



# ***Perth Jewish Roots***

*Newsletter of the Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society of  
Western Australia Inc*

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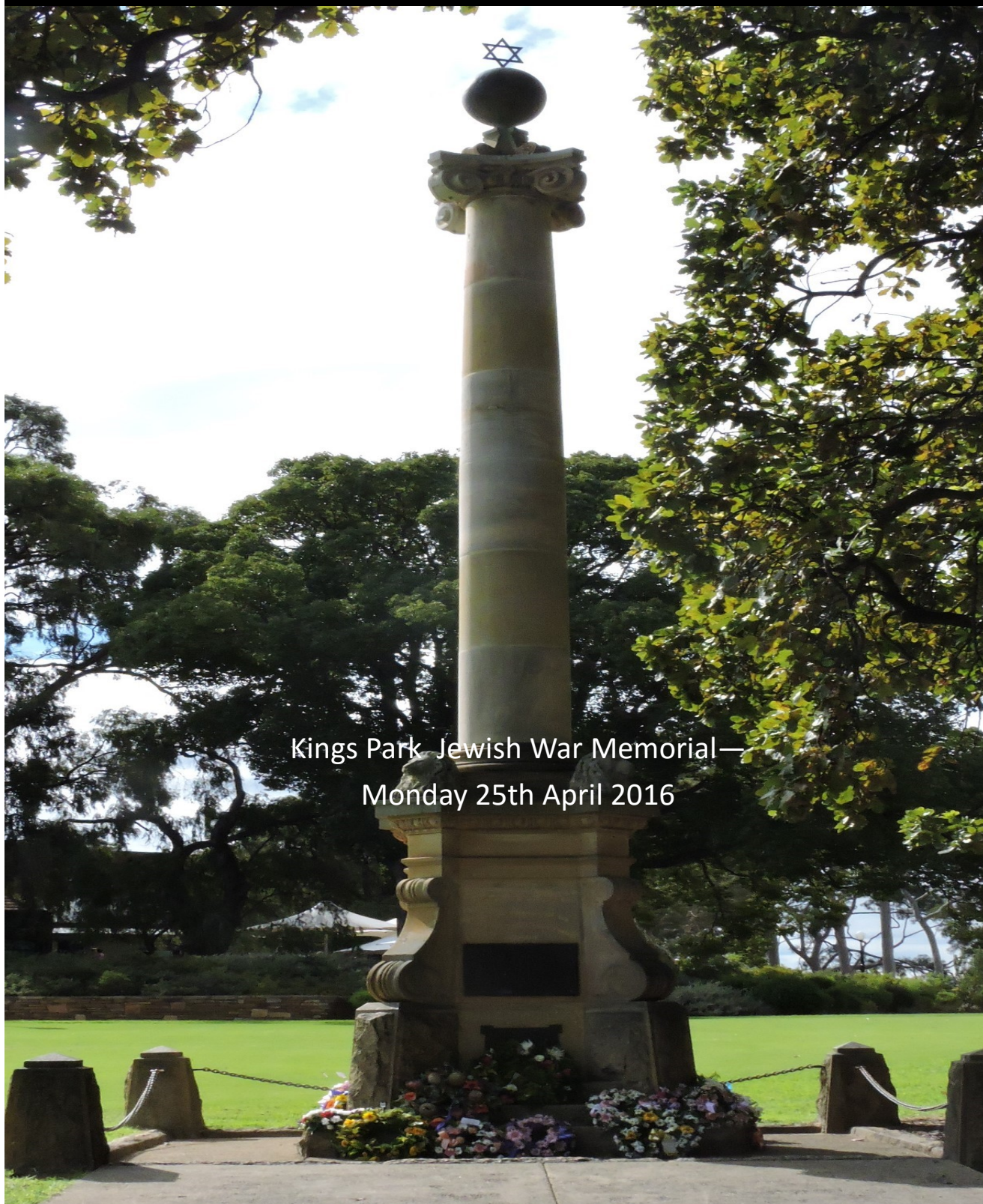
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**Newsletter**

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## Remembering our ANZACS



Under overcast skies, the solemn Anzac Day Dawn Service was held as usual at the Jewish War memorial on Monday 25th April 2016, marking 101 years since the Gallipoli landings.

