

THE RAMSGATE MONTEFIORE HERITAGE

NEWSLETTER

NEW YEAR 2017



HEINRICH HEINE (1797 – 1856)

FROM OUR PATRON

The Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage was set up five years ago to perpetuate the memory of Sir Moses Montefiore and to acknowledge his importance to all the residents of Ramsgate. I was delighted when I was invited to be a Patron. My late husband Patrick was a great-great-great nephew of Sir Moses, and was immensely proud of his ancestor. His picture has always hung in the hall of my home together with the family crest and motto “*Think and Thank*”, it was these words that Patrick would often quote to our children Poppy and Dominic as they were growing up telling them to remember them, the words were important to him as he felt that they were a template for life.

I think the fact that Sir Moses gave so generously to so many local causes, irrespective of religious affiliations, is a pivotal reason why he is so highly regarded locally.

The Committee meets regularly to organise various activities throughout the year, which attract many visitors and keeps his memory alive.

CORAL SEBAG-MONTEFIORE

RMH NEWSLETTER NEW YEAR 2017

This is something of an international edition, with three articles that highlight the international and cultural connections of the Montefiores. We are always grateful for feedback, comments, corrections and so on, and I would be happy to publish these. For future editions, we welcome any contributions relating to Sir Moses, either about his life, his friends and wider family, his international work as well as his life in Ramsgate, so please get in touch with me, preferably by email klhamlyn@aol.com. The next edition will be available in early July 2017.

KATE HAMLYN – EDITOR

“THE CENTRE OF THE JEWISH WORLD”

ABIGAIL GREEN’S TALK ON MOSES MONTEFIORE

Abigail Green’s talk in September 2016 on Sir Moses Montefiore, had the subtitle “When Ramsgate was at the centre of the Jewish world”. If your idea of the centre of the Jewish world might be 19thC Lublin, or pre-Hadrianic Jerusalem, or Roman Alexandria, or Cordoba under the Arabs, somehow Ramsgate doesn’t seem to quite line up with these. However, Professor Green’s talk made it very clear that by being the home of one of the most significant Jews of his time, Ramsgate was at the centre of the international Jewish community.

She began with an outline of his (also her own) family’s history. After leaving the Spain of the Inquisition for Mexico the family (not yet called Montefiore) were caught up with by the Inquisition and two children of the family were executed. A remaining son made it to Livorno, which had become a “Mecca” for Sephardic Jews. Sir Moses’ grandfather moved to London to trade in Livornese (known as Leghorn) bonnets. Sir Moses’s mother was a Mocatta, from one of the first Jewish families to return to England under the Cromwellian Protectorate.

Moving into the financial world Sir Moses made his fortune on the London Stock Exchange and went on to start various financial businesses, which were among the antecedents of Alliance Insurance and the Provincial Bank of Ireland. Through his wife Judith, he was closely tied to the Rothschilds (Nathan Rothschild was his brother-in-law) and other important Anglo-Jewish families. In 1835, after a long engagement with the campaign for emancipation, he became President of the Jewish Board of Deputies.

At around the same period he had begun to spend time in Palestine, helping the poor, buying land and negotiating with Mehmet Ali, the ruler of Egypt, to ensure Jews would be free to practice their religion in the Ottoman Empire.

Sir Moses’ international reputation came from three, often intertwining themes: Palestine, Fundraising and Diplomacy. He pioneered the use of the

press to appeal to a wider non-Jewish audience, launching charitable appeals for various causes.

His diplomacy can be seen as part of a wider Jewish tradition of “intercession” within a community, where well-connected people have supported the wider community by appealing to people in authority. His closeness to the Rothschilds added to his status and Sir Moses was happy to meet other potentates such as Tsar Alexander and (unsuccessfully) the Pope.

Within the community he worked to close the divide that existed between the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities, and it was stipulated that the Lady Judith Theological College that he founded should be equally composed of Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities.

The Lady Judith Theological College



There was considerable sorrow that the Montefiores didn't have children, Lady Judith made a "fertility pilgrimage" while in Palestine, and acquired a "fertility amulet" – really a sort of magic spell. Nevertheless, her status gave her considerable freedom to travel and she accompanied her husband on many of his travels. She was able to engage with different groups, and visit harems and meet the women. She wrote two accounts of her travels to Palestine, some of which were published in the paper *L'Univers Israelite*. Both the Montefiores were very religious: Judith gave her wedding dress to the synagogue to form the Torah mantle, and East Cliff Lodge was more "Jewish" than the country houses of some of the other wealthy Jewish families. Judith was liberated by the broader horizons of their household. She was encouraged to participate in religious services, lighting lamps or helping unwrap the Torah scrolls, which was unheard of for women in that period.

As we learned, from Mark Negin's talk, earlier this year, the Montefiores often missed some of the highlights of Ramsgate's social whirl, but in return, when they were at home, many distinguished and interesting international visitors came to Ramsgate, giving the town a cosmopolitan feel which it would otherwise have lacked.

