

## Sephardi convicts in Van Diemen's Land

■ Susan Ballyn and Lucy Frost

**A**MONG the convict records of Van Diemen's Land are scattered surnames such as Belasco, Botibol, Garcia, and Mendoza. Many of the Spanish and Portuguese surnames of convicts transported from England belong to families that experienced a double order of expulsion, first from the Iberian homeland signified by their surnames, and then from a diasporic enclave concentrated in the East End of London. Who were these Sephardi<sup>1</sup> who seem to have vanished from the history of Tasmania as if they had never been here at all? In this chapter we look briefly at the background of the Sephardim in England, and then offer case studies of two Sephardi convicts, Samuel Belasco (transported in the 1820s) and Esther Botibol (transported at the very close of the convict period), who chose different ways to negotiate their Jewishness in the difficult world of Van Diemen's Land.

### **Convicts from the English Sephardi community**

From the time of the Moorish invasion of Spain to the late fifteenth century, flourishing and cultured communities of Jews lived harmoniously with both Muslims and Christians on the Iberian Peninsula. And then disaster struck. During the joint monarchy of Isabella, Queen of Castile, and Ferdinand, King of Aragon, Spain was for the first time united and made Catholic. The Moors (Muslims) were driven out of the country, and all professing Jews expelled. In March 1492, a Royal edict decreed that 'within four months all those Jews who did not consent to be baptised would have to leave their realms'.<sup>2</sup> The Inquisition had begun. 'Tens of thousands – possibly hundreds of thousands – of Jews fled into neighbouring Portugal, only to find themselves also trapped there when Portugal in 1497 followed the same policy as Spain.'<sup>3</sup> This time

their paths of flight were greatly dispersed, taking them to North Africa and the Ottoman Empire, as well as to more tolerant cities of northern Europe like Amsterdam, where in time they established a thriving community. The Sephardim in Amsterdam gained a powerful foothold in the trans-channel and Atlantic trade in spices and diamonds. As trade expanded, the merchants themselves began to settle in the colonies of the Dutch empire, establishing a network of new Sephardi communities.

While Amsterdam became the hub of an international network, the Sephardi never lost contact with their Iberian homelands. They called themselves by what the eminent historian Rabbi John Levi describes as 'the proud and nostalgic name of "Sephardim", derived from the Hebrew word for Spain'.<sup>4</sup> For centuries after the Inquisition, writes Rabbi Levi, and even after the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of London was well established, 'in memory of their ancient link with the cultural and spiritual renaissance of the Iberian Jewish civilisation, the Sephardim kept their communal records in Spanish rather than English'.<sup>5</sup> This persistent identification with Iberian culture among communities of exiles was crucial for the survival of Jewishness among families still living in Portugal and Spain. Although, according to Manuel Luciano da Silva, the Amsterdam Jewish community, for instance,

probably did not openly help crypto-Jews in Iberia, there is evidence that some of the many prayer books that were printed in Spanish and Portuguese in Amsterdam were sent from there to Spain or Portugal or their overseas possessions. Also, there is evidence that Amsterdam *ex-conversos* strongly encouraged their friends and relatives in the Iberian Peninsula to leave before the Inquisition found them.<sup>6</sup>

As the Inquisition continued throughout the seventeenth century and into the first half of the eighteenth, many of the *conversos* or 'New Christians' found that conversion offered little protection in hostile Spain. Officers of the Inquisition relentlessly hounded *conversos*, suspected of being crypto-Jews who continued to practice their religion behind closed doors. Although the Spanish populace called these secret believers *marranos*, meaning swine, this badge of infamy became a badge of courage when Sephardi families who had kept their beliefs alive from generation to generation were eventually welcomed into an English community, where a man need not fear that circumcision would be sufficient evidence for torture and death, as under the Iberian Inquisition.

At the time of the expulsion of 1492, however, Judaism could not be practised openly in England either. In 1290, Edward the First had banished the English Jews, and two hundred years later the ban remained in effect. Nevertheless, some forty families who were initially *marranos* made their way to England during the sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup> As in Spain, circumstances compelled them to conceal their identity. Outwardly Christian, they maintained their Jewish beliefs and customs in secret.<sup>8</sup> In a country long hostile to Catholic Spain, the Jewishness of these illegal Iberian emigrants, even if recognised, may have been strategically ignored. In 1655 Oliver Cromwell for various reasons legalised the 'return' of Jews to England. Two years later the Bevis Marks Synagogue, the first synagogue of the Resettlement, was established by Sephardi Jews in Cree Church Lane in the City of London.<sup>9</sup> From then on, escapees from Spain and Portugal made their way to England, usually with the help of British sea captains who were then recompensed by the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation of the Bevis Marks Synagogue.<sup>10</sup> The community which gathered in England (their presence most

