

THE RAMSGATE MONTEFIORE HERITAGE

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2018



SHIR CONCERT, JANUARY 2018

FROM OUR PATRON

The Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage was set up over 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 SUMMER 2018

Since our last edition, we have had three very successful events: a concert by Shir in January; a talk by Elizabeth Steven in April and the Annual Montefiore Day Concert which this year was given by Eliot Alderman, Benjamin Wolf and members of the Rinah Ensemble. Reviews of each of these events are covered below. We also have an interesting article by Diana da Costa on her and her husband's visit to Dubrovnik.

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 us, preferably by email to ramsgatemontefioreheritage@outlook.com .

The next edition will be available in January 2019 and contributions should be received by 31st December 2018.

Gerald Tripp

Chairman & Editor Pro-Tem

SHIR PLEASURE, AGAIN!

A return visit for the third time last January, a new venue and RMH members, guests and the general public filled the Oddfellow's Hall in Ramsgate for a swinging afternoon of the best of Jewish music.



At the risk of sounding like an advertisement, it was 'Klezmer and more'. Whilst it is the more recognisable style of Jewish music in this country, Klezmer is but one of many genres of this music, as diverse and internationally widespread as the people themselves. In its programme of concerts Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage has spread the word (and music) of this fact.

And at this concert Shir's repertoire really fitted the bill with music from the European Diaspora, Sephardi, Ashkenazi, Ladino, Yiddish, Hebrew, Mizrachi, Yemenite, (go on, get the Google finger working!) Israeli pioneer and modern, with a fusion of jazz.

Our new venue gave us a relaxed atmosphere with individual tables, a bar (sorry about the lack of tea and coffee this time), and room for Israeli dance circles which most of the audience joined in with relish and the odd bruised shin.

And such a welcoming audience, reluctant to let the band go. But Shir said they'd love to come back again, but could it be in the summer next time!



Godfrey Fischer
Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage

ELIZABETH STEVEN TALK ON ABRAHAM MONTEFIORE,

27TH APRIL 2018

The Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage was delighted to welcome Elizabeth Steven, Friend of Worth Park, who had done a great deal of research into the life of Abraham Montefiore, younger brother of Sir Moses.

The brothers had at one time worked together and had been very successful accruing great wealth – however during his life Abraham faced many challenges of a personal nature. Sir Moses was greatly affected by the death

of his brother Abraham. They were close as siblings and business partners. Sir Moses had visited Abraham shortly before he died, aged thirty-six, leaving five children.

Elizabeth lives close to Worth Park in Crawley which led her to begin her research into Abraham's life – which contrasts greatly to that of Sir Moses. It is a sad coincidence that both the houses, at Worth Park and at East Cliff Lodge in Ramsgate, were pulled down by their respective Local Authorities.

Elizabeth continues to pursue her research – I am sure there is a book to be written!

Her enthusiasm and dedication are to be applauded and I would also like to mention and thank her two colleagues, Eileen Hill and Keith Gravenor, who accompanied her to the talk – they continue to delve into the history of Worth Park. Extensive work has been carried out there and the grounds certainly look very beautiful. It is hoped that R.M.H. will organize a visit to Worth Park in 2019.

The talk was well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. At the conclusion of the talk Rabbi Dr. Andrew Goldstein presented the Mayor of Ramsgate, Cllr. Trevor Shonk with a statue of Sir Moses together with a plaque which are now on display in the Custom House, Ramsgate.

Pamela Fields
Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage

MONTEFIORE DAY CONCERT 2018 – MONTEFIORE IN THE NEW WORLD

On the 17th of June 2018 the Montefiore Synagogue welcomed an audience of approximately fifty-seven local and those from further afield purveyors of fine liturgical music to enjoy the annual Montefiore Memorial Day Concert. This annual event organized and sponsored by the Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage and held at the Grade II* Listed Synagogue by kind permission of the Montefiore Endowment, has become an established part of the Ramsgate cultural scene.

The concert is held to commemorate the day in 1833 when Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore invited their Ramsgate gentile neighbours, their family and friends in celebrating the dedication of their synagogue. Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage committee members were pleased to be reunited with the Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage Membership, other regulars and to also welcome newcomers.

The synagogue, external building to the rear and external access routes, have during the preceding year benefitted from significant restoration and improvement works under the enthusiastic custodianship of Benedict Kelly,

the most recently appointed Keeper. Mark Negin was available to share his considerable knowledge regarding the Montefiore Synagogue, Mausoleum and general relevant history with visitors asking for information.