KATE HAMLYN

A VISIT TO PISA

DIANA DA COSTA FINDS TRACES OF SIR MOSES

In November Anthony and I had nine days in Italy – four nights in Rome, three in Florence and two in Pisa. It was in Pisa though that we had the biggest surprise when we decided to visit the old Synagogue there. Publicity regarding visits to the Synagogue is not particularly good but as luck would have it, the Tuesday afternoon, when we banged on the Synagogue door, was the afternoon when it is open to receive visitors.



The Pisa Synagogue exterior

We were the only visitors and we were warmly received by Jenny Del Chiocca, the Curator, who then showed us round. The Synagogue, which is on the first floor, is located in a 14th-century building and was originally

converted into a synagogue in 1595. It was rebuilt in the 1860s but closed in 2007 because of structural damage. It re-opened in 2015 and regular services were resumed.



The beautiful ceiling of the Pisa synagogue

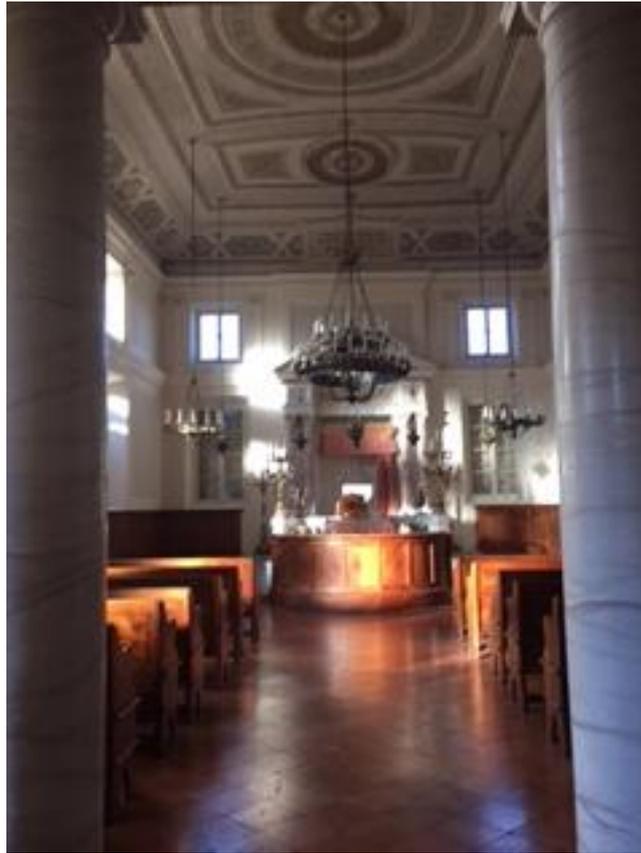
But to our surprise Ms Del Chiocca then showed us a wooden bench dedicated to the memory of Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore. On returning home we then took a look at the published diaries of the Montefiores [\[1\]](#) and on page 76 of the second volume noted that on May 15th 1857 Sir Moses had attended the Sabbath Service, Lady Montefiore having been indisposed. He records that the congregational attendance had been good and describes it as “*one of the handsomest little Synagogues I have ever seen*”. Even more interestingly, Sir Moses then writes “*I wish I had seen it before I built one in Ramsgate. I would have gladly adopted the plan.*”



A view of the interior

Clearly the Montefiores had family ties with Pisa as well since Livorno, from where the Montefiores originated and where Sir Moses was born, is only 25 kilometers away. It will be interesting to find out from Rabbi Dr. Andrew Goldstein when he comes to give his talk on Thursday 16th March whether there are any further references to Pisa in Lady Montefiore's unpublished diaries.

Anthony and I thoroughly enjoyed our visit and were able to update Ms Del Chiocca on the work of the Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage as well as explain the Montefiores' contribution to Ramsgate.



Another view of the interior

Our own photographs have been used to illustrate this article, but more photographs can be found on the Internet. Unfortunately the memorial plate dedicated to the Montefiores (see below) is well-worn with the passage of time and so the photograph is not very clear.



^[1] "Diaries of Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore" edited by Dr. Louis Loewe. 1983. A facsimile of the 1890 edition.

HEINE IN RAMSGATE

BY KATE HAMLYN

We have a habit in Ramsgate of celebrating with our home-made blue plaques any famous person who so much as dipped a toe into the sea here (Charles Darwin and Karl Marx spring to mind). We have yet to latch on to Heinrich Heine who spent three weeks here in July-August 1827.

Heine was one of the leading German Romantic poets, whose work is probably best known to British audiences through Schubert and Schumann's *lieder* which set a number of them to music (e.g. *Schwannengesang* and *Dichterliebe*). Brought up in a Jewish family in Dusseldorf, he was originally intended for the precarious family textile business, but his father's business failed and Heine went to Hamburg to learn banking in his Uncle Saloman Heine's bank. This was not his *metier* either, and although his uncle didn't support his poetry, he was happy to fund his studies in jurisprudence.