Despite the threatening rain, around 150 members of the community were there in Kings Park as dawn broke to take part in the commemorative service conducted by Rabbi Dovid Freilich,

supported by Rabbi Marcus Solomon and Adi Cohen.



Wreath layers were headed by her Excellency the Governor Kerry Sanderson AO together with Hon Colin Barnett MLA Premier of Western Australia, The Right Honourable The Lord Mayor Lisa Scaffidi and representatives of the President of the RSL and the Leader of the Opposition.

As well as wreaths from these and other dignitaries, there were those from virtually all local Jewish organisations, including Dr Michael Anderson who represented our Society, laid to cover the entire base of the monument.

The poignancy of the moment and the dignity of the service was appreciated by all those present, including the large crowd that gathered having come from the State ANZAC Dawn Service. The traditional Ode, recited by Warren Austin, President of the General Sir John Monash RSL Sub-branch and the WA Association of Jewish Ex-Service Men & Women, concluded the service.

David Denver, President JCCWA and his group deserve credit for again organising this important occasion so efficiently.

*Keith Shilkin AM*

*The Maccabean*



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## East Perth Jewish Memorial Cemetery

Committee members Warren Austin and Jonathan Wolf joined President John Urban, and spent a morning removing weeds at the East Perth Jewish Memorial Garden, which is jointly managed by our Society JHGS-WA and The National Trust.

This small Garden is on the west side of Plain Street, on the corner of Wickham Street, East Perth.

There are a number of tombstones from Jewish graves there, which were moved to this position some years ago when road improvements necessitated this.

The Jewish Memorial Garden is normally closed to the public, but the Society intends to have an “open day” in the future, when members of the public will be able to visit.

*Jonathan Wolf*



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## National Volunteers Week

Last week (9th—15th May) marked National Volunteers week. In 2016 the theme celebrated is “Give Happy, Live Happy” which explores the research that shows volunteers live happier and healthier lives.

JHGS-WA would like to say “Thank You” to all the volunteers who have generously donated their time and efforts for our Society. **We would welcome people to come forward and volunteer their time and be inspired and make a difference and come and join us and become more involved and creative and make changes, and make our Society bigger and better.**



## Litvaks on the Move : From the Baltic to the Edge of the Diaspora and Back



On Sunday 28th February, the Society was privileged to be informed (and greatly entertained!) by Eli Rabinowitz with his presentation on the migration of *Litvaks* to South Africa and the place of his own family in this history.

Eli pointed out at the outset that the definition of a *Litvak* is open to debate. Firstly, the term relates to a far wider geographical origin than just the boundaries of modern Lithuania and so includes, for example, parts of what are now Latvia, northern Poland and Belarus. Secondly, Litvaks differed from the larger Ashkenazi population having some divergence from culinary and religious traditions but these differences are not clearly delineated. Significantly, Litvaks have been recognized for their rationality and intellectual achievements. Jewish people left their Litvak homelands for South Africa for what we can appreciate as an amalgam of *push* factors of persecution and poverty with the *pull* of the prospect of prosperity due to the mineral riches of diamonds and gold recently discovered there.

Though some British Jews had settled in South Africa as early as the 1820's, the period 1881-1930 was the time of the great influx of Jewish migrants. The single governmental province of Kovno alone - now Lithuanized *Kaunas* - saw 70,000 Jews depart in this period. The Jewish community came to represent a significant proportion of white South Africa. Very differently from the Australian experience, Litvak settlement in South Africa included many small towns, so the Jewish population was thinly spread throughout the country.

Eli told us by words, illustrative photos and videos, how he had encountered Jewish life in present day Lithuania on numerous trips of researching his own family roots. His message loud and clear was that you will only uncover a small amount of your family story by looking through the formal records that can be obtained via JewishGen and other internet and documentary sources.

It's when you share your story with others that so much more will come to light. He gave many illustrations of this point that by talking with distant cousins and even with non-Jewish Lithuanians, he had been able to incrementally add chapters to his family story.

Eli generously shares the information he collects by maintaining a regular blog : <http://elirab.me> with a Litvak portal : <http://elirab.me/litvak-portal/> . Eli has been putting together many KehilaLinks links through JewishGen : [kehilalinks.jewishgen.org](http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org) .

He cautioned in this face-to-face researching, however, not to be drawn into believing that people who happen to share your family name are necessarily related since, for instance, his own name of Rabinowitz was one changed by his forbears.

