

Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots: Exeter's Multi-Coloured History

Multi-Cultural Exeter 1500-1800

By Community Researcher, Olivia Hall

The Jewish community of Exeter

'The Jews of Devon and Cornwall', *The Hidden Legacy Foundation*, Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 2000:

The Exeter Cemeteries

'Exeter has two Jewish cemeteries. The oldest burial ground is in Magdalen Road, and has limited space for future burials. From the road, one can look down into this picturesque walled cemetery, carefully tended by the local Jewish community. Its stones are primarily engraved in Hebrew lettering, with occasional English, most still legible... The cemetery has seen over one hundred burials since the land was leased to the community in 1757, and since 1977 the community has owned the burial ground. The earliest stone to have survived is only partially legible and dates from 1807. None of the earliest headstones from the eighteenth century has survived. With their disappearance and the continuing decay of existing tombstones, their inscriptions and biographical details will be lost, unless they are catalogued and transcribed. They are another example of Anglo-Jewry's fast disappearing and often unrecorded heritage. The second burial ground is located in the Exwick area of Exeter and can cater for the foreseeable needs of the community.' (pp. 18-19)

Ezekiel Abraham Ezekiel of Exeter – by Frank Gent

<http://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/Community/exe/ezekiel/ezekiel.htm>

'It was in the 1750s that the first Ashkenazi (of German tradition) Jewish families settled in Exeter, notably the brothers Abraham and Benjamin Ezekiel. We do not know their town of origin...'

'Five Jews had shops in the fashionable shopping area of Exeter sufficiently well established to warrant inclusion in the *Exeter Pocket Journal* of 1796. The latter recorded that there were two silversmiths, an engraver who sold a variety of goods, a pawnbroker and a stationer. The trades followed by these early immigrants were typical of middle-class Jews in the eighteenth century. Barred from professions, and susceptible to persecution, they needed occupations that were mobile, transportable and transferable. Silversmithing was consequently popular with those who could afford the apprenticeship and basic resources'

Ezekial Abraham Ezekial:

- Father leased the land and had built the Exeter synagogue (opened 10th August 1763)

- Father and uncle, came to Exeter as young men in their 20s, probably from the Rhineland
- Father, Abraham, was a watchmaker and silversmith
- Ezekial born in 1757, eldest of six children
- Apprenticed to Alexander Jenkins, Exeter goldsmith at the age of 15
- Produced first engraving in 1779
- Fluent in English, Hebrew and German
- Premises: George Inn, North Street
- Four examples of his work are in the British Museum
- Engraved many bookplates, trade cards and the masthead for the *Flying Post*
- 1795 – began to deal in optical instruments
- Specialised later in telescopes, microscopes, fossils and mineralogy
- Successful miniature painter
- Died of dropsy in 1806, unmarried

Jews in Exeter – Census 1841			
Family Name	Number of Persons	Professions	Place(s) of Birth
Ralph	4	Dress Maker, Tailor's Apprentice	Devon
Dimond	2	Jeweller	Devon
Israel	4	Jeweller	Poland
Woolf	1	General Dealer	Foreign
Mordechai	3	General Dealer Hawker	Foreign
Lazarus	16	Stationer General Dealer Jeweller	Devon
Levy	1	Hardware Dealer	Devon
Ezekiel	4	Independent	Devon
Levi	1	Independent	Devon
Soloman	5	Jeweller	Foreign/Devon
Edelstein	6		Devon
Abraham	2	Optician	Devon
Alexander	10	Optician	Devon
Johnson	1	Independent	Devon
Jacobs	2	Pen Cutter	Foreign

		Servant	
Hart	6	Watch Maker	Devon
Schultz	1	Independent	Foreign
Emanuel	1	Watch Maker	
Cohen	3	Gem Merchant Hawker	Foreign
Silverstone	8	Watchmaker	Foreign (Parents) Devon (Children)
Marks	6	Silversmith	Devon
Joseph	1	Shop Boy	Devon
Morris	1	Hawker	
Woolfe	7	Jeweller Shopman	Foreign (Parents) Devon (Children)
Aaron	4	Jeweller	Devon
Prince	3	Furrier	Foreign
Barnet	1	Assistant	
Abrahams	1		
Green	2	Clothier	
Davis	12	General Dealer	Devon
	Total: 119		

Exeter Census 1851

Place of Birth	Number of Jews
Hamburg	1
Germany	3
Prussia	3
Exeter	88
Guernsey	1
Plymouth	2
Surrey	3
Barnstaple	4
Middlesex	2
Birmingham	1
London	2
Poland	9
Kent	1
TOTAL	118



**View of the Jewish Cemetery on
Magdalen Road Exeter**



**'A Cluster of Gravestones with Hebrew
Inscriptions', Photo courtesy of David
Cornforth, Exeter Memories**