

HAYNT

PRESERVE EDUCATE PROMOTE



Australian Society of Polish Jews
and their Descendants

AUTUMN 2023 ISSUE 17

Yom HaShoah Remembrance Day

Yom HaShoah – Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day
is commemorated on Tuesday 18 April 2023 this year, with a special focus
on the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

PRESERVE EDUCATE PROMOTE

“Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants (ASPJ) 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 and Sydney, 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:	Board Members:
Ezra May	Eva Hussain
Vice-President:	Karen Pakula
Estelle Rozinski	Prof. Lucy Taksa
Treasurer:	Editor of Haynt:
Andrew Rajcher	Izidor Marmur
Secretaries:	
Lena Fiszman	
Peter Schnall	

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

Dzien dobry and welcome to our first edition of Haynt for 2023.

Although we are now over a quarter of the way through 2023, in many ways it feels as if we are just getting over the busy end the ASPJ had to 2022.

Just to recap some of the highlights: in July 2022 the ASPJ hosted, in a packed Beth Weizmann auditorium in Melbourne, the acclaimed creative project curated by our Vice-President Estelle Rozinski, “... and he taught the canaries to sing” featuring animations and stories celebrating vignettes of pre-war Jewish life in Poland. This project was also shown in NSW in October 2022.

In September 2022, for the first time both in Melbourne and in Sydney, the ASPJ hosted its 2022 ASPJ Oration, featuring Dariusz Popiela of “People, not Numbers” and the Australian premiere of the film *Edge of Light*. The ASPJ Orations were an outstanding success and Darek’s charming personality coupled with his humility, inspired all those who heard about his work in restoring forgotten cemeteries and identifying and memorialising forgotten victims.

On a different course, November 2022 saw the ASPJ partner with the Polish Community Council of Victoria (PCCV) in hosting our inaugural The Circle Social Club function. The Circle Social Club was a dream project of previous ASPJ & PCCV Presidents Bernard Korbman, Izi Marmur and the late Marian Pawlik, to host social functions to enhance friendships between members and friends of our two organisations. An entertaining and enjoyable night of Jazz music was our first event and we look forward to more The Circle Social Club functions and joint initiatives with the PCCV this year and in the future.

Recently, on 19 March 2023, the ASPJ hosted a booth at the In One Voice Festival in Melbourne where we were busy all day with many attendees passing by and stopping for a chat, often sharing their Polish ancestry as well as views on issues related to Polish–Jewish matters of interest.

On 26 March 2023 in Sydney and 2 April 2023 in Melbourne, the ASPJ hosted visiting historian and genealogist Michal Majewski as guest speaker at an ASPJ Genealogy Open Day. Both events were well attended and provide attendees with an excellent overview as well as practical tips on where and how to best search and navigate the available resources.

The ASPJ’s Statement of Purpose is: 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.

As we look around at the world in 2023, it seems our purpose is more necessary than ever. There is the concerning and heart-breaking rise in antisemitism, both locally and internationally, as well as general overt fascist and nationalist politics that seeks to not only divide communities, but threatens and actually harms in acts of violence. As well, the war in Ukraine continues to rage with its mounting military and civilian toll and continuing refugee crisis.

As we have just celebrated the Festival of Pesach – Passover, one can only hope that globally and individually we all experience its central theme of Liberation & Freedom. We now also stand on the precipice of periods of reflection and gratitude in the calendar. In the coming weeks we have Yom HaShoah – Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day – and the following week Yom HaZikaron – Memorial Day for Israel’s fallen soldiers and victims of terror, immediately followed by Yom HaAtzmaut – Israel Independence Day. In Australia we also commemorate ANZAC Day. All of these days should cause us to pause and reflect not only on the tremendous debt we owe the sacrifice of so many of the generations before us to ensure that people, all peoples, can live today in peace, friendship & tolerance with each other. But the terrible suffering and devastation that can result when we don’t.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our upcoming functions.

Remembering with Israel on Yom Hazikaron

Memorial Day for Israel's fallen soldiers and victims of terror is commemorated Tuesday 25 April 2023, this year also coinciding with ANZAC Day.

