powerful in all of the many projects he undertook. He is widely regarded as a man of great generosity and kindness, and I'm lucky to know him as a dear friend. While it saddens me to see him step down from the organisation, I know that he will apply his great passion and determination to his next endeavours where he'll undoubtedly make a significant contribution.

I wish Bernard all the best and thank him unreservedly for his dedication to fighting the good fight and for the immense legacy he will leave behind.

Krzysztof Lancucki AM

Past president of Polish Community Council of Victoria Inc.

It made me sad to learn that Bernard Korbman is no longer the co-president of Australian Society of Polish Jews and their Descendants. His knowledge of almost a millennium of Jewish presence on Polish lands and their constructive co-existence with the locals induced him to work towards establishing good relations with the local Polish community in Australia and overcoming mutual misunderstandings emanating from the tragic events of the last century. This happened more than ten years ago, when I was the president of Polish Community Council in Victoria and finding him a kindred soul we quickly became friends committed to work towards the same goal. These efforts proved fruitful and soon a good interaction between our communities was established. Over the last few years I had to reduce my involvement in the Polish community activities because of my age, but my successors continued the relationship. Now that Bernard is

gone I hope that the next generation in both our communities will continue the good work.

Adam Warzel

Former President Australian Institute of Polish Affairs (AIPA)

Bernard Korbman's decision to retire from his dynamic involvement in the ASPJ's activities comes as a big surprise as his name, over the years, has become inextricably linked, if not synonymous, with this respected organisation.

In his leadership positions within the ASPJ's structure, Bernard has been guiding many commendable projects promoting Polish-Jewish dialogue in Melbourne. For me, the most memorable example of this was the ground-breaking symposium, Facing the Demons of Polish-Jewish history, organised jointly by our respected organisations in 2012, which explored many aspects of often difficult 20th century history of Polish-Jewish relations.

Dear Bernard, thank you for your friendship and your close cooperation over the years. I wish you lots of enjoyment and satisfaction in your pursuit of this most noble of arts – literature.

Take care and stay in touch!

Ezra May

President of ASPJ

It is a great challenge to write about the retirement of Bernard Korbman OAM as not only my Co-President, but from all positions in the ASPJ.

As will no doubt be repeated many times throughout this *Haynt* tribute, Bernard was the single most fundamental factor in the establishment, formation & growth of the ASPJ. Indeed, for many people in the Jewish, Polish & wider general community, Bernard is the embodiment of the ASPJ and the living exemplar of its ideals.

Personally, Bernard was all that for me and more, as Bernard is entirely responsible for my involvement and

all the education, entertainment and satisfaction the ASPJ has provided me. At the conclusion of attending my first ASPJ event, despite never having met before, Bernard approached me, introduced himself and then welcomed me aboard. All before I had time to introduce myself back. Those familiar with Bernard's charismatic and intoxicatingly captivating personality wouldn't be at all surprised.

Participating in a meeting, engaging in a discussion or attending a presentation with Bernard was always a delight, on so many levels. Every occasion, I learnt something, laughed at something, but most importantly observed how to behave. It is Bernard's ability to analyse a situation and know precisely how to act with just the right calibration of tolerance, respect, forcefulness & conviction that was my greatest lesson. No issue or challenge was ever too difficult and when it was required, Bernard displayed the strength to remain true to his values & ideals, no matter the pressure.

As current President of the ASPJ, Bernard, I thank you for everything you have established and contributed to the ASPJ. The challenge now for us is to continue to further our mission to preserve and promote the historical and cultural heritage of Jewish life in Poland and to foster understanding between current and future generations of the Polish and Jewish communities, without Bernard's day-to-day leadership and guidance. I am confident that based on the platform built by Bernard and by following the direction and path he forged, the ASPJ is well placed to do so.

Lena Fiszman

Secretary of ASPJ

I first got to know Bernard Korbman from the time I started to work at the Jewish Holocaust Centre in 2004. My admiration for his academic skills and knowledge is only surpassed by my appreciation of his humanity and ability to communicate with people of all ages, background and views. When he asked me to join him in setting up the Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants

group, I didn't hesitate because I knew that whatever Bernard was involved in would have his heart and soul and I was right. I wish Bernard all the best in all his endeavours and projects. He will be missed.

Dr G J Z Luk-Kozika OAM

Sc[Melb]L D S [Vic] Hon Consul General of Poland in Victoria

A very modest tribute to Bernard Korbman OAM, a man of intellect, ideas, vision and a particular appreciation of life. It is rare to meet a man and establish a pretty well instant liking and rapport-- Bernard is such a man! I am proud to be able to call him a good friend. I am very glad also to see that he is not forsaking us and the Society dear to his heart, and that his wisdom and good counsel will be still available to us.