obvious in London) may have been less fearful of local hostility than in Spain, and at a time when to be English with Iberian antecedents was a mark of being Jewish, the Sephardi refugees did not try to mask their identity by changing their Spanish and Portuguese surnames. Some even reclaimed distinctively Sephardi names previously abandoned in Spain. The assumption that an Iberian in England was a Sephardi is evident as late as 1731 when Manoel Gonzales wrote of London that 'there are but few Spaniards or Portuguese, and the latter are generally Jews'.<sup>11</sup>

In 1991 the Honorary Archivist of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation of the Bevis Marks Synagogue, after studying records of circumcision (all men returning to Judaism had to be circumcised no matter how old they might be) and marriages (anyone whose father had not been a practising Jew was recorded as fatherless), concluded:

It would be safe to guess that the full number of those returning in London to the faith of their ancestors in the eighteenth century – the period of most intense immigration – must have been at the very least 3000'.<sup>12</sup>

Another influx of refugees from Spain, this time fleeing the siege of Gibraltar (1779–1783),<sup>13</sup> had arrived by 1788 when the first convicts were transported to Botany Bay, but over the ensuing sixty years of transportation to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, there would be little further Sephardi migration to the British Isles, and of the 30 000 to 40 000 Jews living in Great Britain in 1840, fewer than 3000 were Sephardi, according to calculations published in 1973 by the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation and the Jewish Historical Society of England.<sup>14</sup>

In spite of being few, the Sephardi Jews had put down roots in London and various strategic seaports in England, and the Spanish and Portuguese congregation of the Bevis Marks Synagogue afforded a publicly visible and crucially effective focus for preserving the community's distinctive linguistic as well as religious and cultural identity. While continuing to dream of a return to Spain, their beloved Sefarad, the Sephardim were well-established in England by the end of the eighteenth century, and ranged through all classes. Wealthy traders, though highly influential, were far fewer than the stallholders and street vendors of Petticoat Lane. As Rabbi Levi points out: 'Until the 1830s, with the exception of a few magnates ... the entire metropolitan Jewish community continued to be found in the East End of London.'<sup>15</sup> Not surprisingly, the East End's narrow streets, crowded with people seeking a living, were home to many of the Jews arrested for petty crimes, and transported over the seas to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land.

### **The first case history: Samuel Belasco**

It is through Samuel Belasco's older brother that we know details of Samuel's arrest. Aby (Abraham) Belasco had entered the limelight of public celebrity through the then highly fashionable sport of boxing. In London, boxing 'was the one career really open to talents; it was the one stage where the last might be first. The "sweet science" was dominated by those who in the hierarchy of labour were the lowest',<sup>16</sup> and the most dominant figure of all was Belasco's mentor and fellow Sephardi, Daniel Mendoza. Aby's fame as a boxer attracted a reporter from the London *Times* to the Bow Street Magistrates' Court to hear him respond to charges much less serious than those faced by his twenty-one-year-old brother. According to the story as it was published in the

*Times* of 25 May 1825, a crowd of men and boys had been milling around the Epsom Race Course on a late spring evening when 'a peculiar kind of hallooing' caused heads to turn towards a pair of mounted police.<sup>17</sup> On the ground lay the body of a young man who had flung himself down out of the grip of police on horseback. Constable James Ellis, as he told the Magistrate, had no doubt that the noisy body beneath him was making some kind of signal. Two seconds after the hallooing began, the constables 'were attacked by a great number of persons'.<sup>18</sup> Among them was 'Abraham Belasco, the pugilist', who gripped Constable Ellis by the collar in an attempt to hold him while the prone man got to his feet and escaped.<sup>19</sup> 'You shan't take him!' Aby shouted at the constable, and then called to his confederates, 'Cut away! Slog away!'<sup>20</sup> For readers unfamiliar with London slang, the *Times* journalist added a definition: 'Slog, we understand, means "hit" or "strike"'.<sup>21</sup> When the fracas was brought under control, the police charged Aby Belasco with 'slogging' under its legal definition, 'assault', and with 'attempting to rescue his brother, Samuel Belasco, whom the patrol had in custody on a charge of felony' – to wit, 'picking the pocket of a young gentleman ... of a pocket-book, several sovereigns, and a silver pencil-case'.<sup>22</sup>

