



Ramsgate, August 2023

Our new Patron

Following the Annual Town Council Meeting on the 17th of May 2023, it was agreed that Councillor Pat Moore be elected Mayor of Ramsgate for 2023–24, and Councillor Kay Dark was elected as the Deputy Mayor. RMH congratulated her and invited her to become our new patron. She kindly agreed and both the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor attended the Montefiore Day Concert in June.

Rivka Dodds 1929 – 2023

Rivka and her husband, Tom, were members of the local Jewish community. They joined and supported Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage from its inception and rarely missed a talk or musical event until ill health meant a move away from Thanet to be closer to family.

Rivka was born in Paddington, London, in August 1929, daughter of a tailor-turned-market trader and then grocery shop owner. Her father had come over from Russia, and her mother from Austria, in the early twentieth century and Rivka was the youngest of seven children.

She and Tom moved to Margate in 1960 where they opened a grocery shop. They were stalwarts of the Orthodox Synagogue in Cliftonville and then joined the Thanet and District Reform Synagogue in Ramsgate 40 years ago. Rivka died at the end of May and will be greatly missed by her family and many friends.

Mark Negin

In March 2023 many members enjoyed visiting Mark Negin's *Retrospective* exhibition in Ramsgate's York Street Gallery.



Entering his 7th decade of painting, drawing and design, Mark Negin maintains his passion for, and comprehension of, the beauty of classical imagery. His retrospective included work from his life in theatre and since his embrace of Ramsgate as his home in the 1980's, where he found new inspiration, discovering the town's richly cultural heritage. Continuing the town's history of artists arriving and falling in love with the coast, harbour and architecture, Mark was involved in many of the cultural initiatives including the Spring Festival, and he embraced his Jewish roots, working with the Montefiore Endowment to maintain the historic Synagogue and Mausoleum.

Shortly after the Retrospective finished Mark had to spend time in hospital but luckily was well enough to attend the Annual Montefiore Day Concert at the Synagogue in June.

At July's RMH Committee Meeting, it was unanimously agreed to accord Mark Negin life-time Honorary Membership of the Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage. This is well-deserved recognition for all Mark has done for RMH since its inception. Without him, RMH would never have come into existence in the first place! Mark was very happy to accept.

The Fiddler has left the rooftop!

I hope readers, just this once, will not mind if I do not talk about Sir Moses, but the article below will I hope explain why I am so enjoying editing this newsletter and learning so much about Judaism. When I did a DNA test last August it revealed that I am 14.7% East European. I am now intrigued to find out which town my ancestors came from, whether any of them were Jewish, and when they came to England.

I am sure that, like me, many of you were sad to hear in March of the death in Tel Aviv of Chaim Topol, the Israeli actor who delighted theatre-goers and film audiences with his portrayal of Tevye, the long-suffering and charismatic milkman in *Fiddler on the Roof*.

When Topol first performed in an Israeli production of *Fiddler on the Roof* in the 1960s, he stepped into the part when Israeli star Shmuel Rodenski became ill. Topol fell in love with the part, and the rest as they say is history.

I never saw the stage musical myself, but in 1998, when I visited my son in Australia for the first time, Topol was appearing in Melbourne and I remember seeing the huge hoardings advertising Anatevka outside the Regent Theatre every time I caught the tram into the city centre. Topol played the role of Tevye for more than thirty years, and celebrated his 2000th performance while in Melbourne. He returned to the city in 2005.

When I lived near Crystal Palace I had an elderly Jewish neighbour. One day the topic of *Fiddler on the Roof* came up and Hilly began to explain to me that it was based on one of the stories in *Sholom Aleichem*. His father had come from Kiev in the 1890s and married a lady from Lithuania in the year 1900 in Whitechapel. They had eleven children and the father often used to tell them the tales found in *Sholom Aleichem*. A few months later we went to the King's Head Theatre in Islington to see Saul Reichlin performing a one-man-show based on many of the stories.

Laura Probert

23 for 23



An invitation to take tea in Lady Judith's Italianate Glasshouse

One of RMH's members, June Marshall, is part of Ramsgate Working History. This year's project '23 for 23' has been created to celebrate the lives of twenty-three remarkable Ramsgate ladies in the centenary year when Dame Janet Stancomb-Wills, became the first female Mayor of Ramsgate.

June was asked to demonstrate what a remarkable woman Lady Judith Montefiore was. She is working with the staff of the Italianate Glasshouse (and occasional Teahouse) to celebrate Lady Judith's life. The Glasshouse has agreed to host a 3-day event with the theme:

Lady Judith's Travels and her Cookbook

The event will be held on

Thursday 31st August/Friday 1st September/Saturday 2nd September

**at the Glasshouse in King George VI Memorial Park
from 10.30am - 4 pm every day**

RMH members are welcome to pop in to share their knowledge with visitors. Laura Probert, who is also part of 23 for 23, will be there on Friday morning. The event will be publicised here in Thanet, to all members of our community, and further afield, via groups interested in Sir Moses and Lady Judith. Our new Mayor of Ramsgate is attending in her official capacity along with Montefiore Ward Councillors.

The Cafe may offer some of Lady Judith's sweet recipes on their menu during the event. June has selected some of Lady Judith's recipes and produced a contemporary interpretation which visitors can take away with them. June has worked very hard on this project and deserves our support.