Eli's audience at this meeting clearly admired Eli's chutzpah in his ebullient willingness to reach out to all he meets on his genealogical forays and by so doing helps to keep the memory of the pre-war Litvak world alive, so contributing to the Litvak legacy.

It's sad but true that successive governments of Lithuania have refused to acknowledge Lithuanian complicity in the destruction of Jewish communities during the Shoa (WWII). There are 190 sites in Lithuania where Jews were killed. Eli suggested that a hope for the future is to connect the youth in Lithuania with Jewish youth abroad and of course the modern social media can make this a reality.



Litvaks left their homeland to seek safer and more prosperous lives for themselves and their families in many lands besides South Africa, particularly the USA.

On a personal note, my own paternal forbears who were from Mariempolje south of Kaunas, migrated to Yorkshire, England in the 1870's. Litvaks have been very prominent too from the earliest days in the building of modern Israel.

The contribution made by the Litvaks to the progress of our world in virtually every field of human endeavour has been truly phenomenal - and is continuing with their descendants.

*Dr Michael Anderson*

*This is Sofia's essay for a school project entitled "How does historical change impact on people's actions, values and experience?" The JHGS-WA judges awarded Sofia the First Prize in the 2015 Jack Rose Family History Essay Competition.*

***The Majzner Numbers***  
***How does historical change impact on people's***  
***Action, Values and Experience***  
***By Sofia Majzner***



All that remains to me of my great grandfather Jacques Majzner is a receipt for 11,180 francs. In October 1943 this 36 year old man stood in front of a French official at Drancy Concentration camp, outside Paris, and handed over his life savings having three months earlier seen his 32 year old wife Germaine leave Drancy in a cramped cattle car, on a one-way journey to Auschwitz.

Why, he must have asked himself, are they giving a soon to be dead man a receipt for money that will never be returned? Why, he must have asked himself, hadn't he given more money to his two young sons whom he had managed to smuggle into hiding before he and his wife were led out of their Parisian apartment by a French policeman whom they had once considered a friend?

Days after this receipt was written and stamped, Jacques took the same train journey as his wife and they both suffered the same fate as 73,500 other French Jews, of which 11,000 were children, who were murdered in the Auschwitz death camps.

This receipt, yellowed with age, is my physical connection to one of the most horrific events in history. There are many numbers connected to the Holocaust that everyone remembers, such as 6 million Jews being murdered including 1.5 million children.

For the Majzner family there are some numbers too : three relatives who died (grand parents and great grandmother), 11,180 (francs) and 0 (they were orphans, alone in the world).

Jacques and Germane lived in two countries that were at the heart of World War 2 (WWII). Poland, their birth country and France their adopted country. Jews in Poland had long been subjected to terrible pogroms and anti-Semitism.

France was to be their safe haven and hope for a more prosperous life. The reality was they were caught in the middle of the Nazi's drive to conquer Europe and wipe out the Jews.

Since the reign of Emperor Napoleon III in the early 1800s Jews had civil rights in France and the country became a haven for the Jews from all around Europe seeking emancipation.

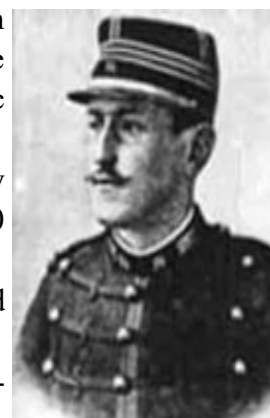
Until the Dreyfus Affair in 1898 Jews had prospered in France, achieving success in all areas of society but were awoken to the reality that anti-Semitism in this Catholic country was still deeply rooted.

The fall of France and the installation of the Vichy Government in 1942 ended the golden years for its 350,000 Jewish citizens - and for my grandfather and his parents.

Historical change from 1939 to 1945 impacted on my family's values and actions today because of the experiences that my grandfather and his brother had.

Historical change is defined as the transformation or conversion of a chronological record of events responsible for development of a people or ideas.

My great grandmother Gitla Rosenberg was born in Chelm, Poland on 2nd January 1911, and was one of five children.



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My great grandfather Yitzchak Majzner was born in Warsaw, Poland on 14th September 1906. He is believed to be an only child, however, nothing more is known about the family.