A man named Lee, whose pocket had been picked, took the stand and told of coming upon the fracas around the mounted police. 'Hah! Mr Lee had said to [Aby], "I know you", for [Aby] had been often pointed out to him as one of the bullies of Drury Lane Theatre, who attended there every night with the little pink girls of his seraglio.'<sup>23</sup> Aby Belasco now changed tack, and said in his defence

that he saw his brother shamefully beaten and kicked by the officers and by Mr Lee, and he merely stepped forward to inquire what he had done, and to prevent him from being ill-used. When he was told he had done wrong, he immediately desisted from further interference. It was not likely that he should try to rescue a brother whom he had once caused to be taken before the Thames police magistrates, and committed for three months to the House of Correction. He had never spoken to him since he was committed ... some months ago, for a robbery at Covent-garden Theatre; but when he saw him ill-used, the natural feelings of a brother prompted him to run to his assistance.<sup>24</sup>

The police magistrate, unimpressed, bound Aby over for trial. He escaped transportation, as he always would, though his brushes with the law were many and varied.<sup>25</sup>

Samuel was not so lucky. On 12 July 1825 at the Surrey Quarter Sessions, he was sentenced to 'transportation for life'.<sup>26</sup> For almost two years he languished in English gaols or on a hulk, and then on 17 June 1827 sailed out of Portsmouth on the *Layton*, one of 160 male convicts bound for Van Diemen's Land.<sup>27</sup> On 9 October 1827, the *Layton* arrived in Hobart Town, carrying both convict bodies and a list known as the convict indent. Across the columns of the indent the following information was given for convict body number 985, Samuel Belasco: height, 5'3¼"; hair brown and eyes blue; age 24; trade, 'Hawker';<sup>28</sup> born London; tried 12 July 1825 at the Surrey Quarter Sessions; sentenced to Life for stealing from the person.<sup>29</sup> Before Samuel and the other convicts disembarked, further information was recorded on a description list, which repeated the information for Samuel Belasco, although it replaced 'hawker' with 'pedlar' and specified his birthplace as Houndsditch, in London's East End.<sup>30</sup> In the column for general remarks, where distinguishing features were recorded, Belasco's body elicits only 'natural red mark inside rt. arm; bow legged'.

In preparation for the next phase of his convict experience, Belasco like the others on the *Layton* was given his own entry in a register of convict conduct records. Identifying information was transcribed, including: name, convict number, crime, place and date of trial, sentence, gaol report on behaviour after sentencing and before transportation, name of transport ship, date of arrival, surgeon's report on behaviour during the voyage out, the convict's marital status. For Samuel Belasco the clerk wrote:

Transp<sup>d</sup> for 'stealing a pocket book cont<sup>s</sup> £3 & a pencil case from the person', character from 'bad, in custody before', in ship 'indifferent' — <sup>31</sup>

As the clerk continued, the convict was required to state his offence:

'Confessed', this offence Picking pockets on Epsom race course, my b[rother] attempted to rescue me - I recollect seeing Mr Newman on the race course when I was taken - I am b[rother] to Abraham Belasco the pugilist. He lives in Denmark Co. Strand. 'Single'. Jew.<sup>32</sup>

A week after the *Layton* arrived, the register was opened to record prisoner 985 as 'absent from P[olice] B[arracks] yest<sup>r</sup> afternoon with<sup>t</sup> leave - dis[charged] being his first offence'.<sup>33</sup> Three months later, he was given fifty lashes for robbing his master's garden and returned to the service of the Crown.<sup>34</sup> From this point on, Belasco was never again assigned to a settler. He had entered the communal world of male convicts who lived and worked in gangs, often wearing chains. Did he mention to them that his brother was a famous fighter whose name they would know, and that he himself was no mean slouch with the bare knuckles? Probably. We know from the convict conduct register that on 28 March 1828 he was sentenced to forty lashes for 'fighting a pitched Battle', code words for boxing.<sup>35</sup> For a year after that he stayed out of trouble (not surprising after ninety lashes in less than three months), and then in April 1829 he was accused of 'receiving & having in his possession knowing it to have been stolen a piece of Canvas and 10/- of the Goods & chattels of Cha<sup>s</sup> Smith of Launc[eston] Constable'.<sup>36</sup> Punishment: 'work in Irons 12 mo<sup>s</sup>' — at the Lime Quarry near George Town.<sup>37</sup> To work in irons with the lime burning into the skin was a terrible punishment, and yet six months after that sentence was over and just three years after his first offence in Van Diemen's Land, the convict pugilist was had up again for 'fighting'.<sup>38</sup> Curiously, he escaped this time with a reprimand.<sup>39</sup> Maybe the audience had included men of the better classes, as it often did in England where the outlawed sport in its heyday drew even the Prince Regent and his circle into the countryside to watch another Sephardi boxer, Daniel Mendoza,<sup>40</sup> two of whose children (Sophia and Isaac) were also transported to Van Diemen's Land, while a third (Abraham) served his sentence in New South Wales.<sup>41</sup>

