

Then and Now

A
COLLECTION
OF
RECOLLECTIONS

To Commemorate the
150th Anniversary



COMPILED BY
FREDA SILVER JACKSON

Then and Now

*Published by the Oxford Jewish Congregation,
21 Richmond Road, Oxford OX1 2JL*

Copyright © Oxford Jewish Congregation 1992

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Oxford Jewish Congregation.

ISBN 0 9519253 1 8 hardback

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Designed and produced by
Hunts Lithoprint Limited, Oxford
in conjunction with
Colin Currill Creative Services, Oxford*

Contents

FOREWORD	7
GREETINGS: Lord Jakobovits, Chief Rabbi Sacks, Rabbi Rayner, Rev. Weisman	9
THE EARLY YEARS: Sir Isaiah Berlin, J. Benzion Segal, Raphael Loewe, Walter Eytan, Edgar Duchin, Sydney Brookfield	15
THE WAR YEARS: Will Lawson, Ivor Fields, Tessa Brodetsky, Else Lawrence, Joy Watson, E. Lesheim	32
REMEMBERING LAURIE BLOOM: D.M. Lewis, Herbert Frankel, Rose & Dan Kemp	47
GROWING UP IN OXFORD: Sheila & Brenda (née Bloom), Michael Spira, Caroline Lewis, Laura Spira, Eva Loeffler	50
THE CECIL ROTH ERA: Geoffrey Lewis, Michael Pinto-Duschinsky	65
SOME OF OUR YESTERDAYS: Sir Monty Finniston, Dan Kemp, Barbara Lewis	74
STUDENT LIFE IN OXFORD: Cherry Torrance, Ruth Deech, Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, Robert J. Littman, David & Avis Weitzman, Lionel Wollenberg, Anthony Yablon, Lisa Cohen, Beatrice Lang, Sir Zelman Cowen, FSJ	82
IN THE WILDERNESS: Helen May	115
THE NEW SYNAGOGUE AND CENTRE: Maureen Hadfield, Don Blenford, Sandra Dwek, George Silver, obit. Sir Alan Mocatta, Caroline	117
IN MEMORIAM: Tributes to Richard Koch from Helen May, Penny Faust, Kathy Shock	134
THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD: The Brandstetters, Phyllis Lieberman, Elaine Hyams, Rosemary Eshel	140
AFFILIATIONS: C.C.J., B'nai B'rith, WIZO, Soviet Jewry	146
ECUMENISM: Michael Cross	156
THE OXFORD CENTRE FOR POSTGRADUATE HEBREW STUDIES: David Patterson	159
WOMEN OF WORTH: by Harriet Cronin, Sandra Dwek, FSJ	161
THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY: Ron May	171
TEACHING IT DILIGENTLY TO OUR CHILDREN: José Patterson, Miriam Kochan	173
A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE: Ian Grant	179
INDEX OF NAMES	183

Illustrations

1. Emeritus Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits	9
2. Chief Rabbi Professor Jonathan Sacks	11
3. Rabbi John D. Rayner	12
4. Rev. Malcolm Weisman	14
5. Herbert Loewe	21
6. Memorial Plaque 1914-1918	31
7. Memorial Plaque 1945	46
8. Remembering Laurie Bloom	48
9. Children of the community	54
10. Cecil Roth	68
11. Embroidered tapestry	81
12. The Synagogue - then	114
13. Rt. Hon. Lord Segal of Wytham	119
14. Laying the Foundation Stone of the new Synagogue	124
15. Photograph during the Consecration Service	127
16. Sir Alan Mocatta	131
17. Plaque in the foyer of the new Synagogue	133
18. The Synagogue - now - 1992	133
19. Richard Koch	139
20. The Old Ark	158
21. George	182

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO MY GRANDCHILDREN
and
TO ALL THE CHILDREN OF
THE OXFORD JEWISH COMMUNITY

I hope that when the Bicentennial Anniversary
is celebrated in the year 2042
and the “NOW” has become “THEN”
a further volume of Recollections
will be compiled for publication by them.

Freda Silver Jackson
Oxford
January 1992

Foreword

IT is with great pride that I present this collection of recollections, a record of Jewish life in Oxford dating back to the early part of this century, onwards to the Second World War and through to the present day. It is intended that this volume of personal experiences will complement David Lewis's history *The Jews of Oxford*. In seeking out so many contributors from all walks of life I have found it particularly interesting to discover how varied their lives have been taking into consideration the one common denominator, their Jewishness. Inevitably, some of these recollections have overlapped, but this is part of the kaleidoscope that has made living in Oxford so fascinating and rewarding.

I have been fortunate in finding so many individuals who have volunteered their recollections and to whom I offer my grateful thanks. Sadly two such contributors, namely Sir Monty Finniston and Edgar Duchin, passed away soon after they had penned their reminiscences.

The year 1992 holds out great promise for the New Europe and whilst we in Oxford have, naturally, gone back 150 years for the purpose of our celebrations, we too can have high hopes for the future. It is interesting to note that whereas many congregations throughout the land are dwindling, the Jewish population in Oxford has grown into a well-established community. It is also noteworthy that our 150th Anniversary coincides with the fusion of a wider European Community. The growth of the Oxford Congregation owes much to the influx of Jews seeking refuge *from* Europe in the 1930's. Added to this came the evacuees escaping the Blitz which also emanated *from* Europe. Many of these people settled here making a significant contribution to the Jewish way of life in Oxford and to the world at large in the sciences and other academic fields. It will be interesting for those living in the next century to compare the

‘then and now’ of Europe’s attitude to its minorities. The history of the past has been a blot on civilisation – at present there appears to be a break in this ‘tradition’. Let us hope that this will lead to a peaceful co-existence for our fellow Jews throughout the united Europe.

We, in Oxford, are doubly fortunate in the quality and quantity of our children which augurs well for the year 2000 and beyond. May the events of 1992 usher in an era of peace and tranquillity for us all.

Freda Silver Jackson

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I offer my sincere appreciation to my friend Miriam Kochan
for her assistance in the early stages of this book and to
Tessa Brodetsky for help in proof-reading.

To my daughter Caroline and to Pamela Matheson my gratitude
for their drawings on the dust jacket.

Frances Davis, Stanley Silver and his two daughters and Tibor Reich
have given generous donations towards the cost of this publication.

Finally to my husband Leslie whose patience and understanding
has been a tower of strength throughout the compilation of
this book – his support has proved invaluable.