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1

Introduction

This Chronology includes dates and events concerning Jews in Britain, dates and events in British history involving Jews, and the reaction in Britain (both Jewish and non-Jewish) to events abroad affecting Jews. Generally, unless particularly relevant, it does not cover Jews of British extraction once they have permanently left Britain, nor non-Jewish Brits of Jewish extraction. Important events in Israel are mentioned where they had an impact in Britain or on British Jews. Some dates are clearly milestones and others signposts, but most merely record events.

In the nineteenth century, and the early part of the twentieth century, British governments and the British press were generally sympathetic and supportive of crises and problems affecting Jews outside Britain. This was a mixture of liberalism, basic humanity and a sense of fair play. Philo-Semitism also played its part. There were, though, other motives that had little to do with Jews, such as chauvinism, anti-Catholicism and, for the government, political opportunism. A number of these events have been included in the Chronology, such as the Damascus Blood Libel in 1840, the Mortara Affair in 1858, the Romanian problems from 1866 onwards, the position of the Jews in Russia in 1881 and 1890, the Dreyfus Affair in 1894, the Kishinev Pogrom in 1903 and the Beilis Affair in 1911.

This Chronology includes events in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland (to 1922) and Northern Ireland (from 1922). It does not cover colonies, possessions, British Empire or the Commonwealth, but some events concerning the British Mandate in Palestine have been included.

The titles given in 'Further Reading', which can be found in the Comments column, include articles, papers, and books that deal in depth with the particular event. General historical works are excluded unless their coverage of the event warrants inclusion. All such works are included in the Bibliography as are other relevant and appropriate books.

Wherever possible dates and events have been sourced from primary sources or, where the primary source is not in English, from an appropriate translation. Failing this secondary sources have been used, and whenever possible from contemporaneous

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ones such as chronicles. Every date and event has been sourced and all sources have been footnoted.

One difficulty is where a major event gave rise to a number of important but related events. It has been decided for most of these to include only the first date in the list and all the subsequent dates and events are included in the description in the comments column. Thus, for example, the Mortara affair is shown once as 23 June 1858, the day Edgardo was taken by the Inquisition, and other important dates relating to it, such as Montefiore's mission to Rome and the publication of the massive protest in *The Times* on 18 October 1859, are given in the narrative.

A number of separate tables have been included. Mention has already been made in the Preface of the list of 'Jewish Firsts'. Jews have had an important place in British literature and rather than include the works in the main Chronology there is a table of many of the more important by date of publication. Other tables include a list of Chief Rabbis and Hahamim, a list of the first Synagogues in London since readmission in 1656, dates of establishment of some of the major communities outside London since readmission, numbers of Jews elected to Parliament at each General Election since 1858, and estimates of the number of Jews in Britain at different times.

In order to put the events in the Chronology in context two appendixes have been included – Major Events in Jewish History and Major Events in British History. The latter appendix includes a list of British Monarchs and a list of British Prime Ministers.

No adjustment has been made for changes in the calendar on 2 September 1752 (Julian) to the next day 14 September 1752 (Gregorian). Fortunately no event of Jewish significance occurred during the 'lost' 11 days, except that Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) was on 29 August (Julian) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) was as usual ten days later on 18 September (Gregorian)! Dates are thus the date of the event on the calendar in use when it occurred, No adjustment has been made for the move of the New Year from 25 March to 1 January in 1700 (Scotland) and 1752 (England), except it has been assumed for the purpose of the Chronology that the New Year was always on 1 January, so that for example, 5 January 1647, or as some historians show '5 January 164 $\frac{7}{8}$ ', is shown as 5 January 1648.

Britain has the unenviable distinction of the first recorded ritual murder accusation against Jews in medieval Europe (Norwich in 1144), the largest mass suicide of Jews in the Middle Ages (York in 1190), the first expulsion of Jews from a whole country (1290), an antisemitic story in one of the greatest English literary works (*The Prioress's Tale* in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in 1387), and a major contribution to world antisemitism in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1600). However, from the resettlement in 1656 onwards the history of Jews in Britain might seem rather bland, particularly in comparison with that of Jews in other European countries. There were no ghettos, no kehilla system on the continental model, no blood libels,

no pogroms, little violence, no expulsions, no false arrests and bogus trials, no boycotts and no anti-Jewish legislation.

This chronology, almost by definition, is descriptive rather than analytical and doesn't include much social, intellectual or cultural history. For example, how significant was antisemitism in Britain, what was it like to be a Jewish immigrant in the late nineteenth century, what contribution did Jews make to the criminal classes in the eighteenth century, what did British Jews contribute to the Haskala, what were the major contributions of British Jews in the fields of science, culture, the arts, business, the economy, politics and scholarship (Jewish and secular), and so on? Fortunately, in Britain we have been blessed with historians of note (amateur and professional, academic and lay, Jewish and non-Jewish) who have contributed to these areas through papers and significant books. Many such works are listed in the Bibliography and a major source of papers on these subjects can be found in the *Transactions* (now called *Jewish Historical Studies*) of the Jewish Historical Society of England.

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