Thus far in Samuel Belasco's record of punishment, every offence pointed to the swaggering macho identity of an aggressive young man born and bred in the rough-and-tumble world of the East End. And then something happened. Nothing was recorded for two years and four months.<sup>42</sup> When entries resumed on 7 February 1833, Samuel Belasco appeared as 'invalid' accused of stealing apples, the property of the Reverend W Garrard.<sup>43</sup> Discharged.<sup>44</sup> Two months later, he was convicted of assaulting the gatekeeper at the hospital at New Norfolk and sentenced to eight days' solitary confinement.<sup>45</sup> Same sentence sixteen months later for being absent from the hospital without leave.<sup>46</sup> In March 1836, still an inmate, Belasco was accused of making away with bedding, the property of the Crown.<sup>47</sup> Case discharged.<sup>48</sup> Accused five months

later of being absent without leave and telling a falsehood to Mr Brooks, the patient was sentenced to a cell on bread and water for three days and nights.<sup>49</sup>

In 1837, Samuel Belasco was granted a ticket-of-leave. No longer a prisoner of the Crown, he could live where he pleased within the district of New Norfolk, where for years he had been an inmate at the 'Invalid Depot' which by now was being used primarily as a lunatic asylum, a role it would continue to play under various names into the late twentieth century.<sup>50</sup> In this small town, not more than a village by European standards, the recalcitrant Samuel Belasco would live to be an old man past seventy, returning to the asylum in 1869 as a pauper 'of unsound mind and a proper person to be taken charge of and detained under care and treatment'.<sup>51</sup> In an ironic symmetry, the final six years of Belasco's life were spent in the same hospital where he had served out the last years of his convict sentence.<sup>52</sup>

There is no record of that re-committal in the convict files, however. The final charge on his conduct record was entered shortly after he was granted his ticket-of-leave: on 6 June 1838, he was accused of hawking articles for sale under suspicious circumstances, but discharged and warned not to hawk goods without a licence.<sup>53</sup> He complied, applied for a licence,<sup>54</sup> and became a respectable if always poor citizen of the town, a hawker who stayed within the bounds authorised for him.<sup>55</sup> What had happened to the belligerent East Ender? Although Belasco had remained recalcitrant throughout his convict years, the nature of charges against him had changed radically: pilfering a clergyman's apples was rather different from being had up for fighting a pitched battle. Nothing in the records generated by the penal authorities offers a hint of explanation. Luckily, there is other data as well. On the medical certificate committing an elderly and hallucinating Samuel Belasco to the Hospital for the Insane on the grounds of disease of the brain and poverty, the admitting doctor adds: 'He has been blind now 30 years'.<sup>56</sup>

Whether blinded by blows from boxing or from work in the lime quarry, Belasco's way of living in the world contracted suddenly and severely. Once his custodial sentence was over, how was an ex-convict to fend for himself in a tough no-nonsense colonial farming community? Anxious he may have been, but Samuel Belasco was not without strategies for survival. As a London Jew with an Iberian surname, he surely had heard stories of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, and of the Jews who converted in order to stay. Whether or not he actually pondered the stories of *conversos* and *marranos*, Samuel Belasco inserted himself into a narrative with Sephardi precedents when he was baptised into the Church of England at New Norfolk by the very same clergyman who three years earlier accused him of stealing apples.<sup>57</sup>

Why did Belasco convert? All we can find is a sequence of events. On 16 August 1836 Samuel Belasco was baptised;<sup>58</sup> on 16 February 1837 he applied for permission to marry Ann Tilsed, a convict assigned to Rev. William Bedford;<sup>59</sup> on 22 March 1838, they were married by Bedford in the country church at New Norfolk where the apple-protective Garrard was the resident clergyman, and where the Sephardi convict from London's East End had been baptised into the official religion of the colony to which he found himself exiled.<sup>60</sup>

Samuel Belasco, aged 79, died in the hospital at New Norfolk at 9 pm on 9 December 1875, of 'natural decay'.<sup>61</sup> On 11 December he was buried in the cemetery of St Matthew's Church, where he had married Ann Tilsed. She had died almost exactly eleven years earlier, also aged seventy-nine, and was buried in the same churchyard on



*Hobart Town, 1830 (Duncan/Huggins)*

18 December 1864.<sup>62</sup> At the time of their marriage, Ann was past fifty, and the Belascos appear to have had no children.