At dates unknown both Gitla and Yitzchak independently immigrated to Paris, where they met each other and married on 5th November 1931. However, prior to their marriage, both Gitla and Yitzchak changed their names to Germaine and Jacques Majzner in order to better assimilate into French society.



They lived in a rented apartment in Paris at Passage Saint Avoise 4, in the 3rd district in the predominantly Jewish area known as the Marais. They spoke Polish and Yiddish to each other and to their first child Simon (born 1st February 1931). Whilst the Rosenberg's had migrated to France much earlier and had successfully received French citizenship, Jacques found difficulty in doing so. Therefore, in 1936 after months of frustration from being denied French citizenship, Jacques, Germaine and their three year old son Simon immigrated to Palestine in search for a better

Jewish future. Palestine at this time was rocked by violence and anti-Jewish riots by the Arab population. The hardships that they experienced was too great so they returned to France. Despite the constant plea from their relatives Aaron and Sarah Nirens to follow them to Australia, Jacques received his citizenship and they stayed in France.

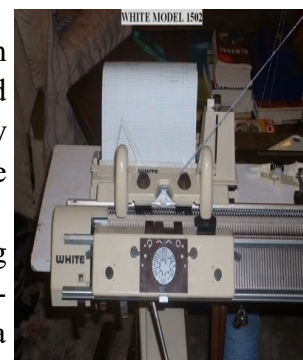
Two years later on 4th June 1938, my grandfather George (George) Majzner was born and the Majzner family was complete. The feeling of national pride and loyalty to France caused Jacques to join the French army at the start of the war in 1939.



He was sent straight to the Front Lines and was badly wounded in the stomach and was taken back to Paris for rehabilitation. The feelings of pride and devotion that Jews felt towards their home country were taken advantage of during the start of WWII. My great grandfather, amongst many others, fought for a country that soon after stripped them of their national rights and forced them to rot in embarrassment and fear amongst fellow citizens for six painful years.

During WWII in occupied France, people's responses varied greatly; many rose above the tragedies and carried on their normal day to day lives, whilst some sank to states of grief and depression and accepted their presence as victims of their circumstances. Life was hard for all people during the war, food and supplies were rationed to the public.

Jacques Majzner had to support his young family and after his stomach wounds healed he set up several knitting machines in his apartment and together with his wife they began running a small textile knitting business. They were familiar with this area of work and had previously worked in the textile field.



At this time in France life for Jews was at its lowest point. Jews were being rounded up by French police and soldiers and taken to the transit Drancy Concentration camp. One day in the first half of 1943 a friend of Jacques who was a policeman entered the Majzner family apartment and arrested Jacques and Germaine. Ten year old Simon was told by his father to take his five year old brother George to the concierge of the apartment building. Without being stopped by the French police Simon and George went to the concierge who knew their maternal grandmother, Freida Rosenberg who took them to her. Sadly the widow Freida was also taken to Drancy and perished in Auschwitz in 1944.

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Simon remembers seeing his parents, with a small suitcase each, leave the apartment with the police and he knew then that he would never see his parents again. By this time the children's aunty and uncle Marie and Jacques Sanicki and their son Claude had fled Paris to central Free France along with their uncle David and Eva Rosenberg and their children Robert and Rosette. Yitzchak Rosenberg the oldest brother had been deported early in the war and Sarah and Aaron Nirens and their four children had left for the safety of Melbourne, Australia.

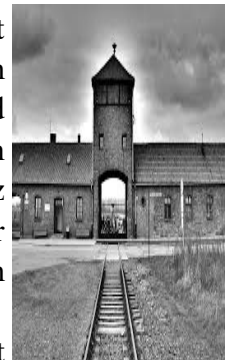


The concierge as paid by their grandmother to take the boys to their relatives in the town of Benevant L'abbaye. After a few months hiding on false papers, they were taken by their uncle Jacques Sanicki to the small farming town of Peyrouw-Vieux, 40-50 km away. Simon received papers giving him the identity of Jean Maiznet and Geroge became George Maiznet.. The two brothers were split up and lived separately and although it was only 50 m away from each other it was still very traumatising for the brothers.

