

# History of the jews in england

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The Jews in Manchester came from Eastern Europe, but the synagogue the museum is set in, was for Spanish and Portuguese Jews in Manchester. The Jews moved to Manchester as Industrialisation was taking place, and they thought that they would have a better life in England. Also at the beginning of the twentieth century, Jews were moving west out of Eastern Europe to avoid poverty and persecution from Nazis. At first, when some of the Jews first came to Manchester, there were just twenty families around the cathedral, and they had got to Manchester buy peddling stuff that they had made and buying and selling cheap second hand stuff.

The number of Jews grew slowly and by 1840 there were only three hundred Jews living in Manchester, and they had separated into two communities: the poor Jews, and the rich Jews. After 1840, yet more Jews moved from Eastern Europe to Manchester to escape the increase in poverty and persecution. By 1860 there were one and a half thousand Jews, and by 1914 there were thirty five thousand living in Manchester. I expected the museum to be a really good source of information, and really quite big and informative.

The synagogue the museum is set in was founded in 1874 and it remained open for a hundred years. The museum was used by Spanish and Portuguese Jews; but by 1980 the museum was falling down! So, Jews in and around that area were asked to donate some things and they turned it into a museum.

The museum opened in 1984. In the museum, there were two floors; the ground floor was set up like a synagogue with the torahs behind the altar, and the upstairs part, where the women and children would sit for the Jewish services was turned into a museum.

The talk was given downstairs. The talk, I found very informative. The guide told us all about the different areas the Jews lived in, and where you could expect the poor Jews to live and how they would live and where you would expect the rich Jews to live, and how. He also told us about the working conditions for the poorer Jews. When the Jews moved over here, at first they probably had to sleep on the floor of a one up one down slum, at 12.5 pence per week until they found work. These slums were generally in the area of Red Bank.

Then once the Jews had found work, they might be able to afford to move into the area of Cheetham Hill, where they could expect to pay 32 - 85 pence a week (remembering that on a good salary they only earned i?? 3.00 a week, and they had to pay for food and water on top of rent, and 10% of their weekly earnings would ideally go to charity). If the Jews could not find work when they came over here, there were three things they could do: beg on the streets, apply for poor law, or you could starve.

Many Jews could not find work as easily, as the skills they had acquired in Eastern Europe were not relevant for the skills they needed to work in the industrialised Manchester. These skills involved harvesting crops, and rearing farm animals etc, and could not really be put to use in the city of Manchester. When we went upstairs we found displays all around the top of the building, one side concerning the working conditions and one side concerning living conditions. In one of the displays, it showed one of the most typical jobs that Jews were employed to do, and that was Schmere.

A schmere would work in a factory sewing bits of material together to make a waterproof fabric. It was a horrible job, and the glue would not come out of your clothes and the gases that came off it were in the long term poisonous, and made people ill. However, if one Jew was doing the work, then he dropped dead because of all the fumes, then another Jew would be ready and waiting to take his place straight away because they were so eager to work. Another very typical job (which the information was in a display) was the schoolteacher. The school for Jews in the area of the synagogue was called the King David School.

In these schools the Jews were taught English as a main language, and some of the Jewish culture was lost through the generation. Some of the other jobs listed on displays at the museum were: tailoring; the manufacture of footwear; cabinet making; buying and selling of second hand goods; shopkeepers; market stall holders and credit drapers. There was only the two displays, photos and the guide to tell us about the working conditions in the twentieth century; but as you can see through all of this information, it was absolutely full of facts.

There wasn't really an awful lot about the actual living conditions of the Jews in Manchester in the museum. There was one display, which showed a typical meal time in a working class Jew's house. The table was set for two and the stools were different and very used and old. It was very small and crowded and extremely old fashioned, however, the Jews in this model household prided themselves on paying attention to their religious need, and all the religious articles were there, for a typical meal time. There were different wine glasses on the table and the cutlery did not match.