### **The second case history: Esther Henrietta Botibol**

Esther Botibol's story is entirely different. In spite of equally difficult circumstances, she did not convert.

Esther Henrietta Botibol, a Jewish dressmaker, was convicted of larceny and sentenced to seven years transportation at the [London] Central Criminal Court on 12 May 1851. This was not Esther's first offence, hence the severity of the sentence. Eight months later the *Anna Maria* docked at Hobart with seventeen-year-old Esther on board. One of the many enigmas regarding her biography appears immediately on docking. On three different documents, three different places of origin appear: 'Portico, North Italy',<sup>63</sup> 'Lisbon, Portugal',<sup>64</sup> 'Rathbone Place, London'.<sup>65</sup> Which of the documents really reveals Esther's place of origin? One can hypothesise only. The fact is, that at the time of her arrest she was in London and had been in the area for a while as her previous convictions would suggest. We do know, however, that Botibol is a family name of Sephardi origin. We only actually ever 'hear' Esther's voice once. She did not speak in her defence at her trial, but when asked on arrival in Van Diemen's Land to state her offences she reported: 'Stealing a gold ring and dress, prosecutor unknown. Prison three months for shawls. Four months for rings. Six weeks for keys'.<sup>66</sup> Not a good record for one so young, but not an unusual one either for somebody attempting survival in the hardships of London's East End. She made no further

statement and, unlike others, gave no information regarding family and relatives she might have left behind.

Esther Botibol's conduct record in Van Diemen's Land reveals that she was, to say the least, recalcitrant, re-offending time and again, and absconding if given the chance.<sup>67</sup> Three of the charges are, perhaps, significant indicators of character. She was charged on one occasion with destroying government property,<sup>68</sup> on another with 'disorderly behaviour in the Superintendent's apartment',<sup>69</sup> and on a third occasion for 'refusing to keep her bed & refusing to allow remedies prescribed by the medical officer'.<sup>70</sup> What these charges, together with her absconding on at least two occasions, clearly reveal is that we are dealing with a strong-willed, determined, rebellious young woman who seems to challenge the system with a certain contempt. Once her ticket-of-leave is awarded, she forfeits it by, yet again, breaking the law and has to wait until 1857 to get her second one, which is underwritten with the strict proviso that she is not to reside in Hobart!<sup>71</sup> She was obviously notorious in Hobart and it was probably felt that by keeping her out of the city she would lead a more decent life or at least not give others such a bad example. But, return to Hobart she did, on at least four occasions! It may have been during one of these visits that she met Thomas Simmonds, a millwright, splitter and labourer who was to father her six children before eventually marrying her.

It is not difficult to imagine the life that Esther must have lived during these years. The dates between the births of the children seem to suggest that Thomas may well have been working up-country somewhere and on returning home invariably left his partner pregnant. More than likely it was poverty and deprivation that drove either Esther or Thomas to apply to the Queen's Orphanage in Hobart Town in 1868 to have three of their children admitted into care.<sup>72</sup> No other information is given regarding the parents or the reason for their application. The fact that the three children appear on the application list does not mean that they were necessarily admitted. The three children named were Ann Jane aged 2, Esther aged 9, and Thomas aged 8. Thus only Nicholas aged 5 and Susannah aged 1, would have remained with their mother. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the children were ever actually admitted and so they may have been present at their parents' marriage, by which time yet another sibling Mary Ann Eliza had been added to the family!

Esther and Thomas were finally to marry at the Wesleyan Parsonage in Hobart on 12 November 1872 when their youngest child was eight months old. Esther was thirty-three years old at the time and Thomas fifty-five. There is no record of baptism for Esther, and no hint of conversion.