Simon was sent to live with widow Jamot and her four sons in a two room farm-house, whilst George was more lucky and was sent to live with a newly married couple. They were hardly affected by the war and had lots of food as well as hand me down clothing and boots so that they could work on the farm and go to school. The farm Simon lived on lacked sufficient water which meant



that Simon could not bathe, he clearly remembers having dirt caked on his skin for a whole year. According to transportation documents from the French Holocaust Memorial and Yad Vashem, Jacques Majzner was transported to Drancy Camp in France, the main transit camp, and from there to Auschwitz Concentration Camp on 28th October 1943. Germaine Majzner also went to Drancy Camp and was transported to Auschwitz on 31st July 1943. Both were murdered in Auschwitz.



The Sanicki and Rosenberg families managed to survive the war and when it ended in 1945 Uncle Jacques came to fetch the boys and take them back to Paris. The Rosenberg family managed to keep some of their financial resources and an apartment. The two boys lived with their relatives on Rue De Quatre Fils in Paris and attended school until plans could be made for them.

As soon as the war ended their family in Melbourne, Sarah and Aaron Nirens, started to work to get their surviving family members along with Simon and George to immigrate to Australia where they could be truly safe.

In 1946, Simon, George and David and Eva Rosenberg and their two sons left France in one of the first refugee ships to Australia. The conditions on the ship were rough and the travel was long, the conditions were poor and many on board suffered greatly from under-nourishment. They slept in bunks in the cargo-hold of the ship and were fed staple foods. George fell down and broke his arm and got scurvy in his groin due to lack of fresh fruit and vegetables, so seeing Australia, and land was a great relief for George especially.



Aaron and Sarah Nirens had done well for themselves in Melbourne, Victoria in the textile business and it was with them that the boys lived until they got married. Aaron and Sarah never adopted Simon and George but they raised them in their home along with their four children, Marie; George; Simon and Maurice.

George married Helen Krasnostein of Perth in 1965 and moved to Perth. George and Helen had three children, Mark; Leanne and Carolyn. George died in 1980, aged 42, after a battle against Cancer. WWII was a very hard time for Simon and George, their childhoods were cut short because of their new responsibilities and experiences of being orphans.

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The war years had a significant impact on the two brothers' values and principles that continue today into the third generation. George's values were not properly formed when he was 5 and lost his parents. But as he became an adult he knew that family and Judaism were at the core of his values.

As written above another important number for my grandfather, and therefore for me, his granddaughter is the number '0'.

Zero parents were there to care for him, and like many other orphans, zero was a number that followed them for the rest of their lives in a way that significantly impacted them. As a result of being orphans and being in an unfamiliar country, Simon clearly remembers George as being a very angry child who suffered from the loss of his parents and was often naughty. However, in later life he came to terms with his family tragedy and in the words of his brother "was a mensch in the true meaning of the word".

Inside he was a lonely person who needed to be surrounded by his family and close friends. This is exemplified even by his professional life where his best friend Carl Guenzl had married Helen's older sister Lynne and they went into business together until George died.

Additionally, as a result of being an orphan, my grandfather became a very community and family minded person. He strongly believed in Jewish continuity and that each generation should know more about Judaism than the previous one.

To complement this, he highly valued Jewish education and became a very strong supporter and worker for Carmel School. He acted as a strong member of the Carmel School board and worked hard building the new Primary School and Kindergarten. Because his family had been murdered for being Jewish he was very concerned about Jewish continuity. He did not want Hitler's mission to be completed. He talked and worked hard to create a strong Jewish community in Perth and to ensure his kids got an excellent Jewish education. He was always a loving and kind person to his and his friends' children as they represented the future. Without children their stories would not be passed on and Judaism would not be continued. Living in an unfamiliar country, with zero parents and never feeling the same sense of belonging as he would with his own family, my grandfather spent most of his life searching for the one place that he belonged to. He and my grandmother together created that place, their family.



Today in year 2015, my mother Johanna, my father Mark and my brother Samuel, George and I, Sofia Joujou (George was called Joujou as a pet name) stand together trying to remember our passed family and live his values. We try to recollect the numbers "11,180" and "0", of Jacques and George Majzner. Remembering is hard but never forgetting is different. We will never forget that it is due to our passed family who's values and experiences we may share today that we have our lives.

As my great grandfather stood in his apartment on Passage Saint Avoys ready to be taken away, clenching his suitcase in his sweaty palm telling his son Simon to take my grandfather and run, he thinks of his children's future, he thinks of me, my brother, my parents, my cousins and my aunts and uncles and my grandmother and all the generations to come from his sons. My great grandfather saved the lives of two incredible men, that were always family minded and kind.