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There was a stone floor and this made the already tiny room look even more tiny, and colder in a way. There were two types of houses that the Jews would live in. The poorer Jews would live in a house, which were badly built, in a bad area, which had no bathroom/toilet, and no kitchen, and basically was just a one up-one down house. Sometimes, two or three families would start of their lives in England living in one of these houses. From the source sheet, from a census returned from the slum area of Red Bank, there are three families (11 people) all living in one of these houses, and two of these were young children under the age of three.

However, in the area of Cheetham on the other side of Manchester where the richer Jews lived, houses were quite big, with a garden at the front and back of the house and near Broughton Park. In these houses it was not unusual to have a general servant living with the family, and the occupations are generally of higher status, and the numbers in the family are lower, with only three people living in the house at one time, and some of the houses not even being occupied. Before I went to the museum I wrote down some questions that I wanted to find out, that I thought were quite relevant to the topic.

I wrote down nine questions, and from the talk and all the displays only two of my questions were not answered: did Jews get treated differently than other workers from a different religion at work? Where the Jews treated any differently in society if they lived in a different part of Manchester that was mainly occupied by other religions like Christians? In the museum, there were some things there that were not relevant to my topic to research, for

example, the impact of the war on the Jews; there was a display all about the impact of the war on the Jews.

I think there should have been more sources on the Jews' social life. For instance, what did they do when they were not at school, work, or in the synagogue? There were some pictures of children's dance classes and brownie meetings, but there was not really anything on what the adults did in their spare time, and I thought that it would be interesting and helpful to know. The museum was created with articles that local Jews brought in, to contribute.

So, if there are more working class Jews living around the museum, as the museum is set in the slum area, what if most of the articles brought in are related to the working class part rather than the middle class Jews that lived on the other side of Manchester? Also, the museum does not qualify for a lottery fund, so it was built by the Jewish people themselves, and the money they make goes towards lighting and heating bills, so they can't have bought many of the items in their, so some of the information might not be totally reliable.

I think the information about the working class Jews is more reliable than the information about the middle class Jews in Cheetham. I think this because most of the information in the museum has come from the working class area where the museum is set, and the museum does tend to focus on the poorer Jews working and living lives. I think the guide tended to dwell on the working class Jews that lived in the same area of the museum, and I don't think he knew as much about the richer Jews.

I think this because most of the people who came in to offer him information would have come from that area, as they live there and they would want to be a part of the museum. A historian has lots of sources available that could help them learn about the living and working conditions of the Jews. I think probably the most reliable way is to go and see some of the Jews that were living in and around Manchester at that time, particularly the more middle class Jews. They could ask them questions about what it was like for them to come to England and live here (as there is not much, if any information about this in the museum).

Another use would be the internet. When the Jews came over from Eastern Europe to Manchester, there was nothing to help them set themselves up. So when some of the Jews had themselves sorted, they set up a charity to help other Jews that were in the position that they were when they arrived. So there would probably be some information about this charity on the internet, and this would help a historian find out about where the Jews had come from and what state they were in when they came to Manchester, physically and financially.

Also, there could be some information from some old landlords, as the Jews rented houses when they came, they must have rented them off some one and that person might have records of who lived in that house and when. Also there would be records in places where the Jews from the twentieth century worked, and doctors or apothecary's records. I think the best way a historian can find out about the living and working conditions in the twentieth century, is to possibly find a diary that someone kept from that period, of their life.

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That way, the historian can be almost certain that this happened and it would tell a lot about that particular person, although, it would only tell you about that one person from that one family in that one area so it might not tell the historian a lot about the other people and people who lived in other areas. I think the Jewish Museum is very useful to the historian, especially the guide and the talk that he gave. Some of the displays and information is not relevant, but would still be interesting to a historian, looking at that period.

Although, I do think that the museum could be of better use to the historians. For example, they could get some people in who lived in the different areas to give talks about what their life was like at that time, and how their parents and grand parents came to live in this country, and they could bring in articles that is useful to the historian. That way the historian can get any information he or she needs to know from that person about what life was like working and living in the twentieth century in Manchester for the Jews.