Yom HaAtzmaut

Yom HaAtzmaut – Israel Independence Day is celebrated Wednesday 26 April 2023, being 75 years since the establishment of the modern State of Israel.



ASPJ GENEALOGY OPEN DAYS 2023



Michał Majewski

Four years after the ASPJ's first such event in Melbourne, this time, in 2023, our ASPJ Genealogy Open Days were held in both Sydney at the Sydney Jewish Museum and Melbourne at the new Melbourne Holocaust Museum. Again, this year, our special guest was Polish genealogist and historian, Michał Majewski.

Historian and genealogist Michał Majewski, visiting from POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute, was featured speaker and delivered an informative and entertaining presentation. As well as providing an overview of the state of academic research of Polish Jewish genealogy, Michał provided valuable practical guidelines and tips on the best and most efficient way to navigate the public and private resources available to begin your own genealogical discovery process

In Melbourne, Patrick Ferry, State Manager Victoria from the National Archives of Australia, also presented an overview of the resources available to locate the applications of many post-war Jewish Holocaust refugees seeking entry into Australia.

Following Michał's lecture and answering general questions, audience members were invited to bring their own, personal questions to representatives of



Representatives of Polish Museum and Archives Australia



Patrick Ferry, Victorian State Manager,
National Archives of Australia



Victorian branch of National Archives of Australia



several specialist organisations. Also in attendance were representatives from the Polish Museum and Archives in Australia.

The ASPJ sincerely thanks representatives of other organisations who supported these events both in Sydney and in Melbourne.

ASPJ HAS A VOICE AT *IN ONE VOICE* 2023



On 19 March 2023, the ASPJ hosted a booth at the In One Voice Festival in Melbourne – the largest annual Jewish cultural festival in the Southern Hemisphere. The ASPJ was busy all day with many attendees passing by and stopping for a chat, often sharing stories of their Polish ancestry as well as their views on issues related to Polish–Jewish matters of interest. As well as seeing lots of old friends, many new connections were made.

Lena Fiszman & Peter Schnall at the ASPJ booth at *In One Voice*.

DID YOUR FAMILY COME FROM POLAND?

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

TALK TO US TODAY!

1300 88 55 61
polaron.com.au
citizenship@polaron.com.au

Polaron
European Citizenship



WOLF & DORA RAJCHER
MEMORIAL FUND

**proudly supporting
the work of the**



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

POLISH MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES IN AUSTRALIA



One of the many workshops held by PMAAA

The Polish Museum and Archives in Australia was established in 1991 as an initiative of a number of people who saw the importance of collecting and preserving historical materials that reflected the individual and community life of Polish immigrants living in Australia.

Current Activities and Projects

The Polish Soldier Migrant Project:

In 1947 and 1948 Australia accepted a very specific Polish migrant. Over 1,500 former members of the Polish military based in the United Kingdom arrived in Australia aboard the *Asturias* and the *Strathnaver*. These men represented various military services including the Carpathian Brigade, the Air Force, Armoured Division and the Second Corps. A sizeable number worked on the Hydro-Electric Scheme in Tasmania; but many were sent to various parts of Australia. These men were vital to the establishment of Polish community structures in the following decades. They also represent a significant prelude to the massive post-war Polish migration from the displaced persons camps scattered throughout Western Europe.

The Polish Museum and Archives in Australia is seeking to document this unique group of Polish soldier migrants in the form of a publication and is currently conducting research. You can register your details.

Collections Project:

The Polish Museum and Archives continually seeks significant objects, documents and photographs that



Archival image of post war family reunion.

relate to the story of Polish post war migration experiences. It would be a lost opportunity to make our mark on the multicultural mosaic of Australia and for our own sense of cultural identity, if we were to lose these treasures, just because their true significance was not recognised at the time.



L-r. President Lucyna Artymiuk, Maria Paszek, Helen Evert

Oral History Project:

The post-war Polish immigrants are today our senior citizens. It is therefore important to document the experiences of these early pioneers.

Reflections on Polish migrants' lives today.

It is vital that these stories be recorded and passed down to future generations of Polish Australians. They should also be documented as part of the greater multicultural Australian experience.