Three years after her marriage, and a considerable time after her last conviction, Esther was had up on two charges of larceny. On 19 August 1875 she received a six-month sentence and, almost two years later, on 14 July 1877 she was handed a twelve-month sentence for stealing a pair of boots. On both records she appears as a 'Jewess'. On 13 November 1877, when Esther was into the fourth month of her second sentence, her son Thomas, a labourer, died of 'meningitis of base of brain' after having gone into a coma at the Hobart General Hospital.<sup>73</sup> The death was registered by the Superintendent and no mention of the parents is made, but there is no doubt that he is Esther's son. We have no evidence, however, regarding what happened to the remaining siblings during Esther's incarceration.

Esther Botibol disappears from the convict records after the final entry in her conduct record in 1877, which records her twelve-month sentence for larceny. The last



record we have for her is her death as Esther Symmonds in Hobart in 1910, her husband having pre-deceased her there on 25 May 1894.

Through her records we witness the story of a woman of Sephardi Jewish descent, of unknown origin, who was not Anglo-Celtic, and whose ancestors must have come from distant Spain (Sefarad). The young Esther found her own personal ruin first on the streets of London and later in Van Diemen's Land. Her story could so easily have disappeared, subsumed into the Anglo-Celtic master narrative of Tasmanian history through the permutations of her maiden name to Butterball and Butterworth, as recorded on the birth certificates of some of her children, or through the various spellings of her husband's name, Simmonds. Although her voice is 'heard' only once, we learn from the official records that she was a woman who took pride in her lineage and origins, never renouncing her Jewish identity which appears on most of her records, and who ensured that, when registering two of her children's births herself, her own family name was correctly spelt and thus preserved in the history of the country of her exile.

## Conclusion

So what has become of the Sephardim in Tasmania, the rest of Australia and indeed, around the world? Research needs to be carried out on the make-up of Jewish communities in large cities such as Sydney and Melbourne which have a long-standing history of Jewish presence and may well include a nucleus of Sephardim.

In Tasmania we have discovered only one Sephardi convict with direct connections to the Hobart or Launceston Synagogues, Aaron Mendoza, son of Mordecai Mendoza.<sup>74</sup> Born on Commercial Road in London's East End, the one-legged young man<sup>75</sup> was tried at the Old Bailey on 7 August 1840, and sentenced to seven years transportation for stealing brushes.<sup>76</sup> He arrived in Hobart on the *Duncan* in April 1841, aged twenty-four, his occupation given as tinman and brazier.<sup>77</sup> Four years later he applied to marry a fellow convict, Ann Stewart.<sup>78</sup> Their application was approved in 1845,<sup>79</sup> but they did not marry for nine years, well after Mendoza was 'free by servitude'.<sup>80</sup> On 10 September 1854, Aaron Mendoza, 'Dealer', married Ann Stewart 'Spinster', in Hobart's Argyle Street Synagogue, 'according to the rites and ceremonies of the Jews'.<sup>81</sup> The groom signed his name, while the bride made a mark. Although no children of Aaron and Ann Mendoza have been identified, Tasmania may well be home to descendants of Sephardi convicts, as well as of Sephardi free settlers who arrived during the colonial period and later. But their presence is difficult to chart: names have changed down generations, and not necessarily is an individual aware of his or her ancestral heritage.

Elsewhere, across the world, the Sephardim continue to thrive with communities as far-flung as Spain and the Caribbean, Portugal and Brazil, England and India, Holland and the United States, not to mention Israel. Many of these are fairly large and vibrant communities, others are small and contained, such as that in India. In looking at Sephardi communities around the world we need to bear in mind that within a very short time after their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula they spread not only to Northern Europe but also to the Americas. A cursory look at activities on world Sephardi genealogical web pages brings this sharply into focus.

Something else which has to be factored into any research into the Sephardim is the re-emergence of communities which had remained crypto-Jewish during the Fascist regimes in both Spain and Portugal. The community of Belmonte in the Tras-os-Montes

region of Portugal is an excellent example. Once democracy was established in Portugal, this small community reinstated itself as it had always been: Sephardi. In 1994 Rabbi Shlomo Sebag travelled from Jerusalem to Belmonte to oversee the re-conversion of 200 people. Consequently, the researcher must always bear in mind that fear generated by the Inquisition, the Holocaust and Fascist dictatorships in many countries has meant that the Sephardim have often had to make themselves invisible in order to survive, and it is only in recent decades that families have begun to establish publicly their links with communities across the world.