The values that these two orphans passed on helped shape me and my family. Even though my grandfather never lived to see it, there are several other numbers that are associated with him :

3 loving children; 8 Jewish grandchildren; and 1 big united Jewish family in the community he helped shape.

### **Bibliography :**

1. The Oral History of the Gitla & Yitzchak Majzner Family, Told by Simon Majzner to Mark Majzner on 1st January 2008.
2. The Yad Vashem central database of Shoah Victims names.
3. Wikipedia, "The Holocaust in France". N.p.,2015. Web 9th Aug 2015.
4. Goldfarb, Michael, *Emancipation*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2009. Print. Pages 313-345.



**Save the Date !**

**A.G.M. @ 1.30pm**  
**Sunday : 28th August 2016**

Noranda Chabad Synagogue, 11 Garson Court, Noranda  
All members are invited to our Society's Annual General Meeting, meet other members, find out what's been happening, elect our Committee. Afternoon Tea is provided after the meeting. See our Website : [www.jhgs-wa.org.au](http://www.jhgs-wa.org.au)

## DONATE

As an independent organisation we rely on gifts like yours. Without the generosity of people like yourselves who care for Jewish WA heritage, the history and culture we treasure would be lost. **Donations of \$2 and over are Tax Deductible to the JHGS-WA Museum & Library.**

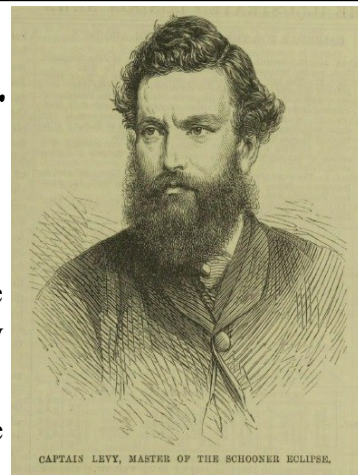
**Sunday 26th June 2016 at 1.30pm**

### ***Captain Morris Levy (1830-1901) : Master Mariner, Merchant and Adventurer***

Presented by Sue & Julian Levy

Born in the Channel Islands, Morris Levy and his young Devonshire wife Sophia Mordecai Levi sailed to the Antipodes in the early 1850s, where they faced many great challenges as they raised a large family.

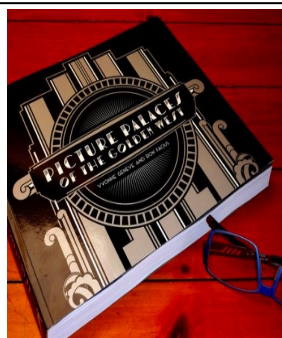
Morris found renown as the rescuer of a missionary in a truly gruesome incident during the N.Z. Maori Wars in 1865.



**Sunday 31st July at 1.30pm for a 2.00pm start**

### **BOOK LAUNCH**

Book is available for purchase on the day or do you wish to pre purchase please contact us on : [jhgs@iinet.net.au](mailto:jhgs@iinet.net.au)



### ***Picture Palaces of the Golden West***

by Vyonne Geneve OAM & Ron Facius

Focuses on the built form and exotic décor of the picture theatres in the Art Deco era in WA, while placing them in the continuum of the earliest advent of film to the present time. Based on seminal research by Vyonne Geneve at UWA, this book draws on long-held memories and well-remembered incidents brought to life by the drawings of designer Ron Facius, which capture the ambience of the buildings and the excitement they brought to WA. The publication also documents the changing attitudes to architectural form and societal expectations, due in no small part to the influence of the movies in this isolated Australian state. Do you have any memories of going to the Movies? Send in those memories to : [jhgs@iinet.net.au](mailto:jhgs@iinet.net.au)

### **RECOMMENDED WEBSITES :**

History of Outback communities in Australia

[www.outbackfamilyhistory.com.au](http://www.outbackfamilyhistory.com.au)

Family History Daily - a blog that includes many lists of useful tips for researchers and genealogists

<http://familyhistorydaily.com>

101 Resources for Finding your Jewish Ancestors

<http://crestleaf.com/blog/jewish-genealogy-100-resources-jewish-ancestry-research>