Heine seems to have been a student for many years, becoming active in the liberal politics and artistic currents of the period, the Young Germany movement. While Düsseldorf had adopted the liberal Napoleonic code after being occupied by the French during his youth, many German states, especially Prussia, still had authoritarian regimes which were frequently anti-Semitic (Jews were banned from universities in several states). These extremely illiberal, authoritarian regimes also practiced wide-ranging censorship. Heine frequently fell foul of this cultural climate, and in 1825, hoping for an academic career, he reluctantly converted to Lutheranism. Nevertheless, he was not to become an academic, but to scrape by as a writer, critic and journalist, supported with hand-outs from Uncle Salomon.

Like all good Romantics, Heine tended to heroize Napoleon, and disliked the British for their role in his downfall. Nevertheless, he came to England in April 1827 to avoid the heat when his latest work, *Reisebilder II* was published, since it contained a satire on censorship which he expected would be controversial. A fascinating 1955 article by C.C. Aronsfeld in a monthly publication called *AJR Information*, published by the Association of Jewish Refugees, describes Heine's amorous activities in London and Ramsgate. You can read it here: http://www.ajr.org.uk/journalpdf/1955_july.pdf or go to <http://www.ajr.org.uk/pdfjournals> and click on July 1955 – the article is on page 5.

Unfortunately no references to the original material are given but the material seems to have come from his letters.

THE MONTEFIORE CONNECTION

What is of particular interest to the RMH is that Heine wrote one letter on “East Cliff Lodge” headed notepaper, and another letter is simply headed “East Cliff”. He appears to have been staying in the Lodge while Moses Montefiore (not yet knighted) was on his first visit to the Holy Land. Salomon Heine no doubt knew Nathaniel Rothschild and his brother-in-law, Montefiore, and presumably made an introduction by letter. Salomon Heine was very like Montefiore in his ecumenical approach to Jewish-Christian relations and was a very considerable benefactor in Hamburg. He may also have wanted Montefiore to hear at first hand, something of the repression that Jews were still suffering in Prussia. A lack of time, energy and only rudimentary German prevent me from researching any further into connections between the families, but RMH would be delighted to hear from anyone who knows anything about this.



Heine, painted by Mauritz Daniel Oppenheim

Interestingly, the East Cliff Lodge letter was written to Johann Hermann Detmold, a friend who came from another Jewish family who had been forced to convert for political/social reasons. Detmold, although more conservative, had also been forced to take refuge in Paris during the 1830s, and later fell foul of the reactionary King of Hanover, Queen Victoria’s Uncle Ernst August. The letter, dated Ramsgate, July 28th, 1827, begins in a fine Romantic style:

“I am high up at present, on the last cliff at Ramsgate, and I am sitting in a high balcony, and as I write I look down over the lovely wide sea, whose waves clamber up the rocks and roar their most joyous music for my heart. I tell you this, so that you may know that my good advice comes down to you from a good healthy height.”

However, Heine’s main interest in Ramsgate seems to have been pleasure rather than politics. The AJR article mentioned above describes a love affair Heine had with an Irish woman in Ramsgate, clearly a wealthy one, perhaps aristocratic, whom he refers to as “My lady”. He meets her again some years later in Lucca. Love affairs seem to have been a dominant interest for Heine. Perhaps he was making hay while the sun shone, since later in life he was laid very low by a neurological illness, now thought to have been multiple sclerosis.

During his time here Heine made a sketch for a poem on Ramsgate, making plenty of use of sea and cliff imagery, and perhaps, inevitably, describing “a huge white cliff, like a woman’s bosom, upheaving itself above the sea”. This poem does not seem to have been completed, and so was not, like some of Heine’s poems turned into Schumann lieder. This is such a pity, it would have been an excellent thing to have heard Fischer-Dieskau or Thomas Allen singing about Ramsgate in German!

JUST ONE MORE THING...

Karl Marx was Heine’s third cousin and they corresponded a good deal. Perhaps someone could find some evidence of him visiting East Cliff Lodge? Or perhaps not.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: I am indebted to Julia Dogra Brazell and Elaine Smollin for drawing my attention to this interesting Montefiore-related story, and for providing me with links to sources.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY 16TH MARCH, TIME: TBA

We will be delighted to welcome Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein who will be giving a talk about the recently discovered unpublished diaries of Lady Judith Montefiore.

At the Comfort Inn, Ramsgate.



Further information pertaining to all events are sent out by separate mailings. Announcements also appear on the RMH website and Facebook page:

Website: <http://www.ramsgatemontefioreheritage.org.uk>

Facebook: Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage

[https://www.facebook.com/RamsgateMontefioreHeritage/info/?tab=page info](https://www.facebook.com/RamsgateMontefioreHeritage/info/?tab=page_info)

AND FINALLY...

**A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO
ALL OUR MEMBERS & FRIENDS!**