Current president of PMAA Lucyna Artymiuk is the recipient of the ASPJ's Henryk Slawik Award 2012.

VALE “MELBOURNE’S YIDDISH TREASURE” DANIELLE CHARAK OAM



Danielle Charak was born in Brussels in 1939 and when the war came to Belgium, she was put in the care of a non-Jewish family, who looked after her for a year until 1944.

She was reunited with her parents and older sister, the late Floris Kalman. In 1949 Danielle and the family moved to Melbourne.

As well as being recognised internationally as a Yiddish scholar, she was a teacher of Yiddish language for over fifty years.

Danielle was a Yiddish speaker at countless community functions and events. She recorded books in Yiddish for ageing, vision impaired members of the community and translated many private letters and articles.

She married Isi Charak in 1962 and leaves behind three children and twelve grandchildren and countless friends.

Danielle will be remembered for her warmth, positivity and wisdom.

May her memory be a blessing.

THE PASSING OF A FRIEND OF ASPJ PROFESSOR PAWEŁ ŚPIEWAK



Ezra May meeting with Paweł Śpiewak while visiting in Warsaw.

The ASPJ acknowledges the passing of Prof. Paweł Śpiewak on 30 March 2023. Historian, sociologist, writer, former director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (2011-2020) and good friend of the ASPJ.

He was both a proud Jew and a committed Polish patriot.

May his memory be a blessing.

KALISZ, A JOURNEY OF NO RETURN

By Rosalind Brenner

On my first fleeting visit of Poland, my ancestral home, after walking through the streets of the city of Kalisz, I imagined how different the city must have been in my father's childhood, with its strong Jewish population thriving before the onslaught of the Holocaust. As I sat in a courtyard in front of the Town Hall square, reflecting on what I'd seen and what I'd not seen, an internal notion sparked the writing of a book. At first, I protested the idea, not wanting to join the already well-established queue of Holocaust survivor writers. But the notion held strong. *Kalisz: A journey of return*, is a sweeping family saga spanning three continents and set over two world wars.

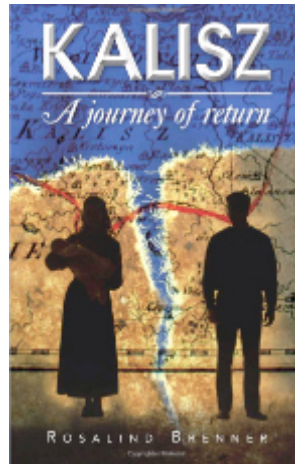
The story itself has different perspectives, as it is not set solely in Europe, but also Palestine and Australia and is an interesting way of looking at social history. I have worked as a drug and alcohol counsellor. I've travelled to India volunteering in schools and to the outback of Australia taking part in the ceremonies of the indigenous women.

Set in Poland, Palestine and Australia, *Kalisz: A journey of return*, a fiction novel, is about the lives of one family over many years, including world wars. History has a way of keeping family secrets hidden for decades. *Kalisz: A journey of return* looks at what happens when family secrets are revealed.

Chapter 1 A New Beginning

Life is a precious gift.

Through its cycles of life and death, Alex Berner thought he'd found a way to survive and prolong his life through a silence carved from unspoken grief. Now as he rushed Stella through the emergency entrance of Crown Street Hospital, his worries were left behind, replaced by anticipation and trepidation.



Kalisz: A journey of return is available at Amazon.com and www.austinmacauley.com/author/brenner-rosalind

Synopsis

History has a way of showing up without being invited and relatives can be hidden for decades, but when the truth is revealed, changes emerge. It is without intention that Rose turns up in Kalisz, Poland, her father's ancestral home. But it is not the same Kalisz her father grew up in. The large welcomed Jewish population was emptied

and left silent by the Holocaust. But for Mr Masjewski, Rose's visit unlocks a hidden past. And an extraordinary connection between the two families is unveiled from its dark hiding place. *Kalisz* is a sweeping drama, travelling between worlds of time and place through a rich culture's rituals and traditions, from Poland to Palestine and through generations of two world wars and beyond.