The late Marian Pawlik OAM

Former President of the Polish Community Council of Victoria Inc.

The entire Polish Community Council of Victoria Inc. would like to sincerely thank Mr Bernard Korbman OAM for his tireless work in bringing our two communities closer together, sharing our common values, paving the way to constructive and respectful dialogue, understanding, and cooperation. The Council is very grateful for Mr Korbman's wisdom and care. We wish to extend best wishes to Bernard in his retirement and to his family. We hope to be able to still draw on his wisdom into the future to continue our engagement with the Jewish community, and the Polish Jews and their Descendants.

Thank you once again.

Estelle Rozinski

Co-Vice President – Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants

He was always a naughty boy. Even as a small child he pushed back against boundaries and injustice.

In the 1950s we were a relatively small and insular war-torn community of Polish survivors caught between an abyss of experience and a new culture. My parents met the French-speaking

Bernard on his arrival in Melbourne, because my mother's French was good.

Bernard's unharnessed sense of justice propelled him through a hooligan adolescence that was quietly enriched by a love of fine literature, heralding an untapped and gifted intellect. In the '60s, Bernard took his place, in that leather jacket, at the Sorbonne, the prodigal son returned.

From there only thumbnail sketches: his return to Australia, a country marriage, two daughters and a rural teaching post.

I'm not sure of the where nor the why of Bernard's relationship with Poland or how he found his bearded self in Wroclaw looking for a cab surrounded by drunken soccer skinheads. Nor how the scene switched in a hair's breadth from threatening to hilarious, with our hero Bernard at the helm, laughing raucously about THE best beer and soccer teams from Wroclaw to Warsaw.

He earned his community stripes as CEO of the Jewish Holocaust Centre, where he enthralled students and embraced our elders – the survivors – with compassion and respect. It was a role that earned him a cherished place in everyone's heart.

I met Bernard again through my own Polish journey and felt privileged to be offered a place on the ASPJ board. Bernard as president didn't disappoint: visionary, mediator, protector, larrikin and great intellect, by far his greatest strength was to view ignorance as just another teaching opportunity and personal challenge.

These are but punctuation points in the life of an extraordinary being. Thank you, Bernard, for your vision, passion and your commitment to making this world a better place.

On ya, mate, now go on and create – we're all looking forward to the next thrilling episode.

Dr Sylwia Greda-Bogusz OAM

Chair - Polish Care Services PolCare Inc.

Reading your resignation letter my first thoughts were, this is the nicest and the classiest resignation letter I have ever read. As much as I liked the letter I was not impressed that you Bernard Korbman decided to retire; people like you don't just retire ever! Then I came to my senses and I arrived at the conclusion

that a person of your intellect and wisdom has made his choice and I am sure the decision is for the better.

Working for the Polish Community for a long time now and seeing the benefits of your work for both of our communities at first hand I think it is only appropriate to thank you not only as a member of that community but for mostly personally for everything you have done.

Bernard you have been a solid rock in bringing our communities together, closing the various gaps, providing much-needed wisdom and guidance to both our communities and you did it so graciously. For this I am very grateful. But, mostly on a personal level, I am grateful for your friendship, which I will treasure. Over the years I have learned a lot from you, not only about our shared history but also about humanity and humility. Bernard thank you for the opportunity to work with you. However, in saying that, I am looking forward (in your retirement), to still being able to draw on your wisdom and counsel. Wishing you all the best in a well-deserved retirement (I am kind of jealous of all the literature you have promised to read), lots of health and happiness to you and your family.

Once again, my sincere thank you.

Dominic Carter

Director - Polaron Language Services

I've been asked to write a few words about Bernard Korbman, or Bear, as he is affectionately known to his nearest and dearest.

As his nickname would suggest, Bear has a large body with stocky legs, a long snout, small rounded ears, shaggy hair, plantigrade paws and a short tail.

Like the bear, he is a highly evolved social animal with intelligence comparable to that of great apes and he communicates using body language, sounds and smells.

But perhaps – more importantly – bears are not mean nor malicious, as their reputation would have it. They are in fact very gentle, tolerant animals. They can be empathetic, fearful, joyful, playful,

social and even altruistic. And this is where I can truly recognise my good friend Bernard.

Through our time spent together on our radio show, Open Minds, I've come to love and respect the man for his patience, commitment and incredible generosity of spirit. We have lived through moments of joy, wisdom, boredom and tragedy and I could not have wished for a better sparring partner during those times.

