



www.movinghere.org.uk

200 years of migration to England

third party copyright - Jewish Museum, London

BRITISH JEWRY BOOK OF HONOUR

THE JEWS OF THE EMPIRE AND THE GREAT WAR.

"Their Name Liveth to all Generations."

In those fatal and ever-memorable days of August, 1914, when the call came to the young men of the British Empire to give up all that they held most dear and go forth to fight in the battle for right against might, for justice against injustice, for freedom against tyranny, among the first who responded were men of the Jewish faith. In the mighty struggle which rent the world for nearly five long and weary years no fewer than fifty thousand Jews bore their part, and bore it nobly.

From all corners of the British Empire they came. From South Africa, from Canada, from Australia and New Zealand, they came in their thousands. Among them were men in every walk of life. They served in all the fields of the far-flung war, in all capacities, from that of the simple soldier or sailor to that of the commanding officer. Each made the supreme offering; his life, his wealth, his strength, his personal happiness were his response to the great call of duty. For themselves these men asked nothing. Obedience to duty, to the voice within speaking of righteousness, is the mark and sign of the children of Light. Never did the Sons of Israel prove more splendidly what is that righteousness which exalteth a nation than in those terrible five years.

British Jews have vindicated, once and for all time, their right to British citizenship. They have proved in an unmistakable manner that they are part and parcel of the Empire. Great Britain was the first country in the world completely to emancipate the Jews. This was in 1854. The opportunity to justify that emancipation did not come for sixty years, but when it did come—in August, 1914—the opportunity was seized with a spontaneity and enthusiasm that surprised even those who knew the loyalty of the British Jews.

WHAT IS THE BOOK OF HONOUR? The British Jewry Book of Honour has been planned as a permanent record of the services of all the fifty thousand Jews who, from all parts of the British Empire, served in the

Great War; so that, in days to come, all may have before them, in a permanent form, the remembrance of these men and know how to hold them in honour and lasting thankfulness. To do less, is to fail in duty to them.

More than this, it is to under-estimate a landmark in the history of the Jewish race. For nothing is more remarkable, in the whole course of their long history, than the way in which in the British Empire, wherever they were living, the sons of Israel came forward and bore their part, thinking only of the great cause at stake. In doing this they asserted before the eyes of all the world all that is great and permanent in the idea of nationality and showed, once more, that neither time, nor exile, nor oppression, can extinguish the sacred spark.

RECORDS. Every endeavour has been made to secure completeness in the records. As far as it has been possible no one has been forgotten. All the Chaplains and officiating clergymen working in different parts of the world have deposited their official records with the Editor, and all information sent to the Jewish Press has been carefully noted. The detailed lists which were prepared by the Jewish War Services Committee have been fully utilised, nominal rolls have been received from all the Dominions overseas, whilst information has poured into the editorial office from various sources, both public and private.

It has naturally hardly been possible to keep in touch with the frequent changes in rank of Officers, N.C.O.'s or men in a large number of instances, but whenever brought to the notice of the Editor these alterations in titles have been duly recorded.

It has been designed to place on permanent record details of the war services rendered by Jewish sailors and soldiers, who served in France, in Belgium, in Italy, in Mesopotamia, in Palestine, in North Russia, at the Dardanelles, in Salonica, in East and South Africa, and on the Seas. Of these over two thousand made the supreme sacrifice; thousands more have lost their health and strength which to many men mean as much as life itself; others have been spared to return home and rejoice in the achievement common to them all.

JEWISH ENLISTMENTS. When war broke out the number of Jews

attached to the Regular branches of His Majesty's Forces was comparatively small. There were about fifty in the Royal Navy; four hundred officers and men in the Army; and about six hundred in the Special Reserve and Territorial Forces. In response to the appeal for volunteers, Jews came from all classes and from all parts of the world to uphold England's cause. The number of Jews who were on active service before conscription came into force was about 10,000, of whom 1,140 were officers.

In the British Dominions, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, in the British West Indies and other Colonies, the proportion of Jews who enlisted was very high. (For detailed lists see pages 549 to 596.) In Australia, for example, out of a total Jewish population of 17,000, there were 2,000 enlistments and 300 deaths in action. (See further, p. 21.)

Of the families of English birth, the proportion of voluntary enlistment was something approaching 90 per cent. of the available young men, whilst British-born sons of alien immigrants from countries like Russia and Poland contributed a large number to the ranks. Thus, from the well-known Jews' Free School in the East End of London about 1,200 old boys joined up, and the Jewish houses at the public schools of Clifton and Cheltenham can point to the proud record of practically every one of their present and past pupils of military age having taken a commission. It is further striking evidence of the enthusiasm of the English Jews in joining the forces at the outbreak of the War that the Jewish Lads' Brigade, which both in London and the provinces trained Jewish boys in military exercises without being regarded as a part of the Army, contributed 80 officers out of a total of 90 young men who were serving as officers of the Brigade at the time.

The complete record of the number of Jews who were on active service throughout the whole war will never be accurately known, owing to the difficulty of compiling the lists. The military authorities rendered from time to time, both abroad and in the United Kingdom, nominal rolls of Jews who were serving, and, in addition, the chaplains and officiating clergymen, in the course of their ministrations, discovered