Rosalind Brenner

Rosalind Brenner Website:

[www.https://rosalindbrenner.ampbk.com/](https://rosalindbrenner.ampbk.com/)

Rosalind Brenner was born in Sydney, Australia, 1957, to immigrant parents. Her father was a Polish Jew and a Holocaust survivor, and her mother was also Jewish, from England. Brenner married at a young age and lived on the Central Coast of NSW as a fulltime wife and mother.

In 2005, she began her studies as a writer. On her first visit to Kalisz in Poland, the hometown of her father, she sat in a courtyard overlooking the Square when she realised a story needed to be told. Over the following four years, Brenner wrote the visions appearing in her mind and the story of *Kalisz* unravelled.

BOOK REVIEW

Son of Chaim

by Janusz ben Yisrael

When Henryk Poznanski began working at the Ministry of Art and Culture (MKiS) in May 1950, Poland was still coming to terms with the genocide that had taken place on its soil. Apart from Auschwitz-Birkenau, there were smaller extermination camps like Treblinka, Belzec, Majdanek, Sztuthovo, and Sobibor. The German Nazis established all these places in a deliberate, calculated manner, as part of Hitler's 'Final Solution' policy. During



the late 1940s and 1950s, within the Polish society, all these places were generally considered as symbols of Polish martyrology and sacrifice. In Poland, they were viewed as sites of Polish suffering under the oppressive Nazi occupation. Apart from symbolizing the Polish national sacrifice, they embodied the Polish struggle, resistance, and rise against the Nazi

murderous oppression. The destruction of the Jewish people was officially named "The Extermination of Millions," since the intention was to include the extermination of people from other cultural groups, such as gypsies, and political prisoners.

Henryk's entire family had perished in the German Nazi extermination camps. For him, his work at the Board of Museums and Monuments Protection has become the sole purpose of his working career, as he felt deeply compelled with great urgency and determination to preserve the memory of his family and the millions of other innocent Jewish victims. As time went by, he became wholly absorbed by the work he was assigned to do. As a delegate of MKiS, he oversaw and had critical input into the emerging practical processes that were being initiated and implemented in the protection and preservation of the sites that formed an integral part of the systematic genocide of Jewish people

during the Nazi's occupation of Poland. Henryk was the only Jewish person that worked at the Board of Museums and Monuments Protection. He was familiar with the tacit unspoken, subtle, but ever present resistance of the Polish public and the Polish Government Sector to acknowledge the systematic genocide of Jewish people.

It was morally and emotionally difficult for Henryk to deal with this unspoken subtle 'resistance' of the Polish Government and Polish society more generally, to openly acknowledge the Jewish tragedy at the hands of the German Nazi murderers. Even though every Pole knew what happened to the Jews of Poland, collectively, the Polish nation was experiencing a quiet difficulty in coming to some point of voiced recognition, a point of collective reverent acknowledgment.

For Poland's Christian society, collective empathy for the Polish Jewish victims of the Holocaust was indeed a complex and somewhat confronting issue. The unspoken but felt historical antipathy among the Poles towards the Jews of Poland actively clouded Polish collective grief and empathic responses to the murder of millions of their Jewish neighbours.

Henryk struggled against the ideological perspective of the Polish Catholic society in Communist Poland, that has found its expression in expressed views of President Cyrankiewicz and career politicians like the Minister of MKiS, Kazimierz Rusinek. Both these political influencers of the time highlighted Poland's national sacrifice and struggle against the German Nazi oppression, whilst comfortably placing the extermination of the Jews in the Communist ideological framework of the "international suffering of nations, oppressed by forces of Nazism and Fascism".

The book *Son of Chaim*, among other things, deals with Henryk's efforts to preserve the ground and remaining structures of the extermination camps, amidst political forces of the late 1950s and early 1960s that aimed to plough over these vital evidentiary reminders of human catastrophe. Because of his firm opposition to any government initiative to reduce the scale of Holocaust commemoration, Henryk was removed from his post at MKiS in 1962, like most remaining Polish Jewish government officials, who chose to stay and work in Poland after the WWII.



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: ____/____/____