- 14 *Gazetteer of Tasmanian Shipping 1803–1842*, part 4, p. 12.
- 15 Nicholson, p. 213.
- 16 *Launceston Advertiser*, 20 February 1834, p. 204.
- 17 VJ Jones, 'Solomon's Ford', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. 9, part 5, 1983, pp. 316–17.
- 18 AOT, CON 38, p. 73, no. 217.
- 19 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 1838, p. 209.
- 20 *Independent*, 23 November 1833.
- 21 *Cornwall Chronicle*, 19 November 1836.
- 22 J Batman, *The Settlement of John Batman in Port Phillip From His Own Journal*, George Slater, Melbourne, 1856, p. 16.
- 23 Jones, p. 316.
- 24 Levi & Bergman, p. 280.
- 25 Levi & Bergman, p. 280.
- 26 Jones, p. 320.
- 27 *Hobart Town Courier*, 22 March 1839.
- 28 *Hobart Town Courier*, 22 March 1839.
- 29 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 1841, p. 256.
- 30 Levi & Bergman, p. 281.
- 31 *Hobart Town Courier*, 13 November 1835.
- 32 Jones, pp. 319–21. In VJ Jones's work, the Joseph Solomon III in this chapter is referred to as Joseph Solomon 2; and the Joseph Solomon II in this chapter is referred to as Joseph Solomon 3.
- 33 Levi & Bergman, p. 282.
- 34 *Port Phillip Herald*, 8 September 1840, supplement, p. 1.
- 35 HJ Solomon, 'Joseph Solomon', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 2, 1967, p. 458.
- 36 Jones, p. 319.
- 37 Letter from Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, 29 November 1983.
- 38 Levi & Bergman, p. 281.
- 39 Levi & Bergman, p. 281.
- 40 AOT, AD 960/3, p. 916, will no. 648. In Judah Solomon's will, dated 14 December 1855, real estate was left to his daughter Sarah, wife of Joseph Solomon, residing at Church St, Hobart.
- 41 *Launceston Advertiser*, 10 April 1878.

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- 1 According to the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993), the word 'Sephardi' is derived from modern Hebrew, and means a 'Jew of Spanish or Portuguese descent. Later also, a Jew from a Middle Eastern country'. Collectively, these Jews are known as the Sephardim.
- 2 JL Lacave, M Armengol & F Ontanon, *Sefarad, Sefarad: La Espana Judia*, Barcelona, Lunwerg Editores, 1999, p. 225.
- 3 'Introduction', *Bevis Marks Records*, part 4, Oxford, Spanish and Portugese Congregation, 1991, p. 4.
- 4 JS Levi and GFJ Bergman, *Australian Genesis: Jewish convicts and settlers 1788–1860*, new edn, Melbourne University Press, 2002, p. 3.
- 5 Levi & Bergman, p. 3.
- 6 MD Manuel Luciano da Silva, *The Odyssey of the Portuguese Jews*, Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausenbaum, 2000.
- 7 JA Romain, *The Jews of England: A portrait of Anglo-Jewry through original sources and illustrations* London, 1988, pp. 63–66.
- 8 P Magriel ed., *The Memoirs of Daniel Mendoza*, London, Batsford, 1951, p. 2.

- 9 See RD Barnett and A Levy, *The Bevis Marks Synagogue*, London Society of Heshaim, 1970; and AM Hyamson, *The Sephardim of England: A history of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community 1492–1951*, London, Methuen, 1951.
- 10 Throughout the eighteenth century, a brisk trade was carried out between England and Portugal after a treaty was signed in 1703 which lowered tariffs on Portuguese wines and English textiles. Among the concessions offered under the terms of the treaty were free ports and no inspections.
- 11 M Gonzales, *London in 1731*, Gutenberg Project September, 2001.
- 12 'Introduction', *Bevis Marks Records*, part 4, p. 5.
- 13 GH Whitehill, 'Introduction', *Bevis Marks Records*, part 3, London, Spanish and Portuguese Congregation, 1973, p. 4.
- 14 Whitehill, *Bevis Marks Records*, part 3, pp. 4–5.
- 15 JS Levi, *The Forefathers: A dictionary of biography of the Jews of Australia 1788–1830*, Sydney, Australian Jewish Historical Society, 1976, p. 2.
- 16 P Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and civil society in the eighteenth century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 414.
- 17 *The Times*, 25 May 1825.
- 18 *The Times*, 25 May 1825.
- 19 *The Times*, 25 May 1825.
- 20 *The Times*, 25 May 1825.
- 21 *The Times*, 25 May 1825.
- 22 *The Times*, 25 May 1825.
- 23 *The Times*, 25 May 1825.
- 24 *The Times*, 25 May 1825.
- 25 Including those mentioned in *The Times* for 31 October 1827; 19 September 1829; 27 September 1834.
- 26 Public Record Office, Kew, (PRO), HO 27/30.
- 27 PRO, HO 27/30; C Bateson, *The Convict Ships*, Glasgow, Brown, 1985, pp. 358, 385.
- 28 Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT), MM 33/1, p. 495. 'Hawker' was a common occupation for London Sephardim (Whitehill, *Bevis Marks Records*, p. 13).
- 29 AOT, MM 33/1 p. 495.
- 30 AOT, CON 23. Description List for *Layton*.
- 31 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 32 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 33 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 34 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 35 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 36 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 37 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 38 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 39 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 40 P Magriel, ed., *The Memoirs of Daniel Mendoza*, London, Batsford, 1951.
- 41 Abraham Mendoza arrived in Sydney aboard the *Moreley* (1) in 1817; Sophia Mendoza arrived in Hobart Town aboard the *Harmony* in 1829; and Isaac Mendoza arrived in Hobart Town aboard the *John* (2) in 1833.
- 42 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 43 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 44 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 45 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 46 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 47 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 48 AOT, CON 31/1.