Contact June with any queries on: (june57marshall@live.com) as this is not a RMH event.

Claude G Montefiore

When Chief Rabbi Joseph Herman Hertz published *A Book of Jewish Thoughts* in 1920 he included three quotes from *The Bible for Home Reading*, a commentary on the Bible with moral reflections first published in 1896 by Claude Joseph Goldsmid Montefiore, son of Nathaniel Montefiore, and great nephew of Sir Moses Montefiore. Educated at Balliol College, Oxford he began to train for the ministry of the Reform congregation of England, but devoted himself instead to scholarly and philanthropic pursuits as a spiritual teacher and lay preacher.

Free copies of Rabbi Hertz's book were given out to Jewish servicemen in Canada during the Second World War and RMH member Mark Negin still has a copy among his family papers. Soldiers may have found comfort in C G Montefiore's thoughts on "The Contemplation of Death" included on Page 281 as they faced horrific dangers far from home every day.



Frontispiece of book

Rothschilds and Montefiores

In 1812 Judith Cohen, the daughter of Levi Barenth Cohen, married Moses Montefiore, a Sephardi Jew of Italian origin, a city merchant and financier, considered to be one of the richest English Jews at the time. Lady Judith's sister Hannah was married to Nathan Mayer Rothschild, the head of the Rothschild family in England. Moses joined him in many joint ventures such as the Alliance British and Foreign Life and Fire Assurance Company.

The couple's connection with the Rothschild family was further strengthened when Moses Montefiore's brother Abraham married Henrietta Rothschild, a sister of Nathan Mayer. She was his second wife and they had four children.

Another member of the extended Rothschild-Montefiore family circle was Benjamin Gompertz, who came from a family of Jewish merchants who left Holland and settled in England. His mother, Leah Cohen, was the second wife of the diamond merchant Solomon Gompertz. Benjamin was denied admission to universities because he was Jewish so he taught himself mathematics and was assisted in his mathematical education by the Spitalfields Mathematical Society later the London Mathematical Society.

On 10 October 1810 Gompertz married Moses' sister, Abigail Montefiore. Gompertz himself joined the stock exchange in 1810 and he became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1819. The following year he read a paper to the Society which applied the differential calculus to the calculation of life expectancy. In 1824 Gompertz was appointed as actuary and head clerk of the Alliance Assurance Company, set up by Sir Moses Montefiore, his brother-in-law, to put Gompertz's mathematical and actuarial skills to good use.

Louise, Lady Anthony de Rothschild, was the daughter of Abraham Montefiore. Her mother Henrietta was the daughter of Mayer Amsel Rothschild. Her marriage in 1840 to Anthony de Rothschild produced two daughters, Constance and Annie. The family lived at 107 Piccadilly, and Aston Clinton in Buckinghamshire.

The Voice of the Cantor

Once again on Sunday 18th June the dome of the Montefiore Synagogue was filled with the beautiful sounds of Jewish music as the performers celebrated the role of the solo voice, in particular the Cantor or Chazzan, whose primary role is to lead services.



Singers (l-r) Benjamin Wolf, Yoav Oved and Eliot Alderman were joined by harpist Milo Harper. Photograph by Gordon Fox.

The content and performers for this year's Montefiore Day Concert were chosen to give that extra sparkle to the programme content taking into consideration that the variation and appeal of liturgical music is somewhat limited. RMH feel it is important to keep our regulars onboard and, also, to attract those who, hitherto, have not

come to the concerts. A programme of Ashkenazi Chazanut, Sephardi and Yemenite melodies and wedding music was enjoyed by nearly seventy people that afternoon. The standing ovation at the end of the concert showed that Jewish music is as popular with non-Jewish as well as Jewish audiences.

This year Eliot Alderman and Benjamin Wolf were joined by Yoav Oved, who moved to England from Israel in 2012 to study music at Royal Holloway University. Milo Harper completed the quartet, charming the audience with his sparkling performances on the harp.

Future events being planned

Ightham Mote

In April Amanda-Jane Doran, Manager at Ightham Mote, a beautiful medieval moated manor house, near Sevenoaks, came to talk to us about the Colyer-Fergussons, who first opened this historic house to the public. Mary Colyer-Fergusson, née Cohen, was the second wife of Sir Thomas Colyer-Fergusson, and closely related to the Montefiores and the Rothschilds.

RMH plan a coach-trip to Ightham Mote in the autumn. Full details to follow.

Ramsgate's special day

In November Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein, and our Newsletter Editor, Laura Probert, are planning an illustrated talk to celebrate the 140th anniversary of Sir Moses' 99th birthday in 1883, which was celebrated as a public holiday in Ramsgate with a procession through the town up to Sir Moses' home at East Cliff Lodge.

The procession was estimated to have been over two miles in length and took three-quarters of an hour to pass through the town. Nothing on such a grand scale had ever been attempted in Ramsgate before. Hopefully the weather was better than for this year's 100th Ramsgate Carnival!

Full details to follow.

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Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage

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Patron:

The Worshipful The Town Mayor of Ramsgate, Cllr. Pat Moore

DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER:

31st January 2024

Please send contributions to Laura Probert, RMH Editor,

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