This year, regular Montefiore Concert performers, nationally and internationally renowned musicians, Eliot Alderman and Benjamin Wolf, were joined by Rinah Ensemble members, Benjamin Seifert (baritone), Edward Edgcumbe (countertenor) and two young choristers, Chaim and Sony. The audience expressed their delight in response to the performance offered by these talented youngsters. They beautifully complimented the efforts of their senior. and greatly accomplished counterparts.

Although Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore never did travel to the continent of America, their name is recognized throughout this part of the world. Their reputation for inclusive generosity was instrumental in the name Montefiore becoming a symbol of Jewish philanthropy throughout the world.

This year the concert, which reflected the Spanish and Portuguese origins of the Amsterdam Synagogue, or Esnoga, via Bevis Marks in the City of London, explored the music originating in the Old World and how it developed in the Spanish and Portuguese communities in the Americas. An appreciative audience was held spellbound by an eclectic selection of sixteen musical offerings.

The opening piece Baruch Haba is sung in all Jewish communities as part of the Hallel – the selection of Psalms 113–118 used to celebrate the major Festivals in the Jewish calendar. Each community has its own particular version and on this occasion was presented as heard in the Esnoga – the great Portuguese Synagogue of Amsterdam.

The Curaçao set: Baruch Haba, Marcha Nupcial, Veshameru, Psalm 29 & Yigdal was very popular with the audience. The pieces played ranged from fairground to Beethoven sonata in style and clearly delighted many individuals. This selection of music is from the Caribbean island of Curaçao which was originally part of the Netherland's Antilles, whose Jewish community maintained very close ties with its parent in Amsterdam. The Hope of Israel – Emanuel Synagogue in Willemstad, Curaçao is considered to be amongst the oldest, if not in fact the oldest active Jewish congregations in the Americas and dates from the 1650s. It is more commonly known as the Snoa which is short for Esnoga, an old Portuguese and Ladino word for synagogue.

Ubnucho Yomar, a piece rediscovered in the Congregation Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia archives, was a special treat as the community no longer has a choir and as a consequence this piece has not been heard for a long time. The synagogue which dates back to the 1740s maintained close ties with both its parent community in London and the sister synagogue in New York with which it shares much of its music. It is an interesting and pertinent fact that one of the Congregation Mikveh Israel Synagogue's ministers, Isaac Leeser, corresponded with Moses Montefiore regarding the latter's endeavour to assist Jews in Palestine and Europe.

Several pieces performed, namely Maher, Yehi Chasdecha and Psalm 23, provided excellent examples of the repertoire of the Congregation Shearith Israel, the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue in New York. Interestingly and perhaps surprisingly some might declare Yehi Chasdecha, as set by Israel Mombach, who was the choirmaster at the Ashkenazi Great Synagogue of London (destroyed by a German bomb in 1941) is an example of the direct transfer of a melody from London to New York. Quite clearly the difference in liturgical custom was no barrier to the transference of a good tune. No doubt the Montefiores would have appreciated this. Psalm 23 as interpreted by Henry Pereira Mendes, who began his Rabbinic career in 1874 at the Manchester Sephardi congregation before he was called to the Bimah at Shearith Israel in New York in 1877, is illustrative of the close ties maintained between Sephardi communities in the Old and New Worlds. It might interest some to learn that Rabbi Henry Pereira Mendes who was also medically qualified was shot by a beggar and almost lost his life. When the assailant died some years later Rabbi Mendes paid for his funeral.

The Montefiore March by William Jonas prompted Benjamin Wolf to encourage the audience to imagine that the piano he was playing was an orchestra in place at the annual Hebrew Charity Ball Association of Philadelphia. This piece of music was played at the Ball in January 1885, Moses Montefiore's 101st year. The name Sir Moses Montefiore lent kudos to the event and of course his longevity warranted recognition and celebration.

The concert ended with Halleluyah (Psalm 150) - Matthew Moss, one of the earliest choral settings from the London Bevis Marks Synagogue, which has been adopted into the repertoire of most of the other Spanish & Portuguese Synagogues worldwide. Matthew Moss, a non-Jewish organist, was engaged to train the then nascent Bevis Marks Choir and his setting of Psalm 150 is a very fine and pleasing example of the early 19th century choral style.