- 49 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 50 The hospital complex was eventually closed in 2000.
- 51 AOT, HSD 285/1, Justices' order for the reception of an insane person.
- 52 AOT, HSD 247/1, Patient Records, Royal Derwent Hospital; RGD 35/43, Register of Deaths. He was admitted to the Hospital for the Insane on 14 April 1869, and died there on 11 December 1875.
- 53 AOT, CON 31/1.
- 54 The *Hobart Town Gazette* 1842, p. 755, published Belasco's name on a list of hawkers and carriers to whom licences had been granted.
- 55 His name is included on a list of 24 inhabitants of New Norfolk who met on 29 May 1843 at the Bush Hotel to empower a committee to enquire 'into the mismanagement of our supplies of water' (*Hobart Town Advertiser* 6 June 1843). On valuation rolls for the District of New Norfolk, published in the *Hobart Town Gazette*, 27 April 1858, Belasco is listed as renting a property in Charles Street valued at £5. Ten years later he was renting a property in George Street valued at £10 (*Hobart Town Gazette*, 30 April 1867).
- 56 AOT, HSD 285/1, Justice's order for the reception of an insane person, 21 April 1869; HSD/1, Weekly medical journals 14 June 1869–27 May 1883.
- 57 AOT, RGD 32/1.
- 58 AOT, RGD 32/1. Robert Officer, who would later commit him to the Hospital for the Insane, was one of the two recorded witnesses. For Officer, see *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol. 2 (1788–1850).
- 59 AOT, CON 52/1, p. 17; CON 52/1 p. 35, See also AOT, CSO 1/790 and CON 40/9.
- 60 AOT, RGD 36/1. Perhaps the Chaplain, whose concern for prisoners was undeniable if intrusive, took a special interest in the blind Sephardi boxer, and was a catalyst in both Belasco's conversion and marriage. See entry for William Bedford, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 1 (1788–1850).
- 61 AOT, HSD 51/7, Casebook (male), Royal Derwent Hospital; AOT, RGD35/43 Register of deaths in the District of New Norfolk.
- 62 S Cordwell, J Cowburn, & R Cox, *St Matthews Church burial records, historic New Norfolk, series 4*, New Norfolk Council, n.d., p. 18.
- 63 AOT, CON 31/42.
- 64 AOT, CON 15/1.
- 65 AOT, CON 15/1 14/7/1877.
- 66 AOT, CON 31/42.
- 67 AOT, CON 19/10.
- 68 AOT, CON 31/42.
- 69 AOT, CON 31/42.
- 70 AOT, CON 31/42.
- 71 AOT, CON 31/42.
- 72 *Applications for Queen's Orphanage Hobart Town, 1858–1878*. Compiled by Joyce Purtscher. Published by Irene Schaffer, 23a Montagu Street, New Town, Tasmania, 1993.
- 73 AOT, RGD 35/9.
- 74 AOT, CON 14/5.
- 75 AOT, CON 18/27.
- 76 AOT, CON 14/5, CON 27/8, CON 33/8, MM 33/8.
- 77 AOT, CON 33/8.
- 78 AOT, CON 52/2.
- 79 AOT, CON 52/2.
- 80 AOT, CON 33/8.
- 81 AOT, NS 829/1/1. HHC, register of marriages (1840–1883), no. 28.