Whatever your cause, your angle, your beef or spleen, Bernard is always ready to hear you out. Whether he agrees with you or not, he is always open to dialogue. He is living proof you do not need to be sitting on the fence to mediate a civilised conversation between opposing sides.

Above all, though, he is a good friend, fiercely loyal and always ready and willing to lend a helping hand, a sympathetic ear or a shoulder to cry on.

Sue Hampel OAM

& Pauline Rockman OAM

Co-Presidents– Jewish Holocaust Centre

The idea of the ASPJ was born in 2009 when Bernard was CEO at the Jewish Holocaust Centre. This organisation evolved from a desire to maintain and grow the very impressive and long running Federation of Polish Jews (Australian Chapter) that had virtually ceased to exist.

With Bernard Korbman at the helm, the ASPJ morphed into a significant participant in promoting Polish Jewish relations, both locally and internationally.

As founders and facilitators of March of the Living Programs in Australia, Sue and Pauline strongly endorse the important work that Bernard set in motion by inspiring and enabling dialogue as well as creating a heightened awareness of its importance not only for today, but also for future generations.

We congratulate him on his fantastic contribution and wish Bernard well in his future endeavours.

Natalie Suleyman MP

State Member for St Albans



03 9367 9925

Keilor Downs Shopping Centre
80 Taylors Road, Keilor Downs VIC 3038

natalie.suleyman@parliament.vic.gov.au

nataliesuleyman.com.au

facebook.com/nataliesuleymanmp



Funded from Parliamentary Budget



ZYGMUNT STĘPIŃSKI NEW DIRECTOR OF POLIN MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF POLISH JEWS

Zygmunt Stępiński Photo: POLIN Museum

By Piotr Wiślicki

President, Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland

Zygmunt Stępiński was born on 12 October 1947 in Warsaw. He graduated from the Department of History at the University of Warsaw in 1971.

He decided to stay in Poland after the March '68 antisemitic campaign. He is a member of B'nai B'rith Poland lodge and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland. He was Deputy Director of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews from 2012 until 2019, with responsibility for education, communications, marketing, and sales, and such projects as the Daffodils campaign, Grand Opening of the Core Exhibition, Museum on Wheels, the annual POLIN Award, and the March '68 program on the 50th anniversary of this event. He served as Acting Director of POLIN Museum from 1 March 2019 until the end of February 2020.

Mr Stępiński started his professional career as a journalist for *Architektura*, a monthly. On 14 December 1981, he was expelled from work for his political views. A week later he became the editorial secretary of one of the leading clandestine publishing houses in Poland (CDN). In 2008, he was awarded the Knight's Cross Order of Polonia Restituta by President Lech Kaczyński for his underground activity during martial law.

In 1983, together with a group of journalists also dismissed on political grounds, Mr. Stępiński founded the MURATOR Publishing House, the first privately owned publishing house in Poland since the end of the Second World War. For eleven years, beginning in 1993, he acted as its CEO. He implemented the idea of a profitable, effectively competitive publishing company by introducing new products to the market, including 30 press titles: monthlies, information guides, catalogues, and websites. He achieved multiple growth in the company value (quote for the year 2004: 25 million USD; start-up capital in 1983: 1,000 USD). After a hostile takeover of the MURATOR Publishing House, he worked for leading European publishers as a media consultant (Bonnier Publications A/S Sweden and Edipresse Swiss Ukraine).

A recognized expert on the building industry and architecture, Mr Stępiński was the chair of the supervisory board of the Polish American Homebuilders Institute in Washington D.C. and Gdańsk from 1993 to 1996. He was also associated with USAID, National Home Builders Association, and Home Builders Institute. He was the main promoter of introducing a mortgage system in Poland, modeled on the American experience.

In 2016, he won a nationwide competition for the best marketing director of an institution of culture in Poland.



**Australian Society of Polish Jews
and their Descendants**

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Date: ____/____/____

Title: _____ Given Name: _____

Surname: _____

Address: _____

_____ Post Code: _____

Phone: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Please tick the relevant box.

Full Membership ☐

Associate Membership ☐

Membership Fee: \$25 p.a.

Cheque ☐

Cash ☐

Direct Debit ☐

Request Receipt ☐

Taken by: _____

In making this application, I confirm that the above details are true and correct.

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Account Name: Australian Society of Polish Jews and their Descendants Inc
ANZ Elsternwick.
Sort code/routing/BSB: 013-304
Account Number: 0086-15341

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Approved ☐

Date: ____/____/____