The audience expressed their appreciation of the concert via several thunderous rounds of applause to which the musicians responded with a most gracious series of bows.

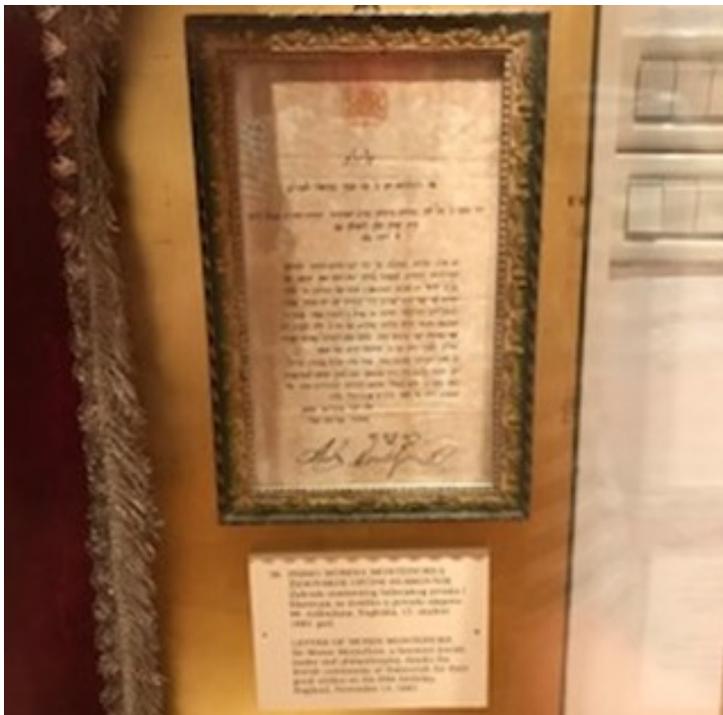
As concert attendees gathered in the green and pleasant grounds surrounding the Synagogue to enjoy après concert discourse, many were heard to express their appreciation of the concert. Some also described their childhood experiences regarding the synagogue clock especially when it came to getting to school on time or being punctual for a rendezvous later on in life. The inscription on the clock "TIME FLIES VIRTUE ALONE REMAINS" has been fondly remembered. I am guessing that these individuals would have been inspired by Sir Moses Montefiore's motto "Think and Thank" in response to the enduring services provided by this wonderful keeper of time.

Tamara Kolbl
Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage

SIR MOSES AND DUBROVNIK

In May, Anthony and I visited Dubrovnik. Whilst visiting the Jewish Museum which adjoins the beautiful Synagogue, we came across one exhibit of a letter written by Sir Moses, in Hebrew, dated 15th November 1883, thanking the Jewish community of Dubrovnik for their good wishes sent for his 99th birthday which had taken place on 24th October 1883.

Once home, we attempted to research the connection between Sir Moses and Dubrovnik. There is no reference at all in the diaries edited by Dr. Louis Loewe of any visit to Dubrovnik nor in Abigail Green's biography of Sir Moses, we googled – all to no avail.



So, the inference has to be drawn that Sir Moses never visited Dubrovnik but such was his fame that communities all over the world, regardless of whether Sir Moses had visited or not, sent birthday greetings, all of which in due course were acknowledged.

The letter was written in Hebrew presumably as neither Sir Moses nor his Secretary knew the local Croatian language. The signature is that of Sir Moses but presumably his Secretary wrote the letter.

Diana da Costa
Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage

WANTED - EDITOR – FOR RMH NEWSLETTER

The RMH Newsletter is published twice a year – December/January and July/August. The role is not onerous as hitherto RMH has been fortunate as there seems to be no shortage of material. But we need someone who will compile the contributions and will also be free to make their own mark on the publication.

Please could anyone who is interested contact either the Chairman, Gerald Tripp or the Hon. Secretary, Diana da Costa via ramsgatemontefioreheritage@outlook.com to arrange a telephone discussion.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Further information pertaining to all events are sent out by separate mailings. If you are not already on the RMH mailing list or you know of someone or an organisation who would like to be added, please email us at ramsgatemontefioreheritage@outlook.com or secretaryrmh@btinternet.com

Likewise, if you would like to join RMH, please email us.

Announcements also appear on the RMH website and Facebook page:

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

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